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Cognition, Language, and Law: Introspective Reflections on How we Learn, Teach, and Understand Law Across Languages and Legal Systems

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1. Introduction

I was invited to write this article to reflect upon my cognitive experience as a lawyer and academic with some proficiency in English and Spanish and with training in both the Common Law and the Civil law legal systems.[1] This article incorporates reflections on the intrinsic relationship between law and language and the cognitive process of learning, teaching, and understanding law across different languages and legal systems — with particular focus on the legal constructs 'constitution' and 'corporation' — based on my academic and professional trajectory. Considering the nature of this invitation and the purpose of this issue, I consider it appropriate to first provide the reader with a summary of my academic and professional background to contextualise the reflections that follow.

Academically, I have been trained in law in Colombia, a Civil Law country, and Australia and the USA, both part of the Common Law tradition. I studied law for about 14 years in English and Spanish across five different universities. I obtained my LLB (Honours) in Colombia as well as three graduate diplomas. I did my LLM in the USA and my PhD in Australia. Finally, short courses and certifications in Colombia and the USA complement my academic training. Professionally, I have industry experience as a lawyer and corporate counsel in the private sector, and academic experience as an educator and researcher in the same legal traditions and languages. As a result, my legal formation has been deeply influenced by two of the most widely spoken languages in the world, English and Spanish, as well as by two of the most prominent legal systems today, the Common Law and the Civil Law systems.

[1] The terms 'legal systems', 'legal families', and 'legal traditions' are used interchangeably in this article.

This article, therefore, is not a research paper; it is an introspective, reflective piece limited in scope by own personal experience.[2] It is also limited to particular languages (Spanish and English) and specific legal families (Common Law and Civil Law) and jurisdictions (Australia, Colombia, and the USA).[3] I ask for the reader's indulgence as the following lines are dedicated to this self-reflecting exercise without the usual rigour required in legal scholarship — which also explains why the article is written in the first person. The reader's disagreement is expected, welcomed, and (probably) correct, as no scientific method is followed.

The article is organised into four groups of reflections, one group per section. Section I develops initial reflections on the law and, in particular, the Common Law and the Civil Law legal systems. Section II discusses ideas around the connection between law and language. Section III incorporates thoughts about the social, political, and economic dimensions of law as a discipline. Finally, section IV analyses the legal constructs 'constitution' and 'corporation', followed by the concluding remarks.

2. Reflections on Legal System and Law

Before talking about law and language, it seems logical to talk about law first. Particularly, I want to reflect on conceptual and methodological differences and parallels between the cognitive process of learning law in the Common Law and the Civil Law legal systems. Legal traditions seem to represent significant changes in substantive content and cognitive processes. These divides, however, are often artificial.

I usually teach my first-year students the main differences between the predominant legal systems in the world. It is a useful learning exercise that gives them a sense of the complexities and nuances of law as a global phenomenon. Countries are not situated in a legal vacuum isolated from what occurs outside their boundaries. Law is interconnected. It is a transnational and evolving phenomenon, adapting to societal changes, technological advancements, and the complexities of the modern world. Aside from an international legal order shared by multiple jurisdictions — exemplified by the United Nations (UN) and other international organisations, and a robust framework of multinational and plurilateral agreements — more often than not, legislators, adjudicators, and scholars alike look at foreign legal developments to inspire their own legal thinking.

For one thing, countries that have adopted the same legal family generally share similar legal principles, doctrines, and rules. For instance, the historical importance of case law with its correlated doctrine of precedent, the adversarial nature of the judicial system, and the parallel applicable rules of equity are aspects shared by most Common Law countries. For another, countries from different legal families may also share fundamental principles, doctrines, and rules. Essential constitutional principles such as constitutional supremacy, due process, and the rule of law are all shared features of most jurisdictions, regardless of whether they adhere or not to a particular legal family. Additionally, jurisdictions of other legal families can share principles, doctrines, and rules that are simultaneously different in countries within

[2] The more I study and experience, the more I realise the vast universe of knowledge I ignore in terms of law and language, a Socratic Paradox.

[3] Although a country can have multiple jurisdictions — as in Australia, USA, and Canada — the word 'jurisdiction' is used in this article as a synonym for 'country'.

the same legal system. For instance, the principle of separation of powers adopted in the USA is more similar in Colombia than in Australia. While there is a clear difference between the legislative and executive powers in both the USA and Colombia (*Myers v. United States*, 1926; *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co v. Sawyer*, 1952; Colombian Constitution, art. 113; Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2016), this division is not as strict in Australia, where members of the executive are also members of the parliament (Australian Constitution. s 64)- (*McCloy v. New South Wales*, 2015. Gageler J). This difference gives rise to legal principles, such as the doctrine of responsible government (*McCloy v. New South Wales*, 2015. Gageler J), that are absent in the USA, another Common Law country.

