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IN ESMERALDAS**



**APPLIED LINGUISTICS SCHOOL**

**THESIS REPORT:**

**ANALYSIS OF THE MOST COMMON WORDS CALLED “FALSE FRIENDS” OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE THAT INTERFERE THE STUDENTS’ READING UNDERSTANDING AT PUCESE**

**TESIS DE GRADO:**

**ANÁLISIS DE LAS PALABRAS MÁS COMUNES DENOMINADAS “FALSOS AMIGOS” DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS QUE INTERFIEREN EN LA COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE LA PUCESE**

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I, **Daniel Israel Guevara Loor** declare that this research under the current thesis is absolutely original, authentic and personal. Being based on real facts this research is legal and academically exclusive of the author and **PUCESE**

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## RESUMEN

Las palabras llamadas “cognados” se encuentran en diferentes partes e idiomas en el mundo entero al conocer que tienen ortografía y significado similar. Además, éstas pueden ayudar a los estudiantes con un amplio vocabulario y tareas de comprensión lectora. Sin embargo, debe tenerse en cuenta que las palabras que parecen similares, a las cuales se les denomina falsos amigos, requieren de una atención muy especial: tienen diferentes significados en todos los contextos. Esta investigación, la cual se basa en los cognados y falsos amigos, consiste en establecer, clasificar, identificar y comprender el origen de tales palabras y establecer cómo éstas han afectado a los estudiantes en los últimos años en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Este estudio es de tipo cualitativo y cuantitativo para obtener una amplia ilustración sobre las dificultades encontradas en los estudiantes de la Universidad Católica de la ciudad de Esmeraldas, quienes en algunos casos tratan de entender algunos textos en inglés, pero la mayoría se confunden por ciertas palabras dentro del idioma conocidas como "falsos amigos".

Con el fin de completar el trabajo acerca de la identificación de las cognadas y falsas-amigos del inglés se hizo un diagnóstico sobre el conocimiento de los alumnos en relación con este tema a través de una encuesta dirigida a todos los estudiantes de las diferentes carreras de la PUCESE; cuyo objetivo principal de este estudio fue determinar cuáles son las palabras denominadas falsos amigos más comunes del idioma Inglés que interfieren la comprensión de lectura de los estudiantes en la PUCESE.

Los resultados mostraron que los falsas amigas que se derivan de la reciprocidad lingüística y también que son en parte ignorado por los estudiantes, constituyen un problema principal en su comprensión de lectura. Sobre la base de los resultados obtenidos, se plantearon algunas conclusiones y se dieron recomendaciones tanto a los maestros como a los estudiantes del Inglés General de la PUCESE para manejar tal problema.

Los resultados obtenidos permitieron el diseño de un material didáctico para beneficiar el aprendizaje del inglés por los estudiantes.

## **ABSTRACT**

The words called "cognate" are found in different parts and languages around the world, knowing that their spelling and meaning look similar. Besides, they can help students with a wide range of vocabulary and reading comprehension tasks. However, it should be noted that words that seem alike, which are called false friends, require special attention: they have different meanings in all contexts. This research, which is based on cognates and false friends, focus on classifying, identifying and understanding the origin of such words and establishing how they have affected students in recent years in learning English as a foreign language.

This study is qualitative and quantitative in order to get a comprehensive illustration of the difficulties encountered by students of the Catholic University in the city of Esmeraldas, who in some cases try to understand texts in English, but most are confused by certain words in the language known as "false friends."

In order to complete the work on the identification of cognates and false-friends words, a diagnosis was preceded on the students' knowledge regarding this issue, through a survey directed to all students of different careers at PUCESE. The main principal objective of this study was to determine what are the most common words called false friends of the English language that interfere the students' reading understanding at PUCESE.

The results showed that false friends that are derived from linguistics reciprocity and partly ignored by students are a major problem in their reading understanding. Based on the results, some conclusions were provided and some recommendations were given to both teachers and students of General English at PUCESE to handle such a problem.

The results allowed the design of an educational material for learning English that will benefit the students.

## INTRODUCTION

Statistically, the English language is truly the global language in history. It is the language of education, business, medicine, travel, research and also the way to get to know people, cultures and customs. It is the language of communication. More than 1.5 billion people around the world speak or read English as a primary or secondary language. English is also the world's most rapidly changing language.

Throughout this investigation people who get themselves immerse into this language with an interesting view of how the English language has influenced the world, face a diversity of words that are presented to them, but change through time; so, sometimes these words can easily be used and misunderstood. Besides, some of the most current changes in the English language by using modern data to collect vocabulary, regionalism, or changes have been made specifically for the sake of students and English teachers.

In Ecuador, the English language is also considered as one of the most useful languages in order to get a good job. It is also regarded as an extra tool for business in a different field of expertise. The Ministry of Education here in Ecuador "Ecuadorian in-service: English Teacher Standard" states that: being proved the fact that Ecuador is a multicultural country, where a certain number of Ecuadorian students from public or private schools, colleges and universities who are learning English may descend from different cultures- basically all those from indigenous cultures, where the Spanish language is their second language; and then, English the third one; English teachers really need to have knowledge of how the English language has changed along the way and need to keep abreast of things that happen at present; being aware that those changes may interfere the learning of the English language.

Nowadays, some students in Esmeraldas city, especially those from the Catholic University (PUCESE), find themselves involved and challenged in learning English as a foreign language because of a small and tiny problem that occurs all the time when they are reading

and trying to understand different kind of texts in which there can be programs prescriptions, newspapers, manual devices or video game instructions and many other things in English. Students use cognate words frequently when for the first time they are learning English. These words help them in reading comprehension and can improve students' writing.

Most of the educators frequently try to use real cognates as a teaching instrument. If learners are conscious that cognate words exist, they will then realize to use this as a way to better and understand English if they perceive that some words seem to be real cognates, but their meanings have changed over the years. Definitely, those words are deceptive cognates, or false friends. Marie Heather Walseth (2013) declared that such existence of false friend words may cause problems in learning, not only just for teachers, but for students as well in learning, when they may be deceived into believing that they are using the right word when actually they are not.

Therefore, educators must teach their students that not all words resemble to be friendly and real cognates; instead, they must teach them that some words may be false cognates or friends, which can turn out to be foes. Cognate words sometimes can specifically be used to a learner's advantage in his better understanding of a new language and may appear themselves as such, but the student may also be fooled if such cognate is in fact a false cognate. Furthermore, as an English teacher and during pre-professional practice it was observed that students often tend to fall flat into the same trap.

It has been through observations and much practice that this issue about false friend words brought forth the initiative of the awareness and usage of cognates in English learners. So it is really important to find out whether learners are in fact aware of real cognate words and false friends as they are getting English vocabulary when reading a text.

Many students in this university, especially those whose careers tend to deal with international business and are related to their field of expertise, should be aware of this danger at not knowing the true meaning of certain words.

These words may lead them to a misunderstanding or a mistake when they read and understand English texts due to ignorance of some traps that the English language has; on the other hand, knowing that some of these English words seem to be "friendly" to learners and help them to convey communication in English too.

