

**Improving Reading Comprehension
Through Recognition of Cognates
In Basic English Learners in a Licenciatura Program**

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Licenciatura en la Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa

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Table of contents

2. Introduction	4
3. Definition of Terms.....	6
4. Statement of the Problem	8
5. Research Questions	12
6. Literature Review	13
7. Research Design	17
7.1 Type of Research.....	18
7.2 Type of Study	19
7.3 Setting of Study.....	20
7.4 Participants.....	20
7.5 Role of the Researchers.....	21
7.6 Data Gathering Methods.....	21
8. Instructional Design	23
9. Findings and Discussions	26
9.1 Students were partially aware or both the term of the concept “cognate”.....	26
9.1.1 Participants were partially aware of the term cognates.....	28
9.2 Students naturally tended to recognize words similar to Spanish as true Cognates	30
9.3 The context did not help much in the recognition of false cognates.....	34
9.4 Activities on favorite topics not mean correct writing of true cognates	36
9.5 Recognition of cognates does not necessarily imply better reading comprehension	38
10. Educational and Research Implication	41
11. Conclusions	43
12. Appendixes	45

1. RESUMEN

El presente trabajo “Mejorando la comprensión lectora a través de reconocimiento de cognados en estudiantes de Inglés básico en un programa de Licenciatura” es un estudio de caso inscrito en el paradigma cualitativo, en el cual se hizo un proceso descriptivo e interpretativo. Este estudio fue realizado en una universidad pública en la ciudad de Pereira. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar cómo el reconocimiento de cognados puede o no contribuir a la comprensión lectora de textos en lengua inglesa con estudiantes de inglés básico en una institución pública de educación superior.

Los datos fueron obtenidos a través de observaciones de clase, entrevistas, grabaciones de audio y notas de campo. Los datos recolectados fueron analizados con el fin de obtener los hallazgos que le dieron respuestas a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cuál es el impacto en la comprensión lectora el reconocimiento de cognados verdaderos en estudiantes universitarios de un idioma extranjero en nivel básico los cuales hablan español como lengua materna? ¿Cómo la lengua materna de estudiantes universitarios de lengua extranjera quienes hablan español como lengua materna puede contribuir en el reconocimiento de cognados y el mejoramiento de la comprensión lectora?

El análisis de los datos muestra resultados relacionados con los siguientes temas:

- La percepción de los estudiantes sobre tanto el término como el concepto de cognados
- La tendencia natural de los estudiantes a asumir como cognados las palabras similares al vocabulario de la lengua materna
- La dificultad de los estudiantes para reconocer cognados falsos

- Los efectos del reconocimiento de cognados en la comprensión de textos en lengua extranjera

ABSTRACT

The present study “Improving Reading Comprehension Through Recognition of Cognates in Basic English Learners in a Licenciatura Program” is a case study under the paradigm of qualitative research. It was also a descriptive and interpretative study since it provided data obtained from a small population of students and the results of it are the product of our interpretation. This study was conducted at a public university in Pereira. The objective of this study was to analyze how the identification of cognates both true and false may contribute to improvement in reading comprehension in English in students of Basic English level in a public institution of higher education.

Data were obtained through observations, interviews, audio recordings and field notes. The collected data were analyzed in order to obtain findings that gave answers to the following questions: What is the impact on reading comprehension among university EFL basic learners who speak Spanish as their native language, of the recognition of cognates? How can the mother tongue of university EFL basic learners who speak Spanish as their native language, contribute to both the recognition of true cognates and the improvement in their reading comprehension?

The analysis of the data shows results related with the following topics:

- The perception that students have about both the term and the concept “cognate”.

- Students' natural tendency to assume as cognates those words similar to Spanish.
- Problems that students have to identify false cognates.
- The effects of cognate recognition in the reading comprehension of texts in English.

2. Introduction

Most of the world's languages share a common origin (Hagman 2008), and languages derived from Latin share a lot of morphologic and phonetic characteristics. Spanish and English vocabulary share similar characteristics such as the roots and the morphological parallels, since both languages Spanish and English are historically connected to Latin (AERA 2008). Those similar characteristics are useful to identify lexis between languages: in this case study English and Spanish. Ringbom (1986) pointed out that if L2 is closely related to L1, the language learner will benefit from the existence of cognate words given that recognition and understanding of these words is less difficult than identifying completely alien words.

In this research, our purpose is to analyze the effect of the use of the recognition of cognates both true and false, as a possible reading comprehension tool in foreign language in Basic English level students in a Licenciatura program. To do so, we divided the presentation of this paper in several chapters.

The development of this document is structured in four chapters: in the first chapter we present short definitions of the concepts to be considered in the study. Also in the first chapter, we present the statement of the problem that for our study is connected to the shortcoming that affect in a negative way the foreign language reading comprehension in EFL (English as Foreign Language). Thus, in this project the most important objective is as to get students aware of the existence of cognates and to connect this awareness to the improvement of reading comprehension strategies.

The second chapter includes the literature review, which has been designed based on information taken from several sources and authors, who show their insights about cognates and their impact on educational and research fields.

The third part includes the research design; this part contains the type of research, the type of study, the setting of the study, the participants, the role of the researchers and the methods that were implemented in this study, with the instruments that were used to gather information during the process.

The fourth part on this study contains the instructional design. It describes the development of the sessions and the strategies and methods that the researchers implemented throughout the six sessions.

The fifth part includes the findings and discussions. This section shows the analysis of the data gathered in the six sessions, the reaction of participants, observations, interviews, audio recordings and also the references to the authors cited in the literature review.

Finally, in the sixth part, we include the educational and research implications suggested after finished the findings and discussions in order to propose future studies about the use of cognates and also the conclusions of the study.

3. Definition of Terms

We found several definitions for the word *cognate*. All the following definitions are cited by Mugford (2008). Crystal (1987) defines cognate from a linguistic point of view as (...) “a word that shares a common ancestry with another word”. The same author, Crystal, defines the word as “a [language or linguistic] form which is historically derived from the same source as another language form”. Richards and Schmidt(2002) define cognate as “a word in one language which is similar in form and meaning to a word in another language because both languages are related”. They add: “sometimes words in two languages are similar in form and meaning but are borrowings and not cognate forms”. Melka (1997)uses the terms cognates and loan words interchangeably. Holmes and Ramos (1993) define cognates as “items of vocabulary in two languages which have the same roots and can be recognized as such”. For the current study we rather use the first definition provided by Richards and Schmidt for whom cognates are *words which are similar in two languages* due to the fact that the two languages are related.

Metalanguage: is the use of a specific language or vocabulary in regards to describing or analyzing language itself. (The American Heritage 2009)

Reading comprehension: is the act of understanding what you are reading.

Foreign language: a foreign language is a language that is from a country other than one's native country. Foreign languages are usually learned for the sake of learning about the culture and people who speak it.

Second language: a language that somebody learns to speak well and that they use for work or at school, but that is not the language they learned first (Oxford Dictionary 2011)

Native language: the language which a person has grown up speaking from early childhood. (Oxford Dictionary 2013)

4. Statement of the problem

In this study we do not try to develop a reading comprehension method; however, we focus on how cognates can help the learners to read and comprehend better in the program that prepares future language teachers and in learners who have a basic knowledge of English.

This study analyses how teachers can help their EFL beginning learners to have a better understanding of what they read through the recognition of words that present morphological and phonetic similarities in two languages, in our case English and Spanish. That is to say that when learners of English as a foreign language are given written texts, they might be able not only to recognize those morphological and phonetic similarities in the texts but also understand the key ideas contained in the texts. For this study, the researcher's intervention is thought like this: one of the researchers plays the role of the teacher and the other takes notes of what happens during the session and operates the tape recorder for triangulation and further analysis. Six 60-minute classes are planned to be given to the students which include teaching, monitoring and assessment.

The interaction between the reader and the text is the foundation of comprehension, and this can be seen when the readers relate the information that is presented to them with the previous knowledge in their minds. This process of relating previous and new information is what we call the process of comprehension (Olarde Ortega, 1998). Foreign language teachers need to create reading strategies to facilitate the foreign language learning process; thus, it is imperative that they take into account the students' mother tongue as a tool to reinforce foreign language reading

comprehension. In secondary education, reading in English as a foreign language (EFL) requires teachers to explore strategies that can improve students' reading comprehension (Echeverri A, McNulty. 2009). These strategies mentioned above require from the students to learn, among some other pieces of knowledge, large pieces of vocabulary. Identifying and using vocabulary is one inherent component to successful reading and, therefore, comprehension. Now, regarding reading comprehension in our national context, based on Ríos & Valcárcel, (2005) in Colombia, public high schools' students tend to have low levels of English which makes reading comprehension challenging.

