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HYPERDOC'ING A LEGAL ENGLISH LESSON. MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH HYPERDOCS *

Hiperdocumentos en una Lección de Inglés Legal. Mi Primera Experiencia

* Short Article

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of a group of students' first experience with HyperDocs as a strategy to foster learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It then presents students' insights on their learning experience along with comments and reflections made by their teacher the process over implementing HyperDocs in a Legal English course at a Colombian private university. This qualitative study corresponds to action research and involved a focus group, a students' survey and the students' artifacts. The findings display the relevance assisting students in taking control of their own learning process, being critical net surfers and taking advantage of online learning resources.

Keywords: HyperDocs, Legal English, TEFL.

Resumen.

Este artículo presenta una descripción general de la primera experiencia de un grupo de estudiantes con HyperDocs como estrategia para fomentar aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Se muestran las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre su experiencia de aprendizaje junto con los comentarios y reflexiones de su docente sobre el proceso de implementación de hiperdocumentos en un curso de inglés legal en una universidad privada colombiana. Este estudio cualitativo corresponde a una investigación-acción, y se recolectaron datos a partir de un grupo focal, una encuesta a los estudiantes y elaborados artefactos por los estudiantes. Los hallazgos muestran la relevancia de ayudar a los estudiantes a tomar el control de su propio proceso de aprendizaje, ser internautas críticos y aprovechar los recursos de aprendizaje en línea

Palabras clave: Hiperdocumentos, inglés legal, Enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Introduction

English teaching methods are in constant change and evolution to better meet students' needs and the current societal demands. As an EFL teacher (English as a Foreign Language), I have moved around various methodologies and approaches to aid students to develop their communicative skills and thinking abilities. Amid this search for more holistic approaches to TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), I explored HyperDocs. Highfill et al. (2016) define HyperDocs as

Transformative, interactive Google Docs that replace the standard worksheet method of delivering instruction [...] A HyperDoc is the teaching pedagogy involved when making important decisions about what to teach and how to teach with technology to redefine the overall student experience. [...] Instead of writing lesson plans in a book for us as teachers to implement, we started designing lesson plans for the students using a variety of web tools, and a ripple effect of positive personalized instruction began to happen in our classrooms. (n.p)

Pedagogical practices within the EFL classroom should provide students with lots of opportunities to enhance their communication in English, and also make a contribution to the development of lifelong skills. Thus, my research niche has been mainly devoted to strengthening HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) and communicative skills in EFL.

Discovering HyperDocs and first experimenting with them in one single lesson (unit) allowed me to make some significant findings and carry on innovating in my classes. Thus, this paper is intended to display my initial approach to implementing HyperDocs within ESP lessons (English for Specific Purposes), in this case, Legal English. During a whole semester as part of their Legal English classes, students were immersed in a pedagogical cycle structured by some stages, namely, vocabulary introduction, warm-up speaking, case analysis and collaborative work. English lessons were remote and aimed at constructing critical thinking scenarios within online Legal English classes. The previous pedagogical cycle was repeated

three times, and to conclude the Legal English course I was engrossed in providing my students with a divergent learning approach.

I had noticed that in classes students tended to be quiet and passive. They just limited themselves to speaking if they were directly required to do so. In fact, they held the legal background knowledge regarding the issues studied in class, but they were not fully confident to speak due to various factors such as a lack of specific vocabulary and insufficient information about the legal cases included in the lessons. If they were provided with enough time to prepare their speech, and search for relevant information related to the topics we were discussing in class, they tended to be more engaged and willing to speak. Thus, based on the analysis of the students' performance in classes and with the aim of fostering their speaking skills in English, I created a HyperDoc intended to provide them with a learning path packed with some curated online resources for them to become acquainted with a specific lexicon, case facts and ideas to participate more actively in the online lesson. The HyperDoc also included some questionnaires for them to assess their comprehension and a final survey to evaluate their autonomous learning experience.

