

Exploring WordReference/Online Dictionaries

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The goal of training students to use online dictionaries can include teaching students how to use examples to verify context; how to use the information provided by the dictionary to distinguish formal vs. informal uses or regional variations in usage in addition to identifying meta-linguistic information; the limitations of translating idiomatic expressions; and reflecting on how and why they might use an online dictionary like Word Reference while completing writing tasks.

Set the language to English-Spanish.

1. You find the word “conversador” in your textbook, but you don’t know how to use it so you need to know what part of speech it is. Identify whether or not it is an adjective, adverb, verb, or noun.
2. Look up the verb “to get.”
 - a. How many ways can you say it in Spanish? Why are there so many different ways?
 - b. What is an example of a colloquial, or informal, way to use “to get” in Argentina?
 - c. What verb would you use to say “to get” a good grade
 - d. How would you say “get” as in “shoo, go away” to someone?
3. A fellow student wants to write the following sentence in Spanish: “I am a fan of the Golden State Warriors.” Look up the word <fan>. What word should she use?
4. Look up the expression “Time flies when you are having fun.” What do you find? Why do you think there is no translation?

Now set the language to Spanish-English.

1. Look up the noun “programa.” Is it masculine or feminine?
2. One day someone says to you “Oye tío, ¿qué haces?.” You don’t understand the rest of the sentence but you know that the word “tío” means “uncle,” and you also know that you are not that person’s uncle. What other meaning does “tío” have and where would the person who said it most likely be from?
3. Look up the verb “ser.” This verb shows up in many expressions, or compound forms. Read through them and write your favorite here.
4. You want to say “to dream of” or “to dream about.” You know that the verb is soñar (because I just told you), but what preposition would you use for “of” in Spanish?

Reflection: Why might you consult Word Reference? What is the most important thing you learned from this exploration of Word Reference? In the future, why might you decide to consult Word Reference when you are working on writing activities?

