

Flinspach, S.L., Scott, J.A., Miller, T.F., Samway, K.D., & Vevea, J.L. (Under review) Looking at cognates: What's importante y necesario in instruction?

Susan Leigh Flinspach
Education Department University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, California 95064
(831) 459-2239
flinspac@ucsc.edu

Judith A. Scott
Education Dept University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High St,
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
jascott@ucsc.edu

Tatiana Miller
Education Department University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, California 95064
Tatiana@ucsc.edu

Katharine Davies Samway
Education Department San Jose State University
One Washington Square
San Jose, California 95192
kdsamway@comcast.net

Jack Vevea
School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
The University of California
5200 North Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343
jvevea@ucmerced.edu

The VINE Project is funded by IES Reading and Writing Education Research Grant Program #R305G060140 (U.S. Department of Education), FY2006-2009. This presentation is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Department of Education.

For more information on the VINE Project, see <http://vineproject.ucsc.edu/>.



Running head: LOOKING AT COGNATES

Looking at Cognates:

What's Importante y Necesario in Instruction?

Susan Leigh Flinspach, Judith A. Scott, and Tatiana F. Miller

University of California, Santa Cruz

Katharine Davies Samway

San José State University

Jack L. Vevea

University of California, Merced

Abstract

In the wake of Proposition 227, classroom teachers in California have had greater responsibility for helping their students develop English proficiency. Vocabulary instruction plays a key role in teachers' efforts to meet this responsibility. The research literature documents an enduring vocabulary gap between Spanish-speaking English learners and native English speakers. It also provides evidence for the effectiveness of cognate instruction that stimulates the cognate awareness of Spanish-speaking English learners, accelerating their acquisition of cognate words. So we investigated cognate learning and teaching as part of our mixed-methods study of vocabulary in fourth-grade classrooms in California. We administered vocabulary tests to 380 students in 13 classrooms from seven school districts representative of this region. Spanish-speaking English learners were the lowest performing sub-group both on the tests overall and on the cognate words. Only two of the 13 teachers taught about cognates. Student interviews revealed that limited Spanish proficiency, especially in vocabulary, and an academic identity associated solely with English may slow cognate awareness. The implications include educating teachers about the promise of cognate instruction for Spanish-speaking English learners and meshing cognate instruction with transformational approaches to welcome the expertise of Spanish-speaking students as the teachers of cognate knowledge.

Looking at Cognates:

What's Importante y Necesario in Instruction?

Public schools throughout the United States are serving more Spanish-speaking English learners than ever before. This is particularly true in California where elementary classrooms regularly include English learners, 85 percent of whom speak Spanish (California Department of Education, 2007, pp. 23, 87). In the wake of Proposition 227, which severely restricted bilingual instruction and limited the duration of specialized English-language assistance to one year for many English learners, regular classroom teachers have had greater responsibility for helping their students develop proficiency in English, as well as teaching them to read and write.

Vocabulary instruction plays a key role in teachers' efforts to meet this responsibility.

Vocabulary knowledge is a major component of a language development program for students who are learning English (Nation, 2001) with direct effects for attaining competence with academic language (Cummins, 2000; Scarcella, 2002). In many elementary classrooms, English learners struggle with academic vocabulary that hinders their reading comprehension (Campbell, Hombo, & Mazzeo, 2000; Carlo et al., 2004; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), slows the development of their writing skills (AUTHOR4, 2006), and constrains their access to the rest of the curriculum. Around fourth grade, the vocabulary used to convey ideas in school materials increases significantly. Teachers generally expect fourth graders to understand what they read independently in order to enhance their knowledge across content areas. Not surprisingly then, on the Nation's Report Cards, English learners in fourth grade score considerably below their English-proficient peers in science (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005), U.S. history

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2006), and math (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, p.56), as well as in reading (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007, p.59).

Recent studies of the receptive and productive vocabularies of preschool and elementary Latino students identify apparently enduring gaps between native English speakers and Spanish-speaking English learners (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; August, Carlo, Lively, McLaughlin, & Snow, 2006; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005). Average and above-average native English speakers leave high school having acquired approximately 40,000 receptive words, which works out to more than 3,000 new words for each year in school (Nagy & Herman, 1987). To catch up, English learners must master more than 3000 English words per school year. Yet as Snow and Kim state:

[English learners from Spanish-speaking families] learn English vocabulary at a steady pace that approximately matches that of their EO [English Only] classmates, with the result that they remain on average about one standard deviation below EO children on vocabulary assessments (2007, pp. 126-127).