This paper gives an account of the literature review regarding flipped learning and HyperDocs, the research method, the participants, data collection and analysis. Finally, conclusions and findings are displayed to elicit some reflections and future endeavors.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 Flipped Learning

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach that is intended to invert the traditional class by converting the individual learning space as the scenario to receive direct instruction and transforming lessons into a more dynamic and interactive group space (Lage et al., 2000; Bergmann & Sams, 2012; FLN, para 1). Thus, students

are expected to get acquainted with the class topic prior to the lesson. They check pre-recorded lessons or material previously curated by the teacher and take notes on the topic. In this manner, the group learning space or the lesson itself tends to be a scenario to put into practice what has been learned or studied in the individual learning space. In this sense, Ramírez and Rodríguez-Buitrago (2018) highlight that the class time is enriched as it is devoted to promoting interaction and strengthening the concepts learned in the individual learning space.

The flipped learning experience referred to in this paper was designed and conducted to provide students with online resources and tools for them to make decisions on what to see or study more deeply before the group learning space. Thus, students themselves were expected to determine their own course of study as the HyperDoc included various options for them to become engaged and explore. Flipped learning met the requirements of a Legal English course I was teaching; it was intended to foster critical thinking skills and communicative competence in English, and a strategy to assist students in growing as critical thinkers was inverting the lesson stages. In this regard, Ramírez and Rodríguez-Buitrago (2018) declare:

In flipped learning, due to the inversion made, students remember and understand concepts in the individual learning space, and then, in class, they develop high-order thinking skills with the guidance of the teacher. Thus, flipping Bloom's taxonomy is an effective way for teachers to be able to make the pillars a reality in their classrooms. (p.135)

As a result, the group learning space aims at providing students with opportunities to use their background legal knowledge while attempting to express their ideas in English. In this sense, the class becomes a space to practice and strengthen communicative competencies in a foreign language.

1.2 HyperDocs in the English Classroom

HyperDocs support flipped learning goals as they allow both teachers and learners to take advantage of online resources arranged into predetermined stages to engage learners and promote self-direction. Carpenter et al. (2020) state that

HyperDocs are interactive, digital teaching and learning materials created, disseminated, and remixed by educators. Most commonly, HyperDocs are understood to be digital lessons that are housed in electronic documents or slides and that include content, media, and hyperlinks—thus, the portmanteau name derived from hyperlink and document. (p.2)

However, they are not just a collection of hyperlinks within an electronic document. In fact, every single aspect within a HyperDoc is learning goal-oriented. In this sense, a HyperDoc should comply with certain criteria in order to boost students' learning and self-direction. They should "illustrate through multiple media, provide opportunities for self-assessment and reflection and optimize individual choice and autonomy" (CAST, 2018). Furthermore, Highfill et al. (n.d) provide 5 steps to create a HyperDoc: objectives, the cycle of learning, packaging, workflow, and design. Firstly, the teacher should define the learning goals to achieve. Secondly, an inner structure or design should be selected. For instance, explore-explain-apply. In this regard, multiple learning cycles are feasible. In third place, packaging refers to the sort of electronic document used to set the learning cycle. Afterwards, the teacher should determine "the workflow of the HyperDoc, including how it will be delivered, how students will submit their work, and how educators will give feedback" (Carpenter et al, 2020, p. 2). Finally, it is necessary to define the visual design. (See Appendix A)

2. Methodology

2.1 The Study

The study was conducted over a term within an online Legal English course oriented to Law students at Universidad Santo Tomás in Colombia (hereafter referred to as USTA. In Colombia, universities operate on an academic year divided into two equal semesters of 16-17 weeks' duration. At USTA a semester is divided into three terms. The last one is usually the shortest: 5 weeks. This study was conducted during the last term from May 3rd to June 4th, 2021.

2.1 Context

The study was conducted at USTA in Colombia as a manner to innovate the methodology implemented to give online Legal English classes and detect potential contributions to students' Legal English learning.

2.3 Design

The study included a phase of pedagogical intervention and another one of data collection. Regarding the former, it was divided into two stages aligned to the implementation of four workshops intended to foster students' critical thinking along with communicative skills in English. The first three workshops were developed based on a pedagogical cycle structured by some stages, namely, vocabulary introduction, warm-up speaking, case analysis and collaborative work. The last workshop consisted of a HyperDoc and involved some principles of flipped learning. Each workshop was intended to be developed for 6 hours. Students took a 2-hour Legal English class per week. After concluding the pedagogical intervention, data collection was conducted by means of students' artifacts, a survey and a focus group session. The survey was designed in Google forms. It was composed of 2 single-answer multiple-choice questions, 2 multiple answers multiple-choice questions and 1 open-ended question (See Appendix B). As for the focus group session, it revolved around 4 open-ended questions (See Appendix C)

2.3 Research Focus

The study was aimed at exploring students' first experience with flipped learning and HyperDocs as pedagogical alternatives to develop a Legal English course. Thus, the study intended to answer the following questions:

- To what extent may Legal English courses supported on flipped learning and HyperDocs contribute to the development of critical thinking skills among students?
- What strategies to build meaning may arise from Legal English courses supported on flipped learning and HyperDocs?

