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English-Spanish Cognates in the Charlotte Zolotow Award Picture Books: Vocabulary, Morphology, and Orthography Lessons for Latino ELLs

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Abstract

English-Spanish cognates are words that are orthographically and semantically identical or nearly identical in English and Spanish as a result of a common etymology. Because of the similarities in the two languages, Spanish-dominant Latino English Language Learners (ELLs) can be taught to recognize English cognates thereby increasing their bilingualism and bi-literacy for these two languages. There are over 20,000 English-Spanish cognates, many of the academic vocabulary words. Despite their vast educational potential, however, cognates are typically excluded as a word category in the language arts curriculum, thus denying Latino ELLs of a resource for acquiring English-Spanish bilingualism and bi-literacy. English-Spanish cognates may be distinguished from non-cognate words by their rule-governed morphological and orthographic structures. To capitalize on the inherent differences between cognates and non-cognates, the present manuscript presents morphological and orthographic strategies that can be used to teach Latino ELLs to recognize the rich cognate vocabulary found in picture books, specifically, those books which have been cited as Charlotte Zolotow Award winners and honor books. Through these strategically designed language activities revolving around the read-alouds of the Zolotow Award books, teachers can introduce Latino ELLs to cognates in the early primary school years to encourage their development of bilingualism and bi-literacy.



English-Spanish Cognates in the Charlotte Zolotow Award Picture Books: Vocabulary, Morphology, and Orthography Lessons for Latino ELLs

Latino English Language Learners (ELLs) are among the fastest growing groups in the United States. Many Latino ELLs enter the primary grades having learned Spanish as their first language. For these students, becoming literate in both Spanish and English is a desirable and very reachable goal. Designing teaching materials and strategies that will promote the bi-literacy development of Latino ELLs should be foremost among the goals of bilingual educators.

An innovative way for teachers to encourage the development of Spanish-English bi-literacy is to teach primary school Latino ELLs about English-Spanish *cognates* through picture book read-alouds. Cognates are words in English and Spanish that are similar in spelling and meaning as a result of a common Latinate etymology. The following pairs of English/*Spanish* words are examples of cognates: animal/*animal*, curiosity/*curiosidad*, and impossible/*imposible*. By learning about the cognates contained in the picture books that are read aloud to them, Latino ELLs can build a bi-literacy foundation early in their education that will earn them access to thousands of vocabulary words and myriads of new concepts and ideas.

English-Spanish cognates constitute an especially important subpopulation of the English language. There are more than 20,000 English-Spanish cognates (Nash, 1999), many of which are the academic vocabulary words important for school success. More than 70% of the 570 words on the Academic Word List (AWL) are English-Spanish cognates (Hiebert & Lubliner, 2008). Not surprisingly, most of the subject headings in the Dewey Decimal System are English-Spanish cognates (Montelongo, 2012).

Despite their prominence in the English lexicon, textbooks, and trade books, cognates are seemingly non-existent as a category of words in the school curriculum. Anecdotal evidence suggests that language arts and content

area textbooks devote less attention to cognates as a classification of words than they do to highly specialized words such as palindromes, homonyms, and homographs, whose numbers and usefulness do not nearly approach the educational or numerical significance of cognates. As a result of the inattention to cognates, Latino ELLs are deprived of a classificatory word scheme that can help them understand the differences between the language they know (Spanish) and the one they are to acquire (English).

Classificatory schemes are useful if students learn ways to differentiate one word category from another. Fortunately, this is the case with English-Spanish cognates and non-cognates. Cognates, because of their Latinate origin, typically possess morphological structures that are different from those of non-cognates. Many cognates consists of a prefix, a root word, and a suffix (e.g., *impermeable*), whereas non-cognates simply stand alone (e.g., *clever*). The differences in morphology between cognates and non-cognates make it possible for students to learn to recognize cognates on the basis of morphological structure. As a result, teachers can design morphology lessons using the cognate vocabulary in picture books to teach students to recognize cognates.