Although there is evidence that enthusiasm for reading and advancing reading proficiency in English facilitate word learning for some English learners (AUTHORS, 2009), many schools are not equipping Spanish-speaking English learners with the knowledge and skills needed to close this vocabulary gap.

Cognate recognition may provide a helpful shortcut through the massive amounts of words that English learners must acquire to read and write well in English. Spanish-English cognates, or word pairs with the same meaning and similar spelling and pronunciation, can help students see connections between the two languages through related roots and morphological parallels, aspects of words derived from a common Latin heritage. Recognition of the potential

of cognates to boost vocabulary development stems from the work of Cummins (1979, 1984), whose model posits a language-learning base, with the language and literacy skills honed in L1 (Spanish in this case) transferring to L2 (English). August and colleagues (2005) regard cognate awareness as a powerful tool for Spanish speakers to learn low-frequency English words that are high-frequency Spanish words, as the students are more likely to know the concept and label in Spanish. Analyses indicate that Spanish and English share 10,000 to 15,000 cognates (Nash, 1997) and, especially for technical vocabulary in subjects like science, a relatively large number of cognates are low-frequency English words and high-frequency Spanish words (Bravo, Hiebert, & Pearson, 2007; Lubliner & Hiebert, 2008). A study of Spanish-English cognate patterns, frequency, and transparency by Lubliner and Hiebert (2008) affirms that cognates offer bilingual students a productive source for English vocabulary growth.

The evidence from classrooms indicates that cognate instruction can engage students and boost their achievement regardless of their home language. Lubliner and Grisham (2008) found that both English speakers and Spanish speakers learned English vocabulary during a fifth-grade, Spanish-English cognate intervention in social studies. Other vocabulary interventions that included, but did not center on, the teaching of Spanish-English cognates in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms were effective for vocabulary development and reading comprehension, improving the performance of both English learners and English speakers (Carlo et al., 2004; Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005; Proctor, Dalton, & Grisham, 2007; Snow & Kim, 2007).

Research about how children learn cognates can influence decisions about whether, and when, cognates should be taught. The work of Nagy, Garcia, and their colleagues indicates that cognate recognition is not automatic for bilingual students. Hancin-Bhatt and Nagy (1994) uncovered a developmental trend in cognate awareness, with older bilingual students recognizing

and understanding cognates more readily than students in elementary school. Proctor and Mo (2009) have challenged the developmental notion of cognate recognition, arguing that growing English comprehension could be more pivotal determinant than age in the cognate recognition abilities of younger students. The release of a new instrument for assessing cognate awareness in elementary students also challenges the earlier results; the developers found that bilingual students in grades three through five who have sufficiently large Spanish vocabularies are aware of cognates in their reading (Malabonga, Kenyon, Carlo, August, & Louguit, 2008). Pushing the ages at which students can recognize cognates back down to the elementary grades underscores the importance of teaching cognates in those grades.

Garcia, Nagy, and their colleagues established that many bilingual students must be taught to become cognate aware. Their studies showed that once cognates were taught, Spanish speakers scored higher on English vocabulary assessments that included cognates (Garcia, 1991; Garcia & Nagy, 1993; Nagy, Garcia, Durgunoglu, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). Dressler (2000) studied cognate recognition as a generative instructional strategy; fifth graders who were taught to search for cognate relationships while reading English text were more successful at inferring the meaning of untaught cognates than a control group. This body of research has fairly straightforward lessons for both English language development teachers and classroom teachers at elementary schools with Spanish-speaking English learners: the integration of cognates as an explicit, generative strategy into the word-learning program of upper elementary students can enhance the vocabulary knowledge of all students, especially the Spanish-speaking English learners.

Given the unusually clear pedagogical implications of the research literature on cognates, we incorporated a line of inquiry about cognates into our mixed-methods study of vocabulary

teaching and learning in fourth-grade classrooms in California. We posed several questions: 1) to what extent do the English learners from Spanish-speaking households recognize Spanish-English cognates; 2) to what extent do their classroom teachers teach cognates; and 3) what factors influence the teaching and learning of cognates?

