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**LANGUAGE FACULTY**

**TITLE: An English-Spanish Glossary of False Cognates**

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**2019**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dra. Margarita González Jurado, who gave me the opportunity to do research on the topic of the influence of task type and mode regarding the persistence of false cognates. Moreover, she guided me through the process of researching by giving me feedback and encouraging me to work to the best of my abilities.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work is focused on the creation of a bilingual glossary of false cognates that will serve as an instrument to help students of English as a foreign language (L2) during their learning process by improving their knowledge of the language and the better understanding and use of it, since the first stages of their studies. In the paper a brief study of cognates, as well as the main aspects for the elaboration of glossaries are presented. The paper is structured in an introduction, a development, conclusions and recommendations. In the introduction, the problem, its solution and the objectives are stated as well as the results of the bibliographical search about the topics related. In the development the proposal of the glossary and its structure is developed. This work is intended to be a reference document for students and professors of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas.

Key Words: bilingual glossary, false cognate, English as a foreign language (L2)

## Introduction

Based on interviews applied to students and professors of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas it was realized that some students don't know even what cognates or false cognates are and professors consider that the limited or sometimes a nonexisted knowledge about them is a difficulty for language comprehension and specially for reading comprehension.

Therefore, the **problematic situation** is the poor students' awareness about the existence of cognates and false cognates as well as the lack of a lexicographical tool in this field to be used by the students of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas. So, the **scientific problem** is how to contribute to raise awareness of cognates and false cognates in the students of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas. Then the **object of study** is the field of cognates and false cognates in English and Spanish languages. Thus, the **field of action** is the knowledge and recognition of cognates and false cognates in English and Spanish languages by freshmen students of the English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas. Hence, the **objective** is to elaborate an English-Spanish glossary of false cognates to be used as a source of information to raise awareness of these words in the students majoring in English Language at the University of Matanzas.

During this investigation, the following **scientific questions** came out:

1. What are the theoretical and methodological foundations of the existence of cognates and false cognates in Spanish and English and about the elaboration of bilingual glossaries?
2. Which is the present state of awareness of the existence of cognates and false cognates among students of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas?
3. How should a bilingual glossary of cognates and false cognates be structured in order to provide the students with a tool for improving the comprehension of the English language at the first stages of their studies?

Therefore, to answer these questions the following **scientific tasks** have been elaborated:

1. Systematization of the theoretical and methodological foundations about the existence of cognates and false cognates in English and Spanish languages and for the elaboration of bilingual glossaries.
2. Characterization of the present state of awareness of cognates and false cognates among the students of English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas.
3. The conception of an English-Spanish glossary of cognates and false cognates as well as its insertion in the Moodle Platform.

To carry out these term paper students from the first years of the English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas have been taken as the population considering that they are the ones that may have greater difficulties in the comprehension of the English language because of their English level and the presence in oral or written texts of false cognates. Besides, it is supposed that these students should master the English language better.

During the whole investigation process, the dialectic-materialistic approach has been used for its undoubted contribution to the process of knowledge.

The research **methods** used are:

From the theoretical level:

1. Historical- logical: Used for the study of cognates and false cognates and the antecedents for the creation of a specialized bilingual glossary and its contribution as a tool in the process of knowledge.
2. Analitical-synthetical: Used for analyzing all the information gathered to select the components and the structure of the glossary
3. Transit from abstract to concrete: Used to decide the methodology to follow for creating a glossary, and the false cognates to be included.

4. Inductive- deductive: It goes from a general knowledge of the language to a particular one. It is also used to get to conclusions about the student's knowledge.

From the empirical level:

1. Interviews, surveys: they are used to diagnose and characterize the problem.

2. Bibliographical search: To consult and analyze the documents as well as the current scientific information about the issues under study.

The **practical significance** consists on providing the English Language Teaching Major at the University of Matanzas, with an easily available English-Spanish glossary of cognates and false cognates in the Moodle Platform.

## Development

One of the peculiarities that have characterized the 21st century is the predominance of English as an international language. It is necessary to take into account the precise meaning of words according to the context. In this regard, the accurate translation of false cognates from English into Spanish is indispensable for a correct comprehension.

Siedlhofer(2003) said: ``the English expansion through the hole globe represents not only an issue to teachers but the ones who should learn it, involves the economy and global culture too``

Nowadays, learning a new language is not only a fashionable thing to do, but it sometimes becomes a necessity. Besides the global aspect of learning a new language, we can easily add our own motivation to become multicultural persons. These are only a few reasons that make us start learning a new language. Stronger motivation can also be found.

Because of their Indo-European origins there are many words in English that are similar in its spelling or pronunciation to some words in the Spanish language. Some of them have the same meaning in both languages. They are known as cognates. But some have evolved differently and have changed their meaning and etymology. They are known as false cognates. The existence in the English language of words that are similar to Spanish words in their pronunciation or spelling, but have a totally different meaning, may difficult the comprehension and the communication and correct use of the language. It is considered that not all the languages have or should have similarities with our, but strategies that help students to learn a new language must be developed. It is easier to incorporate words that we already know. So, for students of English as a foreign language, to be aware of the existence of such words is important, as well as the study of them as a linguistic phenomenon.

