

Strategies for Learning Vocabulary in and outside the Classroom

JACQUELINE ARAYA RÍOS

Sede Brunca
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

BEATRIZ GAMBOA SÁNCHEZ

Sede Brunca
Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica

Abstract

An important part of learning a language is acquiring vocabulary in order to apply it to the other aspects that are studied. Language teachers can aid students in upgrading their lexical information by using strategies that will focus their attention on meaning. Lexical learning should be a constructive process focused on finding out the meaning. As students advance from one level to another in their language learning, they will expand the amount of words they understand and use. They will also broaden the amount of information they have of a particular word. Consequently, this increases their ability to communicate when it is integrated with the structures they have also learned. In this regards, Teichroew proposed that “vocabulary knowledge can best be represented as a continuum with the initial stage being recognition and the final one production” (as cited in Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 452). ESL teachers usually employ different strategies for lexicon learning in and outside the classroom. This article discusses the role of false cognates, affixation, and the context as key vocabulary learning strategies that may enhance the learner’s competence in L2.

Keywords: lexicon learning, false cognates, affixation, context

Resumen

Una parte importante del aprendizaje de un idioma es la adquisición de vocabulario, para aplicarlo a los demás aspectos que se estudian. Los profesores de idiomas pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar su conocimiento léxico utilizando estrategias que enfocan su atención en el significado. La adquisición de vocabulario debe ser un proceso constructivo centrado en descubrir el significado de los vocablos. Al avanzar de un nivel a otro en el aprendizaje de la lengua, el estudiante no solo ampliará el número de palabras que comprende y utiliza, sino también la cantidad de información que tiene de una palabra en particular. En consecuencia, incrementará su capacidad de comunicación cuando integre el léxico adquirido con las estructuras que ha aprendido. Al respecto, Teichroew propone que "vocabulary knowledge can best be represented as a continuum with the initial stage being recognition and the final one production" (citado en Gass y Selinker, 2008, p. 452). Los docentes de ESL suelen recurrir a diferentes estrategias para aprender léxico dentro y fuera del aula. En este artículo se analiza el papel que desempeñan los falsos amigos, la afijación y el contexto como estrategias clave de adquisición léxica que pueden mejorar la competencia del aprendiente de L2.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de léxico, falsos amigos, afijación, el contexto

Introduction

An important part of learning a language is acquiring vocabulary in order to apply it to the other aspects that are studied. As students advance from one level to another in their language learning, they will expand the amount of words they understand and use. It is necessary for students to get acquainted with the lexicon of the language they are learning in order to communicate successfully. Students must become aware of the fact that words can be interpreted in different ways and that they have to be careful of when and where to use them. They will also broaden the amount of information they have of a particular word. Consequently, this increases their ability to communicate when it is integrated with the structures they have also learned.

Language teachers can aid students in upgrading their lexical information by using strategies that will focus their attention on meaning. Lexical learning should be a constructive process focused on finding out the meaning. Activities that engage students' attention usually result in higher retention of the new words introduced. This has been demonstrated in a survey carried out by Laufer and Hulstijn as cited by Gass and Selinker (2008, pp. 16-17). ESL teachers should employ different strategies for lexicon learning in and outside the classroom. Once students come to understand the usefulness of these strategies, they will be able to employ them in different contexts to practice the vocabulary learned and to expand their lexical knowledge.

This paper discusses the role of cognate recognition, affixation, and contextual information in foreign lexicon acquisition, and their benefits in

accelerating that acquisition. EFL students from Universidad Nacional, Pérez Zeledón Campus, were surveyed about their experience with lexicon learning strategies. The research, which was conducted at the beginning of the 2017 school year, was aimed at determining the students' use of these strategies, specifically cognate recognition, affixation, and the use of contextual information. The data collected in the survey helped to answer the following research questions:

- Are students being instructed in the use of these strategies?
- How useful are these strategies for students to build on their lexical skill?