At the end, they turn out to have problematic and different meanings from those once believed on the basis of the similarity with the mother tongue, being false, tricky and very much less friendly than expected. That's why there might, undoubtedly, appear situations of mere coincidence, where there is no connection between the two words. It may cause a misunderstanding because of a similitude in form or pronunciation.

Personal completeness in regards with cognate words and false friends as a learner in the Catholic University led the author to dig for more information about the mutual relationship between false friends and cognates. It is thrilling to find out whether students are supposing that word meanings resemble exactly the same as the Spanish counterparts or if they are really using the context to see the presumptuous definition is correct.

Nonetheless, it is very important for teachers and students who often have the opportunity to go to a different country and deal with things according to their careers, to know what the most common false friends words of the English language are; our bonds of coexistence with other countries are becoming possible, and it would be a great idea to have the ability to stay updated with the continuous changes that the language has gone through. It would be really gratifying to find out if cognates and false friend words are implicit for students' awareness.

Therefore, this research will focus on answering the problem of the investigation: Which are the most common false friend words of the English language that interfere the students' reading understanding at PUCESE?

Subsequent questions of the study include:

- How will we know that such false friend words were really a problem in the past?
- Will participants be able to recognize false friends and real cognates?

- Will participants be able to get the meaning of certain unknown words through context?
- Is there any way to prevent these pitfalls and confusions?
- What solution would be given to teachers and students who study this language in relation to this topic?

This investigation is based on theories related to the origin of “false friends” in the English language; focusing on the target and considering the needs that the teaching –learning process of general English requires. In order to get this research done, a survey will be applied and with the results, a list of the words and phrases may help students and teachers to prevent the confusion when they are reading a text.

A pamphlet based on the most common false friend words in the English language will be provided to teachers; hoping that they may make use of it in order to overcome students' weaknesses, knowledge in the language because of the mentioned words, and factors that enable the process of learning. This research will be a great asset to teachers, but mainly to students and all those who want to avoid certain pitfalls in English, understand texts in English and enhance their English level a little bit higher, avoiding falling into the deception of false friend words.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVE:**

- To analyze the most common false friend words of the English language that interfere the students' reading understanding at PUCESE

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

- To make a bibliographical review of false friend words and how they may affect the students' reading understanding.
- To make a diagnosis regarding the students' knowledge about false friend words.

- To elaborate a pamphlet of the most common false friend words of the English language that hinder the students' understanding at PUCESE.

## **1. - THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ABOUT FALSE FRIEND WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The English language in his vast vocabulary tend to have an extraordinary range, flexibility and adaptability in itself; after so many years of contact with foreign languages and its readiness to form new words out of old elements, it appears to have far complex words in its main vocabulary than in any other language. There are many such sets of examples of words which intensify greatly our chances to express subtle areas of meanings in different levels and style. When dealing with false friend words, it is normally made reference to words that share the same form and etymology but evolved in the midst of two languages and two different civilizations where they may acquire different meanings (Lado, 1957)

So according to Lado's scale of difficulty, he states that false friends have the highest position in language and he described them as "sure-fire trap".

For Baker, this term involves "replacing a cultural-specific item or expression with target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning" (1992). Meanwhile, Kiss (2002) featured that, contrary to synonyms or paronyms, false friends are not innate in any language, but they are yielded in it. Thus, they should be considered first from an etymological perspective and second from a psychological one to envisage their formation; this is true, because there's a need to know where those words come from and how these affect the English learning process.

However, words can have a deceptive meaning as a result of semantic change in time and dissimilar development in two languages; they may be called deceptive cognate words or false friends.

Hatem and Mason (1990:61) assert that words in each language tend to have different meanings; as a result, one to-one correspondence is rare between any two languages.

To settle this difficulty, Newmark suggested a strategy called “cultural equivalent” (1988: 82-83); in which he states that false friends can be problematic for language learners as they tend to overgeneralize and presume they know the meaning of these words, which are in fact misleading especially when reading. The given name as false friends, though widely spread and known, is by no means the only one used in literature on the subject.

Chamizo-Domínguez (2008, p. 2), stated that “up to 16 more terms referring to the same or analogous phenomena” do really exist and of these at least five are misleading since they resemble to a different concept. The most notable as well as frequent example of a simplification of this kind is the use of “false/deceptive cognates” interchangeably with or instead of false friends.

Ringbom (2007), for instance, provides the term “false friends” in inverted commas, as another way of referring to “deceptive cognates” (p. 75), and Casanovas Catalá & O’Neill (1997) observe that “when it comes to speak about false friends, we are normally referring to inter-lingual deceptive [or false] cognates” (p. 103).

The previous similarity leads to false associations, wrong use or misunderstanding, or in the best case distortion of context, imprecision, disregard for the right stylistic coloring (Andrejs Veisbergs, 1997) Holmes & Guerra Ramos (1993) stated that false friends are simple “words in two different languages that are orthographically recognizable, but totally different in meaning”

Coming to the conclusion that:

*The term [false friends] refers to the specific phenomenon of linguistic interference consisting of two given words in two or more given natural languages [that] are graphically and/or phonetically the same or very alike; yet, their meanings may be totally or partially different(Chamizo-Domínguez, 2008-p. 132).*

## 1.2. HISTORY AND RELATED FACTS

Deceptive false friend words have existed mostly in all Europe, as a clear prove of borrowed words from a singular and important source, the Latin language.

When languages come into physical connection anywhere as happens in second language development, these types of words often establish a source of lexical interference at all levels of dominion of the language (Maria O'Neill 1978).

This is true, because that's why this meaningful theoretical background has the purpose to focus on the active nature of false friend words by providing a brief narration of both, their diachronic and synchronic features, and also how these words affect to students, getting them confused when reading, at not knowing the meanings of certain words.

So, the first part of this theoretical background consists of a quickly overview of the history of borrowings in the English language all over the world, mainly on the periods of when the richest importation of Latin and French words took place and which, in this way, may have contributed and offered to the acquisition of the most common false friend words; and the second section deals with some theoretical aspects of false friend words in a synchronic framework, the one that clearly shows the achievements that linguists have done through the time.

The implicit comparison about false friends is frequently found and used in the Linguistics area in order to point out the existence of some lexical items in two languages which are alike in structure but rather different in meaning (Hill 1982; Prado 2001; Chamizo Dominguez & Nerlich 2002; Schlesinger & Malkiel 2005).

The famous semantic false friends refer to all those having the same etymological source and their meanings change in different languages, but one barely can still detect semantic relations between them. They may be considered to be the cross-linguistic equivalents to polysemous words in single and unique natural languages.

These connections between meanings in different languages can be based on metaphor, metonymy and euphemism, but similarly on the specialization and generalization.

This kind of study relates with important implicit understanding for translation and cross-linguistics interaction, which an awareness of false friends is bring forth and is really important together with the knowledge of certain pragmatic strategies and methods in which help to prevent misunderstandings or mistranslations.

### **1.2.1. DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE:**

According to Mulcaster, (1985) false friend words are inter-lingual deceptive cognates or false friend words. However, there's an area, which is called intra-lingual part, where it is spoken about the "second degree of false friend words" (Koessler, 1975) where he suggests that these are products of the temporal and spatial variations and tend to operate in the same language.