According to Idol (1997), to getting reading proficiency in L2, can be the consequence of awareness in the (reading) process. Reading comprehension is not the sole responsibility of the students; the teachers, in their role as facilitators, should investigate and incorporate effective and efficient strategies or techniques in the field of reading comprehension to help students to understand a text, regardless of how difficult it may be. Likewise, the material used to improve reading comprehension must be integrated into the schools' curriculum design in order to make reading a more enjoyable activity and not a dull task. Before trying to develop the student's reading and comprehension abilities in a foreign language, it is crucial that the students have reasonable reading competence in their mother tongue. But, a considerable part of the Colombian population is not interested in reading, in contrast, the majority of Colombian citizens consider reading like something for academic purposes; According to El Tiempo (2009) the average Colombian prefers to spend time doing unproductive activities such as watching television or listening to music. Therefore, one may perceive reading as a pursuit that Colombian society does not regularly practice nor takes a whole lot of

pleasure and time in doing, and merely pursues as a designated task at school or university. The low level of reading habit in Colombian citizens is showed by Gamboa and Reina (2006) who took data from DANE (2005) and according to which between 2000 and 2005 the amount of Colombian regular readers fell considerably and this is a disturbing data about the reading habit status in the country.

Based on the *Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo*, by 2019 the Colombian students at all levels are expected to have obtained a level of proficiency B1 based on the Common European Framework for Languages in all the four skills.

En el contexto colombiano y para los alcances de esta propuesta, el inglés tiene carácter de lengua extranjera. Dada su importancia como lengua universal, el Ministerio de Educación ha establecido dentro de su política mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza del inglés, permitiendo mejores niveles de desempeño en este idioma. Así pues, se pretende que los estudiantes al egresar del sistema escolar, logren un nivel de competencia en inglés B1 (Pre intermedio). (MEN. Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, 2006).

For the specific skill of reading comprehension, high school students are expected to manage the standards of English language competences according to the Common European Framework. The following are some of the objectives to be reached in language courses and with beginning students.

I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters. (CEFR, 2001).

Most high school students are able to interpret words in a text; nevertheless, a vast part of the learners do not comprehend what it is what they are reading (OlarTE Ortega, 1998). Therefore, one of the most significant challenges for English teachers in high

schools is to improve English reading comprehension and effectively raise the standard of reading proficiency.

This strategy is based on the ability to not only recognize words that look similar in the two languages (English and Spanish)but also to give learners tools to understand the texts better and infer the meaning of those unknown words and, therefore the general contents of the texts. This strategy was developed because, as evidenced by (Ospina, Bedoya 2009) and their case is similar to ours, there is an evident lack of vocabulary on the students' part. On the other hand, Nagy (1993) found that not all foreign language learners automatically recognize and use cognates. For this reason it is essential to promote the student's awareness of the existence and the usefulness of cognates.

To support our thesis, we based part of our work on the paper written by Ospina & Bedoya(2009). They researched on this topic, and their work was also based on previous studies about the use of cognate vocabulary recognition whose purpose was to help students improve their reading comprehension skills. They claim that EFL beginning students face difficulties in reading comprehension. These difficulties do not only affect the progress of language learning, but also have negative repercussions on other academic subjects different from English.

5. Research questions

What is the impact on reading comprehension in university EFL basic learners who speak Spanish as their native language, of the recognition of true cognates?

How can the mother tongue of university EFL basic learners who speak Spanish as their native language, contribute to both the recognition of true cognates and the improvement in their reading comprehension.

6. Literature Review

Reading comprehension can be a tough challenge for EFL students in the language learning process; according to Echeverry and McNulty (2009) being able to recognize what one reads is of paramount importance for learning not only at school but also for everyday life. Reading is not only the understanding of grammatical structure or a code-breaking task, without solid understanding of what is being read. EFL (English as a foreign language) learners can be reinforced on reading comprehension through the recognition and application of cognates in order to increase word recognition and expand English vocabulary. According to August, Carlo, Dressier, & Snow (2005), *in some cases* the students' mother tongue has resulted in being an effective resource to recognize cognates in English. Jimenez (1997) makes reference to the use of the mother tongue to give instructions in some tasks to be performed in the foreign language. He considers that through this practice, the student is more likely to learn. Based on the previous studies, speaking the mother tongue of the students for certain tasks, can be positive since it is a good chance for the teacher to explain some words that are similar to Spanish (true cognates), and have the meaning that their appearance suggests

Students with a good reading proficiency in their first language can take advantage of their reading skills to understand texts in a second language by recognizing familiar vocabulary or words that present morphologic similarities and these students have more possibilities to achieve success in foreign language reading comprehension compared to those students without good reading comprehension skills in their mother tongue. Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1996), argue that successful bilingual readers can see the relationship that both English and Spanish orthographic systems have. Jimenez (1997) also points out that students with a high level of reading comprehension have the

capacity to transfer or to apply their literacy knowledge and abilities from one language to the other. Therefore, students who have good command of their mother tongue can transfer this literacy knowledge to improve word recognition in a foreign or second language. According to Kieffer and Lesaux (2007), knowing a word involves the combination of several different types of knowledge, and Stahl (1999), suggests that knowing a word goes beyond knowing its meaning, it also implies knowing its relationship with other words, its connotations in different contexts, and its power of transformation into various other forms.

Bimbi and Phyllis (2001) have argued that learners transfer first language characteristics into the target language as a natural tendency; however, strategies for transferring may be directly instructed. The reading comprehension process in foreign languages includes different techniques such as word recognition. When the mother tongue is referenced to understand the meaning of words in the target language, what happens is a transferring of meanings of words between languages. According to this position, the students can use their mother tongue as a strategy to improve reading comprehension in the target language. According to Ospina and Bedoya (2009) one of the elements that can be transferred from one language to another is vocabulary. This does not mean that different languages have the same vocabulary. It means that words are more susceptible to be transferred from one language into other, as it effectively happens between English and Spanish.

Similarities between languages can be used as a tool in the reading comprehension process in foreign language learners. According to Hornberger (1989) languages that share many linguistic associations may transfer more readily than those with fewer linguistic relationships. We can observe many associations between the English and

Spanish languages and, therefore, their words; many of their words in both languages are similar in morphologic structure and also in pronunciation.

We need to consider that reading comprehension strategies go beyond learning mere vocabulary; nevertheless, expansion in vocabulary facilitates the comprehension of the target language. Hulstijn (1993), suggests that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also supplying learners with strategies to increase their vocabulary, and according to Wallace (2007) English language learners need ample vocabulary in order to read successfully.

Based on the Holmes & Ramos cited by Mugford (2008), “cognates and loan words reflect natural learning strategies ... current teacher training programs need to help future teachers to see how cognates are not mere lexical phenomena but also reflect social and cultural language use”. Nevertheless, cognate recognition cannot be an automatic process. The students’ ability to recognize some words as cognates and touse them as a strategy to understand the text has a strong relation between the amount of words known in the target language and the ability to recognize those words as similar. But, for foreign language learners, the distinction between the words known in the mother tongue alongside those known in the foreign language is clearly significant; here is where cognate recognition can affect the learning of vocabulary in foreign language texts. According to Qian (1998) cited by Wallace (2007) in defining the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension, “there is a high correlation between vocabulary breadth, depth and reading comprehension (.78 -.82) (cited in Qian, 2002).The amount of vocabulary (breadth) facilitates the recognition of words and therefore the comprehension of texts. Freebody and Anderson (1981) say that augmenting general vocabulary knowledge facilitates reading comprehension, and

Adams (1990) argues that accuracy in word identification and skimming abilities – recognition of the overall content of a passage through a quick reading of it—are prerequisite abilities for reading comprehension. Some studies establish that using cognates were successful not only in vocabulary development but also in reading comprehension (Carlo et al., 2004; Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005; Snow & Kim, 2007). Reading strategies can help students to increase their vocabulary and their capability to recognize words, but these strategies must be well put together to give students the opportunity to expand vocabulary. According to Ospina and Bedoya (2009) the appropriation of word learning strategies will help students to increase their vocabulary and, at the same time, these strategies provide learners with tools that eventually promote autonomous learning.

The strategies to increase vocabulary in foreign language are tactics used by teacher to improve reading comprehension and one of them is cognate recognition strategy; it could be an appropriate reading comprehension tool. Holmes and Ramos (1993) posit that cognates are components in a vocabulary in both languages – native language and target language (Spanish and English) – that share *some* common linguistic development. Mugford (2008) emphasizes that the teaching and learning of cognates not only helps students to improve their wider recognition of words, but also helps them to develop their own learning strategies. Moreover, learning how to recognize cognates makes students feel motivated because by using the cognates, students are conscious that they are improving their reading skills.