Further, the divides between the Common Law and the Civil Law legal systems have blurred over time. It is often said that the Common Law tradition is based on case law, while the Civil Law system relies on codes and legislation. Yet, one of the biggest codes I have ever studied is the US Uniform Commercial Code (UCC). In another example, Australia has been going through a 'codification' process in several areas of law. Negligence law, for instance, is heavily legislated after the 2002 Ipp Review (Australia Treasury, 2002), recommended multiple changes and limitations to the common law rules.[4] As a result, case law now has primarily an *interpretative function* — of statutes and legislation — in many common law countries, relativising its historical significance in the *creation of law* and, therefore, its role as an actual *source* of law. This interpretative function is analogous in Civil Law countries (Act 153 of 1887, 1887, art. 4; Civil Code, Spain, art. 1.6).

An underlying feature of this similarity is that the associated process of creating law — as well as the method of understanding, teaching, and learning it — is deductive rather than inductive. Through this method, general rules of law, usually codified, are applied to particular cases. This approach moves from general rules and principles to particular cases in opposition to the inductive method that moves from particular cases to general rules.

Additionally, both systems allow judges to *create law* in some instances, typically contingent on areas without legislation or regulation and when subsequent decisions follow earlier cases (the doctrine of precedent). For instance, the Constitutional Court of Colombia, the highest court for Constitutional matters in this country, has also adopted the doctrine of precedent — usually associated with Common Law jurisdictions (Corte Constitucional de Colombia [Colombian Constitutional Court], C-621/15 Corte Constitucional de Colombia [Colombian Constitutional Court] C-621/15, Corte Constitucional de Colombia [Colombian Constitutional Court] SU354/17, Corte Constitucional de Colombia [Colombian Constitutional Court] C–836/01; Código General del Proceso [General Code of Civil Procedure], art. 7). In this decision, as occurs in the Common Law tradition, the Court has differentiated ratio decidendi and obiter dicta as binding and persuasive parts of those precedents created by the High Courts of Colombia.[5]

As a *source of law*, case law uses a different method shared in both legal systems: an inductive method. As explained above, this method takes particular fact scenarios and derives general legal rules applicable to similar cases from them. Similarly, an inductive process is used to understand, teach, and learn the rules arising from jurisprudence qua *source* of law.

[4] The terms 'Common Law' (capitalised) and 'common law' (without capitalisation) are used differently in this article. While 'Common Law' refers to the legal system, 'common law' is a synonym for case law and jurisprudence.

[5] Ibid. Unlike Australia or the USA, Colombia has different High Courts depending on the subject matter. One is the Colombian Constitutional Court, which is in charge of constitutional issues.

These reflections suggest comparable Kelsenian Pyramids in these two legal systems (Kelsen, 1967), together with analogous methods for creating law and parallel cognitive pathways for understanding it.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, the Common Law and Civil Law legal families have several overlapping legal principles, doctrines, and rules. These parallels range from constitutional principles and political organisation to the adoption of specific legal constructs, such as 'easements', 'independent contractors' and 'insurance'. Many countries within the Common Law and Civil Law traditions are built upon the same legal, political, and societal foundations, which often echo the tenets embodied in the French Revolution motto 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'.

My main point here is that, although there are obvious differences between them, the Common Law and the Civil Law systems share more commonalities than is often recognised.[6] This realisation makes it easier to understand, transfer, and apply legal concepts, especially for lawyers trained in multiple jurisdictions and languages who are constantly modifying, adapting, and extending their knowledge by parallels, analogies, and contrasts.

3. Reflections on Language and Law

Now that we have reflected on the law as a global discipline composed of various interconnected legal systems, it is time to cogitate on language and its connection with law. Language is a fundamental aspect of human cognition.[7] From an individual perspective, language allows people to express thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. From a broader social perspective, it enables social interaction, knowledge transmission, and the development of social values such as culture, customs, and traditions.