One thing is certain, words and their meanings change through time. Therefore, false friend words are the outcome of words having a common origin, which lead us to the source, Latin language.

Consequently, some Germanic tribes of the Rhineland familiarized the words such as beer and wine as result of all borrowed words obtained from the Romans who had introduced them. This concept is really important to know because it allows students to know where this phenomenon has occurred and when the most common false friend words of the English language come from.

Whatever the reason, English borrowed extensively from Latin first directly or indirectly through French. The acting of borrowing words reflects the sorts of relationships between the two certain areas and their same shared interests. There were approximately 50 words found by that time according to Baugh& Cable, (1995) dealing with topics such as trade, agriculture, military matters and living refinements.

This phenomenon profoundly marked the existence of the English language, presenting words which have affected all the spheres of life and facilitating subsequent borrowings in later periods. It is hard to deduce that some words were borrowed directly from the Latin language or by French as commonly both languages were going through the same enrichment process.

No doubt those borrowings still continue in our current world, but the sources have changed and differed and these changes can bring about some semantic discomfort in the reader. But it is still unknown what the most common false friend words of the English language are and also to know if they are going to be handicaps for students who deal with their careers and use the language in their daily lives at not knowing which words can be frequently found.

### **1.2.2. SYNCHRONIC PERSPECTIVE:**

From a synchronic's view, it is considered that interference results from the partial identification of two linguistic systems. For this reason, (Pit Corder, 1973) admitted the term *faux-amis*, which shows the incorrect use of certain words in the second language because of its physical likeness to a word in the mother tongue.

There have been some linguists who have contributed with vast of dictionaries to their own language (Catalans, Australians) but there are few such as Lenka Tycová (2012) who created a dictionary for English Language and Literature. Different classifications of false friend words have been put forward. As follows; one of these, which has been adopted in this study, ranks false friend words according to the degree of meaning overlapped.

Following this criterion, (Selinker, 1972) said that false friend words fall into three groups. The first category, known as segregation words, gives description to the situation in which none of the meanings of the words coincide in either of the two languages. For instance, “Desgracia” in Spanish and “Disgrace” in English exemplify this first case.

The second degree, known as intersection words, refers when the two words share some meanings but not at all times, showed as “inscribir” and “inscribe”. Finally, and the last one called inclusion words often takes place when the meanings of one word absorbs those of the other, that is, all the acceptations of one word coincide with the other and moreover.

However, equally significant is the global situation in which the structure occurs and the utterances that proceed and follow it. This is true, according to these theories, because difficulties are found everywhere, when the teaching-learning process is being taken into account, especially teaching English as a second language; teachers must do their best in

order to help and succeed with their students finding the best way to overcome this problem.

### 1.3. CLASSIFICATION

- **Cognates or True Friend Words (Vrais Amis):** words being perceived as similar and mutual translations. The spelling structure can sometimes be identical or not. For instance: nature - nature, recognition -reconnaissance.
- **False Cognates or Deceptive Friends (Faux Amis):** words found in two languages that are noticed as similar but rather have different meanings. For instance: main \hand" - main, blesser \to injure" - bless.
- **Partial Cognate Words:** They perform as cognates or as false friends, depending on the sense that is used in each context. For instance, in French, *facteur* means not only \factor", but also \mailman", while *étiquette* can also mean \label.
- **Semantic false friends:** simply words that are graphically and/or phonetically alike in various languages, but their meanings have diverged.

These different meanings are, however, related to each other by various figurative links. For this reason semantic false friend words could be regarded as the equivalents, in two or more given languages, of polysemous words in a given single natural language.

Maria O'Neill (1978) stated that semantic false friends can in turn be classified into two groups:

- The first one, known as the full false friends, which are those words whose meanings in various languages diverge widely and are on brink of becoming equivalent to homonyms; For instance: *bothersome* and *fastidioso*.
- Partial false friends, which are those words that have several senses, some of which coincide in both languages while others do not.

## **1.4. MISLEADING TERMINOLOGIES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

### **1.4.1. BORROWINGS AND FALSE FRIENDS**

Borrowings are a frequent source of partial or full false friend words in the English language; which can be seen in different ways: being based on the target language borrowed words which can be restricted to only one of the various; possible meanings of a polysemous word in the source language.

Followed by the borrowed words polysemies can develop which were absent in the original language; and then the meaning of borrowed words can deviate from the meaning (or meanings) of the source language because they have been used figuratively (Chamizo Dominguez and B. Nerlich (2002) p.34).

### **1.4.2. IDIOMS AND FALSE FRIENDS**

Usually some false friend words are broken down as isolated words, but many terms only become false friends in the context in which they are used. In fact, there are hundreds of numerous words, which are not false friends at all when they are considered in isolation, but which become when they are part of an idiom. Sometimes, idioms can be understood both according to the literal meaning of their component words and according to any figurative interpretation. This representative meaning becomes the most common one when idioms are fully lexicalized.

## **1.5. - PUTTING IT RIGHT: “FALSE FRIEND” OR “FALSE COGNATE”?**

Cognates are words that have similar form and meaning in two or more languages (Kelley & Kohnert, 2012). Although the English language has always had Germanic roots, along the centuries it has borrowed from a plethora of different languages (O’Neill & Casanovas Catalá, 1997). Dr. Jon Aske, from the Department of Foreign Languages, (Salem State University) declared that in the linguistics area; the term cognate refers to mainly words in different languages that come from the same word in a pre-earlier and parent language, which may seem unrelated at first sight, but they are not.

### 1.5.1. COGNATES AND FALSE FRIENDS

Cognate words are an amazing asset part of language learning. Not only do they shared knowledge from L1 to L2 and can be a source of positive transfer, but rather they can also be a strategy to aid in English acquisition. According to what O'Neill and Casanovas Catalá pointed out,

*The Latin foundation had left an indelible imprint on the language and a pitfall filled course for the student of English whose mother-tongue is Catalan or Spanish.*

*Being acquainted with the development of the language and how its vocabulary store was built up will always be an invaluable supply to the student to, if not eradicate these stumbling blocks, at least to heighten his conscience of how they used to come about (1997, p.107).*

These kinds of words are not cognates, but just merely curiosities. In addition to this, de Groot (2011) presents the terms “false cognates” and “false friends” as technically referring to dissimilar phenomena, while Chamizo-Dominguez (2008) considers “false cognates” a hyponym of “false friends”, the former concept constituting a part of the latter. However, this shows us with two different kinds of false friends with regard to semantic evolution or transformation: known as (1) chance false friends and (2) partial false friends:

**Chance False Friends:** They are words which resemble each other graphically, phonetically, or etymologically, but their semantics have become over time. For instance, *bizarro* and *bizarre* are refreshed chances or total false friends because their meanings have no relation to each other anymore.

**Partial False Friends:** On the other hand, this kind of false friends are the semantic relics of pragmatic language used over time and space” (Chamizo Domínguez & Nerlich, 2002, p. 1833). Words with similar linguistics forms and functions. For instance; *Accept* can be considered polysemous in English as it has different meanings that share similarities.

