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Implementing Cognate Identification Strategies to Improve Law Students' Proficiency in
Legal English Reading Comprehension Tasks

By

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Abstract

Proficient reading comprehension in legal English texts and activities is one of the main objectives pursued by the Legal English Program at Universidad de Chile, essential for professional or further academic development in this area. The following action research study addresses the specific reading comprehension difficulties first-year law students in the Legal English Program face when asked to complete such tasks. The problem these students have concerns the type of vocabulary used in these texts and materials, which is representative of the context and the specificity of the topics.

Comparing pre-test and post-test results helped determine that explicit teaching of cognate identification strategies promotes cognate awareness-raising as an effective method to improve reading comprehension proficiency in this area. In addition, the opinions collected through the survey confirm that subjects perceived the usefulness of cognate identification strategies and awareness when dealing with reading comprehension activities.

I. Introduction

First-year law students' reading comprehension of legal English texts is affected by the complexity observed in legal English materials. In addition, the difficulty of the content itself and the vocabulary used in the legal English textbooks affect students' performance when faced with reading comprehension tasks. However, strategies that allow them to identify and accurately use cognate words may help initial legal English students improve reading comprehension skills, regardless of their English proficiency.

The Legal English Program currently focuses on helping first-year students, graduating from public schools in most cases, who score low on the University of Chile's English entry test. Data collected regarding these students' profiles show that an important number of the selected participants in the program achieved only elementary English proficiency in their school years. Nevertheless, their academic skills allowed them to access one of the most demanding undergraduate programs in the national academic system.

Most graduated law students need to be highly proficient in terms of legal English reading comprehension as part of their professional demands or for pursuing postgraduate studies. For this reason, the School of Law's authorities requested the Legal English Program to focus on receptive skills, particularly reading comprehension, over the other language skills. The request was part of a cross-sectional specification from academic units, who observed the benefits University of Chile's law students could obtain from mastering legal English vocabulary and improved reading comprehension skills, considering the amount of reading material they have to process as part of their academic requirements.

Legal English in this project will be the term used to refer to the particular type of English language used by legal professionals in their work or academic contexts. This type of language has unique features resulting from the historical development of English legal forms, limiting its access to those who belong to English-speaking legal

communities. Furthermore, several languages and cultures have influenced the language of the law in English at a lexical level leaving a distinctive Latin-based vocabulary mark. As a result, cognate words in legal English are incredibly high as opposed to everyday English.

Standard legal English textbooks are the primary source of information for law students facing law-related situations. These materials, pedagogic adaptations of authentic legal documents, contain many Latin-based cognate pairs with Spanish forms. However, the approach to legal texts and resources fails to systematically use the many lexical similarities between these languages' shared legal terminology as an advantage. Moreover, available methodologies do not provide legal English students with strategies that support their learning process in this specific context, for instance, using the lexical similarities to bootstrap learning.

Cognates have caught researchers' attention due to the role these words have in facilitating L2 vocabulary activation and performance (Solak & Cakir, 2012). Furthermore, the direct access cognate words offer to L2 students may relate to the lexical representations of L1 mediating cognate words processing, particularly at the sentential level (Comesana, 2010). Consequently, this project will explore the facilitating role of cognates in reading comprehension tasks based on three principles noticed in previous experiences, namely, L2 vocabulary knowledge, cognate identification, and reading comprehension proficiency in this distinct context.

This action research and its related intervention were planned and designed to hope that the specifically developed materials could be used in other programs' levels. Thus, validating a supported stance to teaching legal English vocabulary and reading comprehension development in ESP courses.

II. Research questions and objectives

The purpose behind this action research project is to determine whether and to what extent focused training on cognate identification strategies and specifically designed materials help a particular group of students to increase cognate presence awareness and improve their reading comprehension skills. This real-world problem where language is a central issue (Brumfit, 1995) led the researcher to combine theory and practice in this research project.

The specific objectives of the present study are the following:

- To design and implement teaching strategies intended to raise students' awareness and linguistic understanding of English-Spanish cognates in legal contexts.
- To determine if first-year law students who present low general English proficiency can be trained to identify cognate words in legal English texts.
- To evaluate the effects of cognate-awareness teaching strategies on reading comprehension tasks.

2.1 Research questions

In order to meet these objectives, the present study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- R.Q. 1: How do cognate recognition strategies impact first-year law students' performance on legal English reading comprehension tasks?
- R.Q. 2: Can intentionally raising law students' awareness of legal English cognates help them identify these words more efficiently?

III. Theoretical framework

This section will outline the approach for this research project, aiming to teach strategies that allow the identification and awareness-raising of cognate words commonly found in legal English teaching materials to a group of first-year law students participating in legal English courses. It will review the main concepts involved in definitions regarding cognate and false cognate words, learning vocabulary through cognate recognition and identification, the cognate facilitation effect and cross-linguistic influence.

3.1 Cognates

Much research on the topic of words with similar meanings in different languages has been conducted. However, when it comes to establishing unequivocal definitions of the concept of cognate words, there have been some theoretical disagreements. The lack of concord on defining this term may be due to different perspectives each research project has. For instance, historical linguists define cognates as orthographically identical words that share form and meaning (Aguinaga, 2017). On the other hand, psycholinguists understand cognates as words with phonological and orthographical similarities and equivalent translation (Otwinowska, 2015). All in all, most researchers agree that cognates are words with common roots, showing similarities in sound and appearance (Friel & Kennison, 2001). The following broad definitions for this project will provide a consensual characterization of the concepts involved in the proposed investigation.

A cognate can be understood as a lexical entry sharing its phonological and/or orthographic form in two specific languages (Sheng et al., 2016). Cognate words typically have a common etymological origin both in the L1 and the L2 and sometimes share semantic features (Marín and Fernández, 2015).

From an etymological perspective, the word cognate derives from the Latin word *cognat(um)*, which combines *cum* meaning *with* and *natus* meaning *born*. Therefore, the concept could be read as "*born together*" or "*belonging to the same origin, lineage*" (Sabino et al., 2016). Some languages present more connections than others in terms of origin and historical exchanges, and these connections reflect the number of cognate forms shared between languages. English and Spanish correspond to this description, with many cognate words found in academic or technical contexts in these two languages deriving mainly from Latin and Greek. Therefore, a large number of formally similar lexical items consistently appear in both languages with almost identical meanings as well. According to Lubliner and Hiebert (2011), the direct descent process from Latin to Spanish provided this language with many words for everyday communication purposes.

Some Latin-based words commonly used in Spanish are also present in English. However, in this case, they are regarded as more sophisticated and less frequent in occurrence than their German-origin counterparts used for similar purposes in everyday English. This difference could result from the direct descent of Latin to Spanish, while the path to become part of the linguistic repertoire of English was more complex and indirect. For example, the French domination of England from 1066 through 1399 left a French lexical legacy that incorporated a great deal of the Latin-based vocabulary found in academic and technical texts. Additionally, due to more specific technical and scientific needs during the Renaissance, many Latin words came directly to English to meet the demands for more particular registers (Barber, 2000, as cited by Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011: 77).

3.2 False cognates

When words displaying similar forms do not share etymological origins and/or their semantic values have taken distinct directions, thus evolving to be completely different,

the term *false cognate* is more appropriate. Another name commonly used to describe these words is the concept of interlingual homographs, highlighting the formal affinity observed between words simultaneously present in different languages but showing distant meanings (Otwinowska & Szewczyk, 2019). For instance, the words *pie* (Eng) and *pie* (Span) are examples of false cognates that are likely to confuse Spanish speakers learning English because of the physical similarities. Still, these false cognates cases are not highly frequent in academic or highly technical texts. According to research conducted by Moss (1992), in a corpus of 1583 cognate words collected from different English technical texts, only 10% corresponded to false cognates.

Nevertheless, language teachers sometimes analyze and then teach these words, highlighting the difficulty and danger they present for possible misunderstandings. However, there seems to be insufficient material and approaches to provide specific reasoning to work with cognate and even false cognate words and use their cross-linguistic similarities to raise awareness and develop vocabulary instead. Moreover, even when the learners identify potential cognates, some of them tend to distrust them, having been warned by teachers about the danger of encountering false cognates (Lightbown and Libben 1984; Meara 1993, in Otwinowska & Szewczyk, 2019: 976).

False cognates are conceptually similar to cognates; however, their recognition demands a particular cognitive process in a second language student. In this case, when L2 learners encounter a false cognate word during a reading comprehension task, they should repress their knowledge of an orthographic or phonologically similar word in the opposite language (Simpson et al., 2016). The absence of semantic overlap in these lexical items with overlapping orthographic/phonological properties typically leads to comprehension mistakes, such as the English *exit* being misunderstood or mistranslated into Spanish as *éxito* instead of the correct '*salida*.'

In sum, false cognates are physically and acoustically similar to existing words in the learner's L1 but possess semantically different values. Thus, their deceptive meaning may be located at one end of a semantic continuum, while cognates (true cognates)

presenting identical meaning would be located at the opposite end (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011).

3.2.1 CCVF Taxonomy

This project's intervention uses as one reference a model based on the CCVF (Clasificación de Cognados Verdaderos y Falsos) taxonomy proposed by Chacón, (2006). This classification was initially developed to help students identify false cognate words, preventing possible learning problems they may represent. Nevertheless, its adapted categories could help for proper cognate identification in different contexts. Additionally, this model might complement reading comprehension and vocabulary learning strategies law students in legal English courses could use to support their learning process. The following section will present a brief description of Chacón's (2006) originally proposed categories to illustrate the instrument's potential.

The suggested schematization categorizes cognate words mainly focused on the cross-linguistic influence and relation between English and Spanish, considering that cognate words are language-specific for each pair of languages. Therefore, the validity of the original classification applies only to English and Spanish (Chacón, 2006) because they are typologically related languages, as discussed earlier.

The three criteria considered in this model refer to whether the cognates are true or false, or if they classify as cognates based on their graphic or phonetic similarity, or if their category of false cognates is total or partial, from a semantic point of view. Based on Chacón's taxonomy, there are six possible cognate word types where only two of them belong to the true cognate category. The other four types fall into the category of false cognates, i.e., words that have a deceptive meaning as a result of semantic change and dissimilar historical development in the two languages studied. The following table summarizes the categories described so far in terms of their difficulty for pedagogical purposes:

	Meaning	Spelling	Pronunciation	Degree of difficulty
Type 1	+	+	+	Nil
Type 2	+	+	-	Low
Type 3	+/-	+	+	High
Type 4	-	+	+	Medium
Type 5	+/-	+	-	Very high
Type 6	-	+	-	Medium

Table 1. Chacon's CCVF (2006)

Examples for each category as proposed in Chacon's taxonomy.

Type 1. TRUE COGNATES: PHONETIC

E.g.: Engl. laboratory = Span. laboratorio

Engl. vocabulary = Span. vocabulario.

This category greatly facilitates the learning process for Spanish speakers learning English since these words can be easily identified due to the pronunciation and orthographic similarities with the L1.

Type 2. TRUE COGNATES: GRAPHIC

E.g.: Engl. horizon = Span. horizonte

Engl. ocean = Span. océano.

Words included in this category are very helpful for the language learner from a semantic point of view, too. In this case, the similarity embraces the formal aspect of the word but not so much the pronunciation and, therefore, the language learner may fail to identify the word in listening and will probably be unsuccessful in pronouncing it appropriately if a model is not provided.

Type 3. PARTIAL FALSE COGNATES: PHONETIC

E.g.: Engl. (to) attend = Span. asistir a (to be present)

Span. prestar atención (to listen carefully)

Span. atender (to pay attention)

(to) attend to = Span. ocuparse de

Span. atender (a shop-assistant)

Partial false cognates have a semantic component as the variable as opposed to total false cognates. In this type, words refer to a main meaning in one of the languages but may represent a number of different meanings in the other language. Total false cognate, however, show a clear semantic difference in both languages.

Type 4. TOTAL FALSE COGNATES: PHONETIC

E.g.: Engl. (to) assist = Span. ayudar

Span. asistir (help)

Span. asistir (to attend)

Total false cognates present learning problems given the lack of semantic correspondence. However, pronunciation does not present any difficulty to the language learner.

Type 5. PARTIAL FALSE COGNATES: GRAPHIC

E.g.: Engl. career = Span. carrera profesional (E.g.: carrera judicial)

Span. trayectoria profesional

Span. carrera (universitaria)

Engl. agenda = Span. orden del día

Span. agenda (programa)

Span. libreta (diary)

Partial false cognates present learning problems given the lack of semantic correspondence between the L1 and the L2. Some serious problems are observed in the aural identification and oral production of the word.