Law is inherently linked to language. There is no law without language — in opposition to other human activities like painting, sculpture, and sports. Language not only conveys ideas but encapsulates the substantive content of law. When lawyers hear the term 'lease', for instance, they think about a residential accommodation option, what laypeople usually imagine, but they also think about a legal category with multiple legal implications. For instance, lawyers may think about the proprietary interest that is created in the lessee and the complex set of statutory rights and duties resulting from the lessor-lessee legal relationship. Or when lawyers hear the word 'ownership', they clearly understand the ordinary meaning of the concept, but they are also aware of the intricacies of the concept from a legal perspective — especially in the Common Law tradition where this construct has been traditionally elusive (as opposed to Civil Law jurisdictions, where a right of *dominum* is usually recognised in the proprietary bundle of rights to indicate ownership). Consequently, lawyers assign two different meanings to a term when appropriate: one 'ordinary', which a layperson can easily comprehend, and one 'legal', reserved for a speech community of literate and well-educated lawyers (Chen, 1995) p. 1263-93. The second meaning, a legal construct, is then connected to,

[6] A lawyer trained, for instance, in a Theocratic legal system may rightly come to a different conclusion. In this system, the legal foundations of law as a discipline, which are subordinated to religious principles, may vary significantly from the legal doctrines that inspire the Common Law and Civil Law traditions.

[7] Although there are many types of languages — including sign language, mathematical language, and body language — this article uses the term to refer to natural language, that is, spoken and written language.

and therefore conveys, a dataset of legal categories, principles, and rules associated with the term. The legal construct is cognitively and linguistically attached to an associated set of legal information. Lawyers, thus, create mental connections between ordinary words, legal constructs, and datasets of legal categories, principles, and rules.

An extension of this cognitive process occurs when lawyers train in law across different languages and legal systems/jurisdictions ('multijurisdictional lawyers' or 'MLs'). Similar to neural networks, MLs create datasets connected to each legal construct by jurisdiction and language. New datasets are thus subsumed into preexisting subordinate cognitive structures (Ausubel, 2000). Then, MLs draw parallels, analogies, and contrasts between those datasets of legal information. The more jurisdictions and languages involved, the more complex the comparison and retention of information becomes. This complex cognitive structure allows MLs to see the same legal construct differently depending on the lens they use to conduct the analysis.

The legal constructs and associated datasets MLs create are usually similar in jurisdictions with the same legal family and language — although, as already intimated, jurisdictions of different legal systems can also have similar datasets. This reflection means that, from a cognitive perspective, creating parallels, analogies, and contrasts, as well as ultimate assimilating legal concepts is generally more straightforward between legal constructs and datasets belonging to the same legal family and language. Yet, this is not always the case, and cognitive connections can exceptionally be simpler between datasets of different legal traditions and different languages.

4. Reflections on the Social, Political, and Economic Dimensions of Law

Law has social, political, and economic dimensions that are also created, transferred, and compared when we learn and practice law across languages and legal systems. It is here where I see more differences between the Colombian, Australian, and US legal systems. Although inexact, some generalisations are required at this point.

First, the law reflects the social values, norms, and beliefs adopted by societies. The more the law reflects those values, norms, and beliefs, the more valid it is among society and the more respect and compliance it inspires. The social dimension of law refers, at least for the purpose of this article, to the interaction between the law and society, that is, the way the law affects and shapes social behaviour — eg, how people in a country perceive the law and how much they respect the legal system and the authorities it represents.

The social dimension of law is different in Colombia, Australia, and the USA. On one end of the spectrum, Colombian society often disregards the law and the authorities and institutions it represents. Frequently, Colombian society circumvents laws that are not favourable to it — a type of 'social arbitrage' — and ignores legal orders. This situation is due, *inter alia*, to an inefficient legal system with poor law enforcement mechanisms, which is exacerbated by high levels of criminality, inequality, and poverty. [8] On the middle of the

spectrum, US society tends to respect the law, but often questions its validity and legitimacy based on its increasingly distant ideological views. Finally, Australian society is located on the other end of the spectrum. It usually respects the law, its institutions and authorities regardless of ideological views. Australian society generally recognises the significance of the legal system and its role in the community and is careful to respect it. In contrast to Colombia, Australia is characterised by low rates of criminality, inequality, and poverty, which positively affects how people perceive and interact with the law.

Second, the law has a distinct political dimension. Lawmaking is deeply influenced by politics and usually reflects the views and ideologies of the political party promoting the law. Occasionally, parliament passes laws driven by underlying political and economic interests rather than by the needs of its constituents. Corruption is the primary cause of this situation. The political dynamics of law vary considerably across countries. In Colombia, where corruption permeates the political system, laws often favour private interests, increasing injustice, inequality, and poverty. In contrast, Australia and the USA experience corruption on a lesser scale and, as a result, they enjoy a fairer, wealthier, and more equal society.