## **2. – READING UNDERSTANDING AS A FUNDAMENTAL SKILL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

One of the principal features to consider when learning English is to be aware of how important reading is. However, there is always a further, very important reason why many ESL (English as a second Language) students should try to develop their reading skills, for instance: Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, a student or someone who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams, and at the same time this person becomes wise in different aspects of concerns than a student who is a weak reader.

Good readers can seem to understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can assimilate ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications at once. They probably know most of the words in the text already, but they can also pinpoint the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context - failing this, they can use their dictionary effectively to do so.

But, what would happen if they don't have a pamphlet? How would they solve the problem and see the confusion in certain words? To sum up, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are employed in. And they can do it quickly! Some educational researchers have also found out that there's a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge; which shows that students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers.

This may be not very surprising, since the best way to acquire a large vocabulary is to read extensively, and if someone read extensively, sooner or later is likely to overcome his problems at reading understanding.

## 2.1. THE PROBLEM OF FALSE FRIENDS IN READING UNDERSTANDING FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The skill to read English as a foreign language is fundamental to the language proficiency of many students. Though most students have learned English all along the way, sometimes it seems they are seldom trained to learn reading strategies in order to improve their reading comprehension. So in order to examine the effects of reading strategies instruction to some students in the Catholic University in reading comprehension; this current study is also focusing in that part.

It has been stated that false friend words of the English language are a real problem for language learners. Even so, little research has been done on the identification of the difficulties learners have when it comes to the use of these words.

So, before we can see what kinds of difficulties learners have, it is crucial to know the difference between the terms: Reading strategies and Reading comprehension.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

**READING STRATEGIES:** According to Duffy (1993), reading strategies refer to the plan for readers to resolve problems encountered in constructing meaning from texts. Likewise, Pressly (1989) described that reading strategies are conscious, instantiated and flexible plans readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks. However, D’Arcangelo (2002) indicated that reading strategies are tools which allow readers to be more actively involved while reading. As Barnett (1988) explained, reading strategies are the mental operations involved when readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they need.

What has been stated previously is true, because one of the most efficient way to strengthen learners awareness is to provide strategy training, explicit instruction in how to apply language learning strategies as part of the foreign language curriculum. Hopefully, students can become strategic readers who can read more effectively.

**READING COMPREHENSION:** Sweet and Snow (2003) define this term as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning”. In addition, “reading

comprehension or reading understanding is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002)

Tonjes and Zintz (1987) also stated that the process of comprehension is viewed as an interactive one, where the readers comprehended through what they already know about the topic as they interact with the text. In other words, it is the interaction between the reader and the text.

## **2.2. READING PROBLEMS CAUSED BY FALSE FRIENDS**

Reading is one of the most important skills for learners to expand their knowledge of the language, cultures and the world. They can get as much information as they need through reading different materials, such as magazines, newspapers, novels, books, journals, and so on. With a strengthened reading skill, students make a greater progress and attain greater development in all academic areas.

However, the major difficulty encountered by some students from the Catholic University when they read is the inability to grasp, understand and extract the ideas and meanings of false friends. They tend to get confused many times or simply they don't care what their meaning is and continue reading, thinking that maybe those words that are alike to the Spanish language mean the same thing. Perhaps students seldom use, or have not been taught how to use reading strategies to facilitate their reading comprehension, and also it is plain to see that there's a lack of awareness on this matter.

This can be especially troublesome when reading a badly and old-fashioned translated text. Translations of false friends can lead to certain ambiguities which can, however, be exploited themselves in literature to exceed in certain effects (Sender, 1994; Daninos, 1990). So studying this type of ambiguity can, therefore, not only provide to pragmatics of conversations and misunderstandings, but also to a pragmatics of literature, and to pragmatics of translations.

Robert Hill (1982) has pointed out in his brand new dictionary of false friends that they are particularly treacherous words when it comes to understanding what somebody is speaking and meaning in another language.

### **2.3. PROBLEMS WITH FALSE FRIENDS**

Frantzen (2003) describes false friends as deceptively transparent words. Some studies have indicated that false friends can cause major and big problems for second language learners; all of them came together with the same conclusion scientifically (Alonso, 1997; Chacón Beltrán, 2006; Chamizo Domínguez & Nerlich, 2002; Roca Varela, 2010).

Meanwhile, Roca and Varela (2010) discussed three types of problems regarding false friends. The first real problem refers to the semantic transfer where a learner will simply mistake meanings of these deceptively transparent words as if the words in question were cognates. The second matter is related to syntactic transfer where a learner will assume that the false friend has the same grammatical function as L1; and finally, turn out to be problems with pragmatics. Learners could misinterpret the context where the word was presented and then use that type of wrong interpretation to define other words and finally a distorting of a greater part of the text that can affect the learner's entire understanding of a text (Chacón Beltrán, 2006).

### **2.4. VOCABULARY THROUGH CONTEXT**

Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for a student when reading is to make inferences in the text, it cannot be an immediate skill, but it is a skill that is pretty essential and meaningful in reading a variety of texts and a necessary tool for the standardized tests required for graduation. Once in a while when Spanish speakers see a cognate within a text, they use their L1 knowledge to hypothesize that the word in question has the same meaning in English as it does sometimes in Spanish.

Nevertheless, when a false friend appears, a skill that might support a student in defining that word may be to use the context surrounding the word to decide on an appropriate definition. This is, of course, occasionally provided that the student hasn't already formed an incorrect assumption about the false friend.

#### **2.3.4. CONTEXTS CAN HELP**

Some studies and Scientific reports have been giving the clear evidence that a meaningful context can oversee students understand the word meanings within that context (Durán Escribano, 2004; Frantzen, 2003; Huckin & Bloch, 1995).

Some kind of string influence can affect each individual student as he is trying to deduct meanings within a text, including age, educational background, and knowledge of the world, proficiency level and also life experiences. These factors influence the ability of the learner to succeed in inferring correct meanings from different texts.

In order to derive the meaning of a word from a given context also depends on the text itself. According to Frantzen (2003) texts must be directive; that is, they must be clear and context-based. This means basically that texts must be transparent enough to direct a reader to the correct meaning of a word; also texts must paint a clear picture so that a learner is able to discover the relevant and meaningful meaning.

If the text is vague or ambiguous, a learner will have much more difficulty in defining the unknown word. There must be a lot of support within the text that leads the student to the correct definition. One would assume, then, that if a beginner encounters a cognate within a directive text, they infer that the meanings are indeed the same.

So, taking into account that having the main knowledge of cognates will help learners in their acquisition and understanding, the reverse is also a possibility with false friends as they can disrupt the ability of English learners.

Studies have come down to the conclusion that false friends cause some serious problems for learners and can mislead their understanding of English in several areas such as syntax, semantics and negative transfer, when trying to use context to determine word meaning. Finally, it is truly to say that all of the research done has involved either elementary school students or college students.

### **3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH OF LEV VYGOSTKY.**

Given the importance about the knowledge of False-Friend words of the English language, it should be emphasized and study a little about the psychological and pedagogical contribution that Mr. Lev Vygotsky presented in his theories concerning of teaching and learning fields.