Type 6. TOTAL FALSE COGNATES: GRAPHIC

E.g.: Engl. qualifications = Span. requisito, antecedentes laborales

Span. Calificación (grades)

Engl. lecture = Span. charla, conferencia, clase universitaria

Span. lectura

Type 6 false cognates present an unequivocal dissimilarity in meaning between the L1 and the L2. In relation to their formal written identification, they are not exceedingly complex, but their pronunciation is often not so obvious to the language learner.

3.2.2 Color-coding

In this research project, a strategic resource adapted from Otwinowska's (2020) research project was to identify formally similar lexical items using colors, creating a meaningful code. The use of colors in instructional materials is one way to help teachers capture learners' attention. Attention involves the cognitive process of selecting available information in the environment and is required when learners scan it and select those parts "that require further processing" (MacKeracher, 2004, p.105). Selected information receives more attention than information not receiving attention, increasing the chances of correctly processing the selected data (Chang et al., 2018).

Different language learning approaches resort to "visual reinforcement," Marín (2008), as a technique to emphasize one common target language feature observed, which could

be helpful for students' learning process. For example, visual reinforcement may include colors representing specific lexical items related to an arbitrary category. Although using colors as a language strategy is a recurrent practice, it has been frequently associated with the Silent Way, a language-teaching approach from the 1970s introduced by Caleb Gattegno (Richards, 2001). This method conceives language learning as a problem-solving, creative, discovering activity in which the learner is a principal actor rather than simply a passive listener.

Geigler (2014) defines a color-coding strategy as using colors according to a key designed to facilitate identification. People use color-coding systems all through their life without much planning to do it. The colors of traffic lights, for example, are a code system (Engelbrecht, 2003, p. 3).

Different research projects have established the relationship between colors and cognitive tasks. For example, Mehta and Zhu (2009) indicate that different colors can affect "performances on different types of cognitive tasks." Thus, red is usually related to danger and failures, and its use can activate a prevention focus to remind people to avoid such adverse outcomes.

3.3 Reading comprehension and cognates

Research on cognates has strongly indicated a close relationship between cognate management and reading comprehension success (e.g., De Souza, 2003; Moss, 1992; Nash, 1970; Holmes, 1986). According to Comesana 2010, this connection can be explained because the lexical representations of cognates in the mother tongue mediate the sentence processing of new words, especially in the case of beginner learners. This mediation allows them to transfer their comprehension skills from their L1 into L2. Positive transfer happens when there is some degree of overlap between forms being analyzed; thus, the processes involved when learning the new item resemble, to an extent, the process of the original item in the L1. Despite variations found between the

items, the degree of overlap observed in cognate words can be used to ensure the necessary form-meaning mapping to improve comprehension of the L2. Overlapping of forms and then positive transfer is enhanced when there is a close relation between languages, but also when the reading proficiency of the student in the L1 is good enough, and some degree of metalinguistic awareness could be developed through instruction.

Reading comprehension is a highly complex cognitive process since it demands the construction of a coherent mental representation. This representation is achieved either by using the resources at hand in the immediate context or by using the personal knowledge available, if applicable. When this process occurs, there is always the risk of producing a negative transfer because the knowledge of the L1 is not enough to process L2 sequences. The negative transfer is commonplace in low proficiency EFL learners since it is performed by students in an intuitive form, thus producing negative transfer or interference.

3.4 Cognate identification

The most significant barrier to comprehension in L2 is vocabulary knowledge, which can be more significant than failing to possess grammatical or syntactical knowledge or even knowledge of the subject matter involved (Laufer and Sim, 1985). Lack of proper vocabulary knowledge and management is relevant considering that an important number of L2 words must be incorporated to communicate and function in an L2 (Adolphs & Schmitt 2003; Schmitt, 2010; Schmitt, Cobb, Horst & Schmitt, 2015). It is important to emphasize that the target vocabulary size a foreign language student needs to acquire differs from a native speaker developing L1 (Schmitt, 2010). For an L2 learner, a much smaller number of word families is necessary to perform different activities in the new language. Moreover, the vocabulary goal should be coherent to the communicative purpose of the learner. For instance, to read at an academic level, 95% of

text coverage is necessary (Laufer, 1989, 1992; Hu & Nation, 2000; Laufer & Ravenhorst- Kalovski, 2010; Schmitt, Cobb, Horst & Schmitt, 2015), which means that 5,000-word families are needed to understand these texts.

Academic and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials contain cognate words with percentages that increase depending on the texts' technical level. Although specialized texts can have at least 30 % of these words (Moss, 1992), foreign language learners often fail to notice cognate pairs. This situation, documented in some research projects described later, occurs even when the similarity appears quite evident, which wastes valuable opportunities to use their shared features for faster processing and better comprehension (Otwinowska et al., 2020). Effective identification and favorable use of cognate words can help minimize the time involved in reading comprehension tasks and enhance confidence (Moss, 1992).

3.5 The cognate facilitation effect

The cognate facilitation effect is one of the most researched phenomena in bilingualism studies and psycholinguistic experiments (Otwinowska et al., 2020). It refers to bilingual speakers' ability to process cognate words more quickly than words that appear only in one of the two languages (Poort, 2017). Some researchers (Caramozza and Brones, 1979), for instance, tried to determine the effect of cognates on the speed of word recognition using lexical decision tasks. The authors found out that Spanish-English students responded to L2 cognates faster than they responded to L2 control words. Additionally, they concluded that cognate words activated L1 in addition to the L2 lexical representation, speeding activation and word recognition (Solak & Cakir, 2012).

The formal affinity between vocabulary items in different languages can be advantageous for language learners depending on the mother and target language involved, which is the case of Spanish speakers learning English. Spanish is a direct descendant of Latin. Even though English is a Germanic language, Latin has influenced

English through time, especially during the Middle English and Early Modern English periods. One of the significant sources of loanwords into English, together with French and Scandinavian (Chacón, 2006). The shared lexical items allow students to utilize their preexisting vocabulary knowledge to quickly determine the meaning of novel English words (Mallikarjun et al, 2017). Besides, different task types applied to language learners demonstrate that more similar cognates yield a more substantial cognate facilitation effect than do cognates with less orthographic overlap (Otwinska et al., 2020). Research shows that cognates generate faster responses in receptive tests like visual lexical decision experiments and picture-naming tasks, though much of this evidence corresponds to target words presented in isolation (Sánchez-Casas, García-Albea, & Davis, 1992; Van Hell & Dijkstra, 2002, in Poort, 2017). Word production tasks have produced similar results, with participants displaying shorter response times naming pictures containing cognates (Costa et al., 2000).

When languages present coincidences at the vocabulary level, language learners benefit from these familiar words because their effort to recognize and understand them is less demanding than what happens with totally new and different word forms (Ringbom, 1986). This cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition relates to language proficiency; less proficient learners generally transfer more elements from their first language than those who have a high proficiency (Chacón, 2006). Furthermore, the formal resemblance of cognate words aids learners in achieving an understanding of reading materials with little conscious processing, which is defined as *potential knowledge* in cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition studies (Ringbom, 1992).

The concept of potential knowledge refers to learners' information or familiarity regarding words or structures not yet formally studied in L2. It is assumed that there will be more instances of potential knowledge in cases of a close relation between languages, like legal forms of English and Spanish, especially in reading comprehension contexts. When language learners perceive similarities across language forms, they can transform

this potentiality into reality, making lexical items available for formal learning and retrieval for comprehension purposes (Ringbom, 2006). Also, smooth access to similar lexical items, through cognate words, makes a difference in students' learning process since it facilitates their task of facing an attainable challenge, using familiar word forms.

3.6 Research on cognates

Research on lexical items acquisition in contexts where cognates are predominant reveals that optimal results depend on L2 proficiency (Marín, 2015). The results obtained in experiments applied to students participating in ESP courses (Moss, 1992; Marín, 2015) confirmed the assumption that students' language competence level is critical for successful cognate identification tasks. C1 students, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), obtain better results in translation exercises using general English. The difference is even more significant when faced with specific contexts, such as legal texts (Marín and Fernández, 2015).

The project conducted by Marín and Fernández (2015) explored the impact cognate words may have on understanding and acquiring legal English terminology. The study consisted of a translation experiment applied to 56 first-year law students who worked with two English corpora, one about legal terminology and one about general English. One of the corpora was the BLaRC (the British Law Report Corpus), a vast legal English collection of judicial decisions designed and compiled by Marín and Fernández (2015). The other one was the LACELL (Lingüística Aplicada Computacional, Enseñanza de Lenguas y Lexicografía), a 21-million-word general English corpus compiled and owned by the LACELL research group at the University of Murcia.

Students translated a definite number of legal terms (12) that were part of an unprepared text, taken from the two corpora in the activity. The text contained ten cognates presenting total or partial semantic equivalence. The experiment considered the students'

proficiency level and ability to translate this finite number of lexical items present in two different sources and contexts. The results demonstrated that the difficulty of translating cognate words from English to Spanish depended on the students' proficiency level and the word type of semantic equivalence, either total or partial; therefore, false cognate words in this study represented one of the major obstacles.

Furthermore, Moss (1992) presents a study with an estimated 400 first-year Spanish-speaking students taking university-level English for Specific Purposes (ESP) reading courses. The author based the research on an approximate 1500 English/Spanish cognates corpus from different technical texts and scientific journals frequently consulted by students of computer science, engineering, and medicine to account for the sample's representativity. The research's main goal was to validate the cognate recognition practice, through translation exercises, as a regular activity in reading courses. The researcher prepared a corpus classification that followed orthographical criteria and corresponding instruction to students with different proficiency levels participating in ESP reading courses to achieve the proposed objective. After the intervention on cognate identification, using the translation of isolated items as a reference, the students' performance assessment consisted of two translation tasks of 10 words in English to translate into Spanish. Each set of questions presented two forms, one of them having context and the other one the words in isolation. Findings support the premise that incorporating cognate recognition activities as a regular practice in reading comprehension courses is beneficial for ESP/English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students, who can enhance their reading skills and global understanding of the texts while also gaining confidence in such tasks (Moss, 1992).

Additionally, following similar assumptions regarding cognate identification, several studies (Lightbown & Libben, 1984; Harley et al., 1986; Tréville, 1996; Otwinowska, 2009) have concluded that students do not readily recognize cognates and suggest the need to incorporate classes and materials with cognate recognition activities to enhance L2 learning. Lightbown and Libben's (1984) research aimed to explore the role of

transfer in the L2 lexicon or, more specifically, the use of cognates. This study used comparisons of free compositions, word acceptability judgment tasks, and a cloze test, where participants had to replace missing words. The exercises were applied to two separate groups – one consisting of native French speakers learning English as an L2 and another composed of native English speakers. The authors also created cognate categories specifically for this research's context:

- 1) Appropriate cognate in both languages
- 2) More appropriate in French
- 3) More appropriate in English
- 4) Appropriate in neither language

This research revealed that some students did not trust words with similar spellings in the two languages or simply were unaware of the relationships between English and French words. This conclusion led the researchers to state the need to develop and teach students strategies to recognize all the potential relationships between languages.

The effect of training on cognate recognition has also been the focus of some documented research. Dressler et al. (2011) reported a study based on a pedagogical intervention to improve vocabulary, including activities to recognize English-Spanish cognates. The study required English-Spanish bilingual and monolingual fifth-grade students to sit for interviews and recognition tests, using think-aloud protocols. After the intervention, researchers concluded that cognate knowledge gave students an advantage in vocabulary. Also, they found out that participants used both sound and print to connect the English and the Spanish words. Other findings revealed that students could quickly identify cognates depending on the Spanish frequency and the shared phonological and orthographic features instead of more opaque cognates.

Additionally, some studies confirm that L2 proficiency also interacts with orthographic transparency, a language feature establishing the relationship between the written and spoken forms of words. Learners with a high level of proficiency can identify cognates that are not similar, while participants with a low level of proficiency only identify

orthographically similar cognates (Otwinowska and Szewczyk, 2019). A conclusion reached by these authors is that proficiency entails morphology knowledge which allows for grapheme-to-phoneme mappings. As a result, language learners can access the meaning of non-cognate words through inferences from the context and then map these representations to a new form (Ecke, 2015; Otwinowska & Szewczyk, 2019).

As proposed in this project, the teaching strategies aiming to teach legal English cognates should be accompanied by related cognate identification activities and materials reinforcing reading comprehension training. These materials and activities can integrate rather than replace the existing methodology, offering students the possibility to practice with tasks that include relevant vocabulary that they deem attainable due to the advantages offered by languages closeness in legal contexts, regardless of learners' level. Furthermore, the specificity of the problem dealt with in this research suggests the importance of incorporating activities and materials with local topics that complement the standard textbooks available at the moment, including an intended cognate words treatment.