Finally, adding complexity to the previous reflections, the law also has an economic dimension. Economic power allows wealthier actors to influence lawmaking and law-decision processes. This situation allows these actors to bypass the law with impunity. There is an economic incentive for this: the benefit — eg, securing a government contract through unlawful means — outweighs the potential cost — eg, civil and criminal punishment. The potential cost is less when it is unlikely to materialise, often due to high levels of corruption or low levels of law enforcement. As mentioned above, these conditions are more prevalent in Colombia than in Australia and the USA. For instance, it is relatively common in Colombia for traffic police officers to accept bribes, a practice that is almost unthinkable in Australia and the USA. In these countries, police officers typically earn competitive salaries and, as a result, do not have an economic incentive to accept illicit payments. Further, the potential punishment this act could represent is severe and likely to occur, thanks to efficient law enforcement mechanisms. It follows that the potential cost (punishment) associated with accepting bribes in Australia and the USA, unlike Colombia, generally outweighs the benefit (illicit payment).

To sum up, as I reflect on the social, political, and economic dimensions of the law in Colombia, Australia, and the USA, the contrasts are striking. While, from a purely legal perspective (or positive law perspective), Colombian law is in many areas as developed as Australian or US laws, the most fundamental differences lie in these dimensions. For instance, the adoption of the Simplified Corporation ('Sociedad por Acciones Simplificadas' or 'SAS') in Colombia with the Act 1258 of 2008, 'was so successful that in 2017 it led to the adoption of the Model Law on Simplified Corporations by the Organization of American States' (Villamizar, 2023). Pervasive disrespect towards the law, private interests influencing the legal system, and an unbalanced economic power that allows the richest to circumvent the law are social, political, and economic aspects that differentiate Colombia from Australia and the USA. High levels of corruption, inequality, and poverty are both the cause and the consequence of this divide — a pernicious vicious cycle affecting most developing countries. Importantly, the social, political, and economic dimensions of law are an additional set of data that MLs link to

[8] For instance, a criminal trial in Colombia can take up to 15 years to resolve: see Luz Ángela Domínguez Coral, ¿Cuánto es lo máximo que puede durar un proceso penal en Colombia?, *El Tiempo* (online, 13 June 2023) <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/servicios/cuanto-es-lo-maximo-que-puede-durar-un-proceso-penal-en-colombia-777380>.

legal constructs, increasing the complexity of the cognitive process of learning and understanding law across different countries.

5. Reflections on the Legal Constructs "Constitution' and 'Corporation'

Following the reflections above, the meaning of the legal constructs 'constitution' and 'corporation', both in English and Spanish, carry particular legal meanings associated with specific datasets — of other legal categories, rules and principles informed by the applicable jurisdiction — as well as social, political, and economic dimensions.

From a purely legal perspective, the terms 'constitution' and 'constitución' — the literal and legal translation of 'constitution' in Spanish — convey identical meanings. Both epitomise the bedrock of domestic legal systems, often referred to as the 'law of laws' (*'ley de leyes'* or *'norma de normas'*) (*Colombian Constitution*. art 4), sitting atop the Kelsenian pyramid (Kelsen, 1967). They are codified — or, exceptionally, uncodified (as is found in the UK) — sets of guidelines that shape, guide, and inspire legal systems.

When I think about 'constitution', I link the word with the Australian and US constitutions. Yet, 'constitución' brings to mind the Colombian constitution. The linguistic difference thus connects the term with those legal categories, rules and principles associated with each jurisdiction. In other words, while the core legal concept remains consistent between 'constitution' and 'constitución', the datasets I automatically associate with them vary. The cognitive structures produced by each word are therefore different in terms of the more particular datasets of legal information, while retaining the same general legal meaning.

In this cognitive process of association, it is interesting to see how the Colombian constitution, from a purely positive and formalistic perspective, emerges mentally as a more modern and robust legal document compared to the Australian and US constitutions. It incorporates a comprehensive list of constitutional, human, and fundamental rights (dataset), many of them absent in the text of the Australian and US constitutions .[9] The Colombian constitution includes 380 articles — developing, among others, rights of first, second, and third generation — that are comparatively and conceptually stronger in terms of constitutional guarantees than its counterparts in Australia and US — including all their amendments and reforms. This difference could be partially explained by the fact that the Colombian constitution is a more recent document. While the Colombian constitution was enacted in 1991, replacing the previous text of 1886, the Australian and US constitutional frameworks preserve the essence of the original documents drafted in the 19th and 18th centuries, respectively.