Vygotsky emphasized the fact that learning occurs first interpersonally, by means of the relationship between two or more people, and then intra-personally, in the mind of the individual.

For language learning it is very important to make provision of activities that permit the students' interaction since the very beginning, and not only interaction between them, but also between them and the contexts they read.

But to stablish a good interaction, it is compulsory, since the pedagogical and psychological point of view, to consider Vygotsky's construct of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (1978), what means that to comprehend the relationship between developments and learning, it is important to distinguish two developmental levels: the actual and the potential ones.

The actual refers to the activities that a child can carry out alone, without help; in contrast to potential levels of development: what children can do with help. Precisely, the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development is the ZPD (p. 85).

To go through the ZPD, the child needs mediators, which can be didactic materials, the teacher, and other students. In the case of this investigation, good mediator may be the teacher and the glossary to help the students learn the false friend words in English.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 METHODS

An analytical and inductive method was used for the present research work of investigation. **Analytical** because it gave way to make a diagnosis about how students from PUCESE get confused when reading English texts and of the student's awareness of the existence of false friend words and how they hinder reading comprehension. Also, **Inductive** because it allowed determining how the effective reading and understanding of English written texts can be good for students at knowing the False Friends words problems encountered in the classroom.

### 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research designs for the present study were descriptive and analytical. **Descriptive**, because throughout this, it was exposed how the teaching of the English Language at PUCESE is functioning when it comes to see if students are aware of the misunderstanding they may have because of not knowing some of the false friends words, also, it facilitated to define advantages, disadvantages, challenges that teachers as well as students have to face when they are looking for resources to enrich their knowledge, develop and strengthen their skills in reading comprehension.

**Analytical** because it is made possible to see how students' professional schooling can improve in their knowledge and abilities to give a competitive and responsible service in Esmeraldas when they have a pamphlet which contains most of the common false words of the English Language.

### 4.3 RESEARCH AREA

This investigation was framed in the Research Area of Pragmatics of English as a foreign language.

#### 4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In this work, students from the Catholic University (PUCESE) in the city of Esmeraldas were taken as population because the research was directly conducted to them.

As sample in general, fifty students from the higher levels in different schools and teachers from the English Language Department allowed and collaborated to obtain the results.

#### 4.5 TOOLS

The instrument used for this present research was the survey. The survey was conducted to all students in PUCESE from the higher levels in order to determine what they think about the existence of these false friends words, how they feel about their knowledge as future teachers or professionals, as well, what must be enhanced in the University according to their point of view and lived experiences.

#### 4.6 ETHICAL STANDARDS

This present research work is focused on helping the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language.

##### 4.6.1. VARIABLES

**Dependent:** Reading understanding

**Independent:** False-friends

#### 4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The following data collection was done in the Catholic University of Esmeraldas (PUCESE). The collected information is used to demonstrate how all that is part in the process of teaching English as a second Language and its awareness is working and also to design a proposal detailing suggestions that can students from different Schools to get better results in the General English Learning.

The survey was designed thinking about students to identify their needs, impressions, feelings and how they were progressing in the classroom. Before asking permission to the teacher (because it was done in classes), this was politely delivered to students, but before, it was explained the purpose of those and how to fill them. Students started answering each question and gave back the papers.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In this chapter, the results of the investigation are presented, as well as their analysis and interpretation. In order to make a correct tabulation of the results of the survey, all answers were counted and graphs were made to display the information.

### **PROCEDURE:**

In order to get the tabulation of data; a picture by an individual analysis for each question and a graphical representation was displayed; quantification was performed using the statistical percentage whose formula is:

$$\% = \frac{F \times 100}{N}$$

%= Percentage which is in total the study.

F= Number of times the data is repeated.

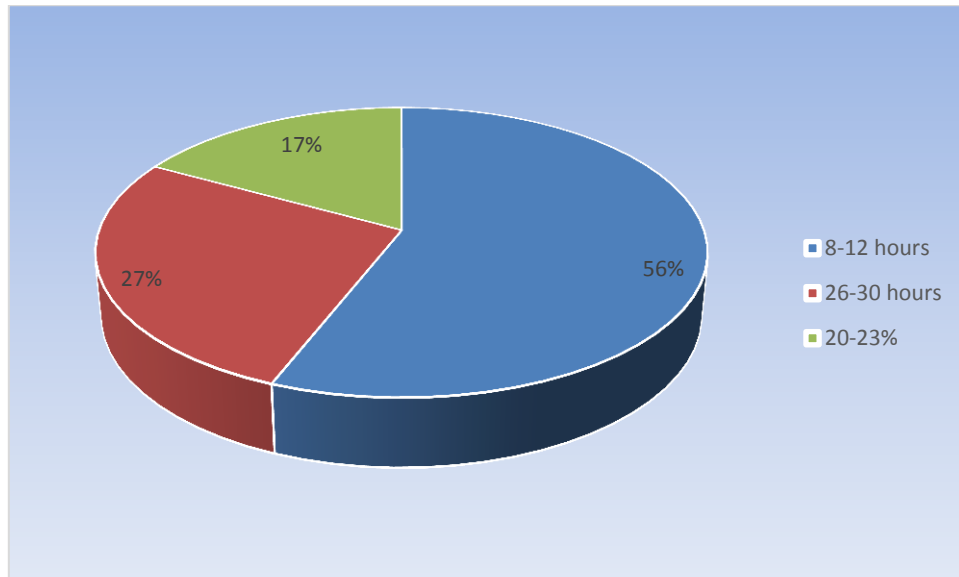
100= Constant sample

N= Total Data.

## DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

### THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

GRAPHIC 1

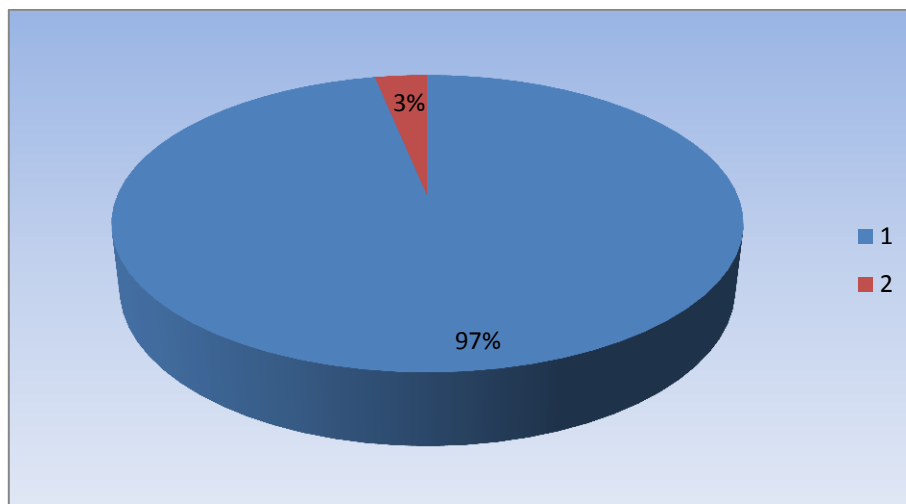


#### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

The graph shows that 56% of students receive at least 8-12 hours of English per week, while 27% reported having at least 20-23 hours due to the need and relationship with the language and their profession, and the remaining 17% said they can receive hours of that language inside or outside the classroom. Thus it is shown that only the majority of students is satisfied and likes to receive 8-12 hours a week.

## STUDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF FALSE FRIENDS

GRAPHIC 2

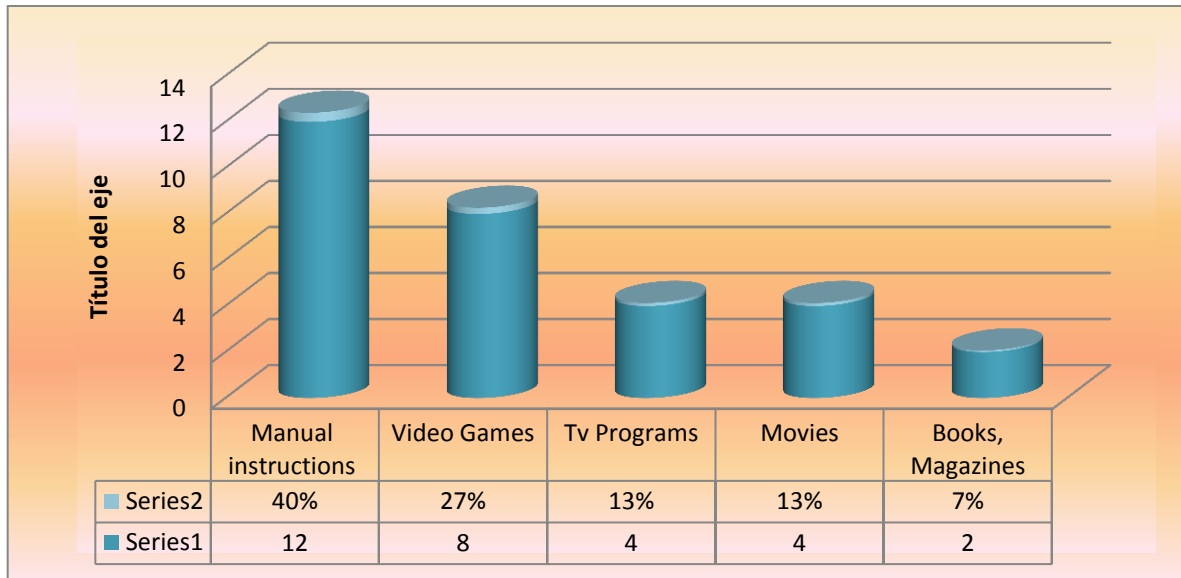


### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

As it can be seen, many of the students estimated 97% are unaware that false friend words exist in the English language and those who frequently often hear this phrase don't really know the real significance of the issue, which is approximately 3%. Therefore, the Catholic university students are not aware of the existence of these kinds of words and how they can affect them in their reading comprehension.

## ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' CAREER AND DAILY LIFE

### GRAPHIC 3

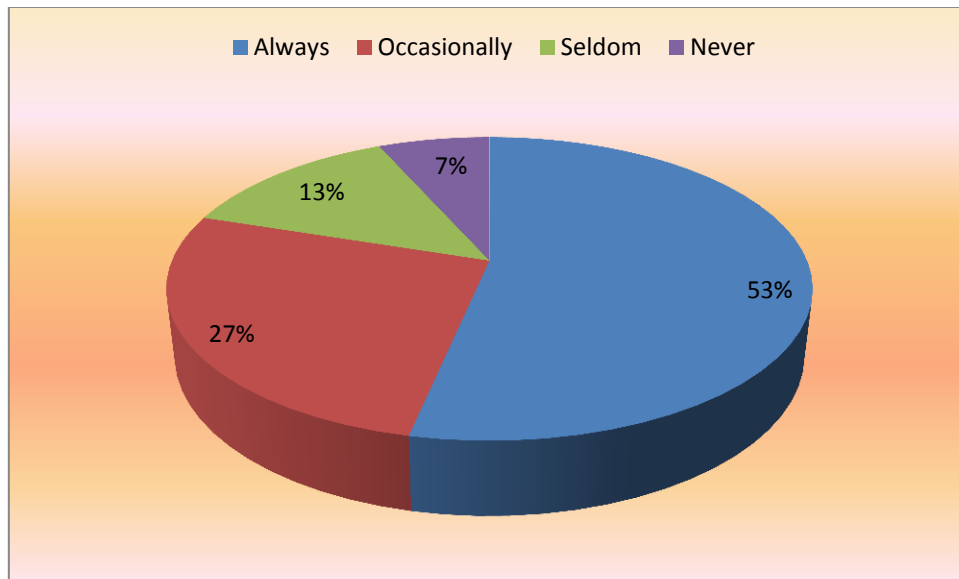


#### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

Parts of the 40% of students meet the English language at trying to deduce manual instructions, others, on the other hand with 27% of the sample indicate that they are caught in video games. However, in cases like TV shows and movies, there is a certain similarity with a total of 13% each, and few are those at the end with 7% who get confronted with a book or magazine.

## STUDENTS' PROBLEM WHEN READING ENGLISH TEXTS

### GRAPHIC 4

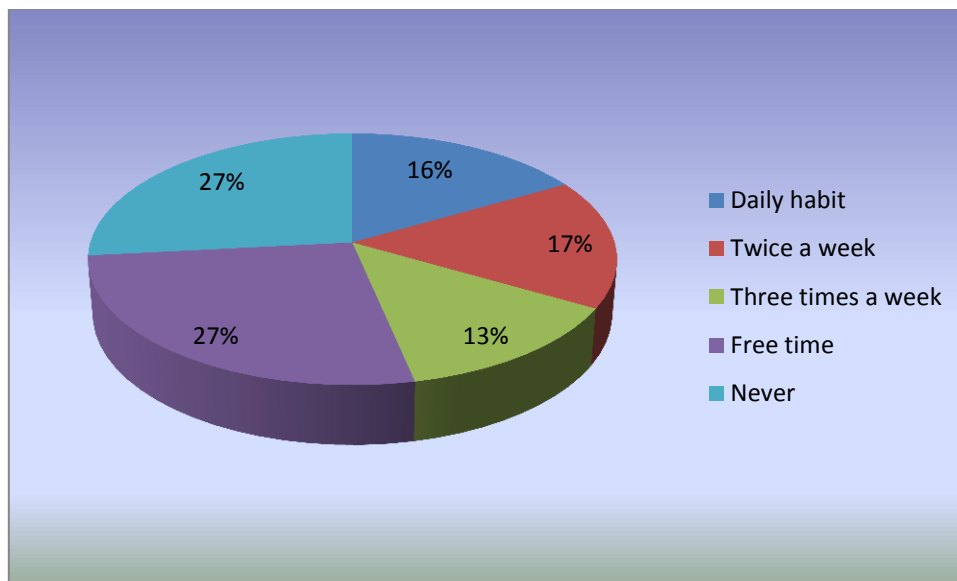


### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

As indicated in the graph, 53% of students usually read things in English for simply taking it as a habit, but 27% admitted that only does it occasionally when they are forced to do so, either by choice or specific task; other students give the clear evidence the 13% they rarely take the time to do it, and 7% truly answered that there's no any fun to do so.