IV. Methodology

4.1 Observation and problem identification

This project's starting point and related intervention is the complexity observed in legal English materials and how this difficulty significantly affects students with initial English proficiency levels, particularly when they need to complete reading comprehension tasks. This problematic situation has been observed and manifested by law students participating in legal English courses and legal English teachers at Universidad de Chile's Faculty of Law. Students' opinions and feelings were considered in this research as they expressed their problems when dealing with reading comprehension activities, highlighting the difficulty of the type of vocabulary used in

legal English textbooks. Teachers participating in the legal English program also agreed with students' evaluation and saw similar problems in the specific type of vocabulary used in legal English texts and materials.

The consensual data collected from students and teachers made me reflect on possible solutions to the reported situation. For instance, the analysis of the materials students use in their classes reported many technical and specific lexical elements that caused them to be highly complex to understand. Therefore, this action research project's primary motivation was to reinforce and improve students' already existing reading comprehension proficiency, demonstrated through high scores on the reading section of the Chilean educational system university qualifying examination (PAES, Prueba de Acceso a la Educación Superior).

Additionally, there is the firm conviction that this contribution could be made by helping them identify formally similar words with similar or identical meanings in both languages, i.e., cognate words. This belief is proposed and evidenced in related research projects, like Otwinowska's (2020); Moss's (1992); and Lightbown and Libben's (1984), who highlighted the importance to develop and teach students strategies to recognize all the potential relationships between languages, as reviewed earlier in the previous chapter [\(III\)](#).

The present study was implemented following action research principles to reach the previously mentioned objectives. This type of research allows for the researcher's reflection on possible ways to solve a practical problem and the creation, design, and implementation of an intervention to answer the research questions mentioned in [2.1](#) based on the necessary theoretical support described in section [III](#).

4.2 Context and participants

This action research was conducted during the final part of the second semester of 2021, specifically on November 3rd, 4th, 10th, and 11th at 12:30 pm, which is the regular online class time for this group of students. The decision to apply the intervention on those days was based on the contextual restrictions and limitations imposed by the SARS-CoV-2 sanitary conditions, which conditioned the teaching format to the online system. In addition, authorities suggested using the regular class time to avoid giving extra screen time to students already having a remote learning system, as was the case for this group of students. Finally, the dates were chosen considering most of the class content was already covered during regular classes, and the intervention would not interfere with the coming final examinations.

Fifteen people were invited to join the online sessions and complete the intervention steps, ten regularly attended all the planned sessions, and their data were considered in the results of this study. Those ten subjects were selected because they actively attended the four intervention sessions and took the pre and post-tests. That is to say, the data was collected from 10 non-probabilistically selected participants, and a convenience sampling scheme was used (Dörnyei, 2007) considering the contextual restrictions online sessions represent. The ten students share the same or similar educational background and are all studying the same Law major and participate in the legal English program in the second level out of five with a corresponding A2 proficiency level (CEFR, 2018).

4.2.1 Sampling techniques

A non-probability sample was used in this action research because students were invited to be part of this online intervention based on the convenience their schedule and legal English courses represented for this study. In addition, a purposeful sampling technique

was selected for the qualitative part of the study, using an online survey, because it could help explore and discover reasons for the problems observed. Finally, the questionnaire was open to all class students regardless of their complete or incomplete or partial intervention participation. Therefore, data analyzed in the following sections consider participants and cases meeting the previously mentioned requirements.

4.3 Intervention procedure

Before the first intervention session, students were informed that they were part of a research and gave consent to use data collected from their answers with this purpose; however, they were not informed about the specificities of the investigation; they were only informed that the research sought to help them support their learning process. Keeping the research details and not revealing technicalities to the students participating was very important for the researcher. The purpose of the study was to observe students' cognate awareness changes and collect insights after implementing cognate identification strategies that help them succeed in reading comprehension tasks.

The intervention consisted of four online sessions of 60 minutes each, which were referred to as workshop 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b. Classes were structured considering the teacher's exposition, students' individual and collective participation, a summary to gather opinions, and a final general review to verify whether objectives had been attained (for details about the planning of the sessions, see Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5). In addition, the material used during the classes was uploaded to the University's platform and made available before each session for students to download at any convenient time.

Despite pedagogical limitations the online modality presents, each session was planned considering time for the teacher's explanation of each session's contents and objectives, encouraging students to use Spanish if necessary to ensure the message was being conveyed correctly. Then, students were divided into mini online groups to work on the planned collaborative activities using the platform features, i.e., chat rooms. Next, the

teacher would join each chat room allowing students to ask questions while monitoring their progress. Finally, the teacher and students would work, for 10 minutes, on a collaborative summary of the main points covered during the workshop, and the teacher would check the objectives to verify whether they had been attained.

The interventions content was based on two main ideas adapted to suit this research's objectives. On the one hand, Otwinowska's (2020) empirical study on cross-linguistic similarities between Polish and English inspired the adaptation of materials and activities on vocabulary learning strategies applied in this research project. Strategies selected from Otwinowska's study refer to the color-coding system idea used in an adapted form for the current project. On the other hand, Chacon's taxonomy (2006) was selected because it offered differentiated categories which students could learn and practice when analyzing cognate words.

4.3.1 Strategies used during the intervention - Color-coding

Otwinowska's (2020) materials were adapted to meet the current research project's needs during intervention session 1, named workshop 1a. First, students received general training on vocabulary learning strategies. This introductory activity allowed them to share the strategies they used to learn and practice new L2 vocabulary items according to their individual experiences. Then, they analyzed a definition for the strategy concept connecting to the previous activities, which aimed to clarify the general strategy concept. Finally, students used a color-coding strategy, which led students to associate colors with a set of L2 words representing feelings.

The ten isolated English words used in the activity contained nine English Spanish cognates, which they highlighted using only one color. The same previous criterion was used to work with another set of thirty words; most of them were legal concepts. This time, students applied the color-coding strategy using the same color selected for the previous activity to highlight all formally similar words.

As a follow-up activity, students worked on grouping the previously colored concepts into one column and those more distant words for them into another list of words. This colored items column represented graphically the number of cognate words they can find in legal English texts. After the grouping activity, students were presented with the cognate word concept to connect the ideas of the previous activities and understand the color-coding representation of the task they performed ([see 3.2.2](#)).

4.3.2 Strategies used during the intervention - CCVF

For the second intervention session, workshop 1b, Chacon's CCVF taxonomy led the session activities for the participants. This classification is highly technical and intended for language teachers to help learners identify false cognate words in its initial version. However, only the first two originally proposed types were selected and adjusted to the participants' proficiency level in this research.

Type 1 "true cognates: phonetic" uses pronunciation and orthographic similarities between Spanish and English to help learners identify cognate words ([see 3.2.1](#)).

According to the author, the difficulty is nil since students can identify, through pronunciation, L2 words similar to those they know from their L1. In this case, students worked identifying similar sounds when pronouncing the words included in the task.

Type 2 "true cognates: graphic" is described as "*very helpful for the language learner from a semantic point of view*" (Chacón, 2006; pp 36), because learners can focus on the similarity the written forms have disregarding the pronunciation, which gives them some level of autonomy in the task. The difficulty learners may have in recognizing these words is low, as indicated by the author. Students worked using a form criterion to identify similarities between words to simplify the task.

The cognate types described in Chacon's model were not presented in the same technical manner to students to avoid the specific language and focus on applying the model

practically. As a result, students had to work with thirty isolated legal English concepts different from those used in the first intervention session. This time to apply the categories described above, students had to focus on two concepts representing the cognate types proposed in CCVF's model. The concepts of *sound and form similarity* replaced the original phonetic and graphic labels to make the cognate words identification task attainable considering students' proficiency levels.

The third and fourth intervention sessions, workshop 2a and workshop 2b aimed to review the strategies practiced in the first two sessions and move from identifying isolated cognate words to working with cognate words identification and reading comprehension tasks, using identification strategies in context. The selected texts for the reading comprehension activities belong to Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English textbook (2008), unit 2 called "Contract Law," which students had never seen or studied before.

Workshop 2a allowed participants to reinforce the color-coding strategy practiced before with a significant context, which helped them face the reading comprehension challenge with new tools. In this activity, students answered one information question from the text and identified the number of cognate words in the studied excerpt. Additionally, students reviewed and worked on completing a cognate word general definition.

The final intervention session, workshop 2b, asked students to work on the exact text used in the previous session, completing a true or false exercise type to assess reading comprehension. Together with the true or false exercise, students worked on a vocabulary activity to complete definitions extracted from the studied text. Finally, participants worked in groups to ask questions and solve problems they had encountered during the session.

Day 1

Objective:	To identify cognate words using vocabulary learning strategies
Contents:	Color-coding strategy and cognate words definitions
20 min	The teacher explains grouping words and color-coding strategies, and presents the cognate words concept
20 min	Students work in small groups with strategies presented
10 min	The teacher monitors each group, answering questions and checking progress
10 min	The teacher gives general feedback

Table 2. Day 1: Class plan

Day 2

Objective:	To classify cognate words using CCVF's adapted taxonomy
Contents:	CCVF's adapted taxonomy
20 min	The teacher reviews grouping and color-coding strategies and presents CCVF's adapted taxonomy categories
20 min	Students work in small groups with a list of selected concepts
10 min	The teacher monitors each group, answering questions and checking progress
10 min	The teacher gives general feedback

Table 3. Day 2: Class plan

Day 3

Objective:	To identify cognate words in a text
Contents:	Vocabulary learning strategies and cognate words definition review
20 min	The teacher reviews the cognate words concept and vocabulary learning strategies to apply them using a legal English context
20 min	Students work in small groups
10 min	The teacher monitors each group, answering questions and checking progress
10 min	The teacher gives general feedback

Table 4. Day 3: Class plan

Day 4

Objective:	To practice reading comprehension using cognate words identification strategies
Contents:	Vocabulary learning strategies and cognate words definitions review
20 min	The teacher reviews the strategy concept and presents reading comprehension exercises
20 min	Students work in small groups with a list of selected concepts
10 min	The teacher monitors each group, answering questions and checking progress
10 min	The teacher gives general feedback

Table 5. Day 4: Class plan

4.4 Instruments and data collection

Data collected from pre, and post-tests 1 and 2 were included in this study to conduct a trustworthy analysis with relevant information. Students had to work on a reading comprehension series of exercises with texts dealing with Law course descriptions to complete the pre-test, and an exercise on cognate identification. After the first two sessions, included in the intervention cycle, a post-test was applied, which helped the researcher reflect on the process and adjust the content for the intervention's second part. At the end of the complete cycle, students were assessed with a similar set of reading comprehension exercises and cognate identification tasks that complemented the pre-and first post-test texts, and the type of activities matched the previously applied tests. All tests texts were taken from Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English (2008) textbook materials. Finally, students completed an online survey to collect their opinions and perceptions on this action research project.

This action research core was the intervention, consisting of four online sessions, divided into two weeks, allowing time to reflect on the approach between the first and the second part and analyze data collected during the pre-and the first post-test, applied after the first two sessions.

Finally, once the intervention finished, participants answered a final post-test and then an online survey to collect their insights and feelings regarding the intervention, its usefulness, and the results they expected after its implementation. This survey can be seen in the appendices section ([Appendix 3](#)).

4.4.1 Pre and post-tests 1 and 2

The pre and post-tests followed a similar pattern, allowing students to focus on the content rather than the applied exercise modality. Thus, the three instruments contained

eight reading comprehension exercises and four cognate identification questions. The source text selected was taken from activities and materials from Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English (2008) for each test, and these materials had already been used by students in the previous level, though little work was done with these paragraphs and contents.

The pre and post-tests 1 and 2 had all the same structural content, which can be summarized as follows:

- Short passage (1)
- Reading comprehension questions (8)
- Cognate identification exercises (4)

The following figures illustrate the question and percentage distribution used in all three evaluation instruments: pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2.