### 1. Cognates

In linguistics, **cognate** is a technical term meaning that words are etymologically related—that is, they have a common origin.



Though the modern-day forms aren't as obviously related, linguists can nevertheless establish their relationships by tracing them back through a series of sound changes to their conjectured historical forms.

And not all cognates share meaning. Cognates are often presented as a way to learn vocabulary quickly, because the form and meaning are often similar enough to the form and meaning of the English word to make them easy to remember. And many of the words presented as cognates are in fact not cognates but merely borrowings.

Strictly speaking, cognates are words that have a common origin—that is, they were inherited from an ancestral language, and in this case they have a Proto-Indo-European descendant. Cognates are like cousins—they may belong to different families, but they all trace back to a common ancestor.

Previous work on automatic cognate identification is mostly related to bilingual corpora and translation lexicons. Simard, Foster, & Isabelle (1992) use cognates to align sentences in bitexts. They employ a very simple test: Spanish-English word pairs are assumed to be cognates if their first four characters are identical.

The misinterpretation and use of cognates can cause a variety of situations and potential conflicts in the classroom because of the existence of those false cognates. They can be funny embarrassing confusing or downright dangerous. There are several studies referred to cognates and false cognates, for example, the one developed by Brew & McKelvie (1996). The extracted Spanish-English cognates and false cognates from aligned bitexts using a variety of orthographic similarity measures to determine the correspondence between words in both languages.

Guy (1994) identifies letter correspondence between words and estimates the likelihood of relatedness. No semantic component is present in the system; the words are assumed to be already matched by their meanings.

Hewson (1993), Lowe & Mauzaudon (1994) use systematic sound correspondences to determine proto-projections for identifying cognate sets.

One of the most active researchers in identifying cognates between pairs of languages is Kondrak (2001, 2004). His work is more related to the phonetic aspect of cognate identification, especially genetic cognates. He uses in his work algorithms that combine different orthographic and phonetic measures,

recurrent sound correspondences, and some semantic similarity based on gloss overlap. Kondrak, (2004) looks directly at the vocabularies of related languages to determine cognates between languages.

Kondrak & Dorr (2004) report that a simple average of several orthographic similarity measures outperforms all individual measures on the task of the identification of drug names.

Mackay & Kondrak (2005) identify cognates using Pair Hidden Markov Models, a variation on Hidden Markov Models that has been used successfully for the alignment of biological sequences. The parameters of the model are automatically learned from training data that consists of word pairs known to be similar. The results show that the system outperforms previously proposed techniques for the task of identifying cognates.

Complex sound correspondence was also used by Kondrak (2003) to help the process of identifying cognates between languages. The algorithm was initially designed for extracting non-compositional compounds from bitexts, and was shown to be capable of determining complex sound correspondences in bilingual word lists. He reports 90% results for precision and recall for cognate identification.

So, it may be concluded that the cognates in English and Spanish may have different etymology and may be of a different kind.

Cognates can serve as an effective tool for a better understanding of the English Language especially for Spanish speakers. Thousands of cognates exist between English and Spanish. Unfortunately, the false cognates also exist and they only serve to confuse.

## **1.2 COGNATE RECOGNITION**

During the process of the acquisition of a second language (L2) in the classroom context, a relationship between the student's first language (L1) and the target language is assumed; this relationship has been studied since the 1950s within the Contrastive Linguistics (CL) field (Di Pietro, 1971; Fisiak, 1980; Lado, 1957). CL principles rest on a twofold axis, based on behavioral theory and structuralism. On the one hand, behavioral theory predicted that established habits of the L1 can create transference in the learning process. Transference is defined as the use of elements from another language (usually,

L1) while producing L2, e.g., the transfer of grammar structures, e.g., native Spanish speakers while learning English as an L2 usually drop the subject pronoun a structured transfer from the L1. On the other hand, structuralism theory strives to compare the surface of English structures to different languages. The goal was to systematize the degrees of difference between the structure of the L1 (English in this case) and the L2. Thus, the following equation was posited: “learning difficulties = differences between languages structures” (Zanón, 2007). As a result, transfer theory and analysis of errors emerged as a new linguistic perspective. However, research does not support transfer as the main source of error production in second language acquisition (SLA). The majority of studies focused on error analysis concluded that around only 30 percent of errors can be attributed to negative interference effects (e.g., Dulay & Burt, 1973; Ellis, 1986). Nevertheless, although the popularity of CL analysis decreased, especially after generative ideas appeared (Chomsky, 1959), studies have been conducted within the phonology field addressing the difficulties usually learners have due to their native language

Vocabulary acquisition plays a central role in the acquisition of a second language, as pointed out by Gass (1990), Levenston (1979), Oxford and Scarcella (1994), Politzer (1978), among many others. In particular, vocabulary acquisition is essential not only in communication, but also in understanding the target language (e.g., Levenston, 1979; Politzer, 1978). Nonetheless, as Lado (1955) indicates, target language vocabulary is not the only element to consider:

“We simply cannot ignore the native language of the student as a factor of primary importance in vocabulary, just as we cannot ignore it in pronunciation and grammatical structure...Similarity and difference to the native language in form, meaning and distribution will result in ease or difficulty in acquiring the vocabulary of a foreign language”.