Teachers can also design orthography lessons using the cognates from the read-aloud picture books. This is due to the fact that there are spelling regularities for transforming English words to Spanish words. As part of the cognate instruction they give, teachers can present spelling conversion rules to help students recognize cognate patterns and become better spellers.

Teaching English-Spanish cognates to Latino ELLs represents an “assets” approach in literacy instruction—one that builds on the knowledge that students already have—in contrast to a “deficit” approach, which assumes that Latino English learners are deficient because they lack English (Valencia, 2010). As pointed out by Lubliner and Hiebert (2011), English-Spanish cognates benefit Latino ELLS with “funds of knowledge” that give them access to academic vocabularies—an advantage to acquiring language in the language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences. Students who learn a Latinate language such as Spanish have an advantage in learning and reading academic vocabulary over their peers who don’t (Corson, 1997). Teaching Latino ELLS about cognates and their morphology and orthography enhances the inherent verbal prowess that accompanies bilingualism and bi-literacy.

Picture Books and Cognate Vocabulary Words

Picture books are an excellent source for vocabulary because their composition includes words much richer than those found in basal readers (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan 2002; 2008). Research has demonstrated that elementary schoolchildren learn new vocabulary words through picture book read-alouds, especially when they are accompanied by meaningful activities. Successful vocabulary-building strategies built around picture book read-alouds include the use of definitions, examples, imagery, and morphemic analysis among others (Kindle, 2009).

Picture books are an exceptional resource for English-Spanish cognates (Montelongo, Duran, & Hernandez, 2013). Teaching Latino ELLs about cognates may be seen as naturally powerful vocabulary-building strategy because it builds upon the many Spanish words that these students can already define, cite examples of, and imagine. Including cognate morphology and orthography lessons are especially applicable as picture book read-aloud activities.

In an influential book on vocabulary instruction, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) developed a three-tiered scheme for selecting the words from read-aloud picture books to teach as enriched vocabulary. *Tier One* words are defined as those high-frequency words such as *book*, *red*, and *apple* that do not require direct classroom instruction as to their meanings because students have learned them through experiences outside of school. *Tier Two* words, on the other hand, are those vocabulary words that: a) are not ordinarily used or heard in daily language; b) appear across a variety of content areas; c) are important for understanding a selection; and d) allow for rich representations and connections to other words (Kucan, 2012). Beck, et al. (2002) suggested that teachers dedicate the majority of their vocabulary instructional time to teach *Tier Two* words. The words *incredible*, *satisfy*, and *tolerate* are examples of *Tier Two* words. Finally, *Tier Three* words are those lower frequency words that are specific to particular topics: *aphid*, *antenna*, and *pollen*. As *Tier Three* words do not usually appear across a variety of texts, their definitions should be explicitly taught when their meanings are necessary for the understanding of a particular text.

Along with their definitions of the three tiers for selecting vocabulary words from picture books, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) listed examples

of Tier Two target vocabulary words for instruction from each of the 83 read-aloud picture books they sampled. Among the examples presented by Beck, et al. (2002) were: *concentrate*, *impatient*, and *ridiculous* which are the cognates of the Spanish words *concentrar*, *impaciente*, and *ridículo*, respectively. That some of the examples presented by Beck and her associates were cognates is no accident. An analysis of the Beck, et al. (2002) Tier Two vocabulary words revealed that more than half of the words (53%) were English-Spanish cognates (Montelongo, Hernandez, Goenaga de Zuazu, Esquivel, Serrano-Wall, Plaza, Madrid, & Campos, 2016). Similar results were found in an analysis of the example Tier Two cognate words listed in a later book by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2008).

Quality Picture Books—The Charlotte Zolotow Award

To design rich cognate vocabulary lessons to accompany read-alouds, teachers require quality picture books. This is consistent with the findings of Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004), who observed that expert teachers chose high-quality picture books for their read-alouds, where quality is defined as a book that has won a book award (e.g., Caldecott Medal Award) or by its appearance on a list of recommended books by a prominent literacy organization (e.g., The American Library Association).