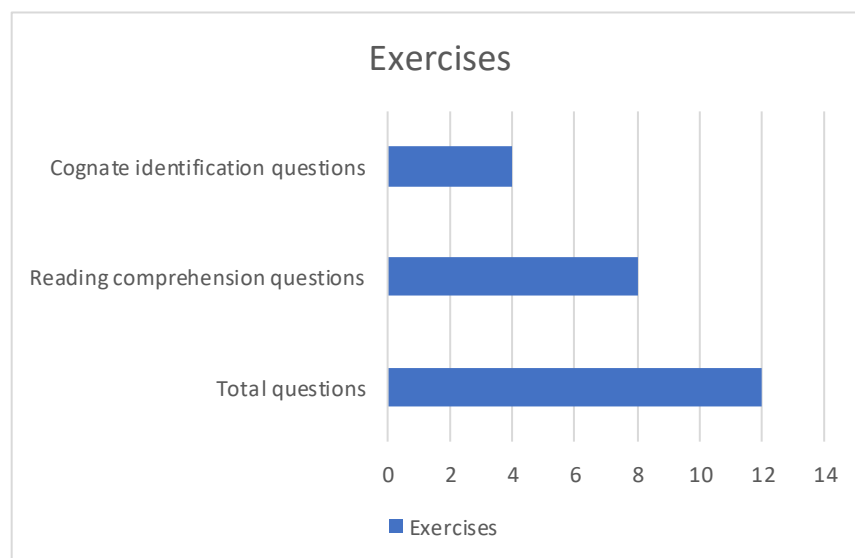


Figure 1. Exercise types used in the tests

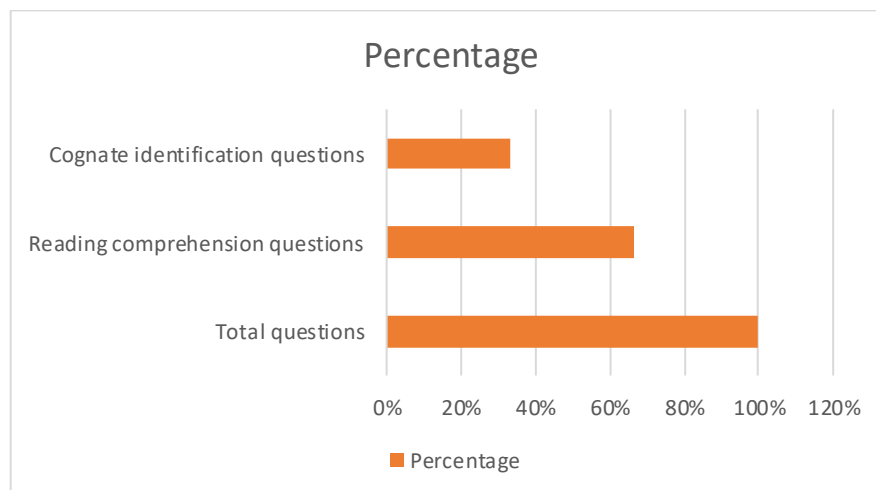


Figure 2. Tests percentage distribution

4.4.2 Pre-test

The pre-test used in this research project contained a text from Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English textbook (2008), unit 1 called "A Career in Law," which was not modified to maintain its authenticity and verify the intervention's impact on students participating in the project. In this unit, Universidad de Chile's law students have the opportunity to read and learn about academic requirements law students have worldwide and compare them with their curricular demands.

The pre-test was administered through the university's platform (Ucursos), allowing students to access it remotely and work independently. This system was used throughout the entire academic year 2021 due to SARS-Cov 19 world's sanitary conditions. A test text sample used for the reading comprehension section can be seen in Fig. 3.

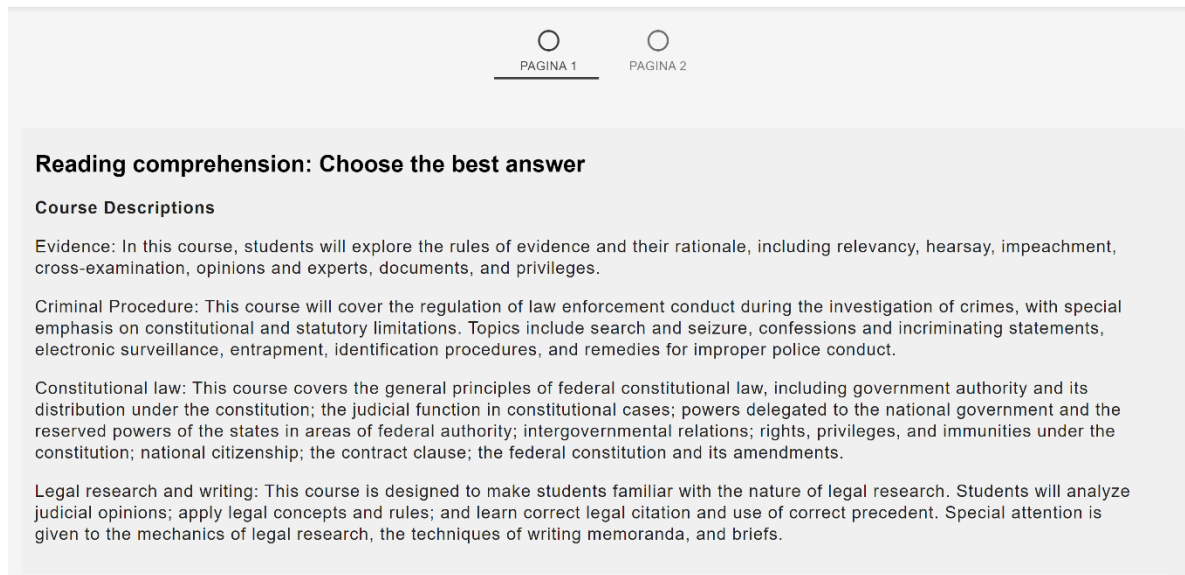


Figure 3. Test text sample-reading comprehension

4.4.3 Post-tests part 1 and part 2

In this action research project, the researcher's reflection process was vital for analyzing and observing the students' progress. Therefore, there were two separate instances of evaluation that could inform the intervention's impact. After the first two sessions, students completed an evaluation that consisted of 8 reading comprehension questions and four cognate identification exercises. The same format applied for the final post-test that students answered after the final two intervention sessions.

Post-test 1 and post-test 2 were also based on Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English textbook (2008), unit 1, "A Career in Law," to maintain uniformity in the modality and objectivity in analyzing the results. Additionally, it is essential to notice that all assessment instances were online using Universidad de Chile's learning platform due to the sanitary conditions and restrictions.

4.4.4 Survey

A vital component in action research interventions is participants' opinions and reflection, which was the objective of the survey students completed at the end of the cycle. Therefore, to obtain truthful answers and opinions, and bearing in mind students' proficiency level, the questions were in Spanish, and students could also answer using this language if they preferred to do so. The rationale to apply a survey rests on Biemer and Lyberg's (2003) idea that observations made on a sample following a measurement process can complement a survey that explores participant perception and behaviors through questions, reflecting research objectives.

This survey was created and applied through the online service creator SurveyMonkey Inc (1999 – 2022), and it combined different question types. There were four Likert scale questions in which students had to match the number corresponding to their assessment for each question (being five the maximum and 0 the minimum); one yes/no question with three answer options: (1) *Sí, definitivamente*, (2) *Tal vez*, and (3) *No, de ninguna manera*; and two open-ended questions at the end of the survey where students were asked to write at least 15 words for each answer.

Students completed this survey in their own time and anonymously, receiving no further information about what they were supposed to write down. The questions of this survey can be found in the appendices section (See [Appendix 3](#))

4.5 Research design

This research had a participatory approach under the scope of an action research design because it sought and emphasized individuals' participation encouraging their action and reflection (Dick, 1993). Therefore, Anne Burns' (2009) adapted action research spiral

model based on Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) (See Figure 4) was selected to systematize the processes followed by this investigation.

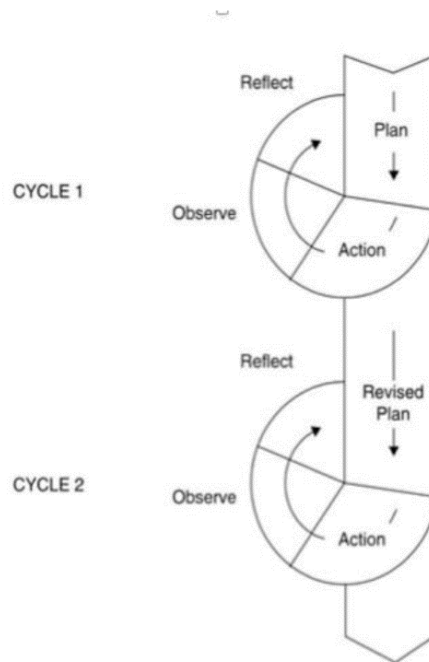


Figure 4. The cyclical AR model. Retrieved from Ann Burns (2009)

This action research model developed by (Mc Taggart, 1988) consists of four stages.

- Planning: The researcher plans actions to improve an observed situation.
- Action: The researcher implements the plans, acting.
- Observation: The researcher observes the effects of the critically informed action in the context it occurs.
- Reflection: The researcher reflects on these effects as the basis for further planning (McTaggart, 1988).

The present study consisted of two four-step cycles; each one had an observation, reflection, planning, and action towards the observed phenomenon.

4.5.1 Material design explanation

The selected materials were created and adapted from different sources that suited the research objectives. For the evaluations, including pre, and post-tests 1 and 2, the choice was Cambridge's Introduction to International Legal English, A Course for Classroom for Self-Study Use (2008). This textbook was selected because it offers students a complete and comprehensive functional approach to learning the language with graded exercises and valuable resources. Additionally, it allows students to work guided by a teacher or individually using authentic legal texts and case studies supplied by TransLegal®, Europe's leading firm of lawyer-linguists (Cambridge, 2008). Some text passages from this source were also used during the intervention sessions, selecting excerpts from different units in the textbook. This decision was to maintain the uniformity and coherence of the activities and exercises students completed during practical activities and in the assessment.

Regarding the intervention, the materials used were created and adapted based on Otwinowska's research project *Learning Orthographic Cognates and Non-Cognates in the Classroom: Does Awareness of Cross-Linguistic Similarity Matter?* (2020). This longitudinal classroom quasi-experiment study explores the benefits of cross-linguistic similarity awareness on Polish learners of English. Consequently, there is a strong connection between Otwinowska's research project and this study, allowing access and adjustment to the activities and exercises used during the intervention. In addition, some exercises outsourced Chacon's CCVF (2006) to test its validity in this study, considering students' level and the vocabulary found in legal texts.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Before the intervention's first session, during regular class time, students were informed that they would be part of a research, and those who agreed to participate in the activities

signed a consent letter ([Appendix 4](#)). This consent letter is in Spanish and clearly states that:

- their participation is voluntary,
- they are free to leave the intervention in any moment they want,
- they will not receive money for this study,
- there is strict confidentiality, so students' names or personal information will not be revealed
- they may benefit from receiving instruction that uses a successful approach to language teaching

V. Data analysis and Discussion

This project was conducted as an action research study that considered mixed methods to answer the research questions described in [2.1](#). Therefore, data analyses included a quantitative and qualitative approach. In addition, a descriptive analysis was applied to the quantitative part to obtain relevant information from the results of the tests. After a cognate identification intervention, the decision to apply a descriptive analysis was to summarize data collected in a sensible, easy-to-understand manner.

In order to answer the research questions, the descriptive analyses provided a powerful summary that enabled comparisons across tests to obtain measures of central tendency like the *mean*, *median*, and *mode*, which offer an objective viewpoint to understand data attributes as opposed to an inferential approach, sometimes used in statistical analysis as a subsequent step for similar research project types. This information helped to detect whether an improvement in reading comprehension proficiency and cognate identification awareness occurred after the intervention.

Finally, the survey's answers were categorized depending on their nature. On the one hand, Likert scale questions were grouped according to the number assigned to each

item by the participants, while the multiple-choice data was analyzed in terms of the tendency it showed. On the other hand, the open-ended questions were transcribed and analyzed to see whether there was a pattern in the students' opinions.

5.1 Quantitative data analysis: Pre and Post-tests

A comparison between the evaluations applied before, during, and after the intervention shows an improvement comparing the test scores obtained. The following section will present a thorough analysis of the previously mentioned results.

5.1.1 Pre, and post-tests results general descriptive analysis

As mentioned earlier, the tests applied before, during, and after the intervention had all the same texts and exercise types. Each correct answer received one point, counting twelve points for the total complete test, divided into eight points for the reading comprehension set of questions and four points for the cognate identification exercises. Following descriptive analysis, the pre-test results indicate that the average number of correct answers corresponded to 58%.

After the first two intervention sessions, students completed an intermediate evaluation, referred to as post-test 1. This assessment was crucial for the researcher's reflection and corresponding reaction since the results indicated that some adjustments were necessary. The corrective actions were motivated by the drop in the scores obtained in this evaluation. The post-test 1 results indicate that the average number of correct answers corresponded to 43%.

The results obtained in the assessment applied at the end of the fourth session, referred to as post-test 2, showed an increment of 17% in the number of correct answers compared to the pre-test results, with a total of 75% of correct answers. The difference is

even more dramatic compared to the post-test 1, which showed a 32% increase in the average number of correct answers.

The mean scores resulting from the three evaluations applied before, during, and after the intervention indicate the movements and results of the planned intervention and its corresponding action taken after analyzing and comparing pre, and post-test 1.