The focus of the present study is on the role cognates (i.e., words with similar morphology, sounds or meanings in two languages) play in the acquisition of L2. In particular, this study addresses the recognition and processing involved when learners encounter these vocabulary items. Cognates have been identified as helpful and easy vocabulary items to learn in a second language

(De Groot, Dannenburg, & Hell, 1994). However, only a few studies with novice language students have been done, with most of them assuming that beginners can recognize cognates, and as a result take advantage of the similarities between these vocabulary items in the acquisition process. Moreover, most language textbook publishing companies also assume that learners can recognize and process cognates without problems; for this reason practice activities on cognate's recognition are scarce in those publications.

Specifically, are cognates between English/Spanish recognized and processed by Spanish L2 novice learners? If so, are all cognates processed equally by learners or are their differences pertaining to the degree of morphological and phonetic similarities perceived by students? For example, are there processing differences between **identical** cognates such as “mural”–“*mural*”, **similar cognates**, i.e., those which differ by one or two consecutive letters, such as “inherent”–“*inherent*”, and **partial cognates**, those which differ by two or more letters, such as “conclude”–“*concluir*”?

### **1.3 Cognates and False cognates in Language Learning**

Linguists have studied the impact of false cognates and cognates in second language learning for a long period of time. They suggest that cognate use and recognition bring improvement in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, and provide a head start in language learning (LeBlanc, 1989). Studies undertaken for French (Treville, 1990) and Spanish (Nagy, 1992), (Hancin-Bhatt & Nagy, 1993) show the importance of cognate recognition in reading comprehension and more importantly, the awareness of cognate relationships in reading strategies. Researchers have concluded that explicit instruction of cognate pairing will increase learner's utilization of cognate knowledge.

When learning a second language, a student can benefit from knowledge in his/her first language (Gass, 1987) (Ringbom, 1987). Kroll et al. (2002) look at the way students use their knowledge of the first language (L1) to transfer it to the second language (L2).

Morphological rules of conversion between English and Spanish also proved helpful in cognate identification in language learning. Awareness of the morphological relationship among words creates a better metalinguistic and

metacognitive knowledge and the more similarity in the structure of morphological rules between language pairs, the broader the possibility for cognate recognition in L2.

The morphological rules seem to be helpful in language learning when there has been an exposure to the language for a few years at high level of discourse. Studies done by Hancin-Bhatt & Nagy (1993) for Spanish with students of different age groups support the claim. Second language learners of Spanish that are native English speakers were studied by Dollenmayer & Hansen (2003) to show that students themselves attempt to guess the meaning of cognates rather than just point out the phonemic relationship resulting from historical sound shifts.

In 1988 Palmberg (1988) conducted experiments with Swedish-speaking students of English to show that orthographic processing of words is a better facilitator of cognate recognition than oral input.

As we have seen by now, cognates have an important role in language learning but, on the other hand, a student has to pay attention to the pairs of words that look and sound similar but have different meanings — false cognates pair, and especially to pairs of words that share meaning in some but not all contexts — partial cognates.

It is a good news for second-language learners that in general the number of false cognates and partial cognates between languages are not as high as the number of cognates, especially for language that are etymologically closely related. Hammer (1976) draws our attention to the fact that in most related languages the number of cognates is much greater than the number of false cognates. He compared English and Spanish and concluded that the ratio of cognates to false cognates was approximately eleven to one. On the other hand, Friel & Kennison (2001) have shown in a study that the number of false cognates between Spanish and English is greater than the number of cognate pairs.

Claims that false cognates can be a hindrance in second language learning are supported by the studies of (Carroll 1992). She suggests that a cognate pairing process between two words that look alike happens faster in the learner's mind than a false cognates pairing. Experiments with second language learners of different stages conducted by Heuven, Dijkstra, & Grainger (1998) suggest that

missing false-friend recognition can be corrected when cross-language activation is used — sounds pictures, additional explanation, and feedback. As pointed in this subsection, the use and usefulness of cognates and the awareness of false friends is strongly integrated with language learning.

#### **1.4 Linguistic Distances**

A brief survey for some semantic measures that are frequently used for analyzing text is done by Lebart & Rajman (2000). Measures used in Information Retrieval (IR) and Text Mining are also presented.

Besides the CL world, linguistics also uses notions of similarity. Areas like historical linguistics, second-language learning (for learners' proficiency), psycholinguistics, are just a few domains that use this notion.

We can see the distance between two words, two texts, two languages, etc., from any of the following aspects:

Phonetic

Syntactic

Semantic

##### **1.4.1 Phonetic**

Albright & Hayes (2003) have done research on the phonetic similarity looking at a model of phonological learning from the “minimal generalization” point of view. The minimal generalization refers to minimal distance in pronunciation. They show that children learn on the basis of slight generalization. They give as an example the formation of the past tense of verbs ending in 'ing' (e.g., sing, sting, string). These verbs have the past tenses ending in 'ung'.

Kessler (1995) work shows how can edit distance be used to automate pronunciation differences to better analyze the dialectology aspect of a language.

Kondrak & Sherif (2006) present and compare several phonetic similarity algorithms for the cognate identification task. The results show that Machine Learning techniques perform well for this task.

### **1.4.2 Syntactic**

Syntactic typology is an area of linguistic theory that tries to identify syntactic features associated in languages. The goal of this research is to show that some languages are more similar to one another than they would appear (Croft, 2001).