Cognates are a good tool to use with students of all levels in second language learning, but cognate recognition as a reading comprehension strategy has both advantages and disadvantages. False cognates are some of those disadvantages. These are words that

have a similar spelling in say, two languages but the meaning is different from the one suggested in one of the languages. Some examples of false cognates are: *library* word in English which is similar to *libreria* in Spanish but does not mean what it suggests, because *libreria* in Spanish means *book store*. These cognates are common in a text and might puzzle the students because sometimes they—the learners— assume the meaning without really thinking about it. Another example of false cognates is the verb *to embarrass* which a Spanish-speaking student might perceive as “*embarazar*” (to fall pregnant) instead of its meaning in English “to shame or humiliate” as opposed to “fall pregnant”. Corder (1973) states that when students recognize a word (that could be a cognate) they use their previous language knowledge nonetheless they can have difficulties with the (recognition of) false cognates. Nevertheless, Bimbi and Phyllis (2001) suggest that (...)students should transfer all the knowledge they already possess (such as their experiences and their skills from their native language to the second language as a natural tendency) and then enhance this knowledge via contact with the target language. Ospina & Bedoya (2009) say that *transfer* is the appropriation of some linguistic patterns from the native language to make the foreign language more comprehensible. Cummins cited by Freeman and Freeman (1994) say that “what we learn in one language transfers into the new language”. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) define transfer as “the use of prior knowledge and/or skills to produce and comprehend the target language”.

According to Ospina and Bedoya (2009), students can transfer the features they have from the first language to the second language, such as vocabulary (their previous knowledge). Thus, students identify cognates words, although according to Kieffer and Lesaux (2007), when students recognize the cognates, they must be under good

supervision; the teacher needs to give a clear instruction to students so that they become aware of the cognates.

7. Research Design

This section presents our interpretation of the data collected by the 4 participants chosen for this study. All the participants are between 18 and 21 years old. They were chosen after a short questionnaire carried amongst 25 first semester LELI program students. They were asked about music, food, sports, their favorite school course and hobbies; then, they were chosen taking into account the similarity in their answers, because according to the answers presented by the students the researchers could select the topics, and make the exercises enjoyable for them and would not have to identify and prepare activities for each one. Information obtained for those activities reports the participants' cognate recognition level and their perceptions of cognates as a tool for reading comprehension.

7.1.Type of research

This study was based on qualitative research. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research “primarily employs an inductive research strategy” and our study will gain understandings through our observations. We will personally be in charge of all data collection & analysis.

According to Merriam (1998), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed”. Our study focuses on a social phenomenon, which we are interested in analyzing in order to understand what the students’ abilities are in recognizing cognates and how they go about in this process.

7.2.Type of study

This study is a case study. According to Bromley (1990), it is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. In this research we observed four participants in a “Licenciatura Program”. Those participants were beginners and we explored how the recognition of true cognates can help EFL learners to learn vocabulary and therefore improve their reading comprehension.

Interpretative study: according to Dobson (2006) an interpretative case study offers explanations, and our study explained the participants’ actions and the events the researchers observed; the events are the six lesson researcher implemented

Descriptive study: According to Merriam (1998) the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive; because we described how the participants interacted and how they engaged with the activity.

7.3 Setting of the study

This study took place at the UTP (Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira) in the Licenciatura Program, fine arts faculty. The students need ten semesters to finish the Program. They are being prepared to be future English language teachers and they have access to facilities such as a laboratory and a computer room. Students are taught four subjects in their mother tongue in their first semester, and all subjects in the next semesters are given in English. Researchers used one classroom to carry out the lessons and the lessons were given to those four students even though the initial survey was given to the whole class (35 students).

7.4 Participants

The participants selected for observation were in English level one beginners of one of the regular courses in one public university of the city. Researchers observed 4 students. The population sample subject for this study included both males and females. Two females were chosen: Carolina (student A, 19 years old), Jhuliana (student B, 18 years old), and two males: Anderson (student C, 21 years old) and Julian (student D, 18 years old). The students were from medium socioeconomic status background (based on the neighborhoods where they lived; 3 participants lived downtown and the other participant lived in a stratus 3 neighborhood, which means medium class area). Two of them had previous contact with English language besides their regular studies in high school: participant A studied English at Centro Colombo Americano (4 levels) and student B learned some English from her stepfather at home. Students Can D only took the regular courses in high school. The criterion for selection was based on what the students like or did not like through questions given to all the students of beginners on issues such as: music, food, sports; their favorite school course and their hobbies. Then,

the topics were selected based on the answers given by the students: those students whose answers coincided topics were then selected.

7.5 Role of the researcher

Each researcher played two roles. Every other session, while one researcher was observing the participants, the other researcher was explaining the lesson to those participants. For each session the roles of the researchers switched up to the end of the observations. The observation of participants was a key aspect for gathering data (Mac an Ghail, 1994). The researcher who played the role of observer, would take notes of what the participants said and the way they reacted to the session.

DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) state that participant observation “ is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides”.

7.6 Data Gathering Methods

Observations involve evaluators in actual view of academic activities, classroom learning, professional development sessions, or community meetings (Neirtec 2007).

Interview

The interview was the first method to implement in this study, through interview we defined the next steps to follow in the study, such as papers to read, activities and also we can observe interpersonal aspects of the participants such as age, participants previous foreign languages experiences, reading habits, hobbies etc. In this case study we implemented informal interview using open items by the way of questionnaire.

According to Gillham (2000) interview questions seek to elicit information about attitudes and opinions, perspectives and meanings, the author also said that an interview serves to obtain information and issues relevant to general aims. We used the interview in order to select the participants for our study an interview was used in the first session for knowing personal opinion of the participants.

Audio recording

We used an audio recorder in some sessions since it provides detailed information of what is going on at least in terms of linguistic issues such as pronunciation, turn taking and the like. According to Graham R. Gibbs, Susanne Friese & Wilma C. Mangabeira (2002) digital audio and video now makes for new ways for creating, processing and analyzing data. In addition they clarified that the tape recorder is clearly an easier way for researchers to keep a record of events and conversations. We used the audio recordings to get data about the speech of students and teacher. The tape recording was used during the sessions one, five and six.

Field notes

According to Bedoya & Ospina (2009) field notes are records of the researcher's thinking of the lives, people, and actions that are the focus in a research. What is observed and then written is treated as data. The researchers used field notes and audio recordings. Field notes provide information about issues such as environment, behavior of participants, lighting, size of classrooms, hunches from the researcher, among other aspects. On the other hand, recordings provide sharp information about reactions, speech, feelings. In addition, Bedoya and Ospina (2009) claim that field notes provide

essential grounding for writing broader, more coherent accounts of students' performance and development of target language inside the classroom.

Observation

The participants observation has been used in various disciplines as a tool in qualitative research to collect data about participants' activities, behaviors and environments; Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviors and artifacts in the social setting chosen to be studied and Bernard (1994) states that observation must have a sense of objectivity through distance; this quote clarifies the neutral role of researcher as observer, standing aside from what happens in the classroom. The observation method was the most used method in all the study because the researchers were divided into teacher and observer.

8 Instructional Design

The instructional design was put into practice in six two-hour sessions and it was implemented in one of the universities of the city. In each session, the researchers had different roles: one researcher was in charge of observing, collecting the data, and the other performed the role of facilitator, teaching the sessions, introducing the use of cognates and the importance of their recognition and implementation in the reading and comprehension experience. The roles of the researchers were interchanged accordingly and they worked in conjunction using observer-facilitator procedure to prevent any skewing of the findings.

The aim of the teacher in each session was to provide reading tools (cognate vocabulary recognition) and the aim of the participants of the study was to become aware of cognates, identify and use them as a way to improve reading comprehension in English.

The researchers designed the material given in the sessions, such as instructions to read short stories with a considerable amount of cognates in order to engage the learner in the activities proposed (around 10 to 15 cognates per activity).

The participants read the text without the help of either the instructor or the dictionary. Then students looked for familiar words and wrote the total of words that were identified by them; the researcher checked the pupils' comprehension by eliciting oral information and ideas about the text. They were asked questions like "*What is the text about?*", "How many cognates can you identify in the text?" "How many true cognates can you identify ...?" "What do you think is the meaning of such and such cognate?" etc.

The researchers would collect the students' papers to check the participants' comprehension of both, the concept and the use of cognates. This provided data for the analysis on the participants' progress in the recognition of cognates as familiar words.

At the end of this session the teacher researcher introduced to the students both the term and the concept "cognates" including the two types of cognates: true and false cognates, in order to avoid misunderstanding. The same procedure was used in the other two sessions, but in those the researchers provided a piece of paper with more questions about the texts in order to collect more data.

In the next session the teacher gave the students a short text with cognates (false and true) and the instructor read the text aloud in front of the students and the students were required to follow along with their own reading, checking through pauses and questions on the reading, that they were becoming aware about the cognates and also that they were recognizing them. When the reading was finished, the students looked for synonyms of cognates, using the monolingual dictionary, in this case dictionaries were allowed throughout the session, with the purpose of looking for synonyms of those words identified as cognates.

In one session, students were taken to the computer room and we applied the strategy presented previously solving some on-line exercises. This activity was done in the interactive lab.

In the last session, in order to check the cognate recognition improvement the outcomes of the first two activities were compared. For these activities, students wrote a summary in Spanish about what they understood from a short text about cognates and had to underline cognates from a short text on music. The students received a text different from the previous reading text, with a lesser number of cognates. Furthermore, in order to check comprehension, students answered five questions related to the information presented and were asked to underline the familiar words.