A comparison using the three data sets collected from the tests can be observed in Fig. 5

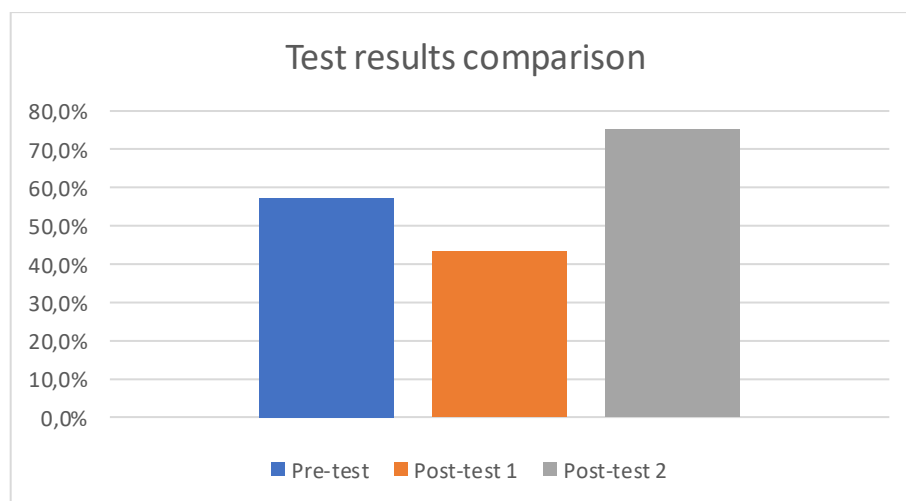


Figure 5. Test results compared

5.1.2 Test results frequency analysis – central tendency

In order to better understand the results collected from the different tests applied, a central frequency analysis was conducted using SPSS IBM's software Ver. 28.0.1.1 (2022). This summary measure can help understand and describe the collected data set with a single value representing the middle or center of its distribution. In this case, the tendency will be represented by the *mean* value, which will indicate students' progress in terms of the number of correct answers obtained. The use of the mean, in this case, was

to describe the sample with a single value representing the center of the data (see figure 6).

		Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
N	Valid	10	10	10
	Lost	0	0	0
Mean		7,1000	5,2000	9,0000

Figure 6. Statistics values general results

Test results arithmetic mean analysis reveals a difference comparing pre-test and post-test 2 general results. Important to notice here is the average performance drop in post-test 1, which was applied at the end of the first two sessions. After reflective analysis, considering quantitative data obtained, the possible explanations to the difference could be due to:

- Intervention content difficulty level
- Test question types

Intervention content difficulty level was checked and verified through the participatory review by the end of the first two sessions. In this activity, the teacher would verify the objectives proposed for each workshop. The results of this frequent check did not present discrepancies so as to suspect this as the reason for the decrease.

Test question types could possibly be the reason for the negative difference observed in the second assessment. The second evaluation included a slightly different cognate identification exercise as compared to the first evaluation because this time, students had to provide the answer rather than simply selecting one answer as in the same exercise for the first evaluation. Therefore, this represented one of the possible causes to understand the difference in students' performance.

An in-depth analysis of each test section revealed that the decrease was explicitly located in the *cognate identification section*. Figure 7 illustrates the difference between the tests, and the following statistics represent the dramatic drop, comparing the previously mentioned section results in the three tests.

		Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
N	Valid	10	10	10
	Lost	0	0	0
Mean		2,5000	0,2000	2,9000

Figure 7. Cognate identification task compared results

An off-the-record conversation with students after the second evaluation revealed participants' common opinions. Students expressed their concern and insecurity in identifying the phonological closeness category, Type 1: "true cognates: phonetic," as proposed by Chacon's CCVF (2006). Thus, this category used and explained during the second session made students feel confused instead of confident when trying to identify cognate words, despite being adapted and presented to them as words having *sound similarities*.

The researcher's reflection, students' feedback, and test results helped adjust the materials for the second series of workshops, this time reorienting the materials' focus to reinforce color-coding and grouping identification strategies ([see 4.3](#)) that had already been practiced by the participants during the first session. The color-coding strategy ended up being regarded as the most useful vocabulary learning activity, which students even considered incorporating into their learning habits in general.

5.2 Qualitative data analysis: Survey

After the final intervention session, the qualitative data analysis was applied to the online survey, which students answered on November 11th, 2021. This instrument was designed to obtain participants' insights, encouraging them to reflect on their learning process and gather their opinions regarding the intervention methodology and its possible applications and usefulness. The survey was in Spanish, and its questions were divided into three types: 4 Likert scale questions, for students to rank their answers from 1 to 5; 1 multiple choice question with three options to answer the prompt, and two open-ended questions where students had to write about 15 words to answer.

5.2.1 Likert scale questions

The survey contained 4 Likert scale questions:

- 1) En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo. ¿Qué tan útil ha sido esta intervención para tu comprensión lectora en textos de inglés legal?
- 2) En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo. ¿Qué tan útil ha sido esta intervención para identificar palabras cognadas en textos de inglés legal?
- 3) En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo. ¿Qué tan probable es que recomiendes estas estrategias a otros estudiantes de inglés legal?
- 4) En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo. ¿Qué tan apropiadas te parecen estas estrategias de identificación de cognados para aplicarlas al estudiar inglés legal?

The results of the four questions indicate that students regarded the intervention and the associated methodology as valuable (See Figure 8), based on the following:

- Eight out of ten students regarded the intervention as very useful for their legal English reading comprehension, giving five points to this question. This number

of students represents 80% of the total answers collected. One student gave four points, and another gave three points to the same question, representing 20%.

- Seven students assigned the maximum score (5) to the intervention usefulness on cognate identification tasks, representing 70%, while 3 students assigned 4 points to this question, representing 30%.
- Nine subjects deemed the strategies as likely to recommend to other legal English students not participating in this intervention, each one assigning 5 points to this item. The percentage representing the maximum score for this question is 90%.
- 100% of subjects gave the maximum punctuation (5) to question number 4, which asked about cognate identification strategies' usefulness when learning legal English.

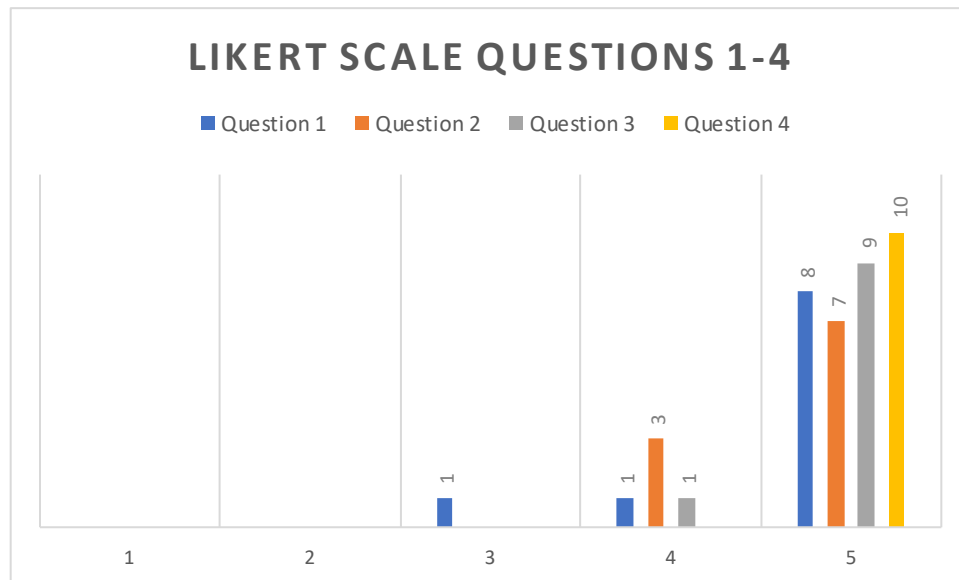


Figure 8. Likert scale questions

5.2.2 Multiple choice question

This single question item aimed to determine whether subjects regard cognate identification strategies as a valuable resource to be considered in all legal English levels. The results indicate that 90% of students (nine out of ten) deem the cognate identification strategies valuable to be included and applied to all legal English levels regularly. Fig. 9

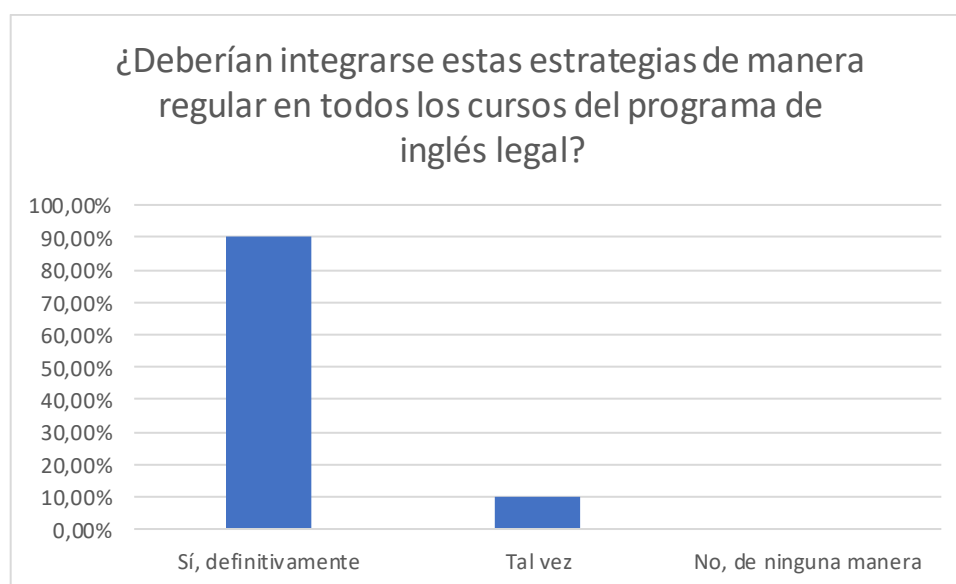


Figure 9. Multiple-choice question

5.2.3 Open-ended questions

The open-ended question answers offered the possibility to examine subjects' perceptions towards the intervention and its methodology. This information from participants' reflections matches the researcher's insight regarding the materials used and the approach to teaching how to identify cognate words. Thus, the data practicality for making the necessary adjustments in future Legal English Program's material selection and creation processes.

The answers from question number six clearly indicate that subjects found this intervention very useful because there were neither neutral nor negative opinions. Furthermore, they highlighted the intervention and its methodology as innovative tools for their legal English technical vocabulary learning process. Students also noted that it helped them see class objectives as likely to attain. Table 6 displays a transcript of question six answers collected after the intervention through the survey applied.

Question 6	¿Cuál es tu opinión con respecto a esta intervención y su metodología en general? Escribe, por favor, al menos 15 palabras.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yo creo que las estrategias aprendidas en esta oportunidad me ayudaron a detectar varias palabras cognadas en inglés, lo que me facilitó mucho la comprensión de los textos legales expuestos en los test. Esta actividad sería un gran aporte para los futuros ciclos de inglés, pues este tema en particular no es tan abordado en algunos cursos de inglés. Además, estar familiarizados desde los primeros cursos con los términos legales solo trae beneficios, como hacernos profesionales integrales al manejar textos jurídicos con mayor facilidad. • Encuentro que es muy practico, fácil de aplicar y recordar. Lo que mas destacaría es que al detenerse y analizar los cognados ayuda a reconocer muy rápidamente y entender mas rápido los textos • en mi opinión, esta intervención sirvió para simplificar o hacer más amigable el proceso de aprender inglés, dilucidando que hay muchas cosas parecidas al idioma español. • Es una actividad interesante, llamativa y se hace amena por la metodología y la constante práctica que facilita la comprensión de las técnicas. • It is good to know new English words in a simple way.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me pareció una buena intervención y metodología, se aprende mucho tanto de inglés como de derecho lo cual es muy bueno y entretenido además, conocer qué se estudia en otros países • En cuanto a la intervención, fue entretenida y gratificante a lo largo de pocas sesiones lograr un avance que se puede dilucidar. En cuanto metodología, es algo entretenido debido a la gran cercanía e interacción que se logró. • la intervención fue muy buena, los ejercicios y la metodología me resultaron muy buenos personalmente, aprendí mucho y adquirí nuevas herramientas para el desarrollo de ejercicios con palabras cognadas • encuentro que es una intervención dinámica, ya que son palabras que por vista ya se pueden entender y asimismo, se pueden crear contextos, lo que hace mucho más fácil el aprendizaje, personalmente encuentro que es una metodología buena y que ayuda bastante al ampliar el vocabulario. • de una manera simple se presentó el contenido y la forma de entender las estrategias. el uso de colores para identificar en categorías favoreció esto mismo y en especial afecta en la actitud del presentador(profesor) ya que lo explica de una manera simple y con apoyo visual
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Table 6. Open-ended question 6 results.