Thomason & Kaufmann (1988) looked at the syntactic level of the language contact and influence between two languages that are used in the same community. Languages change and borrow words from each other if they are in contact (e.g., political, cultural, economical). The same studies are done in second-language learning. As we cited in the previous sections, research on how the first language knowledge is projected in a second language is of great interest for psycholinguists.

### **1.4.3 Semantic**

One of the directions that are followed on lexical semantics is to identify verb classes that have similar syntactic and semantic behavior. Levin (1993) studied some of the English verb classes. Context similarity is always a good measure to use to determine if two words are used with the same meaning.

From our point of view we measure the linguistic distance between two languages using the cognates and false friends that exist in the two languages. If the languages are strongly related (come from the same branch of languages e.g., Latin, Slavic) the number of cognates that exist between the two languages is large.

One of the methods that proposed to identify cognates and false cognates between languages uses Machine Learning algorithms. The algorithms are trained on lists of cognates and false cognates. If two languages are not related (distant) might have few cognates in common, therefore there will not be a lot of training data that can be used by our method.

## **1.5 Empirical Research on Cognates**

After a search among the students' research papers as well as investigations made by professors in Cuban universities, it wasn't possible to find a previous research on this topic. At the international level the author found among many others, the following researches:

- Falsos cognados. Falsos problemas: Un aspecto de la enseñanza del español en Brasil (Humblé, Philippe. 2005): The general objective of this article is to demonstrate how the similarity between two languages can create confusion and serious communicative problems. It is demonstrated that the unawareness of the existence of false cognates is a problem that not only represents a big communicative risk but it also alters the comprehension. This article has being very pertinent to the present paper because the author provides examples that demonstrate how the language proximity generates comprehension problems. At the end of the work, the author suggests the creation of a dictionary of false cognates that, through a lexico-grammatical contrastive analysis of the Portuguese and Spanish lexicon, would describe the most complex cases of such words. Following this suggestion, the present project tries to give a partial solution to the problem by gathering in a glossary, english-spanish false cognates that allow students majoring in English language teaching to increase their knowledge of false cognates.

- False cognates: un problema de lectura en inglés como L2 (López Wilches, J. 2007) The objective of this paper is to design a pedagogical strategy that allows students of English as a second language (L2) to improve their knowledge of false cognates in order to improve reading comprehension. But it also raises the question of how to work with true cognates for them not to be assimilated as false most of the time.

Other studies reviewed for the present research point to the fact that even though a precise definition of cognates is warranted in order to fine tune research objectives in this topic, no consensus is found in the literature pertaining to their definition, as pointed out by Friel (2001). Also as Friel (2001) notes, most researchers agree that cognates are words with similar roots, hence their similarities in sound and appearance. Hall (2002) defines them as “words in two or more languages which share phonological and/or orthographic forms, and normally -but not necessarily- are also related semantically”. Holmes and Guerra (1993) defined them as items of vocabulary in two languages that have the same roots and can be recognized as such. It has been observed that even though researchers agree on three fundamental properties of cognates, namely their phonetic, orthographic, or morphological and semantic similarities in the languages compared, they do not clarify the meaning of similarity.



Lobo (1966) created a cognate corpus of 10,000 words shared between Spanish and English. Lobo categorized cognates as follows:

- 1) A cognate is considered to be an item with a shared orthography, meaning, or etymology, or a combination of these overlapping in two languages.
- 2) Three classes of English-Spanish cognates were distinguished:
  - a) Those which are **similar** in orthography, meaning, and etymology, called true cognates. (For example: “tomato” – “*tomate*”)
  - b) Those which are **similar** in meaning and orthography but not in etymology are called accidental cognates. (“Shock” – “*chocar*”)
  - c) Those which are **similar** in orthography and etymology, but not in meaning are false cognates. (“Bigot” – “*bigote*”)

### 1.6 Identification of Cognates and False Cognates

An important aspect in the study of this topic is cognate and false cognates identification. Experiments have been performed for pairs of words in Spanish and English. The approach to identify cognate and false cognate is based on orthographic matching. An experiment with different combinations of orthographic measures through Machine Learning techniques has been done.

In addition to the methods used for identifying cognate and false cognate pairs of words, this experiment also describes an automatic way to determine a threshold for each of the orthographic measures that is used. The resulting thresholds can be later used in different experiments for new pairs of words.

To discriminate cognate pairs from false cognate pair additional information is needed. If the pairs are translation of each other, then they are cognates; otherwise they are false cognate. Experiments when the semantic aspects taken into account are also conducted in order to create complete lists of cognates and false cognate between Spanish and English. The semantic dimension can be added to the method in two ways: adjusting the features used in the ML techniques to include a translation feature; or splitting the pairs after they are classified as cognates/false cognates depending whether they are translation of each other in a Spanish-English dictionary.

Entries of a Spanish-English dictionary were taken and it was determined how many of the entries are cognates using the thresholds determined by the proposed method. To determine the false cognates from the entry list words

were paired with each other, except their translation; this way pairs of words in Spanish and English were created that are not translation of each other. From this list of pairs of words, the ones that have an orthographic similarity value above the threshold are false cognate.