Investigation about lexicon learning strategies and its impact on students' vocabulary building can help teachers find more appropriate ways to guide students in this task. This paper hopes to contribute to this field by providing insight into the local scene of ESL lexicon acquisition.

The Need to Develop Lexical Skills

Acquiring vocabulary is an important part of learning a language, and students must integrate this linguistic knowledge to all the other aspects of the language being studied in order to express themselves successfully. For beginner students, this can seem overwhelming because when coming into contact with the language, the list of new lexicon can be very extensive. Students must learn the meaning of different words, so they can use them in different sentences and get the message that they desire across without

problems. By lacking the correct words, they might fail to express their ideas, and the person to whom they wish to convey something could interpret it differently or simply not understand. As students advance from one level to another in their language learning, they will expand the amount of words they understand and use; they will also broaden the amount of information they have of a particular word. According to Claire (1998), beginner students have limited passive and active vocabulary, and they cannot produce too many structures since they do not have control over them yet. Intermediate students know many passive vocabulary, but they are not acquainted with as much active vocabulary and still do not have as much control over the structures. On the other hand, advanced students have knowledge of a lot of passive and active vocabulary and they are able to express themselves fluently (Claire). As students learn more about the language, their lexicon increases. Consequently, this boosts their ability to communicate when these new lexical items integrate with the structures they have also learned.

When a person makes a lexical mistake during a conversation, this slip of the tongue can be very disturbing and cause misunderstanding. This happens because when a person uses the wrong word, the whole meaning or idea that s/he is trying to express can be distorted. For example, a learner might express, "I have twenty" when referring to age. So the listener might interpret that he has twenty *things*, not that he is twenty *years old*. The choice of words, which is due to an inappropriate direct translation from the learner's native language—Spanish in this case—,

is causing confusion in the conversation. It is necessary for language learners to develop good lexical skills in order to produce messages that can be understood clearly.

What Knowing a Word Implies

There is a big difference between a proficient speaker's knowledge of a word and a learner's awareness of that same word. When a person knows a word s/he can use it in oral or written form, in the correct context and for all the different possible connotations that the word can have. For example, a person might know that *face* is a part of the body, but s/he also needs to understand that *to keep a straight face* means that the person keeps a serious face even though he wants to laugh. Thus, knowing a word implies understanding the connotation behind the word, applying it at the appropriate time, using its correct grammatical form in a sentence, and being able to add prefixes and suffixes to it.

Contemplated from this perspective, it is not wise to say that someone knows or does not know a specific lexis. There may be times when a person knows some of the possible meanings of a word and can use them in certain contexts, but there are other times when s/he cannot understand what that same word means due to the connotations it has acquired in a particular circumstance. With regard to this, "Teichrow proposed that vocabulary knowledge can best be represented as a continuum with the initial stage being recognition and the final one production" (as cited in Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 452). Little by little the speaker moves along

the continuum as s/he increases his familiarity with a word.

While a native speaker progresses through a lexis continuum gradually and in an orderly fashion, this is not always the case with L2 learners. Graves, August and Mancilla-Martínez explain that, "ELLs whose first language shares cognates with English may recognize a word form in English, and if they know the meaning of the word in their first language, they may know the English meanings that overlap with the meanings in their first language" (2012, p. 12). They agree that this understanding of L2 vocabulary acquisition can be useful for language learners because they can place more attention to other possible meanings the word has in English and how it is used. It is necessary for students to get acquainted with the lexicon of the language they are learning in order to avoid misunderstandings when communicating. Students must become aware of the fact that words can be interpreted in different ways and that they have to be careful of when and where to use them.

Strategies for Learning New Vocabulary

Students need to develop adequate lexical skills in order to learn how to use words in sentences correctly. Beginner students usually ignore specific lexical factors when producing sentences in the L2, such as knowing about the scale of formality of certain terms, which determines which words are appropriate in particular contexts and which ones are not. Then, as they advance to other stages, they start to produce sentences with a wider variety

of words in the structures they have studied. This is directly associated with the additional lexical information they have picked up.