2.4 Participants

The EFL learners belonged to the Law faculty and took the Legal English courses as part of their career curriculum, 21 studied at USTA Villavicencio and 34 at USTA Tunja. At USTA Tunja, law students take 9 courses in all, the first five levels are focused on general English, sixth and seventh courses are aimed at reading comprehension and the last two levels emphasize legal English. In Villavicencio students enroll in 7 levels of General English, and 2 levels of legal English in eighth and ninth semesters. Thus, students' first experience with flipped learning and HyperDocs took place in the legal English courses in both branches: Tunja and Villavicencio.

In terms of English proficiency, the table below portrays the level students are expected to attain in each English course.

Table 1. English level proficiency across the courses offered at USTA.

English	_	Legal						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		English 2
A1	A1+	A2	A2+	B1	B1	B1+	B2	B2

Source: USTA English syllabi

The overall time of this study was one academic semester (4 months), and the lessons based on flipped learning and HyperDocs were conducted during the last

month. Classes were conducted remotely due to the pandemic extended conditions in 2021.

The following table displays how the target population was characterized in terms of gender and age.

 Table 2. Population characterization

Criteria	USTA Tunja	USTA Villavicencio		
Gender	7 men	10 men		
	27 women	11 women		
Age	ranges between 19 and 22 years old	ranges between 20 and 22 years old		

Source: Own elaboration

2.5 Data Collection

As part of the research process, students were advised about the research project's aims and scope as a necessary step to ensure their informed consent. The present qualitative research study comprised two phases: data collection and pedagogical intervention that were developed simultaneously. To collect data, three instruments were implemented: students' artifacts, a survey and a focus group. As for the students' artifacts, lessons were intended to make them construct a sort of output based on the analysis of legal cases. Thus, it was usually portrayed by means of digital presentations (slideshow deck, infographic, mind maps and flipbooks). Regarding the survey, it was conducted at the end of the pedagogical intervention so that students had the opportunity to reflect on their own English learning experience mediated by a HyperDoc. As a manner to conclude the data collection, 3 focus group sessions were conducted online. Edmunds (1999) stated that "focus groups participants provide a flow of input related to the topic or group of topics that the group is centered around (p.2)". In this case, the focus groups aimed at collecting students' perceptions on their first experience with flipped learning and HyperDocs as pedagogical alternatives in EFL classes.

3. Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed and triangulated bearing in mind the procedure proposed by grounded theory (Creswell, 2012). Thus, data arose from three different sources: students' artifacts, a survey and a focus group, and were coded and refined. Based on the commonalities observed in the data, two categories and three subcategories emerged.

Table 3. Emerging categories and subcategories

Category	Subcategories
Category 1. HyperDocs as a path to	Subcategory 1. English classes as
foster interpretation, argumentation and	scenarios to nurture key skills for
proposition	lawyers
Category 2. Strategies to build meaning	Subcategory 1. Building up a
	lexicon to speak
	Subcategory 2. Analyzing cases to
	foster thinking skills
	Subcategory 3. Coping with
	technological tools to support English
	learning

Source: Own elaboration

4. Results

Findings will be illustrated with excerpts from the survey and the focus group.

Category 1. HyperDocs as a Path to Foster Interpretation, Argumentation and Proposition.

Students' first experience with HyperDocs was conducted in the last thematic unit of a legal English course. Students were provided with a HyperDoc intended to analyze a well-known legal case in Colombia. In this sense, students had the opportunity to determine their own pace to check and study the material, and they also defined what activities to do. Most of the activities proposed intended to set some stages for students to have a big picture of the case and to be able to discuss it in class. The HyperDoc comprised vocabulary, listening, reading and speaking activities that allowed students to gain knowledge in terms of lexicon and to set a position toward the case itself. As a result, the HyperDoc served as a space to rehearse communicative skills and strengthen interpretation, argumentation and proposition.