## STUDENTS' OPINION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE READING SKILL

**GRAPHIC 5**



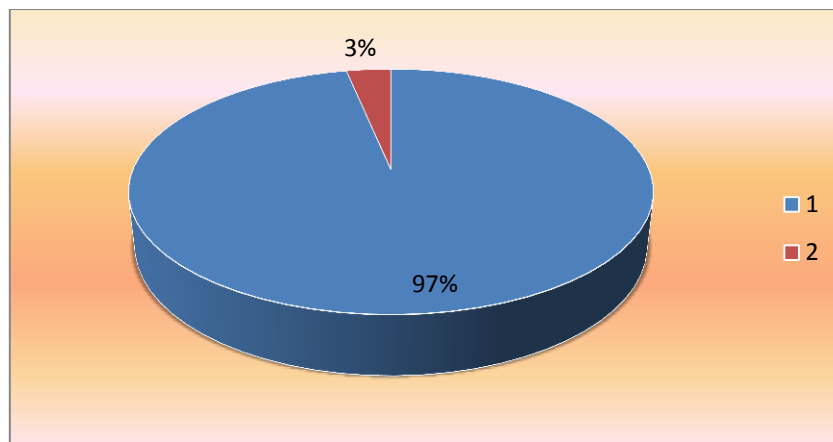
### **INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:**

It is very curious that part of the first two options with 27%, students consider that the reading skill could be taken as a daily habit, meanwhile others prefer to do it twice a week with a total of 17%; followed with 13 % some testified that could do it three times a week.

There were also students who really admitted to do it when they have their free time, and others clearly stated that they don't take it as a study issue or much less not to see it as an importance of a living habit.

## STUDENTS' DESIRE ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF FALSE FRIENDS

**GRAPHIC 6**

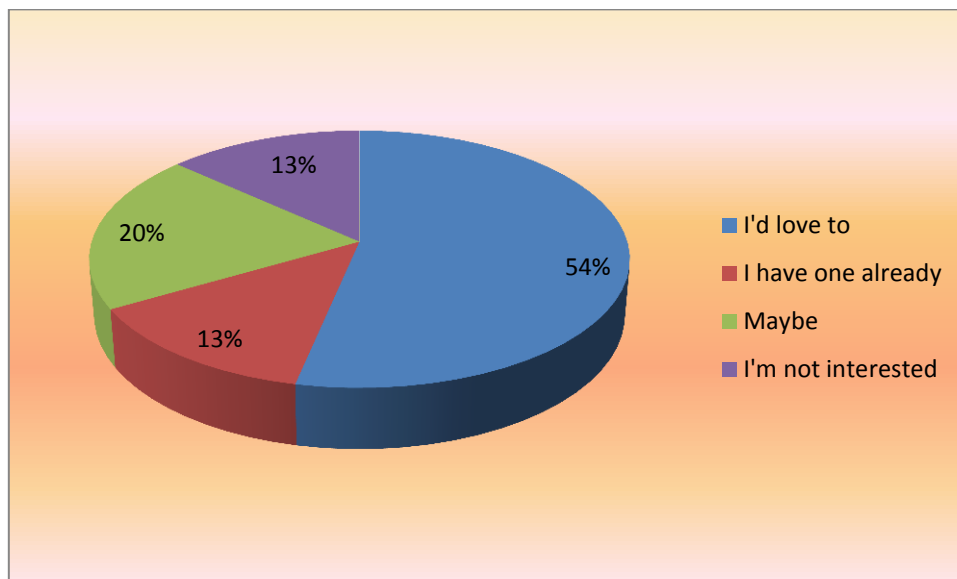


### **INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:**

It was given the option to ask students to be honest if they really were interested to know what those words were, and to our surprise 97% of students said that they really needed to know them in order to not be confused when learning the language and so avoid some pitfalls and confusions; but 3% of the population are not interested or in fact they deduced that they could not see them much in their daily lives.

## STUDENTS' INTEREST AT GETTING PAMPHLETS REGARDING FALSE FRIENDS

### GRAPHIC 7



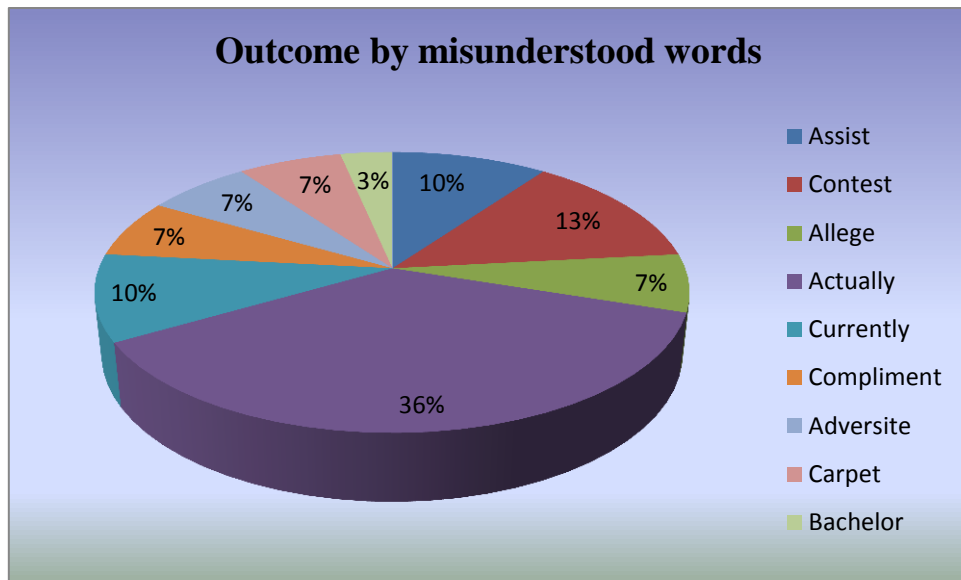
#### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

In this research with the simple and meaningful purpose of solving this big dilemma that our students are often confused in certain English texts, born the idea to provide them a glossary or pamphlet of the most common false friend words, just the 54% of the students showed their joy in wanting to acquire this material.

Followed by 20% who would prefer to keep it as a dictionary or tool when they need it most, and to finish with a great similarity of 13%, each of respondents disclosed that they already have one or at least that's what they say and others who are not really interested.

## COMMON MISUNDERSTOOD WORDS BY STUDENTS

### GRAPHIC 8



#### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

A total of 37% of the students thought that the word "actually" would have to do something with things that are happening nowadays, followed with 13% some of the students who thought that the word "contest" would have to do with the verb "answer a call or inattention", this same way with 10% from the same case, certain group of students with 7% seeing words such as "assist" and "currently" diverted their concentration and were unable to deduct true meaning of the sentence and finally with 3% only a few were wrong to think of the real meaning of the word "bachelor".

## 6. DISCUSSION

This current research investigated the notion of false-friend words as a problem encountered in foreign language learning and specifically in students' reading understanding. Also, this research took advantage of common misunderstandings that students have when reading English texts and adapted its methodology to reach a conclusion.