Language teachers can aid students in upgrading their lexical information by using strategies that will focus their attention on meaning. Lexical learning should be a constructive process focused on finding out the meaning. Laufer and Hulstijn conducted a study where they found that at higher levels of involvement from a learner's part in an activity, there was higher retention of the new word (as cited in Gass and Selinker, p. 465). For this study, three strategies that focus students' attention on the meaning of a new word will be examined; these are learning about cognates, affixation and using contextual information.

Cognate identification. Cognates are those words that not only look identical or similar to others from the native language, but also have the same meaning in the target language. Holmes and Ramos (1993, p. 88) have defined them as "items of vocabulary in two languages which have the same roots and can be recognized as such". Languages such as English and Spanish share many cognates; it has been stated that 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish (Colorin Colorado, 2010). Thus, English language learners, whose L1 is Spanish, have an advantage when it comes to learning vocabulary. Learners have a tendency to transfer lexical patterns from their native language into the target language. In this case, there is no problem generated since the word means exactly what the learner expects it to mean.

However, true cognates can be confused with false cognates, or words that are similar or identical in written or oral form, but have different meanings in both languages. For this reason, cognate identification can be useful; through it, students can become aware of the true and false cognates that exist. Teachers can make students aware of these possibilities so that they can overcome the negative effects of language transfer. Students need to know the slip-ups that can occur and they must be encouraged to correct these mistakes. Recent studies carried out by August, Dressler and Snow (2005, pp. 50-57), Kelley and Kohnert (2012, p. 191), Borah-Geller (2010), and Solak and Cakir (2012, pp. 431-434), have made reference to the benefits that this strategy has had on language learners. Some of these benefits include an effortless increase of lexicon, avoidance of negative language transfer, and acceleration of second language vocabulary development through cognate awareness and comparison of lexical items in both languages.

Affixation. Students also need to learn about word formation to be capable of twisting words around and enhance the vocabulary that they already know by using it in different forms. Harmer upholds that "Word formation means knowing how words are written and spoken and knowing how they can change their form" (1991, p. 157). Learning about prefixes and suffixes or transforming the word to use it with different functions is important because students will be able to play with the variety of meanings a word may acquire. When students learn how to do this, they can use and understand the

same root in many different grammatical contexts, enriching the possibilities to communicate different ideas (see annex 2, activity 1, for an example of how to use affixation for vocabulary learning). They also learn about the different grammatical categories or parts of speech of a word and its derived forms. For example, given the base *comfort*, which is a noun, they will start to derive and associate other terms with it, such as *comfortable* (adjective), *comforter* (a noun derived from the verb /kəm'fɔrt/ by means of the agent suffix *-er*), *comfy* (a reduced form of the adjective formed with the ending *-y*), *uncomfortable* (the negative prefix renders the antonym of the adjective), *discomfort* (another negative prefix *dis-* which creates an antonym for the noun), and so on. The importance of this type of morphological processes of word formation is that students start to feel in control of their own learning, and begin to hypothesize about the second language at more advanced and abstract levels.

Using context. For a learner who has had very little contact with the second language, understanding the meaning behind the combination of different letters or sounds that make up words may be an overwhelming task. However, soon they figure out that this linear arrangement of lexical items in English makes more sense than they thought at first because the meanings of those words can be identified in context, that is, contextual information helps them to predict or anticipate and to clarify meaning. Therefore, they soon get accustomed to looking at the clause or sentence in order to guess the meaning of an unknown word using the clues provided. In a little while,

they become capable of replacing one word with another, maintaining the sense of the clause. They also develop the skill to examine how a specific word relates to the rest of the clause, that is, they are able to say what part of speech it performs, even in instances of homography. This applies especially to those cases in English where a noun and a verb, such as /'rɛkəd/ and /rɪ'kɔrd/, or an adjective, a noun and a verb /kən'tɛnt/, /'kɑntɛnt/, and /kən'tɛnt/, which are spelled identically, function differently in a clause.