9 Findings and discussions

9.1 Students were partially aware of both the term and the concept “cognate”

9.1.1 Participants were partially aware of the term cognate

In the first session we found the lack of knowledge about the term “cognate”. The term was clarified during the session, but initially this term was unfamiliar to most of the participants, except for one who had a vague idea of what it meant. We started the session with a short reading activity; the facilitator gave the participants the text and then he gave instructions on what they were supposed to do. But the facilitator did not explain what the term “cognate” meant. That is to say that although the students did not have any idea about the topic of the text, they could identify the words that had similarities in both languages Spanish and English. This short text had basic vocabulary and a considerable amount of true cognate words (around 23 cognate words in the text).

After the students read the text the facilitator asked them what they learned about the term “cognate”. Even though the students read the text three times, students still had difficulties understanding the term. The students were asked to underline and identify the words that they thought looked similar to their target language and after that, the facilitator asked the participants to write a short paragraph in Spanish about what they understood about the term. This “loop exercise” had the intention to help the students understand the term. These are the answers students gave about the term based on the four paragraph reading.

S A: Son palabras que tienen un origen común y similar en dos lenguas. También se refiere a palabras en dos lenguas que son similares pero no el origen

In the same paragraph, student A made reference to “false cognates”

SA wrote: Falso cognado son las palabras que tienen un significado diferente pero su escritura es similar.

Student B said something similar, as follows:

SB wrote: los cognados son palabras que tienen similitudes entre dos idiomas. Existen los cognados falsos y verdaderos, los falsos son los que al leerlos nos muestra un significado que no es al de la palabra y los verdaderos son los que muestran transparencia en su significado en el momento de leerlo.

In both extracts we noticed that the participants had a rather vague idea of the concept “cognate”. From the interviews, we learned that students had some previous knowledge of English. Our inference is that their knowledge of the concept was influenced by their previous knowledge of English in this particular task.

All students were asked to perform the same activity, that is, to give a written account in Spanish of what they understood from a text in English about cognates. Some excerpts of their answers are provided:

St.C wrote: La técnica en dos mundos es común, original en las cognitivas, hay dos lenguajes comunes en la etimología, ejemplo: el inglés y el español son cognitivos.

St.Dwrote: Los idiomas son similares en uso de manera cognitiva porque ambos vienen de una raíz etimológica aunque siempre van cambiando con el uso. Los idiomas en general son muy parecidos.

We found different answers between the two groups of students: group A and B, and group C and D. Based on the analysis of the products students gave, the first group focused on the meaning of the text, but the second group could not make a clear

relationship between the main idea of the text and the words that they understood in it. When asked, students C and D said they tried to translate the text into Spanish and we had noticed this as we walked around checking their writing. One example of the above can be described when student C tried to translate the word “cognate”, and in his paragraph he used the word *cognitive* as meaning of the word *cognate*. This lead us to think that beginning students of English try to grasp the meaning of words in the target language based on their vocabulary in their native language.

9.1.2 Most of the participants were unaware of the concept “cognate”.

After the reading exercise, the facilitator explained what the term “cognate” meant and the difference between *true* and *false cognates*. After the students did the exercise, the facilitator asked what they knew about the topic. Some of their answers were like these:

St. A: yo la verdad no tenía ni idea de que eso se llamara así, aunque si había pensado en eso no sabía que eso se le llamaran cognados.....por lo menos en el colegio nunca me dijeron de eso.

St. B:yo si sabía de eso cuando estude con mi padrastro, pero él me hablaba de true friends y false friends, pero no que se decía cognados y nada más, por eso me parecía raro el término ese.

St. C: pues vea, la verdad no sabía nada de eso, y pues como yo de inglés solo se lo del colegio y la verdad me da como duro eso de traducir.....

Facilitator:pero yo no dije que tradujera el documento sino que expresara en un párrafo lo que entendía.....

St. C: si pero pues como yo soy tan regular para eso pues trate fue de sacar eso traducido con las palabras que vi.

St. D: con ustedes es que estoy viendo eso nada más, porque antes quedaba volando con eso, mejor dicho hace 5 minutos no sabía que eran cognados o para que servían.

Based on the answers given by most of the students, we found that three out of four participants did not have a clear idea of the concept. They seemed to understand cognates as words that look similar in both languages, but did not completely understand cognates as the representation of important connections and relationships across English and Spanish. Only one of the participants had a perception about the term although she used a different term: “friend”. This tendency to “translate” or infer meanings based on similarities is explained by the Processing Oriented Hypothesis which claims that learning a second language also implies relying on the learners’ native language. According to Hu (1995) this is part of a model which explains this linguistic process:

“By metalanguage language orientated (model), we mean the linguistic processing is accomplished by relying on a language other than the one being learned. One example will be learning Esperanto through thinking, reasoning or processing in English. In most cases, the metalanguage orientation means the L1 orientation, but sometimes they are not identical”.

Based on this, we infer that the participant redirected previous information about the topic just through accommodating this knowledge to another new term; even when student B did not recognize the term but did know the concept. Meanwhile the rest of the participants declared having no knowledge about the concept cognate.

For Alyousef (2005) reading comprehension is “an active process”. As an active process, it requires the students to be taught strategies to read more efficiently. For the

exercise we mentioned before, the students were simply given the reading texts with no other orientation apart from the instructions to do the task. The purpose of this was to have a non-biased result of what the students did understand from the text.

Even though the participants do not have a remarkable previous knowledge of the language based on what they said in the interviews, we noticed that both student A and B who had some learning experiences additional to those at school did show a better performance when identifying both the term and the concept in the two tasks made. This might confirm what Gradman & Hanania's (1991) research demonstrated that those learners who have had previous exposure to formal and consistent language instruction in previous stages to college are more likely to perform better in reading and comprehension tasks. Now, speaking of the ability to recognize cognates as such, Garcia G. E. (1988) states that students sometimes overlook obvious parallels between English and Spanish and hence do not fully utilize the potential help offered by cognates

9.2 Students naturally tended to recognize words similar to Spanish as true cognates.

The average of cognates recognized by the learners was 20 out of 29 which represents a percentage of 68% which means that there is a natural tendency to recognition of cognates in the case of our participants. Although cognate recognition seems a natural process because some words in English are evidently similar to some in Spanish, in the case of our study, student A who, based on her answers in the interview, has had some

previous formal instruction in an English learning institute, along with some reading habits, was able to recognize more cognates than the other participants. Juliana (student A) was able to recognize 27 out of the 29 cognates present in the reading, whereas students B and D recognized 17 and student C 18 cognates.

The interviews made to students show that their prior instruction and reading habits are quite similar for students B, C, and D. In these cases, cognate recognition is a natural process now that even though their prior instruction is similar it is, nevertheless poor compared to that of student A.

In terms of percentages, student A recognized 93.1% of the cognates presented in the reading “cognates” (see appendix 1) whereas students B and D recognized 58.6% and student C 62.06%.

The following table clearly shows what was said above.

Cognate Recognition/Percentages	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
	93.1%	58.6%	62.06%	58.6%
True Cognates	27	16	16	17
False Cognates	0	1	2	0
Missed	2	12	11	12

The following are the pieces of dialogues in the interviews on reading habits.

Student B

R: ¿Y te gusta leer?

P: ¿En español o en inglés?

R: En el idioma que más te guste.

P: La verdad más bien poco, yo leía lo que me colocaban en el colegio y nada más, no me gusta leer mucho (Int.)

Student C

R: ¿Qué tan bueno es usted para la lectura?

P: A mí no me gusta leer, me quedo dormido fácilmente cuando estoy leyendo. (Int.)

Student D

R: ¿Le gusta leer?

P: No

R: ¿Por qué?

P: Me aburre leer libros.(Int.)

Even though Students B, C, and D, from our study, report that their reading habits are quite poor, they were able to recognize at least half of the cognates contained in the reading given as an exercise (see appendix, text for activity 2). This provides evidence of what Holmes and Ramos (1993) cited by Mugford (2008) point out that cognate recognition ‘is a natural strategy’ and that as Corder (1973) says “students use their own language experiences and resources to find connections between languages”. That is to say, students naturally tend to recognize true cognates.

Despite the above interpretation of data, we also consider that in the case of student A, whose ability to recognize cognates is evident from the results in the reading exercise (she got 27 out of 29 cognates), the reading skills in the native language is one reason

for this student to being successful in identifying cognates. From the interview, we learned that her reading habits are better than the other participants’.

P: Pues yo me defiando en algo, no es que digan que uff la dura leyendo pero tampoco me quedo estancada pues, algo se hace

R: ¿Qué tan frecuente lees un libro?

P: Pues yo para leer no soy muy buena pero pues por ahí unos 4 libros al año y eso que depende del libro.

R: ¿Porqué que depende del libro? Es que qué clase de libro te gusta?

P: Estilo Walter Riso o Cohelo, me aburre un poco los otros libros como cien años de soledad. (Int.)