Regarding the survey's second open-ended question, question number seven, the information reveals students' feelings after the intervention, using the information received to face legal English reading comprehension tasks. As can be seen from the transcripts of the question in table 7, there is total agreement with the usefulness and applicability of the intervention offered to them to deal with cognate identification in

legal English texts and use this information to improve reading comprehension performance. Furthermore, most answers stress the intervention's importance for their confidence and awareness when they worked on reading comprehension tasks.

Question 7	Desde tu perspectiva. ¿Te sientes mejor preparado(a) para identificar palabras cognadas y comprender mejor los textos de inglés legal, después de esta intervención? Escribe, por favor, al menos 15 palabras.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totalmente, diría que la intervención me dejó muy claro el tema de los cognados, antes de ello no tenía conocimiento de la existencia de dichas palabras, ahora incluso puedo darme cuenta de ellas al leer textos, etc. • Me siento mucho mejor preparada para identificar estas palabras en textos jurídicos. No había dimensionado lo similares que son las palabras y lo mucho que ayudan a la comprensión de textos jurídicos. • Me siento más preparado de identificar palabras cognadas, pero también de estar atento a las palabras que no son cognadas pero lo parecen, lo que me permite ser precavido al momento de leer textos en inglés. • Si, los métodos son fáciles de aplicar por lo que facilitan la lectura de textos legales. • Yes, because they gave us tools to achieve it • Mmm sí, me siento más preparada que antes, siento que ya no es tan complicado aprender este nuevo idioma luego de reconocer que en un texto hay más palabras que conozco que palabras que no conozco. • Totalmente, sobre todo ahora que sé que algunas palabras se escriben y tienen el mismo significado.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totalmente, la intervención me permitió darme cuenta de varios errores que cometía, y que espero no volver a repetir, debo ser más cuidadosa de ahora en adelante, gracias a la intervención. • a comparacion a como era antes, he tenido un avance en este ambito gracias a este tipo de metodologia, por lo que ahora puedo reconocer con mayor facilidad los cognados y puedo a veces comprender los textos en base a estas palabras. • considero que ahora me doy cuenta y logro identificar conscientemente la cantidad de cognados que existen en los textos, no solo legales si no que en general.
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Table 7. Open-ended question 7 results

5.3 Discussion

This action-research project's primary motivation was to reinforce and improve students' already existing reading comprehension proficiency by helping them identify cognate words that have a high frequency in legal English textbooks and materials. The activities planned for each intervention session included an explicit treatment of new vocabulary in general, focusing on cognate words. The evaluations applied before, during, and after the intervention were analyzed descriptively to assess the intervention's success. The findings for those analyses are summarized versions of the qualitative survey students completed after the intervention.

As for the first specific objective and its validation after analyzing the results obtained: *To design and implement teaching strategies intended to raise students' awareness and linguistic understanding of English-Spanish cognates in legal contexts*, information collected from the open-ended questions in the online survey applied after the intervention provides us with the necessary evidence to conclude that cognate vocabulary strategy design and training is an appropriate decision to make when dealing

with legal English vocabulary related problems students may face in the near future. To confirm the success of students' awareness-raising through vocabulary teaching strategies, narrative answers from the open-ended questions section can illustrate the point (see tables 6 and 7).

The second specific objective, *To determine if first-year law students who present low general English proficiency can be trained to identify cognate words in legal English texts*, can be confirmed in terms of intervention success as indicated in the students' answers presented in table 6. The answers represent the participants' qualitative content in the survey's open-ended questions section. Additionally, data collected from the cognate identification sections in the tests confirm the success the intervention had expressed in the 75% of correct answers students demonstrated in post-test 2.

Regarding the third specific objective, *To evaluate the effects of cognate-awareness teaching strategies on reading comprehension tasks*, the results indicate the usefulness of the methodology and its content represented for students participating in the intervention. Their opinions and insights reveal a higher degree of confidence and better awareness when faced with legal English reading comprehension tasks, as expressed through participants' answers (see table 7).

Quantitative results from the intervention helped validate the impact cognate recognition strategies have on first-year law students' performing legal English reading comprehension tasks. The qualitative component from students' opinions and the answers collected in the survey offered the key to modifying and confirming the correct action to take. After processing the first data set, results indicating a decrease in the achievement percentage obtained in the cognate recognition exercise forced the researcher to decide the corresponding analytical solution to the problem. Input from students obtained through off-the-record conversations confirmed the methodology was correct, but one of the strategies presented additional problems. The categories proposed

in the CCVF taxonomy, despite being adapted, required students to identify cognates through a phonological criterion. This ability is not adequately developed in this group of learners since their English proficiency level (A2) limits their possibilities of identifying sound similarities between Spanish and English cognate words when they see the English form for the first time, and the teacher does not provide the pronunciation model, creating an extra problem for them.

The unexpected finding, a negative outcome using one of the selected strategies, provided valuable insights precisely because they helped restructure the second week's intervention sessions and focus on alternative strategies that did not require students to have a higher English proficiency level to apply a *sound similarity* criterion analysis ([see 4.3.2](#)).

VI. Conclusions

This action-research responded to two research questions:

- R.Q. 1: How do cognate recognition strategies impact first-year law students' performance on legal English reading comprehension tasks?
- R.Q. 2: Can intentionally raising law students' awareness of legal English cognates help them identify these words more efficiently?

The impact cognate recognition strategies have on first-year law students' performance on legal English reading comprehension tasks is what research question 1 tried to validate through this research project. According to the findings obtained, students receiving focused instruction on cognate recognition strategies show better results on reading comprehension tasks. This positive effect is present in the percentage increase reported by the quantitative part of this research and confirmed in the opinions and reflections of students collected from the answers to the two last questions of the survey.

The percentage increase in the reading comprehension tasks applied to students during the intervention indicates that cognate recognition strategies positively influence reading performance. Nagy et al. (1993) supported reading comprehension performance improvement after a similar intervention, stating that Spanish speakers transfer their lexical knowledge to reading in English, mediating their L1 vocabulary knowledge, their recognition of cognates, and the degree of orthographic overlap between cognate pairs.

The combined efforts of different strategies used during the intervention to support cognate identification and improve reading comprehension yielded positive results. The use of adapted categories from Chacon's (2006) taxonomy and the color-coding strategy applied to new words was beneficial for students participating in the intervention.

Colors aid students to focus on relevant information, and their use can be a highly effective instructional tool in the foreign language classroom (Geigle, 2014). For example, language learners could retain information more quickly when instructed on using a color-coding technique to identify cognate words during the intervention. Additionally, when teachers know how color can benefit students identifying cognate words, for example, they can incorporate instructional strategies that use this approach and become much more effective in their work.

The second question tried to verify the benefits of cognates awareness-raising for effective identification in a group of legal English students with low proficiency levels, as indicated by the English entry test applied at the beginning of the academic year 2021.

Considering quantitative and qualitative data sets, focused cognate teaching strategies positively affected students' awareness-raising, allowing them to identify cognate words effectively. Besides, effective individual use of cognate identification strategies was more productive when students used formal similarities observation criteria instead of the sound similarities category. Improved recognition can be observed both in the

percentage increase reported by the quantitative part of this research and in the opinions and reflections of students collected in the survey. Furthermore, the achievement percentage showed an increment in the specific set of cognate identification exercises once the researcher reflected and reoriented the activities based on the intermediate test results (post-test 1).

The results obtained in this investigation confirm what other researchers had proposed in similar projects reviewed in the theoretical framework regarding linguistic competence level. Marín and Fernández (2015) correlated students' performance and proficiency on legal English/Spanish translation tasks. More proficient students had better results in both specialized and non-specialized contexts. Student proficiency determined success rates in the referred research project, where C1 students showed a higher accuracy level in translation exercises than initial A1-A2 learners. Similarly, in the current research project, participants' linguistic competence level limited access to the phonological criterion proposed in Chacón's (2006) categories to identify cognate words correctly.

Nevertheless, focused vocabulary teaching through cognate identification strategies also helped students realize that some vocabulary elements are shared between languages in legal contexts, facilitating L2 understanding. Moreover, the students expressed in the survey that cognate identification strategies had helped them feel more prepared to deal with reading comprehension tasks, knowing there are more similarities between the languages than they had initially thought. Learners efficiently take advantage of similarities across languages when they consciously identify closeness between languages (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Jessner, 2006; Rubin, 1987; Schmitt, 1997).

In sum, it would be fair to conclude that focused training on cognate identification can help improve reading proficiency skills, and it should be incorporated as a regular practice into material and classes design, considering it is seldom present in L2 learning textbooks. Furthermore, this intervention demonstrates the necessity of working vocabulary teaching strategies adapted to the complexities of legal English-specific vocabulary. It also showed that it was possible to modify the students' vocabulary -

learning strategies, allowing them to appreciate the role of cognates. Sensitization of the existence of cognates helped the students recognize more formally and semantically similar words while reading and rely more on them to solve the tasks required.

Additionally, this action research project confirmed that students enjoy active participation in engaging activities that give them confidence in the language learning process. However, students' active engagement during the intervention became a challenge due to the online modality, limiting active teaching activities.

Finally, it is worth relating this study to the Applied Linguistics field because the efforts made during this action research project aimed to solve a real-world problem caused by using the language. In this case, the proposed solution to the problem was implementing cognate identification strategies when dealing with reading comprehension tasks involving a critical number of legal English cognate words, helping a specific group of students succeed and feel more confident in their academic learning activities.

VII. Strengths, limitations, and projections

This action-research project had as a main objective to determine whether and to what extent focused training on cognate identification strategies and specifically designed materials help a particular group of students to increase cognate presence awareness and improve their reading comprehension skills. This objective was achieved and demonstrated through positive results obtained by the subjects in the reading comprehension and cognate identification tasks included in the tests applied at the end of the intervention. In addition, the opinions subjects reported about the intervention reveal the positive impact the sessions had on them and their assessment about cognate identification strategies as tools for improving their reading comprehension skills. According to their input, they feel more and better prepared to deal with legal English reading comprehension tasks after participating in the intervention. Strategies offered them the possibility of developing awareness and seeing the connections between

Spanish and English in legal texts at the vocabulary level. The intervention provided participants with strategies applicable for cognate words identification and vocabulary learning in general, which can also be applied to other academic disciplines.

Limitations in this research study refer to two main conditions observed during the reflection process and after the intervention. First of all, being this a small-scale investigation with only ten participants does not allow for generalizing outcomes. Therefore, although the research results described above look promising, it is hard to draw firm conclusions based on a single study. Secondly, the online teaching methodology used in this intervention poses several disadvantages that differ from the traditional participative teaching practices applied in face-to-face classes, despite being considered in the planning. Thus, the temporary solution to the SARS-CoV-2 sanitary conditions made the intervention more difficult than expected for learners' active participation.

Further research could focus on developing specific materials dealing with cognate identification in legal English contexts according to the CEFR's levels. In light of this study's results, class materials could be replicated or adapted to other proficiency levels incorporating cognate words analysis as a regular practice promoting second language learning in this particularly complex legal context. Future research would also be constructive to expand this project's exploration scope to the complete Legal English Program at Universidad de Chile to conduct a more representative investigation, ideally in a larger sample, including progress comparisons between levels.

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i) On your own, write three ideas you have about this question **(Think)**

ii) Discuss your ideas with a partner. Put a check by any ideas, above, that your partner also wrote down. Then, write down ideas your partner had that you did not have **(Pair)**

iii) Review all of your ideas and circle the one you think is most important.

One of you will share this idea with the whole group **(Share)**

As you listen to the ideas of the whole group, write down three more ideas you liked:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. Strategies

A strategy (from Greek στρατηγία *stratēgia*) is a general plan to achieve one or more goals under certain conditions. A strategy describes how the ends (*goals*) will be achieved by the means (*resources*)

For example, we can use common characteristics observed in the subject we study as a referent to classify the components. In this case, we will work with vocabulary (words)

A. COLORS

What color do YOU associate them with?
Write down the color and tell your partner.

Example: *I think pessimism is black. To me pessimism is black.*

ambition

enthusiasm

determination

pessimism

love

concentration

frustration

optimism

satisfaction

depression

- ❖ Choose one color to represent all those words that look similar to words in Spanish from the following box
- ❖ Highlight the selected words using the color you chose before

B. GROUPING

core	assistance	free
include	become	housing
voluntary	sole	employment
variety	day	courses
ability	arbitration	opportunity
new	large	things
commercial	job	graduates
partnership	contract	useful
get	hire	skills
good	international	future

❖ Now, make 2 lists in the following box. One list containing the selected and colored words and the other list all those words that do not look similar

--	--

ATTENTION!!!

Words that you colored and included in the first column have their special name. They are called **COGNATES**. Cognates are words that look similar in two or more languages and whose meaning is the same. For example:

Eng: *opinion, vocabulary*

Spa: *opinión, vocabulario*

❖ Read the following text and find Spanish - English cognates.