The main purpose of this study was meant to investigate the metacognitive awareness that students from the Catholic University had regarding to false friends and cognate words during reading understanding; also to do an analysis of which words in the English language called false-friend are the most common ones. Some additional objectives of the current research were to assess students' knowledge and awareness while reading and the ability to define cognates and false friends; to make a bibliographical research regarding this topic and whether students could establish the meaning of unknown words through context. This chapter will provide a brief summary of the results, the limitations of the research, implications for instruction, and finally suggestions for further research.

As it was discussed in detail in Chapter Three, this research could find that part of the students are aware of real cognates and false-friend words within a text and others are not. This awareness can be used in learning as a strategy to enhance proficiency in English; but participants also demonstrated though with regard to these words, and exposed the fact that they often assume word meanings without bothering to check the context to ensure the correctness of their supposition. According to the gotten outcomes, they support the fact that participants may be able in some cases to infer meaning from context when provided with choices; but this thing does not happen all the time.

However, students did really struggle to define unknown words independently and there was no sign that they were able to decipher a meaning without prompting.

There can be several factors which may limit the extent to which these results may be used. First, there were some problems with the selection of words. The real issue here is the nature of the false friends.

Since these meaningful words were specifically chosen to be academic in nature, they may have been more challenging cognitively for some students in different areas they may encounter in everyday language.

Cross-linguistic influence between the Spanish language and English and the students' ignorance about the different denotations that the same item takes in both languages have a great deal in this problem. This was clearly identified in the learners' translation and reading understanding resulting in different deviations.

The outcome of this research suggests that having a perception of cognates and false-friend words can make language more accessible for learners. The data resembles that learners may be mostly successful in identifying cognates and false friends within a text for a combined total of 65% if they knew about the existence of these words; but only the 35% are conscious or they have just got to the right answers by guessing the words. Students should be aware that cognates can be used as an asset in language acquisition if they really want to get better their reading understanding and doing so, will avoid some future problems. Likewise, no doubt false friends may cause obstacles for learners and they should also be made aware of them in order to confirm their previous notions of real meaning. Knowing this, it will allow learners to acquire a metacognitive strategy that could profitable increase their learning, useful in reading comprehension, and language acquisition.

Results of the study showed that students could not identify false friends as deceit cognates 52% of the time. This gives teachers additional reasons to always make students aware of the existence of false friends and encourage them to double-check their L1 definition of the word with the context. The context quiz of the survey results demonstrated that participants were very successful in some cases using the context when provided with choices. This does not mean, however, that participants would be able to infer the meaning using the context alone. Educators should instruct students to use the context whenever possible to attempt to determine the right meaning, but also scaffold, if necessary, their approach in correctly defining words.

Otherwise, semantic problems will occur and a learner's understanding and production of the language could be misunderstood.

So, why is it this mentioned again? Because this emphasizes that there is a latent necessity and lack of knowledge in different areas which is to help students to:

- Have a strong development of the Linguistics and English skills and
- Feel confidence with what they have learnt during their classes.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout the development of this study, it could be determined that there should be conclusions according to the objectives of the study:

- The problem of false friends is pretty evident from the learner data considered. This well-known language learning problem is not an invention on the teachers' part but a real problem for EFL students.
- Pragmatically speaking, the misuse of these words can easily cause serious communication problems in students.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All these problems should be mitigated by the teachers' action in and out of the classroom.
- The usage of audiovisual materials (pictures, videos, cartoons) in the classroom might be useful and could promote students' reflection on the potential misunderstandings caused by those problematic words in naturally occurring situations.
- It is also reasonable to continue this study with a pedagogical experiment by means of which the glossary designed is put into practice.

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# **ANNEXES**



## ANNEXE 1 STUDENTS' SURVEY:

### PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR ESMERALDAS

#### APPLIED LINGUISTICS SCHOOL

Hello, my name is Daniel Guevara, I'm a student from the Applied Linguistic School and I'm about to finish my thesis so that's why I would like to ask you some questions concerning with my topic of investigation.

This is a survey directed for students at Pucese of General English which has the simple purpose to see the students' knowledge in regards with the existence of false friend words of the English language.

Hola mi nombre es Daniel Guevara, soy un estudiante la escuela Lingüística Aplicada y últimamente me encuentro en la culminación de mi tesis de grado; es por eso que me gustaría hacerles algunas preguntas con respecto a mi tema de investigación.

Este es una encuesta dirigida para estudiantes de la Pucese que estudian inglés general, el cual tiene el simple propósito de indagar el conocimiento estudiantil con respecto a la existencia de las falsas palabras en el idioma Inglés.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Please try to read the questions carefully and answer them according to your understanding and knowledge.

1. - Which school are you? –Please specify:
  
2. – What level are you? -Please specify:
  
3. – How many hours do you receive English during the week?
  - 2-4
  - 4-6
  - Or more... please specify:

4. – Have you ever heard about the existence of false friend words in the English language?

- Yes
- No

5. – How often do you give yourself the time to read something in English?

- Always
- Occasionally
- Seldom
- Never

6. – According to your career and daily life, where do you see English words more frequently?

Things such as:

- TV programs
- Video games
- Manual instructions
- Program displays
- Movies
- Books
- Magazines
- Others....specify please:

7. – From the following words given below, please circle the ones you are unsure to understand, and try to translate the ones you know:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| • Actually      | • Determination |
| • Currently     | • Vulnerable    |
| • Advertisement | • Knowledge     |
| • Carpet        | • Acknowledge   |
| • Compliment    |                 |
| • Contest       |                 |
| • Assist        |                 |

8. – How important do you see the reading skill in your daily life?

- As a daily habit
- Read a text twice a week
- Three times a week
- Free time
- Never

9. – Do you consider important to know what the most common false friend words of the English language are in order to have a better reading comprehension?

- Yes
- No

10. – Would you like to have a pamphlet with the most common false friend words and their meaning in order to better your Reading comprehension?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- I'm not interested.



## ANNEXE 2 STUDENTS' EXERCISE

### PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR IN ESMERALDAS

#### APPLIED LINGUISTICS SCHOOL

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Please try to read the following sentences carefully and try to translate them.
- Then, by making a circle you must select some words that you may find confusing and cannot let you have a better understanding what the sentence is about.
- Please, there is no need to hurry yourself up, take your time according to your understanding and knowledge.

**Good Luck!**

1. - The violinist gave only an adequate performance.
2. - The reason I didn't do well in my exams is that I just didn't have adequate time to prepare.
3. - It's not by any means a brilliant salary but it's adequate for our needs.
4. - He was asked to adjudicate on the dispute.
5. - Which court adjudicates on constitutional matters?
6. - We had one or two difficulties along the way that we couldn't have anticipated.

7. - The police are anticipating trouble at tomorrow's football match.
  
8. - Her unhappiness was apparent to everyone.
  
9. - Her alleged skepticism did not prevent her to acknowledge the truth.
  
10. - This boy is fit for the military service.
  
11. - I'm getting married next week. I will surely miss my bachelor life.
  
12. - The sea is rough this afternoon; I had a simple glance at it.

**ANNEXE 3 « PHOTOS »**