To contribute to the discussion, let us consider what Jimenez (1997) says about reading abilities and recognition of cognates in the learners’ native language. This author points out that students with a high level of reading comprehension have the capacity to transfer or to apply their literacy knowledge and abilities from one language to the other. Therefore, students who have good command of their mother tongue can transfer this literacy knowledge to improve word recognition in a foreign or second language. Students with a good reading proficiency in their first language can take advantage of their reading skills to understand texts in a second language by recognizing familiar vocabulary or words that present morphologic similarities and these students have more possibilities to achieve success in foreign language reading comprehension compared to those students without good reading comprehension skills in their mother tongue.

Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1996), argue that successful (...) readers can see the relationship that both English and Spanish orthographic systems have. Our finding suggests that even though cognate recognition is a natural strategy for all students, some can be more successful in their identification due to their abilities to read in their first language.

9.3 The context did not help much in the recognition of false cognates.

We could observe that the student *A* was the participant who identified the highest amount of true cognates, but she did not find any false cognates. Student *D* did not recognize as many true cognates as student *B* and did not recognize any false cognate. For this reason we consider that the *St. A* was familiarized with this vocabulary and she could identify those words better than the rest of the participants. In contrast, the students *B* and *C*, despite the fact they did not find a large number of true cognate they could identify a couple of false cognates.

Participants *B* and *C* identified two words they thought as true cognates despite the fact that the context of the words did not support their choice.

Student B

English: To Come / Spanish: comer

Student C

English: express (as a verb) / Spanish: “expreso” (as an object)

The excerpts taken from the reading “Generations” are the following.

Excerpt 1:

Tran Nguyen was born Da Nang, Vietnam in 1972. His family moved to the United States after the Vietnam War. Tran's native language is Vietnamese but he can *express* himself better in English.

Excerpt 2:

The members of this group all *come* from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

According to the results obtained from student *B*, the English word "come" was confused with the Spanish word "comer" that is used as a verb in present simple tense with third person in Spanish: "*el come*" or "*ella come*", etc. Student *C* recognized the word "express" as if it were "expreso" in Spanish which means "a train", or "a beverage". As researcher one could assume that the students after being instructed in doing so were aware of the context in which the words are embedded to avoid those kinds of confusions. It often happens that students get stuck on the first possible meaning that comes to mind and are reluctant to abandon it even when, in a particular context its meaning cannot be the one they think "at first sight" B.Laufer (2007).

According to those results, we can observe that the recognition of words in a foreign language with lexical correlation with (the learner's) mother tongue can affect considerably how the readers understand the text Beck, McKeown, and Omanson (1987) demonstrated that it was possible to teach EO children the use of strategies for inferring word meaning, while at the same time enriching their vocabulary with direct teaching. Nagy et al. as well as Garcia and Nagy have presented results suggesting the efficacy of teaching native Spanish speakers explicitly about the value of cognates and of morphological relationships between Spanish and English.

9.4 Activities on favorite topics do not mean correct writing of true cognates

In order to strengthen and increase the recognition of cognates and to make the cognate recognition process better and taking into account the lexical similarities as a kind of connection between languages, we increased the amount of cognates on the sessions taught to the participants given the recent evidence for the lexical accumulation of much of language provided by reading exercises (de Bot, Paribakht, and Wesche, 1997) and according to Hunt and Beglar (2005).

For this purpose, the participants were given a reading comprehension text about sports. They were asked to spot those cognates they recognized and give the meaning for them and were given 8 minutes before reading the text aloud and at the end they had to fill a crossword, to match images with a number corresponding to the spaces on the crossword. Based on the survey given to the students and their answers to it, sports were one of the favorite topics and that is why a reading on sports was given to the learners.

In spite of the student's prior knowledge about sports in general now that on mass media, sports are constantly broadcasted, and taking into account that most of the words referred to sports that are loans from English and are of common knowledge, only two of the participants knew how to write and how to pronounce the words related to the sports introduced in the crossword (tennis, volleyball, basketball, football, golf and baseball) in English. When the researcher asked the participants to read the text, participant A, who was better at recognizing cognates and their pronunciation did not perform that well as expected. Student C did not know the pronunciation of the English

names for the sports in the reading, but researcher inferred he knew how to write them, because he said: “*éste crucigrama está muy fácil*”. Student D made the same mistakes as st. B’s.(See An1, obs3.)

Based on these outcomes, especially those on participants C and D, we inferred that the problems they seemed to have were due to the fact that learners were not that aware of spelling and writing common use words. According to Garcia Lopez (2001) “there are learners with a tendency to avoid cognates (see, for example, Kellerman’s (2000) research on ‘homoiophobia’), as they think that similarities between languages will lead to confusion. In other words, some students think that cognates are “too good to be true” and they do not take them into account as true cognates. In spite of the fact that those cognate words are frequent in texts, visual media According to Garcia Lopez (2001) if cognate words are not used with frequency, students could face some difficulties. As researchers we took for granted that words related to sports were common knowledge for the learners. But, apparently, they were not.

Jimenez (1997) states that mother tongue instruction for some (...) activities could be efficient and effective because learners understand what they should do. Since we consider that sometimes when instructions are given in the foreign language it can affect the comprehension of some tasks, we decided to give participants the instruction of the activity in their mother tongue. Nonetheless, this did not change the results evident in the crossword on sports.

Increasing the amount of cognate words in a text could improve student’s vocabulary awareness, making the main idea of the text comprehensible, in particular when those

cognate words are related with their cultural background. From this point of view, it seemed that these students were not that good at writing the names of words familiar to them because they needed more monitoring from the teacher who would give more input. Learners' awareness required more input from the teacher. Droop and Verhoeven (1998) point out that facilitators must check their students as frequently as they can, in order to observe their progress, as Kieffer and Lesaux (2007) state that facilitators must encourage learners to be aware of cognates.

9.5 Recognition of cognates does not necessarily imply better reading comprehension.

The facilitators gave the participants a piece of paper with five questions. In the first question, the participants had to select some cognates and place them in the appropriate box, making a relationship between the words and the sentence. Among the words there were names such as "Bill Gates", dates such as "July 20" and numerical figures such as "65%".

In the second question the participants had to complete the chart with cognates, which they may already have known. For the third question participants had to underline the cognates they recognized in a short text. And finally in the fourth and fifth exercises the participants had to read a short paragraph about coffee around the world, where the participants could find already known cognate vocabulary. The participants had to read the text in order to extract the main idea of the text and finally, to put a title for the paragraph that they read. The researchers suggested that the participants read the paragraph more than once in order to identify all the cognates in the text.

The results of this evaluation were as follows:

Student A recognized most of the cognate words, included the continents such as: Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America. She underlined the vocabulary proposed in the text in order to write a title which contained the main idea of the paragraph and she was the first to finish the exercise (this is an important fact to highlight since she was the most outstanding participant of all who took part in this study).

Student B recognized less than half of the cognate words in the text and did not underline the cognates which are the name of some continents, such as: Latin America, Asia, and Africa. She was more interested in a possible title for the reading but did poorly in recognizing cognates

Student C recognized less cognate words than student B.

Student D was the participant with the worst performance in the last activity and in all the study. It was he who recognized the least number of cognates in the activity and as a consequence he did not finish the exercise, he did not put the tentative title for the paragraph.

Although the exercises contained vocabulary that was mainly true cognate words studied previously, the results of the evaluation were not fully satisfactory. Perhaps the lack of attention and nervousness caused most of the participants to do poorly fail in the exercises in the evaluation. Our expectations about testing reading comprehension by using cognates strategy was higher than the result obtained; we consider that the lack of

support in the last session by the researcher in their role as facilitator, affect significantly the performance of participants.

The results found in the last session show us that participants need all the time the supervision of facilitators to be comfortable in reading activities proposed by the facilitators, because they do not use the cognates as a tool or as a strategy to reading comprehension; again, the lack of confidence of their own knowledge about recognition of cognates is a factor that affects negatively reading comprehension; they need to be constantly instructed or guided about what they are reading, as a result we claim as suggested by Ospina and Bedoya (2009) who argue that vocabulary learning requires constant formal instruction for students to have the opportunity to increase their vocabulary and to take progress in their skill to read and to communicate in oral form. Even though the vocabulary presented in the text was rather familiar in terms of the content of the reading, learners did not perform well in the reading and comprehension test. Since five classes were already given to the students, they were given more freedom to solve the exercises without constant supervision of the teacher. Nevertheless, as Kieffer&Lesaux (2007) suggest, beginners need constant attention on the side of the teacher to build confidence.

10 Educational and Research implications

Since we assume from this study that novice learners tend to infer their L2 vocabulary based on their L1 vocabulary knowledge, we think that the constant and conscious implementation of this cognate identification might eventually help learners, like our participants, to improve their L2 reading comprehension. For educational purpose, working on both the definition and the concept related to both true and false cognates is only the departure point. Learners have to be aware of the fact that both English and Spanish share a common part of history related to Latin and, therefore, there are words that look alike in the two languages but not necessarily mean what they suggest.

We suggest for future studies in education about cognate recognition to explore the above mentioned strategy, in other skills different from reading comprehension.

Listening comprehension and perhaps speaking could also benefit from the application of some ideas portrayed in our study.