How many are there? Write the number below.

The study of law is intellectually stimulating and challenging and can lead to a variety of interesting careers.

In the UK and the USA, law degree programs usually take three years to complete. In the UK, these programs typically include core subjects such as criminal law, contract law, tort law, land law, equity and trusts, administrative law, and constitutional law. In addition, students are often required to take courses covering skills such as legal writing and legal research.

ATTENTION!!!

The word 'career' is not a direct cognate in Spanish. It is a **FALSE COGNATE**. False cognates are words that look similar in two or more languages, but their meaning is not what you originally expected.

Workshop 1b

Objectives



- To use vocabulary learning strategies
- To classify cognate words categories

4. Review

- a) Check what you remember from last lesson. Complete the sentences with words from the box.

CREATE	GUESS	REMEMBER	CATEGORIES	CONTEXT	READ	COLORS
--------	-------	----------	------------	---------	------	--------

- Grouping words into _____ is a useful strategy. You can use different _____ for each group. This technique will help you _____ the new words.
- What is more, _____ every text carefully because it is often possible to _____ the meaning of new words from _____.
- At the end, _____ sentences with some of the new words to memorize them better.

- b) What do you remember about cognates and false cognate words?
Complete the gaps with the words from the box.

DIFFERENT	SIMILAR (X2)	THE SAME
-----------	--------------	----------

Cognates are words that look _____ in two or more languages and whose meaning is _____. False cognates are words that look _____ in two or more languages but their meaning is _____.

- c) Which word in each pair is easier to understand?
d) Circle the words that are easier for you to understand

gigantic	huge
talented	skillful
chaotic	messy
contract	agreement
homicide	murder
basic	key
illegal	unlawful

- e) What color would you use to identify the “easy” words?
-

- f) Apply the same color to the following lists of words

company	introduction	occupations
years	available	small
criminal	related	way
work	experience	community
tort	research	equity
language	run	offer
complete	options	lead
professional	advice	lawyer
foreign	elective	students
degree	knowledge	town

5. Cognate words

Words with **similar** form and sound in two or more languages sharing a common origin can be classified as true cognates using the following criteria:

- a) Sound (similarity)
- b) Form (similarity)

For example, the following words correspond to the **Sound (similarity)** category:

- a) *Interesting / Television / Opinion / Vocabulary / Perfect*

On the other hand, the following words correspond to the **Form (similarity)** category:

- b) *Ocean / Horizon / Isle / Triangle*

6. With a classmate, decide the categories for the cognate words you colored in exercise f) and complete the following table:

ATTENTION!!!

Read aloud the words to your partner before deciding the category

<u>Sound (similarity)</u>	<u>Form (similarity)</u>
criminal	language

Workshop 2a

Objectives



- To use vocabulary learning strategies
- To identify cognate words in context

7. Review

a) Complete the following table with the missing concepts, using cognate words where necessary

	bid
talented	
	messy
contract	
	murder
	key
	unlawful

b) Can you mention some cognate words characteristics? Complete the following definition:

Cognates are words that look _____ in two or more languages and whose meaning is _____. False cognates are words that look _____ in two or more languages but their meaning is _____.

8. Reading comprehension

Read the first paragraph of following text and answer the question

a) What is necessary for a valid contract to be formed?

Contract Law

- a. Contract law deals with promises which create legal rights. In most legal systems, a contract is formed when one party makes an offer that is accepted by the other party. Some legal systems require more, for example that the parties give each other, or promise to give each other, something of value. In common law systems, this promise is known as consideration. In those systems, a one-sided promise to do something (e.g., a promise to make a gift does not lead to the formation of an enforceable contract, as it lacks consideration.
- b. When the contract is negotiated, the offer and acceptance must match each other in order for the contract to be binding. This means that one party must accept exactly what the other party has offered. If the offer and acceptance do not match each other, then the law says that the second party has made a counter-offer (that is, a new offer to the first party which then may be accepted or rejected).
- c. For there to be a valid contract, the parties must agree on the essential terms. These include the price and the subject matter of the contract.
- d. Contracts may be made in writing or by spoken words. If the parties make a contract by spoken words, it is called an oral contract. In some jurisdictions, certain special types of contracts must be in writing, or they are not valid (e.g., the sale of land)
- e. Contracts give both parties rights and obligations. Rights are something positive which a party wants to get from a contract (e.g., the right to payment of money). Obligations are something that a party has to do or give up to get those rights (e.g., the obligation to do work).
- f. When a party does not do what it is required to do under a contract, that party is said to have breached the contract. The other party may file a lawsuit against the breaching party for breach of contract. The non-breaching party (sometimes called the injured party) may try to get a court to award damages for the breach. Damages refers to money which the court orders the breaching party to pay to the non-breaching party in compensation. Other remedies include specific performance, where a court orders the breaching party to perform the contract (that is, to do what it promised to do).

- g.** A party may want to transfer its rights under a contract to another party. This is called an assignment. When a party assigns (“gives”) its rights under the contract to another party, the assigning party is called the assignor, and the party who gets the rights is called the assignee.

b) How difficult was to answer the question in a)?

Use one color to highlight all the cognate words you find and use a different color for all the new words

- c) How many cognate words did you find in paragraph a?**
d) How many new words did you find in paragraph a?
-

9. New words

What do you do when you find a new word in English?

Share some ideas with the class

Workshop 2b

Objectives



- To review cognate words definition
- To practice reading comprehension using cognate words identification strategies

10.Review

Complete the following definition

A strategy is a general _____ to achieve one or more _____ under certain conditions. A strategy describes how the _____ (goals) will be achieved by the means (_____)

11.Reading comprehension

Read the following text and complete the activities

Contract Law

- a) Contract law deals with promises which create legal rights. In most legal systems, a contract is formed when one party makes an offer that is accepted by the other party. Some legal systems require more, for example that the parties give each other, or promise to give each other, something of value. In common law systems, this promise is known as consideration. In those systems, a one-sided promise to do

something (e.g., a promise to make a gift does not lead to the formation of an enforceable contract, as it lacks consideration).

- b)** When the contract is negotiated, the offer and acceptance must match each other in order for the contract to be binding. This means that one party must accept exactly what the other party has offered. If the offer and acceptance do not match each other, then the law says that the second party has made a counter-offer (that is, a new offer to the first party which then may be accepted or rejected).
- c)** For there to be a valid contract, the parties must agree on the essential terms. These include the price and the subject matter of the contract.
- d)** Contracts may be made in writing or by spoken words. If the parties make a contract by spoken words, it is called an oral contract. In some jurisdictions, certain special types of contracts must be in writing, or they are not valid (e.g., the sale of land).
- e)** Contracts give both parties rights and obligations. Rights are something positive which a party wants to get from a contract (e.g., the right to payment of money). Obligations are something that a party has to do or give up to get those rights (e.g., the obligation to do work).
- f)** When a party does not do what it is required to do under a contract, that party is said to have breached the contract. The other party may file a lawsuit against the breaching party for breach of contract. The non-breaching party (sometimes called the injured party) may try to get a court to award damages for the breach. Damages refers to money which the court orders the breaching party to pay to the non-breaching party in compensation. Other remedies include specific performance, where a court orders the breaching party to perform the contract (that is, to do what it promised to do).
- g)** A party may want to transfer its rights under a contract to another party. This is called an assignment. When a party assigns ("gives") its rights under the contract to another party, the assigning party is called the assignor, and the party who gets the rights is called the assignee.

12. Read the text again and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F)

1. In all legal systems, parties must give something of value in order for a contract to be formed
2. An offer must be met with a counter-offer before a contract is agreed
3. Oral contracts are no always valid
4. In in breach, the court will always force the party to perform the contract
5. Assignment occurs when one party gives its contractual rights to another party

T	F

13. Complete these sentences using the words in the box

Breach	Counter-offer	Damages	Formation	Obligations	Oral Contract	Terms
---------------	----------------------	----------------	------------------	--------------------	----------------------	--------------

1. Usually, contract _____ occurs when an offer is accepted
2. A new offer made by one party to another party is called a _____
3. The price and the subject matter of a contract are the essential _____ of a contract
4. A contract which is not in written form but has been expressed in spoken words is called an _____
5. Under a contract, a party has _____ (that is, certain things it has to do)
6. When a party does not do what it has promised to do under a contract, it can be sued for _____ of contract
7. A court can award _____ to the non-breaching party

Appendix 2: Tests

Pre-test

Reading comprehension: Choose the best answer

Course Descriptions

Evidence: In this course, students will explore the rules of evidence and their rationale, including relevancy, hearsay, impeachment, cross-examination, opinions and experts, documents, and privileges.

Criminal Procedure: This course will cover the regulation of law enforcement conduct during the investigation of crimes, with special emphasis on constitutional and statutory limitations. Topics include search and seizure, confessions and incriminating statements, electronic surveillance, entrapment, identification procedures, and remedies for improper police conduct.

Constitutional law: This course covers the general principles of federal constitutional law, including government authority and its distribution under the constitution; the judicial function in constitutional cases; powers delegated to the national government and the reserved powers of the states in areas of federal authority; intergovernmental relations; rights, privileges, and immunities under the constitution; national citizenship; the contract clause; the federal constitution and its amendments.

Legal research and writing: This course is designed to make students familiar with the nature of legal research. Students will analyze judicial opinions, apply legal concepts and rules; and learn correct legal citation and use of correct precedent. Special attention is given to the mechanics of legal research, the techniques of writing memoranda, and briefs.

The main objective of the "Constitutional Law" course is:

- Pregunta #1
- ☐ To review differences between federal and state law
 - ☐ To focus on the study constitutional amendments
 - ☐ To study the main regulations of federal constitutional law
 - ☐ To study the role of federal governments

The "Evidence" course allows students...

- Pregunta #2
- ☐ To analyze students reasons
 - ☐ To explore evidence reasons
 - ☐ To explore students opinions
 - ☐ To examine evidence regulations and principles

The course that acquaints students with the principles of legal research is:

- Pregunta #3
- ☐ Evidence
 - ☐ Criminal Procedure
 - ☐ Constitutional Law
 - ☐ Legal Research and Writing

One of the objectives of the "Criminal Procedure" course is:

- Pregunta #4
- ☐ To examine police behavior in criminal investigation
 - ☐ To investigate constitutional crimes
 - ☐ To analyze statutory limitations
 - ☐ To examine law enforcement statements

This is an example of a core subject at law schools in the UK

- Pregunta
#5
- ☐ Employment law
 - ☐ Tort law
 - ☐ Family law
 - ☐ Company law

If you want to manage a small partnership, according to the text, you may need...

- Pregunta
#6
- ☐ To take subjects such as housing law, among others
 - ☐ To have a good command of English
 - ☐ To take subjects such as company law, among others
 - ☐ To get involved with a voluntary centre

The course that covers the proceedings involved in criminal cases is:

- Pregunta
#7
- ☐ Evidence
 - ☐ Criminal Procedure
 - ☐ Constitutional Law
 - ☐ Legal Research and Writing

One of the objectives of the "Legal research and writing course" is:

- Pregunta
#8
- ☐ To acquaint students with legal research essence
 - ☐ To allow students express their written opinions
 - ☐ To pay attention to the mechanics of the discipline
 - ☐ To criticize legal citation

Read the course descriptions again and answer the following questions

Course Descriptions

Evidence: In this course, students will explore the rules of evidence and their rationale, including relevancy, hearsay, impeachment, cross-examination, opinions and experts, documents, and privileges.

Criminal Procedure: This course will cover the regulation of law enforcement conduct during the investigation of crimes, with special emphasis on constitutional and statutory limitations. Topics include search and seizure, confessions and incriminating statements, electronic surveillance, entrapment, identification procedures, and remedies for improper police conduct.

Constitutional law: This course covers the general principles of federal constitutional law, including government authority and its distribution under the constitution; the judicial function in constitutional cases; powers delegated to the national government and the reserved powers of the states in areas of federal authority; intergovernmental relations; rights, privileges, and immunities under the constitution; national citizenship; the contract clause; the federal constitution and its amendments.

Legal research and writing: This course is designed to make students familiar with the nature of legal research. Students will analyze judicial opinions, apply legal concepts and rules; and learn correct legal citation and use of correct precedent. Special attention is given to the mechanics of legal research, the techniques of writing memoranda, and briefs.

How many cognate words can you identify in the Evidence course description?

- Pregunta
#9
- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1 - 5
- ☐ 6 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20

How many cognate words can you identify in the Criminal Procedure course description?

- Pregunta
#10
- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1 - 5
- ☐ 6 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20

How many cognate words can you identify in the Constitutional Law course description?

- Pregunta
#11
- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1 - 5
- ☐ 6 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20

How many cognate words can you identify in the Legal Research and Writing course description?