Subcategory 1. English Classes as Scenarios to Nurture Key Skills for Lawyers

In the framework of this research project HyperDocs became a suitable strategy to foster key skills for lawyers such as interpretation, argumentation and proposition. After conducting this first pedagogical approach to HyperDocs in a legal English course, students provided some insightful comments as most of their school life they had been exposed to varied methodologies. Some of their ideas are displayed as follows:

I consider we did the necessary activities to understand the case, reading, speaking, analyzing the vocabulary with adequate tools (Student 28, survey, 21.05.2021)

The HyperDoc provided students with lots of online resources to simultaneously obtain more information about the target case and reinforce communicative skills in English. Furthermore, students pondered over how subject matters (in this case Law and Legal English) complement one another.

In the English classes we have learned many things that we have not learned in other law-related subjects, but we have also reinforced previous knowledge [...] incorporated it to the cases we studied in the Legal English classes [...] we see that it is necessary to apply the theoretical concepts. (Focus group T2, 17.06.2021)

The previous comment is in line with the following ones in terms of putting knowledge into practice and perceiving the English classroom as a suitable scenario to learn more than English.

More than legal knowledge, this class taught me a lot about values. (Student 37, survey, 21.05.2021)

Throughout the semester we were learning more about our career in a foreign language, so I think that is why I was more interested, and despite the fact that it was not related to the previous English levels, I think that it was a challenge to learn more, even develop more speaking because it has always been the most complicated for me. (Focus group V, 05.25.2021)

ESP courses are designed to provide students with opportunities to interact in closely real situations related to their own field of study. In this sense, Agustina (2014) asserts that

A matter of fact of ESP is that combining subject matters and English language in the instruction, in which the students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes right away in their study [...] In turn, their

abilities in their subject-matter fields are of a great help to English acquisition. (p.42)

The present study is correlated with Agustina's assertion in terms of students' gains. As they engaged in activities related to their own field of studies, they were able to improve their communicative skills in English. Students highlighted their progress on reading, speaking and vocabulary. Thus, being exposed to activities concerning legal issues may have served as a trigger for enhancing motivation and strengthening interaction in English.

Category 2. Strategies to Build Meaning

In a ESP course students are frequently confronted by new terminology, and the vast range of vocabulary may overwhelm them. Nonetheless, students were able to reflect on how they coped with the challenge of properly using legal vocabulary and express their ideas concerning legal issues.

Subcategory 1. Building up a Lexicon to Speak

As was mentioned in the previous subcategory, students felt challenged to learn and become acquainted with specific terminology related to their field (Law). Familiarizing themselves with some words became a requisite to participate in class activities. They realized that the proposed methodology (HyperDocs along with legal case analysis) provided them with some tools to fill the gap in vocabulary.

In my opinion it has been quite enriching for my legal vocabulary practice [...] because classes are based on real life cases. (Student 32, survey, 21.05.2021)

The topic of vocabulary was very useful to me in the classes in order to analyze the cases. I am not good at English, but fluency changed thanks to the vocabulary and although it was difficult for me, I could improve. (Focus group 2T, 06.17.21).

In this regard, students were expected to navigate in the HyperDoc and become acquainted with key vocabulary prior to the online session. During the online session, they usually participated in activities intended to foster interaction and the use of legal vocabulary as well. Thus, they discussed essential aspects of the legal case, shared ideas concerning the legal procedure conducted and pronounced their verdict.

At this point, it is clear that students realized the benefits of learning vocabulary. They referred to gains in terms o fluency, self-confidence, improvisation and speech. They were capable of noticing they were making progress because they had been provided with tools according to their needs and interests. In this regard, HyperDocs may be cataloged as a toolbox in which students may find out lots of options to learn and tackle the EFL class topics.

Furthermore, the HyperDoc was a manner to invite them to make their own learning pathway, they felt bewildered by the idea of taking control of it and making decisions on their own. This may be explained by the fact that students used to do what they were assigned, but in this case, they decided what to do and what not to do from the array of online resources and activities provided.

Subcategory 2. Analyzing Cases to Foster Thinking Skills

Analyzing legal cases displays lots of opportunities for Law students to build meaning and develop key skills for lawyers such as interpretation, argumentation and proposition. This pedagogical strategy served a two-folded purpose as students increased their knowledge and use of legal terminology in English and strengthened critical thinking and communicative skills. In this regard, one student asserted that "each one of the activities was very important, because I learned new vocabulary and helped me to interpret the case more easily" (Student 17, survey, 21.05.2021). Thus, students realized that gaining vocabulary domain was a key step to be able to analyze cases in a better way.