For future studies we suggest to change the population chosen. So, instead of beginners either intermediate or advanced learners could be selected to see to what extent the results are similar or different with those populations.

We noticed that our target population had some problems when recognizing indirect cognates. Therefore, we suggest that for further studies learners at beginning level might be given more input related to those types of cognates along with more examples and exercises to be done.

For future research studies on cognate as a strategy to improve reading and comprehension of texts in English, we suggest to use short stories, tales, and excerpts from universal pieces of literature they might have read at school. This way, they might have the chance to not only increase their vocabulary, improve their comprehension when reading, but also their knowledge of literature.

11 Conclusions

Despite the fact that cognate recognition can increase the student's capability to understand a text in foreign language or give more advantages to read and comprehend texts better, this strategy is only useful when the student can confront the fear of using it. For this reason cognate instruction strategy requires more time to be implemented correctly by the teacher. In this way, they will be able to familiarize themselves with the inclusion of cognate recognition as a strategy in reading process. In this case study, it is important to take into account the participant's result, all of them were different; although their English level in Licenciatura Program was the same, the degree of cognates recognition was different. As a result, we state that student's literacy level is a factor that must be taken in consideration in order to implement reading strategies.

One of the most important issues here is the evident interaction between Spanish vocabulary knowledge and recognition of cognate relationships. It was evident from what we observed that the participants transferred their Spanish lexical knowledge to read in English; and in addition with correct instruction in cognate vocabulary recognition, participants can get over the difficulties that they have to confront with English reading activities in the Licenciatura Program.

We give special emphasis to the instruction of cognate recognition; to guide students to learn unknown English vocabulary, make them aware of lexical similarities between Spanish –English vocabulary, orthographic similarity could play an important role in cognate word recognition. The students' recognition of cognates seemed to depend on

close “overlapping” between the Spanish and English spellings. Another problem they face in reading comprehension is the context of the text, because the context can alter the meaning of some cognate words being homophone words in mother tongue, this fact may create confusion to understand and affect their decision to choose the correct word especially for Basic English learners. Hence, we emphasize the suggestion given by Ospina and Bedoya (2009) who state that cognates instruction is a reading strategy that should be implemented in the English curriculum from early stages of the English learning process.

APPENDIXES

OBSERVATIONS

Observation 1. Date: June the 15th of 2012

The first session started without any surprise for the observer, the students read the short text and they said they didn't know what cognates were.

All of them spent a lot of time reading the text; but the participant **A** finished the text faster than the rest of the participants.

The facilitator asked the participants to read the text again. The second time that they read the facilitator suggested to them to read quietly, they did not spend so much time reading the text; then, facilitator asked to read the last time the text but this opportunity they must read aloud; as a result most of them spent a lot of time reading the text. They made many mistakes in when saying aloud some words.

Most of the participants presented difficulties trying to read the text, the lack of English vocabulary knowledge can affect their reading comprehension, but the researchers must take into account the English level of the participants.

The researcher as a facilitator confirmed that the most of participants did not have information about cognates, just one of them; participant **B** expressed some knowledge of the topic.

Observation2: Session two Date: June the 20th of 2012

The researcher as facilitator start the activity asking the participants the meaning of the term cognate, in function to refresh the previous information given in the first activity, all the participants showed that they understood the concept clearly after facilitator instruction

The instructor brought for this activity a reading about music. She asked students to read the text first to elaborate the activity proposed in the session, the participants B, C, and D seemed some confused in the moment to read the text, also participant C express that he believed that some of the words are a fake or the words did not mean how they look like (false cognates).They asked between them about vocabulary and they asked to the facilitator for the meaning of some words, but he did not interfere in the activity, just when it was extremely necessary.

The facilitator asked the participants to read the text for a second time, re-reading to the students observed again the vocabulary and to understand better the text, but participants C and D showed confusion trying to translate the unknown vocabulary, just participant A seemed so confident reading the text, she finished in first place the reading

Teacher started the activity about recognition of cognate; he asked to find the most number of cognate vocabularies in the text. Next the facilitator asked the participants to fill the gaps in the reading activity; these gaps were about the characters in the reading, including character's distinctiveness, appearance and personality, etc. this part of the activity was in function to observe the reading comprehension of the participants.

The participants finished the activity and they brought their paper to the researchers to finish the session

Observation 3: Session three.

Date: July the 6th 2012

Student A was very focused on the topic; she did the exercise without any problem and was the first to finish it. She knew how to pronounce and how to write the name of every sport. Participant A was the first one to finish the exercise.

Student B failed in the pronunciation of the names of two sports, she pronounced them in her mother tongue and when she wrote the name of the sports in the crossword, instead of writing “*basketball*” and “*volleyball*”, she wrote “*basquetbal*” and “*boleyball*”. The participant was confused, as she took into account the orthography in Spanish. The lexical similarities can generate confusion what the correct spelling of the word is.

Student C did not know the pronunciation of the sports, but researcher inferred he knew how to write them, because he said: “*estecrucigramaestamuyfácil*”. When he said that, the other participants looked at him and continued with the exercise. Even though participant C showed confidence, he was having problems completing the exercise.

Student D is not focused on what he is supposed to do. When asked, he said he doesn't understand what he's supposed to do. When the other participants completed the exercise, student D began to look around as if he were still confused. Participant D

preferred looking at student B's paper to compare his answers to his. When called his attention he says he was not sure of this answers and wanted to check. He made the same mistakes of participant B's.

Observation4: Session four

Date: July the 13th of 2012

Student A was the first to read aloud part of the text. She had better pronunciation than the other students and she read the cognates more easily than the others participants. Student A had a better time recognizing some cognates, but did not fully understand the meaning of some of them; she was unsure about them. Nevertheless, she was the first one to finish the exercises.

Student B When asked to do the task seems not to know the correct pronunciation of some cognates. The recognition of cognates seems being difficult for her; she has some problems understanding the exercises and the last one was left unfinished, she reacted giving the unfinished paper back to the researcher when she noticed participant A finished the exercise. I guess that she felt the need to finish the exercise because she did not want to be the last one to complete the activity. She behaves as if finishing the task were a competition.

Student C did not know the pronunciation of any cognate words; he cheated in the second exercise from participant A, who did notice this. Student C did the first exercise alone but his recognition of cognates was deficient. I infer that participant C does not have interest on doing the activities and he prefers doing other things like drawing.

Student D did not know the pronunciation of any of the cognate words. This student does not focus his attention on the exercises provided. He looks around him as if de

doesn't know exactly what to do. When asked, he recognized he did not understand the nature of the exercises even when the teacher/researcher explained it.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews were made in May the 7th, 2012

Code: Researcher: "R" Participant: "P"

Those participants' names are not their real names, researchers change them for confidentiality.

Interview #1: Participant A

R: ¿Cómo te llamas?

P: Carolina

R: ¿Cuántos años tienes?

P: 19

R: ¿En qué semestre estas?

P: Apenas entre a la U, estoy en primero

R: ¿Antes de entrar a la carrera, habías tenido otra experiencia con la lengua inglesa?

P: Pues cuando estaba en 11 estude 4 niveles de ingles en el Colombo, y pues por la música que escucho casi toda es en ingles.

R: ¿Qué música escuchas?

P: Rock y metal más que todo.

R: Entonces, ¿te sientes cómoda con los textos en inglés?

P: Pues yo me defiende en algo, no es que digan que uff la dura leyendo pero tampoco me quedo estancada pues, algo se hace

R: ¿Qué tan frecuente lees un libro?

P: Pues yo para leer no soy muy buena pero pues por ahí unos 4 libros al año y eso que depende del libro.

R: ¿Porqué que depende del libro? Es que qué clase de libro te gusta?

P: Estilo Walter Riso o Cohelo, me aburre un poco los otros libros como cien años de soledad

R: Y entonces para las actividades que vamos a hacer ¿Qué te gustaría que pusiéramos en las lecturas?

P: Pues que no sean muy complicadas ni largas porque uno ve eso difícil y que tengan algo de lo que me gusta por ejemplo la música, o el medio ambiente que también me gusta, es que yo quería estudiar ambiental y no pase, por eso estoy en esta carrera.

R: De eso se trata, no podemos ponerles cosas muy difíciles. Listo Camila gracias.

Interview # 2: Participant B

R: ¿Cómo te llamas?

P: Jhuliana

R: ¿Cuántos años tienes?

P: 18 años recientes

R: ¿También estás en primer semestre de la licenciatura?

P: Si, creo que todos los que están afuera están en el mismo semestre.

R: ¿Habías estudiado inglés o habías tenido contacto con el inglés antes de entrar a la licenciatura?

P: pues mas o menos porque aparte del colegio yo estudio inglés con mi padrastro que me enseña desde hace un tiempo porque él vivía en Londres y desde que vino el siempre me pone a estudiar con él, a veces no me gusta de a mucho, pero pues ahí por encima.

R: ¿Su padrastro es profesor en alguna parte?

P: No, para nada, el tiene un parqueadero de motos en el centro y nada más, el me enseña porque quiere nada más.

R: ¿Qué le gusta hacer?