Methods

Research Participants

The findings presented here are from the first year of a three-year study designed to enhance vocabulary development, reading, and writing in fourth-grade classrooms in one region of California. In 2006-2007, the STUDY NAME REDACTED research team collected data from teachers and students in 13 classrooms in seven neighboring school districts. English was the sole medium of instruction in all classrooms. Two classrooms were split grades, with both fourth and fifth graders. The classrooms were located in a mix of rural, town, and metropolitan schools, enrolling from 13 percent to 60 percent English learners in each classroom. The teachers had from one to 16 years of experience and, although some spoke a bit of Spanish, none was fluent.

The school districts provided data on students' language proficiency and on their home language. When the district designated students to be English learners, we assumed that they were proficient in their home language. Forty-six percent of the 380 students involved in this year of the study spoke a language other than English at home, and 32 percent were English learners. Outside of the metropolitan area, English learners usually lived in Spanish-speaking households. The language situation was more complicated in the metropolitan schools, however, with students from households representing 26 home languages. After English, Spanish was the

most common home language overall, spoken by slightly more than 31 percent of the students. Spanish was the home language of 78 percent of the English learners.

Our sample of research participants is a sample of convenience, dependent on teachers who were interested in our study. Nonetheless we took pains to recruit teachers in a variety of school districts that would add diversity to the set of students in the study. Our sample includes rural and urban sites, many home languages, income differences, and ethnic/racial diversity. It is representative of this region of California. Given that 78 percent of our English learners spoke Spanish and the figure statewide is 85 percent (California Department of Education, 2007, pp. 23, 87), some of our conclusions about Spanish-speaking English learners may have application beyond this region.

Data Collection and Analyses

The data used in this paper come from three sources: the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests, teacher interviews, and interviews with small groups of English learners and former English learners reclassified as English proficient. The vocabulary tests were scaled for an analysis of student performance. The tests were scaled using Samejima's (1996) graded IRT model, and attained high marginal reliabilities: .90 for the fiction version and .92 for the nonfiction version (AUTHORS, 2008). Responses to the teacher interview question were summarized for researcher review, and the student interviews were analyzed for information about language use and cognates.

The STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests were designed by the research team to reflect word-learning principles. Words were selected from California fourth-grade textbooks and novels based on an understanding of what is known about vocabulary learning as an incremental and multi-dimensional process. That is to say, the tests captured elements of the

complexity of word learning and were tied to the curriculum being taught in schools. The 15-minute tests, a fiction version (i.e., the words came from fiction sources) and a non-fiction version, each assessed different levels of student knowledge for 36 words.

Combined, the tests consisted of 72 words, and 21 of the 72 words were Spanish-English cognates. Following Bravo, Hiebert, and Pearson (2007), the words on the vocabulary tests were determined to have a Spanish cognate through a three-step process described at length in the Appendix. Initially a native Spanish speaker on the STUDY NAME REDACTED research team developed a list of the test words that have a cognate in Spanish. Then the list of test words was reviewed against definitions provided by two online dictionaries—*Diccionario de la lengua española* (Real Academia Española, 2001) and *Collins Online Spanish-English-Spanish dictionary* (2005). When either dictionary left doubts about the meaning transparency of the cognate pairing, the test word was taken off the list. The third step checked on the word frequency of the Spanish cognates; researchers did not expect a low-frequency Spanish word to help fourth graders recognize an English cognate on the tests. Using the online *Corpus del Español* (Davies, 2007), researchers dropped test words from the list when their Spanish cognates occurred fewer than five times in a million words. Twenty-one test words with Spanish cognates survived the three-step process and remained on the final list. Spanish-speaking English learners should be able to demonstrate their level of cognate awareness on these 21 words (see the Appendix).

The analysis was conducted using a two-level hierarchical linear model. (HLM; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004). Fall to spring growth on the test words was estimated for each student at the lowest level of the HLM model. At the higher level, differences in growth were investigated using English proficiency and home language as moderators. The

results reported here include student performance on the words comprising both tests (72 words total) and on the 21 Spanish-English cognates.

The teachers in the study were not involved in test development, and they were not informed about the words tested. 339 of the 380 students took both of the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests in the fall, and 329 took both tests in the spring.