**2. False cognates** are pairs of words that seem to be cognates because of similar phonetics and spelling but have different etymologies and meaning; they can be within the same language or from different languages. For example, English *much* and Spanish *mucho* which came by their similar meanings via completely different origins. This is different from false friends, which are similar-sounding words with different meanings, but which may in fact be etymologically related for example: Spanish *dependiente* looks like *dependent*, but means sales assistant or clerk as well.

Even though false cognates lack a common root, there may still be an indirect connection between them, for example by phono-semantic matching or folk etymology.

Through years many translators have been mistaken because they do not use wisely the dictionaries, they have been using the false cognates wrong and as a result there are a lot of illegible texts.

On a related note, the Spanish *embarazado* really is related to the English *embarrassed*. They both trace back to an earlier word meaning “to put someone in an awkward or difficult situation”.

Rather than call these words false cognates, it would be more accurate to call them false friends. This term is broad enough to encompass both words that are unrelated and words that are borrowings or cognates but that have different senses.

This isn't to say that cognates aren't useful in learning a language, of course, but sometimes it takes a little effort to see the connections.

### **2.1 The Infamous False Cognates**

False cognates have produced so much doubt and misconception to both teachers and learners to the point of making us keep a prudent distance from absolutely all lexical resemblances. We could be before a foreign word that is

identical to one in our mother tongue but, when we realize that we are unaware of all its possible meanings and integral usage, refusal sometimes seems to be more sensible than approval.

Due to a lack of practical research on this subject, most language teachers are usually more concerned with the intimidating unknown number of false cognates rather than with that of real cognates.

By no means can the existence of false cognate words continue representing, as it has always been, a limitation for a definite identification and exploitation of cognates.

The several statistics provided by this research are reliable evidence to oust some deeply-rooted misconceptions regarding both the number and impact of false cognates; we will demonstrate their immaterial impact in the process of cognate language acquisition.

Interestingly, the larger the number of frequently used words or academic ones, the more real cognate, and the less false cognates we will find. Additionally, it is crucial to keep in mind that the effect of that average 5% of false cognate occurrence is easily, dramatically and permanently going to be reduced once we are informed about them. In other words, we will hardly ever make the same mistake twice concerning the use of a wrong cognate word.

## **2.2 Cognates by nature**

There are several claims that have become the common criteria for some linguists and teachers when determining the false cognate status of a word. Let us discuss the inappropriateness of three of the most common assertions:

1. A word is a false cognate when the (English) term is more common than its (Spanish) counterpart. A cognate will always be a cognate by nature. Its innate status is determined by its origin, not by its frequency. Although evidential frequency can certainly help us decide on the use of a more common or appropriate word, it has nothing to do with the cognate nature of a word, much less with its usefulness.

2. Although both words mean X, in (English) the word has upgraded/downgraded its meaning, making it a false cognate.

False. Analyzing whether the Spanish word *estúpido* (simple, limitado; bruto, rudo; ignorante, nulo) is much more offensive or not than the English word

*stupid* (unintelligent, dense, slow, obtuse; brainless; unwise, foolish) so as to label it as a false cognate is evidently too impractical and fruitless to be commented. The word is simply pejorative; in fact, in foreign language texts such differentiation is inexistent. On the other hand, a deeper analysis would take us to the next claim.

**3. *X is a false cognate when it additionally means Y in only one of the two languages.***

This assertion arises when any of the several meanings of a cognate word is not shared by its cognate counterpart. For example, in both English and Spanish, the word *club* means: association - asociación, society - sociedad, organization - organización, alliance - alianza; nightclub - nightclub, discotheque - discoteca, casino – casino.

However, in Spanish it does share the meanings: stick, bat; or the black trefoil symbol on a playing card. Does this mean the word *club* should be considered a false cognate even when its several synonyms are unequivocal cognates too?

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, *association* and *club* are synonyms because they share at least one common meaning, not all of their meanings. *Association* does not mean *stick* or *a trefoil symbol*; however, these unrelated meanings do not take away its status as a synonym of *club*. We could say the same of *table* and its synonym *chart*, given that *chart* does not mean a piece of furniture. A cognate word goes far beyond being a type of foreign synonym of a word. The cognate nature of words -either borrowed foreign words or ancestral Greek or Latin derivations- cannot be taken away by the fact that not all of their Meanings, connotations or usages coincide with or exist for their cognate counterparts. Cognates have nothing to do with the idea of exactness between all the meanings and usages of two foreign words. The most suitable definition or explanation for many of the so-called false cognates should be that of 'real cognate words with additional unrelated or uncognate meanings'

### **2.3 Characterization of the present state of awareness of false cognates among the students majoring in English Language teaching at the University of Matanzas.**

According to a survey made by the author to students majoring in English Language Teaching, the following qualitative results came out:

Question one: The 16 students (100%) of the group declared that they did not know about the existence of false cognates

Question two: 90% of the group did not even tried to define the concept, 10% gave a wrong definition.

Question three: 100% of the students did not give examples.

According to the survey applied to language professors:

Question 1. 100% of the professors stated that the students are not familiar with the existence of false cognates when they begin to study English at the university.

Question 2. 100% of the professors considers that to be aware of the existence of false cognates is of a great importance for students in order to get a better comprehension and correct use of the language.