P: Me gusta la música, más que todo los vallenatos y el deporte, ver tv y salir a rumbar nada más.

R: ¿Y te gusta leer?

P: ¿En español o en inglés?

R: En el idioma que más te guste.

P: La verdad más bien poco, yo leía lo que me colocaban en el colegio y nada más, no me gusta leer mucho

R: Y entonces para las actividades que vamos a hacer ¿Qué te gustaría que pusiéramos en las lecturas?

P: ¿Van a dar tema para cada uno?

R: No, pero vamos a tratar de que los temas sean acordes a los gustos de ustedes.

P: Pues a mí la música y el deporte pero dudo mucho que haya algo en inglés sobre los vallenatos. (Risas)

R: La verdad tampoco creo pero haremos lo posible.

Interview #3: Participant C

R: ¿Cuál es su nombre?

P: Anderson

R: ¿Cuántos años tiene?

P: 22 años

R: ¿Qué semestre está cursando?

P: Primer semestre.

R: Antes de comenzar la carrera ¿había estudiado inglés en alguna otra parte?

P: Aparte del colegio en ninguna otra parte.

R: ¿Y en el colegio desde que grado estudio inglés?

P: Desde sexto grado.

R: Y ¿Qué tal le iba con el inglés?

P: Regular, es que no me gustaba de a mucho.

R: Entonces ¿Porqué está estudiando esta carrera?

P: porque quiero aprender y pues me sirve para cuando viaje a Estados Unidos que tengo una familia allá y quiero trabajar; todo eso sirve.

R: ¿Qué actividades le gusta hacer?

P: Me gusta mucho el futbol, soy hincha del América de Cali y me gusta ir a los partidos que pueda, y escuchar música.

R: ¿Qué música escucha?

P: Reggaetón

R: ¿Qué tan bueno es usted para la lectura?

P: A mí no me gusta leer, me quedo dormido fácilmente cuando estoy leyendo.

R: Pero en esta carrera le toca leer mucho, le toca estar atento.

P: Va tocar

R: Y entonces para las actividades que vamos a hacer ¿Qué te gustaría que pusieramos en las lecturas?

P: La verdad no me importa mucho, porque hay que ver de todo, sé que es para leer pero no se dé que es lo que se trata lo que ustedes van a hacer.

R: listo. Eso es todo, gracias.

Interview # 4: Participant D

R: ¿Cuál es su nombre?

P: Julián

R: ¿Cuántos años tiene?

P: 18

R: ¿También está en primer semestre?

P: Si, todos somos del mismo salón

R: ¿Que otra experiencia ha tenido con la lengua inglesa antes de empezar la carrera?

P: Solo en el colegio nada más

R: Y ¿Cómo le ha ido con el inglés hasta ahora?

P: Pues normal, pues apenas estamos comenzando y no es mucho lo que han evaluado.

A veces me siento perdido pero eso es normal pues apenas estoy aprendiendo

R: ¿Qué le gusta hacer?

P: Los videojuegos, me gusta mucho jugar World of Warcraft y también soy scout, me gusta mucho acampar.

R: ¿Le gusta leer?

P: No

R: ¿Por qué?

P: Me aburre leer libros.

R: En esta carrera tiene que leer mucho, entonces ¿Qué piensa hacer?

P: Pues no sé, ahí veremos qué pasa.

R: Nosotros vamos a ponerles a ustedes unos ejercicios de lectura; ¿Qué clase de tema le gustaría encontrar dentro de las lecturas?

P: Cualquier cosa, pues no importa de a mucho

ACTIVITIES

As researchers we expected all participants understood what they were asked to do and had a successful performance in each activity provided in the study. We also wanted to observe the difficulties they might have when recognizing cognates to obtain the important data needed for the study.

TEXT FOR ACTIVITY 1.

COGNATES

Definition: In a technical sense, two words that have a common origin are cognates.

Most often, cognates are words in two languages that have a common etymology and thus are similar or identical. For example, the English “kiosk” and the Spanish *quiosco* are cognates because they both come from the Turkish *kosk*.

Cognates often have a similar meaning, but in some cases the meaning has changed over the centuries in one language or another. An example of such a change is the English word “arena,” which usually refers to a sports facility, and the Spanish *arena*, which usually means “sand.” They both come from the Latin *harena*, which originally meant “sand” and came in time to also refer to an area of a Roman amphitheater that was covered with sand. Spanish retained the meaning of “sand” (although the word can sometimes refer to a sports arena), but English expanded the word’s meaning to include facilities something like the Roman amphitheater.

In a popular and less technical sense, the term “cognate” also is used to refer to words in two languages that are similar but have no common origin, such as the Spanish *sopa* (meaning “soup”) and the English “soap.”

Also in a popular and not technical sense, the phrase “false cognate” is used to refer to cognates that have different meanings, such as the Spanish *molestar* (to bother) and the English “molest” (to abuse sexually). A more precise term to use for such word pairs is “false friends.”

TEXT FOR ACTIVITY 2.

Generations

The members of this group all come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They have one common language, English, and they share one common interest, music.

Miranda Johnson was born in Atlanta, of African-American parents. Her native language is English. She is tall, dark, has curly hair and an outgoing personality.

Miranda is the singer in the group. She is quite beautiful and she has a wonderful voice.

Tony Gomez was born in Miami of Cuban-American parents. His father and mother immigrated to the United States in 1960, when Fidel Castro came into power. Tony is good looking, and is extremely talkative; he is fluent in Spanish and English. Tony is a percussionist, but he can play several instruments.

Tran Nguyen was born Da Nang, Vietnam in 1972. His family moved to the United States after the Vietnam War. Tran's native language is Vietnamese but he can express himself better in English. He has dark hair and is thin. He is rather reserved. Tran plays the bass guitar.

Kate O'Neil is of Irish descent. She was born in Chicago and only speaks English. Kate has red hair, grayish-green eyes, freckles, and a charming personality. She is the group's public relations person. Kate plays the piano and keyboards, and does vocals with Miranda.

Sacha Ustinov came to the United States recently, and still speaks English with a bit of an accent. His native country is Russia, but he can speak French too. Sacha has fair hair and light skin. He is an excellent guitarist.

Cognate recognition exercise:

Student A	Student B
Different = diferente	Members = miembros
Cultural = cultural	Group = grupo
Ethnic = etnico	Come = comer
Language = lenguaje	Different = diferencia
Common = comun	Cultural = cultural
Interest = interes	Language = language
Music = musica	Interest = interesante
Native = native	Music = musica
Personality = personalidad	Parent = pariente
Voice = voz	Native = native
Immigrated = inmigraron	Personality = personalidad
Spanish = español	Voice = voz
English = ingles	United = unidad
Instrument = instrumento	Percussionist = percusionista
Percussionist = percusionista	Instrument = instrumento
Family = familia	Person = persona
Express = expresar	
Reserved = reservado	
Guitar = guitarra	
Descent = descendencia	
Public = publico	
Relations = relaciones	
Person = persona	
Recently = recientemente	
Accent = acento	
Excellent = excelente	
Guitarist = guitarrista	

Student C	Student D
<p>Members = miembros</p> <p>Different = diferente</p> <p>Ethnic = etica</p> <p>Common = comun</p> <p>Interest = interes</p> <p>Music = musica</p> <p>Parents = parentesco</p> <p>Native = nativo</p> <p>Members = miembros</p> <p>Group = grupo</p> <p>Extremely = extreme</p> <p>Percussionist = percusionista</p> <p>Instrument = instrumento</p> <p>Express = extreso (tren)</p> <p>Reserved = reservado</p> <p>Relation = relación</p> <p>Public = public</p> <p>Guitar = guitarra</p>	<p>Members = miembros</p> <p>Different = diferente</p> <p>Cultural = cultural</p> <p>Ethnic = etnico</p> <p>Language = lenguaje</p> <p>Common = comun</p> <p>Native = native</p> <p>Personality = personalidad</p> <p>Voice = voz</p> <p>United = unidad</p> <p>Percussionist =percusionista</p> <p>Spanish = español</p> <p>English = ingles</p> <p>Instrument = instrumento</p> <p>Public = public</p> <p>Guitarist = guitarrista</p> <p>Accent =acento</p>

COGNATE RECOGNITION

	Ss A	Ss B	Ss C	Ss D
Cognates identified	27	17	18	17
Cognates missed	2	12	11	12
True cognates	27	16	16	17
False cognates	0	1	2	0

TEXT FOR ACTIVITY 3.

WEEKEND SPORTS

(In the restaurant, two friends speaking)

Susan: Oh!! This is lovely. Would you like to try some?

Christine: No thanks, Susan. I'm really enjoying my pasta!!

Susan: So, do you want to play tennis this weekend?

Christine: I'm afraid, I can't play tennis.

Susan: No, are you joking? I'm sure you can play tennis. EVERYBODY can play tennis.

Christine: Well, I can't. But I can play volleyball.

Susan: Really? I can play volleyball, too. –but not very well

Christine: I have an idea. Why don't we play tennis this weekend and then next weekend volleyball?