Following a classroom observation at the end of the school year, researchers interviewed the 13 teachers about their teaching beliefs and practices. Most of the questions were important to the broader vocabulary study, but one question asked specifically about use of cognates in their teaching that year. Teacher responses to that question are reported here.

In June, students were selected and interviewed in groups (most responses given one student at a time, with two or three questions open for group discussion) about taking the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests. Interviews took place with students from three classrooms; two classrooms were selected because they had English learners and reclassified English learners representing numerous home languages, and the third classroom was chosen because the majority of students spoke Spanish at home. Most of the English learners and reclassified English learners in these classrooms agreed to do the interviews. A researcher asked the students about their proficiency and literacy in their home language, their strategies for taking the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests, and their answers to specific items on the tests. She also asked students from Spanish-speaking homes about their cognate knowledge. In total, 31 students were interviewed. Student responses about their home language and cognates were recorded and analyzed for reporting here.

Vocabulary Tests Results

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the performance of students by English proficiency on all 72 words on the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests. Designated English learners are those identified by the school districts as English learners. The other students include native English speakers, fluent bilinguals, former English learners reclassified as proficient, and 20 students whose language proficiency was not provided by the districts. The 110 designated English learners who took both vocabulary tests in the fall scored significantly lower than the other 229 students on the complete set of words. They also scored significantly lower than the other students on the spring tests. The scaled score group difference in the fall was 7.880 ($t_{337} = 7.88, p < .0001$), and it was 7.804 ($t_{327} = 7.12, p < .0001$) in the spring. English learners, like all students, improved on the vocabulary tests from fall to spring (Figure 2). The difference in the mean performance of English learners from fall to spring was 4.879 ($t_{99} = 7.41, p < .0001$), showing highly significant growth over the school year.

English learners from Spanish-speaking homes scored significantly lower than other English learners on the complete set of words on the STUDY NAME REDACTED tests. Figure 3 shows a difference of almost 5 and one-half points ($t_{108} = 3.38, p = .0010$) between the mean performance of the speakers of Spanish ($N=87$) and the mean performance of speakers of other languages ($N=23$) in the fall. In the spring, the difference in mean performance increased to about 6 and a quarter points ($t_{107} = 3.55, p = .0006$). Spanish-speaking English learners scored lower on the full set of 72 words than other English learners, and they showed less growth over the school year.

Figure 4 displays student growth from fall to spring on the 21 test words with high-frequency Spanish cognates. All students performed significantly better on the cognate words in the spring, with a difference in means of 5.941 ($t_{298} = 14.76, p < .0001$). Similarly, all designated

English learners ($t_{99}=9.01, p<.0001$) and the subset of English learners from Spanish-speaking households ($t_{78}=7.26, p<.0001$) showed significant growth on the words with Spanish cognates.

Despite their overall improvement on the cognate words from fall to spring, the Spanish-speaking English learners scored significantly lower on these 21 words than the other English learners. Figure 5 shows a mean difference of just under 5 points between the two groups for the fall ($t_{108}=2.73, p=.0075$) and just under 6 points in the spring ($t_{107}=3.17, p=.0020$).

Interview Responses

The interviews with STUDY NAME REDACTED research participants shed light on a few factors influencing the cognate knowledge of Spanish-speaking English learners. First, the English learners told us that their fluency in Spanish, their use of Spanish, and their Spanish literacy skills varied considerably. Apparently the districts' "English learner" label can include some students who do not consider themselves to be fluent in their home language. When asked if she spoke Spanish easily and well, Lucía (all names are pseudonyms), who is classified as an English learner from a Spanish-speaking home, said that she did not. She went on to add that she spoke mostly English at home, and that whereas she didn't speak Spanish with her mother and grandmother, sometimes they conversed in Portuguese. On a classroom visit in the fall, a STUDY NAME REDACTED researcher noted that the teacher (who spoke no Spanish) had asked Lucía to translate for a Spanish-speaking newcomer. Throughout the day, Lucía asked her Spanish-speaking classmates, and even the researcher, for Spanish words to help her translate for the new girl. Despite her "English learner" designation, Lucía was not receiving supplemental English services outside her own classroom, and she rarely spoke Spanish at school. Less fluent Spanish speakers like Lucía are likely to have a smaller Spanish vocabulary, which reduces a student's access to Spanish-English cognate knowledge.