Question 3. The most frequently proposal was to work with false cognates as they appear in the content of the lessons, while introducing the new vocabulary, for example. Professor should attract students´ attention toward the cognates, but specially, toward the false ones and explain the differences. Also, professors of Linguistics should introduce the topic within the content of the subject matter.

### **3. Lexicography, dictionaries and glossaries**

#### **3.1 Lexicography and lexicology.**

Lexicography is the theory and practice of compiling dictionaries. It has a common object of study with lexicology, both describing the vocabulary of a language. The difference between them lies in the degree of systematization and completeness each of them is able to achieve. Lexicology aims at systematization revealing characteristic features of a word. The objective of lexicography is the semantic, formal, functional description of all individual words.

As nouns the difference between lexicology and lexicography is that lexicology is the part of linguistics that studies words, their nature and meaning, words' elements, relations between words including semantic relations, words groups

and the whole lexicon while lexicography is the art or craft of compiling, writing and editing dictionaries, glossaries, thesaurus, etc.

Lexicography is divided into two separate but equally important groups:

- Practical lexicography is the art or craft of compiling, writing and editing dictionaries.
- Theoretical lexicography is the scholarly discipline of analyzing and describing the semantic, syntagmatic, and paradigmatic relationships within the lexicon (vocabulary) of a language, developing theories of dictionary components and structures linking the data in dictionaries, the needs for information by users in specific types of situations, and how users may best access the data incorporated in printed and electronic dictionaries. This is sometimes referred to as 'metalexicography'.

General lexicography focuses on the design, compilation, use and evaluation of general dictionaries, dictionaries that provide a description of the language in general use. Such a dictionary is usually called a general dictionary or LGP dictionary (Language for General Purpose). Specialized lexicography focuses on the design, compilation, use and evaluation of specialized dictionaries, dictionaries that are devoted to a (relatively restricted) set of linguistic and factual elements of one or more specialist subject fields, e.g. legal lexicography. Such a dictionary is usually called a specialized dictionary or Language for specific purposes dictionary. Specialized dictionaries are either multi-field, single-field or sub-field dictionaries.

It is now widely accepted that lexicography is a scholarly discipline in its own right and not a sub-branch of applied linguistics, as the chief object of study in lexicography is the dictionary.

Practical lexicographic work involves several activities, and the compilation of well-crafted dictionaries requires careful consideration of all or some of the following aspects:

- profiling the intended users (i.e. linguistic and non-linguistic competences) and identifying their needs

- defining the communicative and cognitive functions of the dictionary
- selecting and organizing the components of the dictionary
- choosing the appropriate structures for presenting the data in the dictionary (i.e. frame structure, distribution structure, macro-structure, micro-structure and cross-reference structure)
- selecting words and affixes for systematization as entries
- selecting collocations, phrases and examples
- choosing lemma forms for each word or part of word to be lemmatized
- defining words
- organizing definitions
- specifying pronunciations of words
- labeling definitions and pronunciations for register and dialect, where appropriate
- selecting equivalents in bi- and multi-lingual dictionaries
- translating collocations, phrases and examples in bi- and multilingual dictionaries
- designing the best way in which users can access the data in printed and electronic dictionaries

The term dictionary is used to denote a book listing words of a language with their meanings and often with data regarding pronunciation, usage and/or origin.

Unilingual or explanatory dictionaries are those in which the words and their definitions belong to the same language.

Bilingual or translation dictionaries are those that explain words by giving their equivalents in another language

Unilingual dictionaries are subdivided into:

1. Diachronic, which reflect the development of the vocabulary by recording the history of form and meaning;
2. Synchronic/descriptive, which are concerned with present-day meaning and usage of the words.

All dictionaries can be:

1. General - are based on the principle which is concerned with the national standard language.
2. Special - their aim is to cover only a certain part of the vocabulary.

In this investigation, the lexicographical work can be classified as Systematic Collection because it is done with the purpose of a long-term use. In addition, this lexicographical tool would facilitate the general study of the English language and would make shorter the translation process.

The theoretical aspects of lexicography back up the lexicographical practice, which are the applied branch of lexicography in charge of the investigation and the elaboration of lexicographical instruments such as specialized dictionaries, glossaries, etc.

There are some definitions of the term glossary:

- a glossary is a collection of textual glosses or of specialized terms with their meanings <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/glossary>
- A list of terms in a special subject, field, or area of usage, with accompanying definitions. Such a list at the back of a book, explaining or defining difficult or unusual words and expressions used in the text. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/glos>
- A list of often difficult or specialized words with their definitions, often placed at the back of a book. (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language)
- a list of terms in a special subject, field, or area of usage, with accompanying definitions. (Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary)
- An alphabetical list of words often defined or translated: dictionary, lexicon, vocabulary, and wordbook. (The American Heritage® Roget's Thesaurus).



- A glossary is an alphabetical list of words relating to a specific subject, text, or dialect, with explanations; a brief dictionary (Oxford Living Dictionary).
- Glosario- Catálogo alfabetizado de las palabras y expresiones de uno o varios textos que son difíciles de comprender, junto con su significado o algún comentario (Diccionario de usos del español de América de María Moliner. Versión digital)

The concept offered by the Oxford Living Dictionary is the most adequate for the purpose of the present paper, considering the field of false cognates as “words relating to a specific subject”. That is why it is the one chosen by the author.