Susan: OK, that's a good idea. You don't play tennis – I don't play volleyball. We both can learn a new sport!.

Christine: That's it. I think is a brilliant idea!

Susan: Now, tell me about your new job.when do you start ?

Christine: Next week. I'm in the accounting department. I make telephone calls to the banks, check the accounts, keep records...that sort of things.

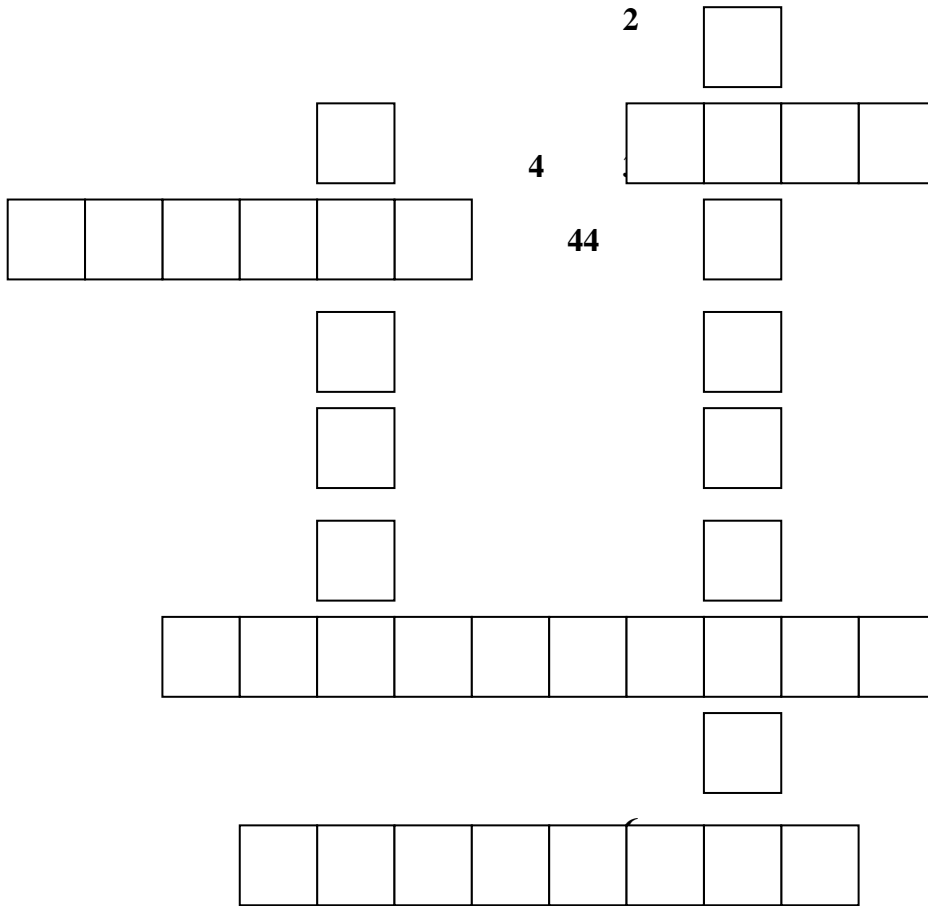
Susan: It sounds like an excellent job.

Christine: How is your job?

Susan: Oh, it's OK. It's boring. I work at the computer all day long, each and every day at the computer.

Christine: I'm sure it isn't so bad!!

3.1 exercise crossword 1



Down

1.2.

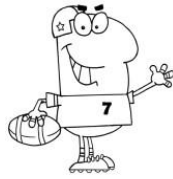


Across

3.



4.



5.



6.



TEXT FOR ACTIVITY4.

FOOD AND CULTURE

Food is an important aspect of culture. Eating habits in the orient differ from Europe and America custom. While the Chinese and the Japanese have several dishes at the same time, Americans and Europeans serve a meal in different courses. In most countries people use silverware to eat, but in countries like Korea, Japan and China, people eat with chopstick. Also, the kinds of food vary from country to country. For example, Japanese people almost always include seafood, vegetables and rice in their diet. On the other hand, meat, rice and potatoes are the basic components of a Colombian meal.

Besides these differences we can observe various ways of preparing food. English people usually cook in a simple way and use gravies to give extra flavor. But Mexicans use a lot of spices to prepare their food.

If you travel to a different country, try its food. That's a good way to learn about its culture.

4.1 exercise: fill the chart

Food is an important aspect of culture		
<p>Mention two eating customs.</p> <p>1. _____ _____</p> <p>2. _____ _____</p>	<p>Mention two examples of differences in diets.</p> <p>1. _____ _____</p> <p>2. _____ _____</p>	<p>Mention two examples of differences in the way of preparing food.</p> <p>1. _____ _____</p> <p>2. _____ _____</p>

4.2 exercise:

Answer the questions.

Have the Chinese and Japanese several dishes at the same time?

Are rice meat and potatoes the basic components of a japan meal?

Does Mexican like spices to prepare their food?

Does the Korean usually use silverware to eat?

Are European and American customs different?

How many differences between US and European customs are there?

ACTIVITY5.

Web page to find cognate videos <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQDmW9oIP4c>

Choose the correct word cognate to each sentence:

1. Did you know that Chrissie got _____ (embarrassed/pregnant) on holiday in Ibiza?
2. The _____ (signature/subject) I hate most is maths.
3. Begonia is a very _____ (kind /sympathetic) person.
4. Keep _____ (removing/stirring) the soup the whole time.
5. I couldn't agree more. That's a very _____ (sensible/sensitive) idea.
6. The film *The Quiet American* was a box-office _____ (exit/success).

7. How many _____ (idioms/languages) can you speak?
8. _____ (Actually/Nowadays) I'm living with my parents again.
9. The poor live in the _____ (slums/suburbs). 10. The police came to my
_____ (assistance/attendance)

**Identify the True Cognates in each sentence; there are more than one in some
sentences:**

1. The doctor told me that she is ok.

2. This is an important hospital

3. The Imperial Hotel is good.

4. The travel was perfect.

5. My mother is very popular.

6. Music is the best invention of the world.

7. Jupiter is the biggest planet of the universe

8. Miss Universe is so beautiful.

9. I don't like Chinese restaurants.

10. Venezuela is a great nation.

Choose the correct cognate

I've got _____ (a cold/constipation). Pass me a tissue, please.

I was only living with my parents _____ (eventually/temporarily).

The governments have _____ (inverted/invested) a lot of money in the new scheme.

Do not _____ (invert/invest) this package.

The Englishman wearing navy blue socks with sandals is a bit of a _____ (stereotype/topic) in Spain.

He never stops moving some part of his body. He finds it impossible to _____ (keep quiet/keep still).

We didn't enjoy the wedding _____ (absolutely/at all).

English is very _____ (important/interesting) for my job.

All my immediate family live in England but I have a lot of _____ (parents/relatives) in Canada.

My _____ (journey/working day) is from 8 am to 5 pm but it only take me twenty minutes to get to the office.

Practice: Match the column A with the Column B to find the meaning of the words:

A	B
Carpet	Metal pot used for cooking
Exit	A floor covering
Pan	The opposite of Entry
Soup	A liquid food.

Choose the correct cognate

The Red Cross are _____ (controlling/monitoring) the situation in the north very closely.

The rebels are _____ (controlling/monitoring) the entire north of the country.

_____ (Eventually/Temporarily), we decided to go on holiday rather than buy a home cinema kit.

I've got _____ (a cold/constipation). Pass me a tissue, please.

I was only living with my parents _____ (eventually/temporarily).

The governments have _____ (inverted/invested) a lot of money in the new scheme.

Did you know that Chrissie got _____ (embarrassed/pregnant) on holiday in Ibiza?

The _____ (signature/subject) I hate most is maths.

Begonia is a very _____ (kind /sympathetic) person.

Keep _____ (removing/stirring) the soup the whole time.

TEXT FOR EVALUATION. ACTIVITY 6

COGNATES

Cognates are words which are similar in English and Spanish. Their similarity can be in their written form or their pronunciation. Recognizing these words in a text make things easier for the reader. Cognates can be names, dates, and figures.

1. The following words are cognates put them in the appropriate boxes.

Bill Gates December 24,

1998 65% 20people Europe 267.444.840 Julius

Caesar July 20

Names	Date	Figures

How many cognates do you know in English?

2. Complete the following box.

International	Television
Use	CDs
Important	

3. Read the following text and underline the cognates or transparent words.

4. Use the underlined words to create ideas about the text.

5. Using your ideas, give a title to the text.

The coffee shrub, an evergreen bush which can sometimes grow to a height of 8 or 10 meters, grows wild in the tropics – mostly in Arabia, Asia and Latin America. It is known that coffee plants were being cultivated in Africa in the 15th century, although it wasn't until the 16th and 17th centuries that it was introduced into Europe. The first London coffee house was established in 1652 and coffee houses flourished in continental Europe later in the 17th century. The drink became popular in North America around 1689, and the USA is now the largest consumer, importing about 1,500,000 tons per year.

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