In this regard, HyperDocs are useful tools to assist students in resorting to reliable sources with the purpose of equipping themselves with the vocabulary required to participate in the in-class activities, and simultaneously they may become acquainted with the case details and develop a critical view of it. Within the framework of this experience, the HyperDoc comprised information from English learning websites, online newspapers, digital applications to create surveys, make and broadcast videos, among others.

Subcategory 3. Coping with Technological Tools to Support English Learning

HyperDocs provide a wide range of opportunities to become acquainted with digital tools and online resources designed to support English learning processes. In this regard, a HyperDoc comprises a set of multiple learning routes as not everyone is expected to use the same resources or venture in the same learning activities. To some extent HyperDocs may prompt learners to make decisions based on their interests and needs. Students' insights on this issue are presented as follows:

I found workshop 4 super interesting because I think it required each person to independently do their job and make an effort to learn about the case. So, for example, I took my time to read, to investigate each one of the templates or the documents that were part of the workshop in order to have a better development and improve my vocabulary. (Focus group V, Student 4, 05.25.2021)

Based on the student's previous assertion it may be inferred that HyperDocs imply independent work and self-direction. Students are expected to follow their own learning path and make their own decisions toward a better learning experience. From the learners' perspective, HyperDocs may demand lots of effort and self-discipline, but they also saw them as brainstorming sessions full of different learning options. Furthermore, they also acknowledged that HyperDocs were innovative and allowed them to use more technological tools and resources.

Students appreciated that they were making their own decisions on what to do. They did not have to comply with a list of assignments; on the contrary, they were prompted to navigate in the document as they wanted. Thus, different learning paths originated based on the students' decisions, however, all of them intended to prepare themselves to socialize ideas, discuss and set their own viewpoints concerning the legal case studied in class.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the students' insights concerning the use of HyperDocs in the EFL classes, a set of practical recommendations arose to guide future EFL teaching and learning experiences mediated by HyperDocs.

5.1Students' Needs as the Starting Point

Designing HyperDocs to support English teaching and learning processes involves inquiring into students' needs. If we as teachers take into account what students need in order to make progress in their EFL learning process, we will be more prepared to create suitable learning experiences which meet their needs and interests in the same way. Furthermore, students gradually may become aware of their own needs and shortcomings and begin making decisions. Thus, HyperDocs become scenarios where students are expected to play an active role in terms of learning activities, resources and goals.

5.2 Transversality in EFL Classes

Another key aspect concerns the transversal nature of EFL classes. This article documents an exemplary case in which Law students were immersed into a series of activities aimed at guiding them to express their ideas on legal issues. Thus, English is more than a subject matter, and EFL classes should aim at fostering communication and transversal competences as well (in this case: interpretation, argumentation and proposition). In this regard, Zadra (2014) asserts that

The focus on transversal competences seems to involve an inevitable reduction in declarative knowledge and the foundation of new contexts and

learning experiences. It emphasises the intentionality of teaching/learning and higher transferability in different fields and, therefore, the awareness of the possibility of conversion of acquired competences into the capacity for action. (p. 4728)

In this case, English served as an instrument to make students transfer their legal knowledge in real contexts by implementing the analysis of a real legal case in Colombia.

5.3 Cultivating Decision-making

HyperDocs prompt students to make decisions concerning their own learning process. In this sense, Rodríguez-Buitrago (2021) asserts:

HyperDocs provide the structure that learners need in order to learn to make decisions about their own learning. Since the structure of HyperDocs is sequential and scaffolded, learners work towards mastery of the topics at their own pace, while exercising their autonomy to make decisions about certain aspects of their learning (timeframes, tools, places to study, etc.). (73-74)

Furthermore, in this specific students' first experience with HyperDocs decision-making also was fostered by implementing the analysis of case studies. In real-world situations, lawyers are frequently urged to set their standpoint, provide legal advice and make decisions based on their knowledge and experience. Thus, analyzing a legal case assisted them with training for confronting real circumstances within their field of studies.