Researching Students' Lexicon Learning Strategies

Strategies help students become more skilled learners by being able to acquire a larger amount of lexicon in less time and with less effort. A survey was conducted at Universidad Nacional, Pérez Zeledón Campus, for the purpose of collecting information about EFL students' experience when using strategies to learn new lexicon. The main objective of the research was to determine the use students give to vocabulary learning strategies, specifically cognates, affixation, and context. English students participated in the survey that gave way to answering the following research questions.

- Are students being instructed in the use of these strategies?
- How useful are these strategies for students to build on their lexical skill?

Forty students with a background knowledge of English of a one-year course integrating the four skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing),

and who are currently enrolled in the second level of the English Teaching Major and the Associate Program were asked about their vocabulary acquisition habits. Basically the instrument, administered at the beginning of the current school year, aimed at determining the students' use of learning strategies, specifically cognates, affixation and contextual information, for vocabulary acquisition. The questionnaire was divided in two parts (see Annex 1). The first part consisted of two open questions and a multiple choice item, whereas the second part was a table with 18 statements where the students would mark from one to five (least useful to most useful) different activities for vocabulary acquisition. Before answering the questionnaire, the respondents were given the definitions of the three key concepts in the instrument: cognates, affixation, and context, in order to ensure comprehension of the questions.

Data Analysis

When asked 'How do you usually learn vocabulary?' 47,5% of students responded that listening to songs and studying the lyrics is the most useful technique. The second most popular activity, with 52% of responses, was watching TV, movies or videos and checking the English subtitles for new and frequently used words. Other favored activities were reading magazines, newspapers or books and understanding the meaning of unknown words with 30% of recurrences; the same number of references was given to the task of looking up words in the dictionary and translating them when necessary; and last but not least,

practicing what was studied in class with a classmate or online and doing homework received 25% of remarks.

When students were asked to share other strategies to study vocabulary, they again expressed using music—listening and repeating words or checking the lyrics—; and watching movies, TV shows, videos and using the English subtitles to learn lexicon. This information can give language teachers insights into the material that they can use when introducing vocabulary according to the students' likes.

As for new or different techniques, it is worth mentioning the use of lists of vocabulary and constant repetition of these items to learn them; nine participants claimed to employ this technique. Using new words in conversation with classmates or Americans was mentioned by seven students. This reveals an interesting side to lexicon acquisition, which is oral interaction with peers or native speakers, in order to practice and remember the lexical items introduced in their repertoire. One student was as creative as to say that he preferred to maintain the English language in his cell phone system to practice and learn the specific terminology. The questionnaire also asked students whether they had been exposed to vocabulary learning strategies by their teachers involving cognates, affixation, and contextual cues. The following table shows their responses to this question.

Table 1
Students' exposure to vocabulary learning strategies

Strategies	Exposure	
	Yes	No
Cognates	50%	50%
Affixation	77,5%	22,5%
Context	85%	15%

Note. Results gathered through the questionnaire for students.

Since the professors were not surveyed for this study, the answers reveal only the students' perception of the vocabulary techniques used in the classroom and their particular experience with each of these methods.

Students expressed that cognates and context are used very often in the classroom, but affixation seemed to be used less frequently.

The results show that EFL students consider of little use learning strategies that deal with affixation processes such as analyzing affixes and roots of unknown words to guess their meanings. They also disregard other techniques like remembering the most common affixes, forming new words by using affixes, and grouping words according to their affixes to analyze their meaning. The following graphic illustrates their opinion regarding the use of affixation to deal with new vocabulary. It is possible that students are not aware of the relevance of affixation for their vocabulary acquisition. It is then the role of the teacher to encourage the use of affixation as a strategy to expand their vocabulary.

Is remembering common affixes useful?