In this paper, we present the exemplary set of quality picture books that have been awarded the Charlotte Zolotow Award and how these books can be used to design cognate vocabulary, morphology, and orthography lessons. The award honors the work of the famous children's books author, Charlotte Zolotow (1915-2013), and is given yearly to the best picture book and honors books for children. The award is overseen by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (2015), the children's literature school at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The picture books that have been honored as Charlotte Zolotow Award winners or honor books contain many English-Spanish cognates. The average number of cognates for each of the 180 award and honor books for the years (2000-2015) was 24.96. The picture books, *Ma Dear's Aprons* (McKissack 2000) and *Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding* (Look, 2006) each contain over eighty cognates. On the other hand, the pre-school picture books, *Apple Pie ABC* (Murray, 2012) and *How to Heal a Broken Wing* (Graham, 2008) each contain only three. The Zolotow picture books range in reading levels from board books to

sixth-grade reading levels according to levels provided by the Accelerated Reader Book Finder (Renaissance Learning, 2015).

The Charlotte Zolotow Award books contain many instances of Tier Two words. Examples of Tier Two words and the Charlotte Zolotow books from which they were drawn are presented in Table 1. The examples of the Tier Two cognate pairs in the table typify the richness of the vocabulary in the Zolotow picture books. Pairs such as devastate/*devastar*, ament/*lamentar* and patient/*paciente*, stand out in contrast to basic sight words typically found in basal readers. Since many of the cognates are in a Latino ELL’s Spanish listening vocabulary, learning the English cognate establishes a connection in memory between the English word and its meaning in Spanish.

Table 1: Examples of Tier Two cognate words from the Charlotte Zolotow Award books.

Picture Book	Examples of Tier Two Cognate Words
<i>A Sick Day for Amos McGee</i>	alarm/ <i>alarma</i> ; allergy/ <i>alergia</i> ; patient/ <i>paciente</i> ; prepare/ <i>preparar</i>
<i>All You Need for a Snowman</i>	absolutely/ <i>absolutamente</i> ; except/ <i>excepto</i> ; surprise/ <i>sorpresa</i> ; triple/ <i>triple</i>
<i>Always and Forever</i>	companion/ <i>compañero</i> ; memory/ <i>memoria</i> , problem/ <i>problema</i> ; suggest/ <i>sugerir</i>
<i>Balloons Over Broadway</i>	articulate/ <i>articular</i> ; destination/ <i>destino</i> ; magnificent/ <i>magnifico</i> ; pattern/ <i>patrón</i>
<i>Click, Clack, Moo Cows that Type</i>	decide/ <i>decidir</i> ; furious/ <i>furioso</i> ; neutral/ <i>neutral</i> ; ultimatum/ <i>ultimatum</i>
<i>Country Fair</i>	content/ <i>contento</i> ; nervous/ <i>nervioso</i> ; section/ <i>sección</i> ; vote/ <i>votar</i>

Table 1: cont.

<i>George Washington's Teeth</i>	battle/ <i>batalla</i> ; fierce/ <i>feroz</i> ; invade/ <i>invadir</i> ; secure/ <i>seguro</i> ; sentinel/ <i>centinela</i>
<i>How I Learned Geography</i>	devastate/ <i>devastar</i> ; enthusiasm/ <i>entusiasmo</i> misery/ <i>miseria</i> ; savor/ <i>saborear</i>
<i>Mabela the Clever</i>	attention/ <i>atención</i> ; initiate/ <i>iniciar</i> ; offer/ <i>ofrecer</i> ; society/ <i>sociedad</i>
<i>Pictures from our Vacation</i>	appear/ <i>aparecer</i> ; interesting/ <i>interesante</i> ; journey/ <i>jornada</i> ; surprised/ <i>sorprendido</i>
<i>The All-I'll Ever Want Christmas Doll</i>	excitement/ <i>excitación</i> ; harmony/ <i>armonía</i> ; imaginary/ <i>imaginario</i> ; sculpture/ <i>escultura</i>
<i>Three Cheers for Catherine the Great</i>	certain/ <i>cierto</i> ; entire/ <i>entero</i> ; mystery/ <i>misterio</i> ; promise/ <i>prometer</i>
<i>Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding</i>	ceremony/ <i>ceremonia</i> ; champion/ <i>campeón</i> ; fertility/ <i>fertilidad</i> ; science/ <i>ciencia</i>
<i>Zen Shorts</i>	accent/ <i>acento</i> ; exclaim/ <i>exclamar</i> ; lament/ <i>lamentar</i> ; preoccupied/ <i>preocupado</i>