Similarly, many of the Spanish-speaking English learners interviewed have undeveloped literacy skills in Spanish. Fourteen English learners from Spanish-speaking households were interviewed; thirteen said they preferred to read in English, and just one said she reads regularly in Spanish. During the course of the interview, students were given a list of Spanish words written on a sheet of paper and asked to indicate the ones they knew. Maribel marked some of the words, asked the researcher about the pronunciation of others, and then added some of the words that the researcher had said aloud to her marked list. Cristina did the same. The words on the list were the Spanish cognates for the English words on the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests. Students like these girls who struggle to decode and read words in Spanish have fewer Spanish resources to draw on than truly biliterate students when they encounter cognate words in written English.

The student interviews uncovered another factor that is likely to influence cognate awareness in bilingual elementary students: student identification of a particular language with a particular domain. Andrés has been reclassified as proficient in English; he entered school as an English learner, but he has since demonstrated his oral and written proficiency in English. Andrés speaks Spanish regularly with his grandparents. When the researcher introduced the ideas of cognates and linguistic transfer during the interview, Andrés said he keeps the two languages separate. He does not identify classroom activities with Spanish, and he does not speak Spanish in class. Rosie, an English learner, said that she “throws out [her] Spanish” at school; she identifies the academic realm of school with English. Another reclassified English learner, Alicia, made a similar claim, but she suggested her English-only domain was schoolwork specifically. She is happy to speak Spanish to her classmates—even in the classroom—but she feels her schoolwork requires English only. So some students associate the

classroom and its work with English. By fourth grade, they are no longer comfortable drawing on their identities as Spanish speakers when they assume a student role. For these children, cognate awareness may demand more than just a new set of vocabulary skills; it might require them to alter the academic identities they enact and the norms they follow at school.

One last factor influencing students' cognate awareness emerged from the teacher interviews. Spanish-English cognates are not part of the regular curriculum in these classrooms, and instruction about cognates is spotty. Most of the 13 teachers said that they acknowledge cognates in some way when they come up in class, and that cognates usually come up when noticed by students. A few of the teachers encouraged students to use their Spanish knowledge to help with English vocabulary in general ways. For example, one teacher told students to "trust your own language" when they were studying spelling or vocabulary in class. When she introduced a new English word, another teacher said that she referenced the Spanish cognate if she knew it. She added that she "doesn't make a whole lesson of it." In his instruction about the *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, a third teacher taught the word "cognate," asked students to identify Spanish-English cognates from a list, and invited students to include Spanish words in a related activity. Another teacher reported that he helped students develop a thorough understanding of what cognates are and how to identify them. He introduced cognates from Spanish, French, German, and Italian and asked students to look up their origin in Latin or Greek. He urged students to look for words that "look alike" when reading. Even this teacher, though, did not provide systematic instruction about recognizing Spanish-English cognates to his class, 25 percent of whom come from Spanish-speaking homes. In this study, an important factor affecting bilingual elementary students' cognate awareness was their teachers' lack of familiarity with the promise of teaching cognates.

Discussion

Our first research question was about the extent to which the fourth-grade Spanish-speaking English learners in the study recognized Spanish-English cognates. We answered this question using the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests. Spanish-speaking English learners performed significantly lower than other students on all 72 words and on the 21 cognate words. In particular, English learners who spoke other home languages outscored the Spanish speakers on the cognate words. From fall to spring the Spanish-speaking English learners' performance improved on the cognate words, but their rate of cognate growth was slower than that of other English learners. These results reflect two vocabulary gaps—one between Spanish-speaking English learners and other students, and another between Spanish-speaking English learners and other English learners. They indicate that the English learners from Spanish-speaking households had little cognate awareness, and that they were not using cognates as an aid in learning English vocabulary. When presented with the notion of cognates and with the cognates from the STUDY NAME REDACTED vocabulary tests in the interviews, several Spanish-speaking English learners confirmed this finding.

Our second question dealt with the extent to which the fourth-grade teachers of these English learners taught cognates. The teachers did not seem surprised that our interviews included a question about teaching cognates, which indicates that they were aware that some teachers do teach cognates. They acknowledged the importance of letting students bring up cognates for discussion; they did not avoid or discourage the subject in their classrooms. One teacher introduced Spanish cognates on a piecemeal basis, according to her own knowledge. In sum, though, 11 of the 13 teachers did not plan and deliver any instruction about Spanish-English cognates.