6. Conclusions

This preliminary approach to legal English classes mediated by HyperDocs provides an interesting insight into some of their benefits and challenges. Further

research should be conducted regarding the implementation of HyperDocs in a complete legal or General English course in order to obtain a better perspective of its scope and contributions to EFL teaching and learning.

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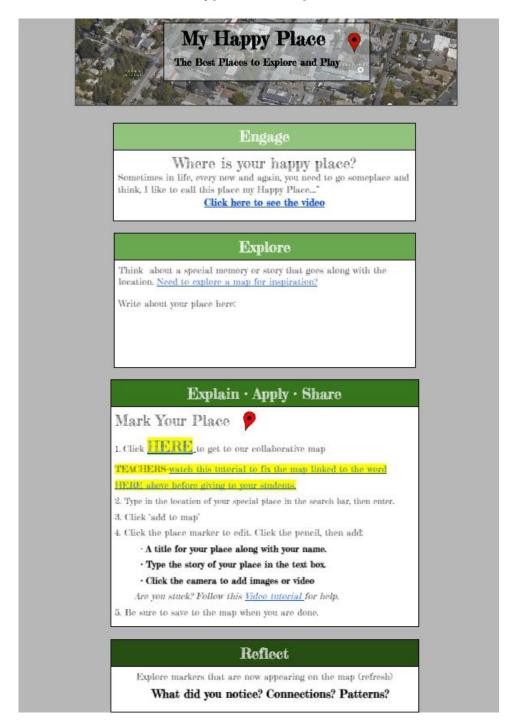
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Appendix A.

Hyperdoc sample



Taken from: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rDxT9U-mZgsJh4Vi1v8WmNtvelb19U1AxuuGrQRYyEw/edit

Appendix B Survey questions

Workshop 4 Legal English

Dear student,

Thanks for going through a workshop created to incite autonomy, critical thinking and English learning according to your own pace and availability.

I would like to have your insights concerning the learning path proposed. Thus, I kindly ask you to answer the following questions.

*Ot	oligatorio
1.	You study at *
	Marca solo un óvalo.
	USTA Villavicencio
	USTA Tunja
2.	From the objectives proposed in the workshop 4, you achieved to *
	Selecciona todos los que correspondan.
	interpret, argue and propose based on the legal case provided.
	link prior knowledge to analyze the legal case.
	apply different reading strategies to understand the legal case
	spread your Legal English vocabulary
	improve your speaking skills
	learn how to use some digital tools for learning purposes

3.	From the stages proposed in the workshop, which ones were the most meaningful and useful for you?
	Selecciona todos los que correspondan.
	Stage 1. Vocabulary activities (document about LGBTQI+ vocaabulary, video about discrimination, game on anti-discrimination law)
	Stage 2. Speaking (Flipgrid)
	Stage 3. Case analysis (Flipping book, news websites, case video)
	Stage 4. Quiz time
	Stage 5. Collaborative work (final discussion on the case coming up with some solutions)
4.	What suits you better? What contributes the most to your learning? * Marca solo un óvalo.
	Teacher's explanation and guided activities during the class + oral presentations done by students
	A learning path (workshop 4) with lots of activities and resources for students to select + final discussion in class
5.	In general terms, how do you describe your learning experience with workshop * 4?

Appendix C. Focus group questions.

De acuerdo con su propia experiencia, ¿qué opina sobre el ejercicio de buscar casos legales de la vida real y utilizarlos como material para las clases de inglés legal? (Refiérase a ventajas o desventajas)

¿Qué situaciones o circunstancias incidieron en el desarrollo de los diferentes talleres?

De qué manera su conocimiento previo en derecho, ¿le aportó para entender, analizar y emitir juicios sobre los casos estudiados en clase? Explique su respuesta.

¿Cree usted que el trabajo en clase de inglés con casos legales, la dinámica de los talleres le permitieron practicar y mejorar su uso personal del inglés? Explique su respuesta en cuanto a resultados/beneficios.

Translated version

Based on your own experience, what do you think about searching real-life legal cases and using them as material for legal English classes? (Refer to advantages or disadvantages)

What situations or circumstances may have influenced the development of the different workshops?

How did your prior legal knowledge help you to understand, analyze and make judgments about the cases studied in class? Explain your answer.

Do you think that the English class methodology (legal case analysis), the workshops' structure allowed you to practice and improve your English? Please explain your answer in terms of results/benefits.