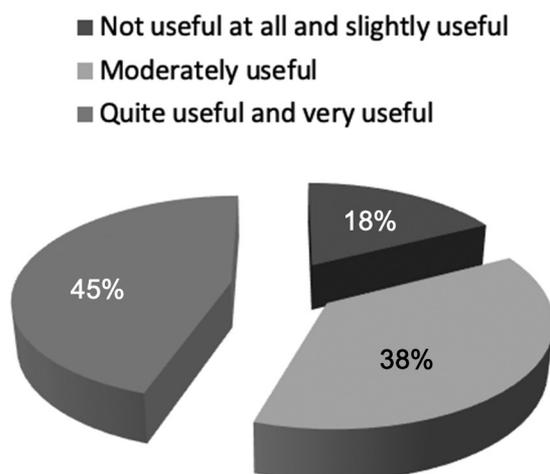


Figure 1. The usefulness in remembering the most common affixes. Results gathered through the questionnaire for students.

The use of contextual information in activities such as replacing a word in a sentence to see if the final result is meaningful, or placing words in a clause to remember their meanings, was also viewed negatively.

A variety of activities of different nature were said to be the most useful for learning vocabulary. Among them may be mentioned identifying differences in stress patterns between the L1 and L2; highlighting similarities and differences

in spelling and pronunciation of cognates; looking for key words and identifying their meaning; using contextual information; comparing words with their translations; analyzing the resulting part of speech of a word when a suffix is attached. Among the techniques mentioned, the one which students rated the highest was paying attention to the similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation of cognates. The graphic below shows the students' answers.

How useful is it to pay attention to the similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation of cognates?

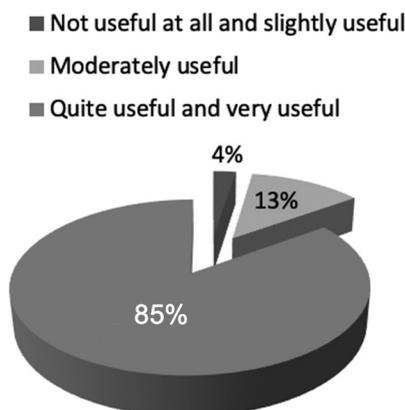


Figure 2. The usefulness of paying attention to the similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation cognates. Results gathered through the questionnaire for students.

Although this was the technique mostly favored by the students, the data indicates that all three strategies are useful to them and that teachers should take better advantage of their effectiveness.

Conclusion

As it has been explained, there are many complexities involved in learning about a language's lexicon.

Different aspects have to be considered when a student is learning vocabulary. It is a teacher's task to ensure that, among other things, students learn that:

1. a word can have more than one meaning
2. sometimes a word can be found in a particular phrase and cannot be separated from it or substituted by another word

3. a word can be twisted in order to use it in different grammatical contexts
 4. an affix may be added to a word to change its meaning
 5. a word that looks like Spanish does not necessarily translates to its Spanish cognate or vice versa
 6. a word is literal and metaphorical in meaning.
5. Teaching vocabulary even when it is unplanned.

All this lexical knowledge is acquired through the attention paid to vocabulary learning strategies. (See annex 2 for some sample activities that practice affixation, cognate identification, and use of contextual information.)

Moreover, the lexicon is of great importance because without the lexical knowledge described previously, learners would not be able to use the syntax to generate sentences with meanings. Or when they produce sentences in which the words are not used properly, confusion in the conversation can arise.

As a result, teachers should take notice of the way vocabulary is taught to their pupils by:

1. Devoting time and attention to vocabulary in their class because they are the building blocks of language.
2. Providing vocabulary within a context since it is internalized better when it can be associated in a communicative framework.
3. Guiding students in their use of bilingual dictionaries so that it does not become their only strategy for vocabulary acquisition.
4. Helping students establish strategies for determining the meaning of words, for example, teaching prefixes and suffixes, identifying definition clues inside a text (parenthesis

or footnotes), or deducing it from the clues that the text provides, comparing and contrasting cognates to determine their transparency.