Two of the teachers incorporated the study of cognates into their lessons. One of these teachers taught cognates as an element of a more general linguistic transfer strategy involving word roots, etymology, and linguistic relationships between any language and English. Just one teacher introduced Spanish-English cognates as a word-learning strategy. This teacher's coverage of cognates was limited to a single lesson, but he encouraged students to identify cognates and discuss them with the class thereafter.

To answer our third research question, we needed to identify factors that influence the teaching and learning of Spanish-English cognates. In their interviews, the teachers said they were invested in teaching their students other word-learning strategies; the teaching of cognates was not high on their list of priorities. One teacher mentioned that her own limited proficiency in Spanish kept her from saying more about cognates in class. Another teacher whose students spoke many different languages questioned privileging Spanish over the rest of the languages. These are a few of the constraints that curbed cognate instruction in the classrooms in our study, but questions remain about teacher awareness of the importance of teaching cognates, their knowledge of how to teach cognates, and the availability of time and support for changing their practice.

The students spoke about factors influencing their cognate awareness and the learning of Spanish-English cognates. First, being designated an English learner does not necessarily mean a student is fluent or literate in her home language. Without the native-language capacities, especially in vocabulary, that support fluency and literacy in Spanish, the "transfer" of knowledge and skills from Spanish to English through cognates is uncertain. Second, some students built their academic identities around English, and they did not regard the classroom or

schoolwork as a domain associated with Spanish. These students would have to be taught (and convinced) that they can draw on their Spanish resources when learning English vocabulary.

Implications and Conclusions

In fourth-grade classrooms like those in this study, many Spanish-speaking English learners have little cognate awareness. Spanish-English cognates either are not being taught at all, or they are not being taught in ways that accelerate the vocabulary growth of these students. Teachers who do not speak Spanish question their ability to teach cognates, and some teachers wonder about the ethics of teaching Spanish and not the other home languages of their students. Teachers are not familiar with the vocabulary gap that characterizes this English-learning group or with the research on the vocabulary-building potential for Spanish-speaking English learners and for all the students, of a systematic program that includes structured cognate instruction. These issues need to be addressed by staff development and teacher education that familiarize teachers with a language program for Spanish-speaking English learners that includes structured cognate instruction.

It is important for teachers and administrators to recognize the differences among students designated as Spanish-speaking English learners. First, they are not uniformly fluent or literate in Spanish. Learning about Spanish-English cognates may be parallel experiences for English learners with less proficiency in Spanish and for other students who know little or no Spanish. At best, excellent instruction about the transfer of linguistic information through cognates may improve these students' abilities in both languages.

Second, some students separate their Spanish-speaking and English-speaking selves. They associate the classroom, or at least its work, with English, and being an English speaker is key to their student identity. Multicultural and transformational approaches may encourage these

students to reconsider and reposition their cultural and linguistic heritage (Banks, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Under such approaches, cognate instruction would include creating a classroom that welcomes the expertise of Spanish speakers. Placing Spanish vocabulary at the center of cognate instruction invites Spanish-speaking students to use their knowledge to teach others, including the teacher. Lubliner and Grisham found high levels of engagement and enthusiasm among Spanish-speaking fifth graders when they took on “the role of the expert in the classroom” (2008, p. 20) during explicit Spanish-English cognate lessons. Classroom experiences like that might help students like Andrés, Rosie, and Alicia re-evaluate the role of language in their academic identities.

Bravo, Hiebert, and Pearson suggest that Spanish-English cognates constitute a linguistic funds of knowledge for learning English vocabulary (2007, p.147). Like the household and community funds of knowledge that Moll and his colleagues describe (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), Spanish-English cognates represent a body of specialized knowledge available to teachers through members of the students’ communities. Especially for teachers who know little Spanish, drawing on bilingual community members as classroom resources for cognate instruction offers clear benefits. When teachers tap a source of funds of knowledge from the students’ community, they erase some of the barriers between home and school and reinforce the status of the students’ culture in the classroom.

Teaching cognate awareness to Spanish-speaking English learners in elementary classrooms is not common practice, but it holds great promise. In the words of Ariana, an English learner:

Sometimes, like, you separate them [the languages]...like when you're doing English, just focus on English. Then when you're doing Spanish, just focus on Spanish. And if you need help, just think of both.