Other differences come to the fore when I consider the social, political, and economic dimensions of this legal construct across Colombia, Australia, and the USA. Paradoxically, while the Colombian constitution incorporates a progressive and strong legal framework, it is simultaneously an inefficient document, lacking the relevance and impact it should have in practice. Persistent violation of human rights, unchecked corruption, constant undue influence of private actors, and poor law enforcement are all social, political, and economic factors that do not reflect what the 'constitución' is from a legal perspective. Conversely, the Australian and US 'constitutions' convey different ideas. They represent foundational legal documents

[9] See *Colombian Constitution* arts 11–82. Cf *Australian Constitution*, which does not incorporate a bill of rights.

that work in practice and whose values are, to a greater or lesser degree, reflected in the social, political, and economic conditions of these countries.

Turning to the legal construct 'corporation', something different occurs. When I think about 'corporations', I do not think about '*corporaciones*', the literal translation of the term in Spanish. The legal equivalent of 'corporations' in the Colombian context — and, in general, the Spanish-speaking Civil Law countries — is '*sociedades anónimas'*. This term refers to legal entities distinct from their owners created by a group of persons, natural or fictional, with a profit objective, similar to the Australian and US corporations (Código de Comercio [Commercial Code], arts. 98, 373). The term '*corporaciones*', the literal translation of 'corporations', refers to a different model of private organisation. '*Corporaciones*' are non-profit entities created to benefit particular groups of people or the community at large ((Código Civil [Civil Code], arts. 633–649; Corte Suprema de Justicia [Supreme Court of Justice], 1940, p. 198) — a concept more akin to the Common Law 'charities', 'non-profit associations' or 'foundations' (Black's Law Dictionary, 2014). Consequently, while the technical legal concept associated with the legal construct's *literal translation* is different, the legal meaning related to the *legal translation* is similar. As Chen observes, '[T]ransplanting native semantics or syntax into a foreign setting will almost surely cause trouble' (Chen, 1995:).

Here, again, the linguistic difference connects the legal construct to distinct jurisdictions and correlated information. When I think about the word 'corporation', in English, I think about the Australian and US corporations — and the associated dataset of domestic legal categories, rules and principles. In contrast, when I think about the compound word 'sociedad anónima', and even 'corporación', I recall the Colombian legal framework. Terminological differences vis-à-vis the same legal concept, therefore, determine different preexisting cognitive structures.

Importantly, there is a terminological and conceptual difference when I think about the word 'corporation'. Considering I associate the term with the Australian and the US corporations, different datasets emerge. As a result of these different cognitive structures, I use the word in the Australian context as synonym for 'company' (Fitzpatrick, 2023), which is a type of corporation in this jurisdiction (*Corporations* Act, 2001). Conversely, I do not use 'corporation' and 'company' synonymously in the US context. Here, I use the term 'company' in a broader sense, which includes corporations, partnerships, and trusts (*Investment Company Act*, 1940). The associated legal construct 'company', therefore, is a good example of the challenges that exist when transferring knowledge from two different datasets, even within the same language and legal tradition.

From a social, political, and economic perspective, the terms 'corporations' and 'sociedades anónimas' evoke to me slightly different ideas in the Colombian, Australian, and US contexts. On the one hand, 'corporations' and 'sociedades anónimas' represent fundamental legal vehicles for organising commercial activities, pursuing private interests, and creating job opportunities in these jurisdictions. On the other, 'sociedades anónimas' — and any other form of business associations[10] — play a more fundamental role in Colombia. In a country with profound corruption, inequality, and poverty, livelihood is not guaranteed. Historically, the Colombian government has failed to provide social welfare, education, and general support to ensure a minimum standard of living for its citizenry — unlike Australia and the USA. As a

[10] For instance, the predominant business entity in Colombia today is the 'SAS' (Colombian Simplified Corporation). See generally Francisco Reyes, The Colombian Simplified Corporation: An Empirical Analysis of a Success Story in Corporate Law Reform (2015) 4(1) *Penn State Journal of Law & International Affairs* 392.

result, the private sector has become the only means through which many families 'put food on the table' and many others manage to thrive in life. For instance, 'Sharing Economy' (Villamizar, 2023; Reyes, 2015) platforms like Uber and Rappi [11] have been vital for some people to survive, including low-income Colombians and the most vulnerable sectors of Venezuelan migration in Colombia (Salamanca, 2020). In addition, these new companies have allowed other member of the polis to earn extra income and pay for their studies, and have helped small businesses to grow by providing services through these platforms (Ibid). Yet, due to the same relevance they have gained and the country's social, political, and economic climate, many 'sociedades anónimas' are better positioned to influence and take advantage of the domestic political and legal systems compared to Australia and the USA — although, to me, corporate influence in politics is a constant across these jurisdictions.