The strategies addressed in this study are commonly used in EFL classrooms. Teachers can make use of the activities that students favored like listening to music or watching TV in order to design exercises where students can put affixation, cognates or context to practice. In addition, the questionnaire revealed that the students who have just passed level one of their major are not well familiarized with affixation and the benefits of learning how to use it in order to expand their vocabulary. For this reason, teachers should assign fun and interesting activities where they can learn about prefixes and suffixes and their role in changing the grammatical function and pronunciation of words. Eventually, as pupils advance in their second language learning, they will warm up to this strategy.

The transparency of the terminology between English and Spanish, where 30 to 40% of the cognates are true cognates, should be taken advantage of by the language teachers to promote fast and efficient meaning identification and to avoid negative language transfer. Cognate recognition may be one of the first learning strategies for EFL learners since it comes naturally as they approach the foreign language texts. Therefore, the similarities and differences found in the two languages in contact can be very useful, especially to beginners.

Bibliography

- August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C. & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice* 20(1).
- Borah-Geller, L (2010). *How can cognates "beneficiar" English language learners (ELL)*. Developmental Studies Center.
- Claire, E. (1998). *ESL Teacher's Activities Kit*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Colorin Colorado (2010). *Using cognates to develop comprehension in English*. Retrieved from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/using-cognates-develop-comprehension-english>
- Gass, S. & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. New York: Routledge.
- Graves, M., August, D. & Mancilla-Martinez, J. (2012). *Teaching Vocabulary to English Language Learners*. USA: Teachers College Press.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London/New York: Longman Group.
- Holmes, J. & Ramos, R. (1993). False friends and reckless guessers: Observing cognate recognition strategies (pp. 86-108). Huckin, T. and Coady, J. (Eds.) *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*. New Jersey: Ablex.
- Kelley, A. & Kohnert, K. (2012). Is There a Cognate Advantage for Typically Developing Spanish-Speaking English-Language Learners? *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 43(2).
- Solak, H. & Cakir, A. (2012). Cognate based Language Teaching and Material Development. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46.

Annex 1

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL

RESEARCH: Strategies for learning vocabulary in and outside the classroom

RESEARCHERS: M.A. Jacqueline Araya Ríos

M.Sc. Beatriz Gamboa Sánchez

Questionnaire on students' use of strategies to learn vocabulary

This questionnaire is an attempt to gather information about college students' use of strategies for lexicon learning in and outside the classroom. The strategies focused are the role of cognates, affixation, and the context. Your ideas are of great value and your cooperation is appreciated. The data collected will only be used for this research and will remain confidential. Feel free to share your ideas when answering the questionnaire.

Name: _____ Age: _____ Level: _____

Part A

How do you usually study new vocabulary? _____

Have you been exposed to any of the following vocabulary learning strategies by English teachers?

Cognates YES ___ NO ___

If your answer is yes, how often has this type of exercises been developed in your English class? _____

Affixation YES ___ NO ___

If your answer is yes, how often has this type of exercises been developed in your English class? _____

Context YES ___ NO ___

If your answer is yes, how often has this type of exercises been developed in your English class? _____

Mention other strategies you use to study vocabulary: _____

Part B

Instructions: For each statement, mark an “X” on one of the spaces according to the scale provided. The following scale is for you to specify how useful you consider the strategy to be when learning vocabulary inside and outside of the classroom.

	1	2	3	4	5
Scale	Not at all useful	slightly useful	moderately useful	quite useful	very useful

Activity	1	2	3	4	5
1. To analyze affixes and roots of an unknown word to guess its meaning					
2. To remember the most common affixes					
3. To identify differences in stress patterns between the L1 and L2					
4. To compare the definition of cognates between the L1 and L2					
5. To form new words by using affixes					
6. To pay attention to the similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation of cognates					
7. To look for key words (the most relevant terms) and to identify their meaning or the meanings of words connected to them in the context					
8. To group words together within a storyline to remember them					
9. To replace the unknown word with guessed meaning to check if the sentence makes sense					