Morphology and Orthography Lessons to Accompany the Picture Book Read-Alouds

There are several types of morphology lessons teachers can design with the cognates they find in the Zolotow picture books they use for read-alouds. Since many cognates are derived from Latin and Greek roots, it is possible for teachers to use cognate prefixes, roots, and suffixes to show the morphological relatedness of words both across and within English and Spanish.

Teachers can promote the development of a cognate-recognition strategy by teaching their Latino ELLs that certain Latin and Greek prefixes are identical or similar in both English and Spanish. Teachers can then provide their students with lessons on such prefixes along with examples of English-Spanish cognate pairs that share the same prefix. From these examples, Latino ELLs can learn the prefixes which signal the presence of a cognate and use this knowledge to recognize cognates. The prefix, /inter-/, for example, can be

Table 2: Prefix generalizations and examples from the Charlotte Zolotow Award Books.

Prefix	Meaning	Book	Example Cognates
ad-	to, toward	<i>Mrs. Crump's Cat</i> <i>Ready for Anything</i> <i>Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller</i>	admire/admirar admit/admitir
bi-	two	<i>Princess Hyacinth (The Surprising Tale...)</i>	bicycle/bicicleta binoculars/binoculares
con-	with, together	<i>When I Was Young in the Mountains</i> <i>Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story...</i>	congregation/ congregación construct/ construir
dis-	not	<i>Monet Paints a Day</i> <i>Precious and the Boo Hag</i>	disappear/desaparecer disobey/desobedecer
e-	out	<i>Who Will I Be, Lord?</i> <i>Pierre in Love</i>	education/educación enormous/enorme
extra-	outside	<i>Tia Isa Wants a Car</i> <i>Tea Cakes for Tosh</i>	extra/extra extract/extracto
im-	not	<i>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type</i> <i>Mary Smith</i>	impatient/impaciente impossible/imposible
in-	into	<i>Clever Beatrice: An Upper Peninsula Conte</i> <i>Cool Cat, Hot Dog</i> <i>Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding</i>	insist/insistir inspire/inspirar
inter-	between, among	<i>Lilly's Big Day</i>	intercept/inteceptar interpret/interpretar
pre-	before	<i>Maxwell's Mountain</i> <i>Zen Shorts</i>	predictable/predecible preoccupy/preocupar
re-	again	<i>Henry's First-Moon Birthday</i> <i>I Stink!</i> <i>Gorilla! Gorilla!</i>	reconstruct/reconstruir recycle/reciclar
sub-	below	<i>Niño Wrestles the World</i>	submarine/submarine
super-	above	<i>Flicker Flash</i> <i>Little Dog Poems</i>	submission/sumisión superhero/superhero
tri-	three	<i>Circle Dogs</i> <i>All You Need for a Snowman</i>	supervise/supervisar triangle/triángulo triple/triple
uni-	one	<i>Country Fair</i> <i>Sick Day for Amos McGee</i>	unicycle/uniciclo uniform/uniforme

found in the English and Spanish cognate pairs: interfere/*interferir*, interrupt/*interrumpir*, and intersection/*intersección* among others. Having learned these examples, students can generalize this knowledge to other encounters with words possessing /inter-/: intercept/*interceptar*, interrogate/*interrogar* and interval/*interval*. Examples of common Latin and Greek prefixes and their

Table 3: Examples of suffix generalizations from the Charlotte Zolotow Award Books.

