

*SHORT CUT*¹

Michael McCarthy (ed.) Cambridge Word Selector: Diccionario temático del inglés contemporáneo (Inglés-Español). Cambridge University Press, 1995. 464 pp.

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Two of the major defects of both bilingual (English-Spanish) and monolingual (English-English) dictionaries in the hands of second language learners are the dictionaries and the students themselves. Dictionaries are very helpful when utilized by trained learners, but they are very confusing for most students who have never mastered the skill of using a dictionary efficiently. They look up the Spanish word they want to say in English in a bilingual dictionary and then copy down the first word in the entry, regardless of meaning, often creating very original sentences. Students are also afraid of monolingual dictionaries since they either don't understand the definitions themselves or what they really need is a translation of a Spanish word or concept.

The *Cambridge Word Selector* is an original solution to these types of problems. Besides giving translations, it also helps the students choose the correct words while they are increasing their vocabularies. The *Word Selector* isn't only a dictionary--it's more. It groups words and expressions of similar meanings under headings based on semantic fields. This allows learners to choose among various synonyms. Also the *Word Selector* doesn't just offer definitions and translations, but it also gives examples and usage information about each word. Since the *Word Selector* is bilingual and designed for Spanish-speakers, it can include information about false cognates and English words which have no exact equivalents in Spanish.

Categories include semantic groupings such as animals, geography, weather, the human body, illnesses, employment and machinery, and adjectives and verbs grouped by similar meaning: *hot, cold, wet, dry, good, evil; begin, continue, end*, etc. There is also a section that lists expressions used in linguistic functions such as introductions, complaints, preferences, etc.

¹ cut (kut).....n....7. a short passage. (*The Pocket Webster School & Office Dictionary*, 1990.)

This book, besides serving as a reference, is a great way to spend some free time. There are many drawings and explanations of differences in vocabulary between British and American English. There also are a number of slang expressions and even “dirty words” with clarification as to when they should, or shouldn’t be used. The *Cambridge Word Selector* is a good addition to any reference library.