10. To examine how the clause containing the unknown word relates to other clauses, sentences, or paragraphs to guess its meaning (example: the use of words like <i>but, if, when, thus, however, etc.</i>)					
11. To place new words in sentences to remember them					
12. To identify false cognates					
13. Using the whole text to understand the words whose meanings are unknown					
14. To look at the clause or sentence in order to guess the meaning of an unknown word using the clues provided					
15. To group words according to their affixes to analyze their meaning					
16. To compare some words with their translation in the students' native language					
17. To look for cognates in texts to determine if they are false or true cognates					
18. To concentrate on analyzing the part of speech (e.g., noun, verb) of an unknown word when a suffix is used					

Annex 2

Recommended activities for vocabulary teaching

1. Affixation

Part A. Stress in nouns and verbs

Directions: As you know, in English, as in many other languages, a word root is often used with several endings to form different parts of speech. Frequently, the main or primary stress occurs on different syllables in different forms of the same root. Thus the verb form *incline* bears the main stress on the second syllable, while the noun form *inclination* has the stress on the third syllable. The adjective form *integral* has the main stress on the first syllable; the noun form *integrality*, on the third.

Mark the main stress in each of the following verbs, and then give the noun form, underlining the syllable with primary stress, which in each case will be different from that of the verb. If you are not sure how to form a noun, look it up in the dictionary.

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Consider | 2. Confide |
| 3. Prosper | 4. Demolish |
| 5. Define | 6. Consult |
| 7. Declare | 8. Colonize |
| 9. Acquire | 10. Contribute |

Part B. Stress in nouns and adjectives

Directions: Now mark the main stress in each of the following nouns, and then give the adjective form, underlining the syllable with primary stress, which will be different from that of the noun. If you are not sure how to form a noun, look it up in the dictionary.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Commerce | 2. Isolation |
| 3. Strategy | 4. Origin |
| 5. Astrology | 6. Specialty |
| 7. Necessity | 8. Desperation |
| 9. Import | 10. Character |

This activity may be modified by giving the students the lists of verbs (Part A) and nouns (Part B), but instead of asking them to use a dictionary to locate another part of speech, a text may be provided so that they find these other forms in the text. (The paragraphs and/or lines may be indicated to simplify the task for the pupils if necessary.)

2. Cognates

Activity 1

Directions: Cognates are words in two languages that share a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. While English may share very few cognates with a language like Russian, 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish. For Spanish-speaking ESL learners, cognates are a bridge to the English language.

Read the following text and discuss whether the underlined words are true cognates (words are spelled similarly and have a similar or identical meaning in both languages), or false cognates (words that look similar but bear different meanings). Then organize the cognates in different columns. For extra practice, write a sentence with each word.

Overcoming the Concerns That Arise with Green Cleaning.

By Mike Sawchuk Monday, 24th September 2012

It might seem a bit strange to find an article advocating green cleaning in a publication whose readers already understand the merits of cleaning and operating their facilities in a more environmentally preferable manner.

This is even more true when discussing the value of green cleaning to the lodging industry, which has been at the forefront when it comes to implementing green cleaning.

However, the truth of the matter is that there are still a number of negative perceptions about green products—specifically green cleaning products—that make it hard for some hotel administrators to accept them. In fact, some distributors of cleaning chemicals still report that in certain quarters, just the mention of green cleaning is enough to get the door closed in their face.

One possible concern that hotel administrators might have about green cleaning products involves costs. With the economy still tough in many parts of North America, discussing any product that might cost more than what is currently being purchased is taboo. This is followed very closely by another concern: performance. Do green cleaning products perform as well as their conventional counterparts? Some hotel administrators aren't so sure.

Activity 2

Directions: Pair students and give each pair a set of cognate cards: one card has the English cognate and the other has the Spanish cognate. As an example, see the table below.

English	Spanish
family	familia
center	centro
class	clase
desert	desierto
magic	magia
gorilla	gorila

Have students sort the words. Then ask them what the word pairs have in common and write responses on the board.

Alternative activity

Ask students to indicate which letters are different between the cognates by circling the letters. They may also indicate differences in pronunciation.