Picture Books	Suffix Generalization	Examples
<i>Balloons over Broadway...</i>	-al/-ico	electrical/eléctrico magical/mágico mechanical/mecánico
<i>Pierre in Love</i>	-ance/-ancia	distance/distancia; elegance/elegancia; importance/importancia
<i>A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams</i>	-ary/-ario	literary/literario; ordinary/ordinario; salary/salario
<i>Monet Paints a Day</i>	-ent/-ente	crescent/creciente; different/diferente; frequent/frecuente
<i>Princess Hyacinth (The Surprising Tale of a Gil Who Floated)</i>	-ly/-mente	exactly/exactamente; firmly/firmente; horribly/horriblemente
<i>Maxwell's Mountain</i>	-ous/-oso	glorious/ <i>glorioso</i> ; rigorous/ <i>riguroso</i> ; studious/ <i>estudioso</i>
<i>Year of the Jungle</i>	-sion/-sión	confusion/ <i>confusión</i> ; explosion/ <i>explosión</i> ; television/ <i>televisión</i>
<i>Lily's Big Day</i>	-tion/-ción	exception/ <i>excepción</i> ; perfection/ <i>perfección</i> ; reception/ <i>recepción</i>
<i>Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding</i>	-ty/-dad	fertility/ <i>fertilidad</i> ; quality/ <i>cualidad</i> ; specialty/ <i>especialidad</i>

associated English-Spanish cognates are presented in Table 2, along with the titles of Zolotow Award books where they can be found.

Teachers can also use suffixes and word endings to show the relatedness of English suffixes and Spanish suffixes. For example, teachers can use cognates to show the relationships between English suffixes and Spanish ones. Examples of suffix generalizations and the Charlotte Zolotow Award books from which they were drawn are presented in Table 3. As may be inferred from Table 3, there are consistent English-to-Spanish suffix generalizations that Latino ELLs can use to transform English words to Spanish words and the converse. For example, many English adverbs that end in the suffix, “-ly,” become Spanish adverbs that end in “-mente” as in finally/*finalmente*.

Along with affix generalizations, teachers can use Latin and Greek roots shared by English and Spanish to derive the meanings of words possessing those roots. Several of the root word generalizations from the Charlotte Zolotow Award books are shown in Table 4 along with their meanings and etymologies. Using the cognates as a ground, a teacher can brainstorm with the Latino ELLs to generate other instances of English and/or Spanish words having a particular root. For example, the root word, -fend-, as in defend/*defender*, can be used to yield the cognates, indefensible/*indefendible* and defensive/*defensivo*. The same root can also be used to generate other cognates such as offend/*ofender* and offense/*ofensa*, as well as fender/*defensa*.

English-Spanish cognates may also be used to design lessons that specifically teach spelling rules for converting English words to Spanish words and vice-versa. For example, the English words possessing the /ph/ digraph may be transformed into Spanish words where the English digraph is replaced by the grapheme /f/ as in the examples: elephant/*elefante*, digraph/*digrafo*, and pharmacy/*farmacia*. Also, the English words, “statue,” “skeleton,” and “spectacle,” become the Spanish words beginning with the epenthetic schwa: *estatua*, *esqueleto*, and *espectáculo*, respectively.

In addition to helping them recognize cognates and develop their vocabularies, there are spelling generalizations involving English double consonants that can be taught to make Latino ELLs better spellers. Many English words having double consonants become Spanish words with single consonants and vice-versa. The English “tunnel” becomes the Spanish túnel.

Table 4: Examples of root word generalizations from the Charlotte Zolotow Award Books.