In sum, the legal constructs 'corporation' and 'sociedad anónima' — distinct from 'corporación', the literal translation of 'corporation' — share nearly identical conceptual legal meanings. This conceptualisation is cognitively particularised through datasets of associated legal categories, rules, and principles applicable by jurisdiction (not by legal system — although, as mentioned above, these datasets can be similar in jurisdictions within the same legal family). Further, both constructs have correlated social, political, and economic connotations. *Mutatis mutandis*, they suggest ideas of economic development, useful vehicles of investment, and primary sources of employment and income. Colombia, however, is highly dependent on this and other forms of business associations. Unlike the Australian and US corporations, Colombian business entities have, to some extent, assumed the role of the Colombian government, which has demonstrated persistent inefficiencies over the years. As a result, many of them have accumulated political leverage and economic clout to intervene in politics and influence the legal system, a situation that is facilitated and exacerbated by the high levels of corruption, inequality, and poverty that have historically afflicted Colombia.

6. Conclusion

Language is a fundamental aspect of human cognition through which we communicate, express thoughts, and transfer knowledge. Language is not only the vehicle to convey words and meanings but also the way we encapsulate the substantive content of law. In this article, I reflected on the complex interrelations that exist when we learn, teach, and practice law across different languages, legal systems, and jurisdictions. Notably, I focused on Spanish and English in terms of language, the Common Law and Civil Law traditions in terms of legal systems, and Colombia, Australia, and the USA in terms of jurisdictional frameworks.

MLs constantly modify, adapt, and extend their knowledge by parallels, analogies, and contrasts. Similar in composition to neural networks, words with legal significance create constructs that are subsequently associated with datasets of legal categories, principles, and rules by jurisdiction and language. New datasets are subsumed into preexisting subordinate cognitive structures that become increasingly complex as another language and legal system are added. Although these mental connections can be simpler in jurisdictions within the same legal families, this is not always the case as many divides between legal traditions have blurred over time, including methods for creating law and cognitive pathways for its understanding.

[11] Rappi is a Colombian platform that operates as an on-demand delivery service, similar to Uber Eats, Deliveroo, and Menulog: see Rappi, *Home – What is Rappi?* (Web Page) < https://about.rappi.com/>.

Importantly, law and its constructs have social, political, and economic dimensions. These dimensions increase the complexity of understanding law, generally, and domestic law, particularly. They represent additional datasets for the MLs to learn and understand law. As demonstrated with the legal constructs 'constitution' and 'corporation', the social, political, and economic dimensions of law seem to represent a clearer divide between jurisdictions of different legal families than the purely positive content of law — at least in the case of Colombia, a Civil Law country, and Australia and the USA, both Common Law jurisdictions.

The cognitive process of learning law across different languages, legal systems, and jurisdictions is, therefore, difficult and often confusing. Similarities between different legal systems (eg rule of law), similarities between jurisdictions within the same legal system (eg adversarial procedures in Common Law countries), differences between jurisdiction within the same legal tradition (eg principle of separation of powers and associated doctrine of responsible government in Australia compared to the USA), similarities between jurisdictions within different legal systems (eg the role of legislation and case law in Colombia, Australia, and the USA), linguistic differences between similar legal concepts (eg 'corporation' and 'sociedad anónima'), linguistic similarities between different legal concepts (eg, 'corporation' and 'corporación'), conceptual differences between similar linguistic concepts (eg 'company' in Australia compared to the USA), and social, political, and economic differences between concepts with almost identical legal meaning (eg 'constitution' and 'corporation' in Colombia, Australia and the USA), all represent important cognitive challenges.

These challenges, however, are also advantages for MLs. MLs are able to see the law with multiple lenses and evaluate it differently in all its dimensions — purely legal, social, political, and economic. They can look at legal issues from different angles and, as a result, develop more comprehensive legal thinking. MLs, therefore, have the enormous benefit of seeing the law for what it is: a nuanced global phenomenon.

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