

How I Wrote the Cognate Poems

and

How I Write Lyrics to Songs

by

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I am The Amazing Cognate Poet. I wrote three poems in April, 1987 that I thought were very good. They start in English, and they end in a cognate word in Spanish that can be easily understood in English.

When I read my poems aloud to a group of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Mexico City, they rolled with laughter (as I had hoped they would.)

One teacher told me that he had seen many things in his life, but he did not expect that he would learn anything completely new. My poems were amazing, he said, because he had never seen anything like them. I had written something in a form that was entirely original.

So I called them "The Amazing Cognate Poems".

In fact, they were very easy for me to write. I had put together "Toussier's Cognate Words" which is a short book with 20 groups of cognate words.

The clever thing about Toussier's Cognate Words is that it is not a LIST of cognate words, but 20 TABLES of GROUPS of cognate words that have the same SUFFIX (ie, the same ending.)

Words with the same ending, of course, rhyme. So I had all of these words that rhymed buzzing around in my head. The rest was easy.

I intended to write an advertisement for Toussier's Cognate Words... The first cognate poem, A Cognate Fanatico, was written in about 30 minutes. I was surprised that I had written such a good poem, but I thought perhaps it was lucky, I had simply written a very good poem by chance...

The next day I sat down to write again, and I wrote the second cognate poem, The Language Revolution, again in about 30 minutes.

And then I thought to myself, I am going to try to write a cognate poem that is a joke. So... I began to write what I later called "Spanish In An Instante..." By now I knew the trick to writing the first two poems, so I knew I could write more poems.

And now I want to share with you "the trick" to write poems. It is very easy.

First, think of what you want to write, in general. I wanted to write poems that would be advertisements for

Toussier's Cognate Words... So...

I thought of a rhythm... like a drum beat...

Ta ra ra ra ra ra ra ra, Ta ra ra ra ra ra ra ra

Ta ra ra ra ra ra ra ra, Ta ra ra ra ra ra ra ra

Or it can be a different drum beat... any drum beat...

Ta ra Boom, ta Boom, ta boom boom boom.

Next... I needed words that rhyme... That is easy if you have a list of about 7000 cognate words, grouped by endings... I had all the words that end in "...tion" and all the words that end in "...ify" and all the words that end in "...ante" or "ente" I had all the "ismo" and all the "ista" and all the "...idad" etc. I could choose any two words that rhyme.

So... my very first cognate stanza I chose the group of cognate words that ends in "...eta"

poeta, profeta, trompeta, gaceta...

Ta ra ra as poeta
Ta ra ra as profeta
Ta ra ra with trompeta
Ta ra ra in gaceta

Now I had to fill in the drum beat with words that would fit the rhythm.

I'm not good as poeta
So I'll try it as profeta
Shout about it with trompeta
I announce it in gaceta

There, it was done. One line, "So I'll try it as poeta" has an extra syllable, but I changed the drum beat slightly and it fit without any problem.

Many years later I met Costa Cordalis, a very famous Greek singer who sings in German. Costa Cordalis has many hit songs in German or Greek. Costa said he would like to come to give a concert in Mexico, so I suggested that we should put words in Spanish to his hit songs.

I knew I could do it all myself, but I looked for persons to help me, because perhaps two heads are better than one.

I also decided that if I was going to adapt his hit songs to Spanish, I would simultaneously adapt the same songs to English.

I did not want to TRANSLATE his songs, because that would strangle me. I would ADAPT his songs to Spanish and to English.

The principle to write the lyrics in Spanish or English is the same as to write a poem, except that we already have the rhythm and the melody of the original song. We need to FIT WORDS that make sense, and then we should rhyme if possible.

Fitting the words is a bit tricky. You cannot only fit the correct number of syllables, you also want the accent to fall correctly, and we are given the original melody, and we would like to keep it exactly the same in Spanish and English, if possible.

And rhyming the words is the easiest part. The trick here is to use a RHYMING DICTIONARY. There are rhyming dictionaries in English and in Spanish on the internet, and there is free software that you can download which will help you to find words that rhyme.

There are plenty of good rhyming dictionaries on the internet, but they are more limited than rhyming dictionary software. Here are some good rhyming dictionaries that you can find on the internet.

<http://www.rhymezone.com/>

<http://www.rhymer.com/>

<http://rhyme.poetry.com/>

If you want to rhyme words in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German... even Yiddish, Swahili and Polish, Hungarian, Japanese and other languages... you can find rhyming dictionaries in many foreign languages here:

http://www.alcor.com.au/rhyming_dictionary.asp

You can listen to Costa Cordalis's songs and read the adaptations that I wrote to his lyrics at

<http://www.supermelodie.com/>

So... why would you want to write a poem? Why do I want to adapt Costa Cordalis songs to Spanish and English?

Satisfaction. Yes, this is a very good reason. It gives me a lot of satisfaction when I have a song with good words that fit the melody, in Spanish, and English.

But there is another very powerful reason: Money.

Song writers can earn millions of dollars (or Euros) with just one song that sells well. There are literally THOUSANDS of hit songs in English, and hit songs in Spanish, and hit songs in Portuguese. Why re-invent the wheel, if all these hit songs can be adapted to another language?

I have adapted songs from Italian to Spanish, and I have adapted songs from German to English and Spanish. I don't have to speak German, I have to speak English, or I have to speak Spanish... and I do. I only need to have an idea of what the song is about in German, and I don't even have to have that if I don't want to.

There are hit songs that have great words in English and the same melody has great words in Spanish, but one is not a translation of the other. For example "It's Impossible" and "Somos Novios" have the identical melody, and the words have a totally different meaning in each language.

And today, you don't even need a record company, you can record your song yourself and put it on the internet, and you can sell it and earn lots of money, if that is what you want to do. (I will expand on this later... download a future version of this e-book, I will tell you where to take your songs on the internet and how to sell them for cash.)

And why would you want to be a songwriter instead of something else, like a teacher, or a doctor? I don't know. The world needs everything. We need teachers, and we need doctors, and we also need songwriters who write beautiful songs.

You should do whatever you love to do. Work in what you love to do. Don't work to earn money to live, work in something that gives you satisfaction and makes you happy that you are doing something useful for yourself and also for others. Sometimes this earns money, sometimes it earns satisfaction... sometimes it earns both.

In the case of writing songs, it can give you both satisfaction and also enough money to allow you to get good musical instruments, to help other people, and to live in what you love to do.

I have never earned a nickle writing songs, but I have earned some money selling my cognate poems or Toussier's Cognate Words.

It is not a question of money. What is truly important is that it gives me satisfaction that somebody values my poems or my book enough to part with some of his hard earned money to pay for them.

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