Picture Book	Root Generalization (meaning; Etymology)	Examples
<i>Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller</i>	-auto- (self; Greek)	autobiography/ <i>autobiografía</i>
<i>Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave</i>	-basi- (at the bottom; Greek)	basic/ <i>básico</i>
<i>Mrs. Crump's Cat</i>	-clar- (clear; Latin)	declare/ <i>declarar</i>
<i>Mary Smith</i>	-duc- (lead; Latin)	conduct/ <i>conducir</i>
<i>How I Learned Geography</i>	-extra- (outer; Latin)	strange/ <i>extraño</i>
<i>Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature</i>	-fend- (strike; Latin)	defend/ <i>defender</i>
<i>Sophie's Squash</i>	-ger- (bear, carry; Latin)	suggest/ <i>sugerir</i>
<i>Three by the Sea</i>	-herb- (grass; Latin)	herb/ <i>hierba</i>
<i>My Garden</i>	-in- (not; Latin)	invisible/ <i>invisible</i>
<i>We March</i>	-jus- (justice; Latin)	justice/ <i>justicia</i>
<i>The Cow That Laid an Egg</i>	-mot- (motion; Latin)	commotion/ <i>conmoción</i>
<i>Sleep Like a Tiger</i>	-nunci- (announce; Latin)	announce/ <i>anunciar</i>
<i>Flabbermashed about You</i>	-phon- (sound; Greek)	microphone/ <i>micrófono</i>
<i>Tia Isa Wants a Car</i>	-rid- (laugh; Latin)	ridiculous/ <i>ridículo</i>
<i>Helen's Big World: The Life of Helen Keller</i>	-sci- (know; Latin)	conscious/ <i>consciente</i>
<i>Maxwell's Mountain</i>	-typ- (model; Greek)	typical/ <i>típico</i>
<i>County Fair</i>	-uni- (one; Latin)	unicycle/ <i>uniciclo</i>
<i>Precious and the Boo Hag</i>	-vict- (conquer; Latin)	victory/ <i>victoria</i>
<i>A Sick Day for Amos McGee</i>	-zo- (animal; Greek)	zoo/ <i>zoológico</i>

Likewise, the Spanish word, *tráfico* becomes the English word, “traffic.” Spelling generalizations for English words having double consonants are presented in Table 5.

Concluding Remarks

In today's elementary schools, English-Spanish cognates are an understudied and under-taught category of words. The sheer number of cognates and

Table 5: . Examples of spelling generalizations from the Charlotte Zolotow Award Books.

Picture Book	Spelling Generalization	Cognate Example
<i>Niño Wrestles the World</i>	cc→c	accept/aceptar
<i>The Hello, Goodnight Window</i>	dd→d	middle/medio
<i>Oscar's Half-Birthday</i>	ffāf	traffic/tráfico
<i>Always and Forever</i>	ggàg	suggestion/sugerencia
<i>Oh, No!</i>	ll→l	allergy/alergia
<i>Superdog, The Heart of a Hero</i>	mm→m	comment/comentar
<i>Bear Snores On</i>	nn→n	tunnel/túnel
<i>An Island Grows</i>	pp→p	appear/aparecer
<i>Pierre in Love</i>	rr→r	hurricane/huracán
<i>Samantha on a Roll</i>	ssàs	depression/depresión
<i>Chavela and the Magic Bubble</i>	ttàt	confetti/confeti
<i>Silent Music: A Story from Baghdad</i>	-ph-/-f-	calligraphy/caligrafía
<i>Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm</i>	-th-/-t-	therapy/terapia
<i>Samantha on a Roll</i>	sc-/esc-	scene/escena
<i>The Hatseller and the Monkeys</i>	sp-/esp-	spirit/espíritu
<i>Three Cheers for Catherine the Great</i>	st-/est-	stamp/estampilla

their value as academic vocabulary words demand their inclusion into the curriculum. Curriculum experts and curriculum writers need to design and incorporate morphology and orthography lessons on cognates that will foster the cognate recognition strategies described in this manuscript. Teachers in the earliest elementary grades can take the initiative and design their own cognate morphology and orthography lessons to give Latino ELLs the deserved linguistic advantage that follows from the acquisition and knowledge of the English and Spanish languages. The present analysis of the Charlotte Zolotow Award books suggest that the picture books that have been recognized by this award are excellent vehicles for designing the morphology and orthography lessons to accompany read-alouds that aim to teach the cognate recognition strategies.

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