

## Content: How are Spanish and English Similar?

- Both stem from the Proto-Indo-European language.
- Both originated in Europe.
- Both languages contain Latin cognates. English borrowed many words from Latin, while the base of the Spanish language is Latin. Both English and Spanish share many Latin cognates.
- Both languages borrowed words from other languages to label and describe places, foods, tools, resources, plants, and animals that were not in the lexicons.
- Dialectal differences exist in both languages. These dialectal differences are highly dependent on the geographic location where the language is spoken.
- Both languages are spoken across the world in multiple countries.
- Both languages share an alphabetic orthography, requiring awareness of the alphabetic principle to decode (read) and encode (spell).

Cognates are words in two languages that share a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. While English may share very few cognates with a language like Chinese, 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish. For Spanish-speaking ELLs, cognates are an obvious bridge to the English language.

Not surprisingly, researchers who study first and second language acquisition have found that students benefit from cognate awareness. Cognate awareness is the ability to use cognates in a primary language as a tool for understanding a second language. Children can be taught to use cognates as early as preschool. As students move up the grade levels, they can be introduced to more sophisticated cognates, and to cognates that have multiple meanings in both languages, although some of those meanings may not overlap. One example of a cognate with multiple meanings is *asistir*, which means to *assist* (same meaning) but also to *attend* (different meaning)."<sup>1</sup>