Nowadays making glossaries is a very common practice. There are glossaries on almost every specialized field: glossaries of computer terms, glossaries of literary terms, among others. A glossary becomes a necessary requirement to understand the terminology of a specific field of study and they offer great help during the translation process. Moreover, they are made by specialists but their objective is not only to assist the person specialized in a subject but also to give an explanation of words to any kind of reader. Besides, this terminological tool may include pictures while defining technical terms of a specific field. They are generally monolingual but at times can be bilingual or even multilingual.

The glossary that is intended to be created is not a terminological tool, because it doesn't gather specialized terms of a specific area of knowledge. It gathers words that are considered false cognates and it is a bilingual. It is intended to contain a list of words in English and their respective equivalents in Spanish.

In the case of this research the glossary created is not a terminological one, because although there are some false cognates that can be considered as terms, not all of them are. It does not refer to a specialized area of knowledge but it gathers words from the daily language including possibly, some terms.

### **3.2.1 The importance of bilingual glossaries in translation.**

In the field of translation, glossaries play an important role. They are one of the translator's aids. For making a work with the quality required a translator needs to consult all the information available on a topic and a glossary is an indispensable tool that helps translators make sure that each time a defined word appears is used consistently and correctly in both languages.

The glossary contains words or terms in a source language and approved translations for that word or term in the target language. It is one of the key tools, to assure that all translated materials meet your quality expectations. Moreover, the glossary becomes even more important for consistency if you use more than one translation resource. This is especially true in the case of tight deadlines when many translators may be working on various elements of a project simultaneously.

A glossary also helps the translators to keep the essence and the fidelity of the source language. Another positive aspect is that they help to eliminate uncertainty in the translation process and it shortens the time it takes to translate a document. A glossary is an indissoluble part of the translation process.

A glossary can be made on any subject as long as it fulfills its social objective. This research is intended to create a bilingual glossary on false cognates specifically the ones that could be encountered by students in the first stages of their studies.

Bilingual glossaries are essential in a classroom where students are asked to apply their previous schema and experiences to the new content we expect them to master. To facilitate this process, it is vital that we provide materials that help them transition from their language of origin (L1) to the language they are trying to acquire (L2). These glossaries should be incorporated into their daily classes. <https://www.rcsdk12.org/domain/11354>

#### **4. The conception of an English-Spanish glossary on False Cognate.**

Regarding the elaboration of different types of dictionaries and glossaries there are many projects of this kind that begin and end, and the authors themselves do not realize that they are doing a dictionary or a glossary. This is, first and foremost, the case of the bilingual glossaries, where it often happens that the technician or the translator begin to gather information on chips or lists and only when they have a considerable amount of material they decide to publish or share it. To some extent, that is what has happened with the present project.

For some time and motivated by the translation of texts from English into Spanish and by Oral Practice Lessons, the lexicon used in some texts, as well as the one found in some lists of words and terms located online or consulted with teachers of the Major has been gathered. Thus, an appropriate amount of these words and terms has been accumulated, what allows the consideration of this work as useful and necessary to meet the demands of the students of the Major. However, when we took on the task of organizing the information in the form of a glossary with all the requirements to be met by a reference work like this, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to:

- 1) Implement a homogeneous system for the selection of sources:** It was necessary to systematize what would constitute the sources of information for the work. In the groundwork, words and terms of the most diverse origin were collected: authentic texts of translation practice, glossaries produced by translators, lists of published dictionaries, student`s textbooks, etc.
- 2) Establish criteria for the selection of vocabulary:** it was necessary to define the lexical units to include in the reference work. Therefore, it was necessary to make a selection of the words of more common use in the English language and in Spanish, taking into account their frequency of occurrence in the sources as well as the personal opinion of the authors.

To organize the work, somehow chaotic and dispersed, in a well-articulated glossary, the conventional methodology proposed by Rodolfo Alpízar in his book *¿Cómo elaborar un diccionario científico-técnico?* (1995) and the Manual

de *Lexicografía de los Lenguajes de Especialidad* (1993) of Henning Bergenholtz and Sven Tarp were used, adapted to the characteristics of the glossary that we want to develop, through a work system taking ideas from the traditional lexicography and the philosophy of the translation memory programs and current mega dictionaries like Babylon, etc.

For the elaboration of the present glossary of false cognates, it was used the methodology proposed by Bergenholz/Tarp 1993 to write a dictionary or glossary, which includes:

- Define the functions which it pursues.
- Systematically represent the area to be addressed.
- Set up a method for selecting the material to be included in the dictionary.

Similarly, the stages proposed by Alpizar [1995: p. 29], for the elaboration of a dictionary, which are also applicable to the elaboration of glossaries were taken. Alpizar explains that these stages should serve as guidance to be adapted to each specific case. Therefore, he distinguishes five stages, on the whole, but for making our terminological product we have outlined three stages of work:

- Conceptualization stage
- Elaboration
- General revision of the glossary and preparation for including it in the Moodle Platform.

Then, we refer in detail to each of them.

#### **4.1 Conceptualization Stage**

At this stage it was determined what would be the content, the macrostructure and microstructure of the future glossary and general methodological principles that govern the work, including: selection of the words to be included, treatment of equivalence, among others.