References

- August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 20*(1), 50-57.
- August, D., Carlo, M., Lively, T., McLaughlin, B., & Snow, C. (2006). The Vocabulary Improvement Project: A research-based program for building vocabulary in English-language learners. In T. Young & N. Hadaway (Eds.), *Helping English language learners in regular classrooms* (pp. 96-112). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Banks, J.A. (2001). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J.A. Banks & C.A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 3-24). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Bravo, M.A., Hiebert, E.H., & Pearson, P.D. (2007). Tapping the linguistic resources of Spanish-English bilinguals: The role of cognates in science. In R.K. Wagner, A.E. Muse, & K.R. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Vocabulary acquisition: Implications for reading comprehension* (pp. 140-156). New York: Guilford Press.
- California Department of Education. (2007). *Fact book 2007: Handbook of education information*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.
- Campbell, J.R., Hombo, C., & Mazzeo, J. (2000). *Trends in academic progress: Three decades of student performance*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Carlo, M.S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C.E., Dressler, C., Lippman, D.N., Lively, T.J., White, C.E. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly, 39*(2), 188-215.

- Carlo, M.S., August, D., & Snow, C.E. (2005). Sustained vocabulary-learning strategy instruction for English-language learners. In E. Hiebert & M.L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp. 137-153). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Collins Online Spanish-English-Spanish Dictionary*. (2005). Based on *Collins Spanish dictionary* (8th ed.). (2005). HarperCollins Publishers. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://dictionary.reverso.net/spanish-english/>
- Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49, 222-251.
- Cummins, J. (1984). Wanted: A theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. In C. Rivera, (Ed.), *Language proficiency and academic achievement* (pp. 2-19). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. North York, Ontario: Multilingual Matters.
- Davies, M. (2007). *Corpus del español* (2nd ed.). Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>
- Dressler, C. (2000). The word-inferencing strategies of bilingual and monolingual fifth-graders: A case study approach. Unpublished Unpublished qualifying paper. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Garcia, G.E. (1991). Factors affecting the English reading test performance of Spanish-speaking Hispanic students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 26, 371-392.

- Garcia, G.E., & Nagy, W.E. (1993). Latino students' concept of cognates. In D.J.Leu & C.K. Kinzer (Eds.), *Examining central issues in literacy research, theory, and practice* (pp. 361-373). Chicago: National Reading Conference.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hancin-Bhatt, B., & Nagy, W.E. (1994). Lexical transfer and second language morphological development. *Applied Linguistics, 15*, 289-310.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*, 465-491.
- Lee, J., Grigg, W., & Donahue, P. (2007). *The nation's report card: Reading 2007* (NCES 2007-496). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- Lubliner, S., & Grisham, D.L. (2008). *Cognate strategy instruction: Providing powerful literacy tools to Spanish-speaking students*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Lubliner, S., & Hiebert, E.H. (2008, March). *An analysis of English-Spanish cognates*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.
- Malabonga, V., Kenyon, D.M., Carlo, M., August, D., & Louguit, M. (2008). Development of a cognate awareness measure for Spanish-speaking English language learners. *Language Testing, 25*(4), 495-519.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.

- Nagy, W.E., Garcia, G.E., Durgunoglu, A.Y., & Hancin-Bhatt, B. (1993). Spanish-English bilingual students' use of cognates in English reading. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 25, 241-259.
- Nagy, W.E., & Herman, P.A. (1987). Breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Implications for acquisition and instruction. In M.G. McKeown & M.E. Curtis (Eds.), *The nature of vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 19-36). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Nash, R. (1997). *NTC's dictionary of Spanish cognates*. Chicago, IL: NTC Publishing Group.
- Nation, I.S.P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). Online tables from *The nation's report card: Science 2005*. Retrieved February 10, 2010, from http://nationsreportcard.gov/science_2005/s0115.asp?subtab_id=Tab_2&tab_id=tab1&printver=#chart
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). Online tables from *The nation's report card: U.S. History*. Retrieved February 10, 2010, from http://nationsreportcard.gov/ushistory_2006/h0110.asp?subtab_id=Tab_2&tab_id=tab1#chart
- National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. (2009). *The nation's report card: Mathematics 2009* (NCES 2010-451). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read* (NIH Publication No. 00-4754). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