- Pregunta
#12
- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1 - 5
- ☐ 6 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20

Post-test 1

Reading comprehension: Choose the best answer

A career in law

1. The study of law is intellectually stimulating and challenging and can lead to a variety of interesting careers.

In the UK and the USA, law degree programmes usually take three years to complete. In the UK, these programmes typically include core subjects such as criminal law, contract law, tort law, land law, equity and trusts, administrative law, and constitutional law. In addition, students are often required to take courses covering skills such as legal writing and legal research.

2. There is also a variety of optional (elective) courses available. Since many law students go on to become lawyers, students often take courses that will be useful to them during their future careers. Someone wishing to run a small partnership or to work alone as a sole practitioner in a small town may decide to take subjects such as family law, employment law and housing law. Those wishing to work in a large law practice will consider subjects such as company law, commercial law and litigation and arbitration.

3. Many universities also offer courses on legal practice. Courses like this give students the opportunity to experience the work of a lawyer before deciding on a career in the law. Another way of finding out more about law in practice is to get involved with a voluntary advice centre or law clinic. These clinics offer free legal assistance to the local community and provide a useful introduction to some of the day-to-day work of a lawyer.

4. For students wishing to work in a commercial practice, knowledge of foreign languages is essential. When law firms hire new recruits, they generally look at four things: education, personality, work experience and language ability. Since English is the language of the international legal community, law firms increasingly expect graduates to have a good command of English.

If you want to become an independent lawyer, according to the text, you may need...

- Pregunta #1
- ☐ To take subjects such as housing law, among others
 - ☐ To have a good command of English
 - ☐ To take subjects such as company law, among others
 - ☐ To get involved with a voluntary centre

If you want to work in a commercial law firm, you need to have

- Pregunta #2
- ☐ Law clinic experience
 - ☐ Litigation and arbitration experience
 - ☐ English language proficiency
 - ☐ Previous work experience only

Law clinics, in general, prepare students to

- Pregunta #3
- ☐ Work in medical centres
 - ☐ Learn another language
 - ☐ Offer free legal assistance
 - ☐ Experience the work of a lawyer

Some law degree programmes offer elective courses such as

- Pregunta #4
- ☐ Criminal law
 - ☐ Constitutional law
 - ☐ Administrative law
 - ☐ Company law

This is an example of a core subject at law schools in the UK

- Pregunta
#5
- ☐ Employment law
 - ☐ Tort law
 - ☐ Family law
 - ☐ Company law

If you want to manage a small partnership, according to the text, you may need...

- Pregunta
#6
- ☐ To take subjects such as housing law, among others
 - ☐ To have a good command of English
 - ☐ To take subjects such as company law, among others
 - ☐ To get involved with a voluntary centre

If you want to work for a big law firm, according to the text, you may need...

- Pregunta
#7
- ☐ To take subjects such as housing law, among others
 - ☐ To take subjects such as family law, among others
 - ☐ To take subjects such as company law, among others
 - ☐ To get involved with a voluntary centre

It is a good idea to take courses on legal practice because...

- Pregunta
#8
- ☐ You can make an informed decision about your future
 - ☐ You can practice law
 - ☐ You can offer free legal assistance
 - ☐ You can practice legal English

Read the text again and answer the following questions

A career in law

1. The study of law is intellectually stimulating and challenging and can lead to a variety of interesting careers.

In the UK and the USA, law degree programmes usually take three years to complete. In the UK, these programmes typically include core subjects such as criminal law, contract law, tort law, land law, equity and trusts, administrative law, and constitutional law. In addition, students are often required to take courses covering skills such as legal writing and legal research.

2. There is also a variety of optional (elective) courses available. Since many law students go on to become lawyers, students often take courses that will be useful to them during their future careers. Someone wishing to run a small partnership or to work alone as a sole practitioner in a small town may decide to take subjects such as family law, employment law and housing law. Those wishing to work in a large law practice will consider subjects such as company law, commercial law and litigation and arbitration.

3. Many universities also offer courses on legal practice. Courses like this give students the opportunity to experience the work of a lawyer before deciding on a career in the law. Another way of finding out more about law in practice is to get involved with a voluntary advice centre or law clinic. These clinics offer free legal assistance to the local community and provide a useful introduction to some of the day-to-day work of a lawyer.

4. For students wishing to work in a commercial practice, knowledge of foreign languages is essential. When law firms hire new recruits, they generally look at four things: education, personality, work experience and language ability. Since English is the language of the international legal community, law firms increasingly expect graduates to have a good command of English.

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph 1?

Pregunta
#9

← → Normal ▾ **B** *I* ~~S~~ \times_2 \times^2 ≡ ▾ ☰ ☷ ≡ ≡ ☒ ☑ 🔗 🔗 <> *I**

Escribe tu respuesta aquí...

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph 2?

Pregunta
#10

← → Normal ▾ **B** *I* ~~S~~ \times_2 \times^2 ≡ ▾ ☰ ☷ ≡ ≡ ☒ ☑ 🔗 🔗 <> *I**

Escribe tu respuesta aquí...

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph 3?

Pregunta
#11

← → Normal ▾ **B** *I* ~~S~~ \times_2 \times^2 ≡ ▾ ☰ ☷ ≡ ≡ ☒ ☑ 🔗 🔗 <> *I**

Escribe tu respuesta aquí...

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph 4?

Pregunta
#12

← → Normal ▾ **B** *I* ~~S~~ \times_2 \times^2 ≡ ▾ ☰ ☷ ≡ ≡ ☒ ☑ 🔗 🔗 <> *I**

Escribe tu respuesta aquí...

Post-test 2

Reading comprehension: Choose the best answer

Course Descriptions

A. Introduction to Law: This course aims to familiarize the student with the study of law; to begin the development of certain basic skills, such as reading, analysis and synthesis of legal decisions, and interpretation of statutes; to discuss fundamental aspects of the legal process, e.g., how courts "make law" and the function of the courts with respect to statutory law.

B. Contract law: This course covers the fundamental principles governing the formation, interpretation, performance, and enforcement of contracts. In addition, special attention is given to the requirements of offer and acceptance, consideration, formal requirements, public policy, and the problems of choosing a remedy in case of a breach. Some attention will also be given to the Uniform Commercial Code.

C. Tort law: Topics covered include liability for intentional and negligently caused injuries to person and property; strict liability; vicarious liability; ultra-hazardous activities; products liability; nuisance; invasion of privacy; defamation; the impact of insurance and risk distribution upon liability; accident compensation plans; damages; losses.

D. Criminal law: This course presents the basic concepts of criminal law. Crimes against persons' property, and public administration are covered, with special emphasis placed upon the law of homicide.

One of the objectives of the Introduction to Law course is

- Pregunta #1
- ☐ To analyze legal decisions and interpretation of statutes
 - ☐ To describe how courts "make law"
 - ☐ To study statutory law
 - ☐ To discuss general ideas of the legal process

One of the topics covered in the Tort Law course is

- Pregunta #2
- ☐ Invasion of privacy
 - ☐ Intentional liability
 - ☐ Products liability
 - ☐ Impact liability

One of the topics covered in the Contract Law course is

- Pregunta #3
- ☐ Formation of contracts
 - ☐ Remedy acceptance
 - ☐ Remedy choosing
 - ☐ Contract offers

The Criminal Law course covers

- Pregunta #4
- ☐ Public administration law
 - ☐ Elementary concepts of criminal law
 - ☐ Person's property law
 - ☐ Criminal property

If you want to learn about negligently caused injuries, you have to take the following course

- Pregunta
#5
- ☐ Introduction to law
 - ☐ Contract law
 - ☐ Tort law
 - ☐ Criminal law

If you want to learn about the interpretation of statutes, you have to take the following course

- Pregunta
#6
- ☐ Introduction to law
 - ☐ Contract law
 - ☐ Tort law
 - ☐ Criminal law

If you want to learn about the enforcement of contracts, you have to take the following course

- Pregunta
#7
- ☐ Introduction to law
 - ☐ Contract law
 - ☐ Tort law
 - ☐ Criminal law

It is a good idea to take a course on Criminal Law because...

- Pregunta
#8
- ☐ You can learn about the Uniform Commercial Code
 - ☐ You can discuss legal processes
 - ☐ You can learn about injuries to persons
 - ☐ You can learn about the law of homicide

Read the text again and answer the following questions

Course Descriptions

A. Introduction to Law: This course aims to familiarize the student with the study of law; to begin the development of certain basic skills, such as reading, analysis and synthesis of legal decisions, and interpretation of statutes; to discuss fundamental aspects of the legal process, e.g., how courts "make law" and the function of the courts with respect to statutory law.

B. Contract law: This course covers the fundamental principles governing the formation, interpretation, performance, and enforcement of contracts. In addition, special attention is given to the requirements of offer and acceptance, consideration, formal requirements, public policy, and the problems of choosing a remedy in case of a breach. Some attention will also be given to the Uniform Commercial Code.

C. Tort law: Topics covered include liability for intentional and negligently caused injuries to person and property; strict liability; vicarious liability; ultrahazardous activities; products liability; nuisance; invasion of privacy; defamation; the impact of insurance and risk distribution upon liability; accident compensation plans; damages; losses.

D. Criminal law: This course presents the basic concepts of criminal law. Crimes against persons' property, and public administration are covered, with special emphasis placed upon the law of homicide.

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph **A**?

- Pregunta
#9
- ☐ 1-5
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ 11-20
 - ☐ 21-30

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph **B**?

- Pregunta
#10
- ☐ 1-5
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ 11-20
 - ☐ 21-30

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph **C**?

- Pregunta
#11
- ☐ 1-5
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ 11-20
 - ☐ 21-30

How many cognate words can you identify in paragraph **D**?

- Pregunta
#12
- ☐ 1-5
 - ☐ 6-10
 - ☐ 11-20
 - ☐ 21-30

Appendix 3: Online survey

1. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo ¿Qué tan útil ha sido esta intervención para tu comprensión lectora en textos de inglés legal?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo ¿Qué tan útil ha sido esta intervención para identificar palabras cognadas en textos de inglés legal?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo ¿Qué tan probable es que recomiendes estas estrategias a otros estudiantes de inglés legal?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 el mínimo y 5 el máximo ¿Qué tan apropiadas te parecen estas estrategias de identificación de cognados para aplicarlas al estudiar inglés legal?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. ¿Deberían integrarse estas estrategias de manera regular en todos los cursos del programa de inglés legal?

- ☐ Sí, definitivamente
☐ Tal vez
☐ No, de ninguna manera

6. ¿Cuál es tu opinión con respecto a esta intervención y su metodología en general? Escribe, por favor, al menos 15 palabras.

7. Desde tu perspectiva. ¿Te sientes mejor preparado para identificar palabras cognadas y comprender mejor los textos de inglés legal, después de esta intervención? Escribe, por favor, al menos 15 palabras.

Appendix 4: Consent Letter

Consentimiento Informado

Título del estudio: *“Implementing cognate identification strategies to improve law students’ proficiency in legal English reading comprehension tasks”*

Descripción: Usted ha sido invitado a participar en una investigación que busca aplicar un nuevo enfoque en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje llamado “Teaching learning cycle”, el cual desarrollado en etapas, guía el proceso a través de la interacción en el contexto de una experiencia compartida, como un proceso de interpretación y construcción del significado.

Esta investigación requiere de su participación en clases. Los datos que deriven de su análisis serán utilizados en la publicación de un trabajo final de postgrado.

Tiempo de duración: Su participación en este proyecto se extiende por un plazo de 4 sesiones de 60 minutos que incluyen la aplicación de un pre test, post test y encuesta al final de la intervención.

Riesgos y beneficios: Si ha leído el contenido de este documento y ha decidido participar en este proyecto, por favor entienda que **su participación es voluntaria** y que tiene el derecho a negarse a participar si así lo decide sin ningún riesgo para usted. Este proyecto no entrega compensación económica a los participantes. **La privacidad de la información que provenga de usted será mantenida en todas las publicaciones escritas y comunicaciones orales que resulten de este estudio.** Si decide formar parte de la investigación, los principales beneficios serán desarrollar habilidades y estrategias para manejar textos tipos con mayor claridad, control y comprensión. Además, recibirá de primera mano la experiencia de trabajar con un enfoque utilizado en Australia que ha permitido mejorar el desempeño en inglés como lengua materna, y que ya ha sido utilizado para enseñarlo como segunda lengua, entregando resultados similares y muy positivos.

Contacto: Si desea contactar al investigador puede escribir al siguiente correo electrónico: acatalan@derecho.uchile.cl (Alberto Catalán).

Consentimiento: Doy mi consentimiento para que mi participación y los resultados que se obtengan de esta sean utilizados en el estudio.

_____ Sí _____ No

Firma _____ Fecha _____

Muchas gracias por su participación.