Activity 3

Directions: Write examples of false cognates on the board, for example: *pie/pie* and *embarrassed/embarazada*. Warn students that they might run into some words that are false cognates. Ask the students:

Does anyone know what *pie* means in Spanish (*foot*)? What does the word *pie* mean in English (*dessert*)?

Another example of a false cognate is the word *embarrassed* in English and *embarazada* in Spanish. What does *embarrassed* mean in English (to feel ashamed about something)? Does anyone know what *embarazada* means in Spanish (*pregnant*)?

Give students some cognates and false cognates and ask them to identify each. Examples of false cognates:

English	Spanish
globe	globo (balloon)
pie	pie (foot)
rope	ropa (clothes)
soap	sopa (soup or pasta)
large	largo (long)
exit	éxito (success)

Adapted from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/background/cognates/>

3. Contextual cues

Activity 1

Directions: Have students read the following text and figure the meaning of unknown words out from contextual information (the words around the specific unknown term).

The Moon

The moon is nearer than the sun. The moon is about 240,000 miles away. The sun is farther, 93 million miles from us. When people look at the moon, it looks as large as the sun. That is because it is much nearer. The sun is really much larger.

The sun is a star. It is a ball of fire; it sends out light. The moon is rocky and hard. It is not hot. It does not send out light; it reflects it. This means that the moon does not make its own light. The sun sends out light to the moon. Then the moon sends the sun's light back to the earth.

The moon is very different from the earth. There is no air on the moon. It is both very hot and very cold there. During the day, it is very hot in the sunshine, but at night it can be -200°F (129° below zero C.)

There are no trees, grass, or water on the moon, only rocks and deserts. There are many mountains that are from 2 to 5 miles high. There are at least 30,000 round holes in the moon called craters. Some of the craters are half a mile wide, but some are as large as 160 miles wide.

A moon is a smaller object in space that goes around a planet. Our moon goes around our earth. It takes about 28 days for the moon to go around the earth. At the same time, the moon itself also turns. This takes about 28 days too. This is why one side of the moon is always turned toward the earth. The other side is

always turned away. Spaceships went around the moon in 1960s. They took the first pictures of the back side of the moon.

In July 1969, two men from the United States stepped on the moon. They took some machines to make some tests. They brought back 48 pounds of rocks from the moon.

Scientists have learned many things from that trip to the moon. They have learned that the rocks are 3.5 billion years old. They are not like rocks on the earth. There are many things about the moon that scientists still do not know.

The first trip to the moon was very important. It means that now human beings have walked on a place different from the earth. It is the beginning. It is a step to all the other planets and stars.

Taken from Connelly, M. and Sims, J. (1990). *Time & Space: A Basic Reader*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall.

Activity 2. Check your guess

Directions: You guessed the meaning of these words from the story. Circle the letter beside the answer that gives the same idea as the new word. Do not use your dictionary.

1. When we look up into the sky, we can see that it is empty. During the day, we can see the sun. At night, we see the moon and many, many stars.

- a. There are many things in it.
- b. There is nothing in it.
- c. There are a few things in it.

2. Scientists want to learn more about the sun and the moon because they are near us.

- a. People who study science
- b. People who write books
- c. People who teach in universities

3. The moon does not send out light; it reflects it. This means that the moon does not make its own light.

- a. makes light
- b. sends back light from another place
- c. shines

There are round holes in the moon called craters. There are at least 30,000 craters on the moon.

mountains

rivers

holes

Spaceships_went around the moon in the 1960s.

- a. Boats that go on the sea
- b. Airplanes that fly above the earth
- c. Machines that take people off the earth into space

6. It was a step to all the other planets and stars.

- a. An example of a planet is the sun.
- b. An example of a planet is the moon.
- c. An example of a planet is the earth.

This activity may be adapted by using the lyrics of a popular song instead of the text proposed. Other alternatives are using an extract from a short story or a poem, or a cartoon strip that students might like. In this way, the teacher may cater to the students' likes and interests.