As we have already outlined, the product we want to develop is a bilingual glossary of false cognates in a digital format, to be included in the University

Moodle platform intended for English Language Teaching Major students. It will have in principle, the following characteristics:

- Easy access to information: this aspect will be solved through its inclusion in the platform Moodle as computing support.
- Reliability of the information: authors will later refer to the sources used for the extraction of the data, which ensures that the information has a high degree of reliability.
- Ability to update and share information: this aspect is something that the current times claim where information is constantly outdated.

The world today is moving toward collaboration and interconnectivity, so the desire to cooperate in the field of lexicography is not an idealistic dream, but a reality that is already materialized through glossaries, terminology banks, etc., that provide free services through Internet. In the University of Matanzas, where sometimes it is difficult to access to this never-ending source of reference that is the Internet, this lexicographical work will allow users' access through their inclusion in Moodle Platform without the need to connect to Internet.

#### **4.2 Macrostructure**

The glossary is will be uploaded in digital format and consists of:

- a) Information summary: author, total number of entries, last date of update, since this glossary is designed to be subjected to continuous revisions and extensions.
- b) Preface: It contains information about the use and limitations of the glossary. Such information includes the subject, recipients, and selection criteria for such words as well as general information on the sources used.
- c) Work body: consists of the set of false cognates designed as described in the section devoted to the microstructure.

#### **4.3 Microstructure**

Tarp and Bergenholtz recommend to everyone who is going to elaborate a dictionary or a glossary, that before deciding on a microstructure, that is to say

before defining the elements to be incorporated in it, it is highly advisable to elaborate some 50 to 100 entries, because only in this way the author may consider and think about the aspects of required inclusion in the lexicographical product. This is precisely the procedure that has been followed in the preparation of this glossary.

This glossary provides the false cognates in English and its equivalent in Spanish. It will offer grammatical marks since the glossary includes different kind of words. The equivalence problems are eluded later on.

#### **4.4 Elaboration**

The development of the glossary consists of several steps:

- a. Location of false cognates in English in the bibliography.
- b. Location of false cognates in Spanish in the bibliography.
- c. Selection of entries
- d. Information crossing (establishment of equivalencies)

Collecting all the information that is going to be used in the elaboration of the glossary constitutes the first step to elaborate the glossary. This glossary includes two languages (English and Spanish), so it is a bilingual glossary. It contains false cognates in English and their respective equivalents in Spanish. It has been arranged alphabetically to facilitate the access to the information.

An exhaustive search was conducted in the different sources of reference in both languages. Through the search, it was found that there are a great number of false cognates in both languages. It was necessary to define the lexical units to include in the work. Therefore, a selection of the words of more common use in the English and Spanish languages was carried out, taking into account their frequency of occurrence in the sources as well as the personal opinion of the authors.

The sources consulted for the localization of the terms were:

- Oxford English Dictionary
- Linguee Dictionary (online)
- Larousse Dictionary
- Merriam Webster Dictionary

It is well known that each language has its peculiarities, so when establishing equivalents, some drawbacks arise. That is why a literal translation is difficult. So the concept of equivalence has been exchanged by fidelity, loyalty, suitability and adaptation that seem to be more appropriate to the translation conceptions. It is not just about textual equivalence but also cultural.

#### **4.5 General Review of the Work and Preparation for its Publication**

Once a considerable amount of false cognates has been gathered and the greatest possible representativeness in different subfields that form this glossary has been guaranteed, the task of sharing the results with other users prevails.

In the previous stage, the cross-linking of obtained data was made with the purpose of establishing equivalencies. Besides, the Moodle platform allows the practical implementation of the proposed objective.

The review includes spelling issues, relations of equivalence, something that is difficult for students at the first stages of their majoring. It is not recommended that the same author performs the review, but a person able to carry out linguistic and specialized review. On the other hand, the uploading of the glossary in the University Moodle platform will allow putting the results of this research available to all students. The Bilingual glossary of false cognates project, will serve as a reference work for people who mostly do not have possibilities of access to other sources as the Internet, or acquire information most updated over this issue.

**Conclusions:**

To conclude, this study has confirmed that false Cognates are still an issue even for students majoring in English Language Teaching at the University of Matanzas.

The correct use of false cognate is essential for language comprehension and effective communication in L2.

It was demonstrated that it is possible to create a glossary of false cognates as a useful tool at the first stage of studies and that it should be structured alphabetically and organized the way it is proposed in this paper.

Further research should be carried out regarding this topic as it can help students perform better in the English languages.



## **Recommendations**

- To consider this work for future researches, mainly to enlarge this glossary with new pairs of false cognates.
- To upload the glossary to the Moodle Platform at the University of Matanzas.
- To inform students and teachers about the existence of the glossary in the Moodle Platform to be used in the teaching learning process.

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## **Appendix**

### Questions (freshman)

1. Are you familiar with the term False Cognates?  
\_\_yes \_\_no
2. If you are, can you explain what a false cognate is?
3. Give at least 3 examples of false cognates

### Questions (Professor)

1. Do you think that your students are familiar with false cognates?
2. Do you think that is important for learning a second language to know them?
3. Give some ideas about how to work with false cognates in the classroom.