

CASE STUDY METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS MAJORING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The paper deals with a case study method as an effective means of developing students' ability to work independently, communicate in professional environment, think analytically and make proper decisions in teaching a foreign language as a major discipline. The concept of case study method has been considered, the main approaches to classification of cases have been characterized, a functional activity model of the case study method has been presented.

Keywords: case study method, foreign language, problem solving, functional activity model.

INTRODUCTION. In learning a foreign language as a major discipline it is crucial to enable students to apply the acquired foreign language skills in their professional environment. Students have to develop the ability to work independently, communicate orally and in written form taking into account cultural aspects of communication, think analytically, make proper decisions, plan their time and be creative. A case study method should be used to ensure effective foreign language learning since it focuses on cooperative and problem-based learning principles as well as students' self-regulation activities. The *aim* of our research is to analyze the use of case study method in teaching a foreign language as a major discipline. The main *tasks* of research are: to define the concept of case study method, characterize the main approaches to classification of cases and present a functional activity model of the case study method in teaching a foreign language.

METHODS AND RESEARCH MATERIAL. Case study, as a learning method, was initially used at Harvard University's Business school at the beginning of the 20th century in the process of business administration (Stepanovienė, 2017: 231). It involved detailed consideration of real life situations presented to students in the form of cases. Ukrainian (V. Haluziak, U. Kovalenko,

I. Romanov, K. Zubar, etc.) as well as foreign (M. Brännback, A. L. Carsrud, J. M. Hawes, S. W. Henson, K. N. Kennedy P. A. Kennett, A. Stepanovienė, etc.) researchers have raised the issues of using case study method in teaching a foreign language. The above mentioned materials have become the basis of our research. On using a set of research methods such as analysis, interpretation, comparison, observation, testing and rating students' progress, we suggest an idea of applying a case study method in teaching English to students majoring in foreign language.

RESEARCH RESULTS. The case method combines role-playing, project-based learning and situational analysis. It is based on the following didactic principles: individual approach to each student, taking into account their needs and learning style; providing students with sufficient visual materials; involvement of a moderate amount of theoretical material, focusing only on the main points; making a teacher accessible to students; development of students' self-organization skills and ability to work with information; focusing on the development of students' strengths (Plotnikov, 2014: 532).

According to their complexity cases are classified into: illustrative learning situations teaching students the algorithm of making a right decision in a particular situation; problem-based cases aimed at diagnosing the situation and making an independent decision on the problem; cases without a clearly defined problem aimed at identifying the problem independently, indicating alternative ways of solving it; application exercises that describe a specific situation for students to find the ways of solving the problem.

According to their style A. L. Carsrud and M. Brännback (2011) classify cases into highly structured (short cases containing no excess information with a stated well-ordered problem and its best solution); short vignettes (short cases used to introduce a key concept, the best answer is not derived from the simple formula); long unstructured cases (often with several exhibits, nearly all the necessary qualitative and quantitative information about the situation is provided, encourage students to thoroughly explore the field of study); ground breaking cases

(for advanced students allowing them and their teachers to be engaged in joint exploration).

A typical functional activity model of the case study method is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Functional Activity Model of the Case Study Method

Stages of a problem-based situation	Stages of work with a case	Activities at each stage
Facing the problem	Organizational	Introducing students to the case study materials
Outlining the problem	Instructional and motivational	Goal setting and case study specification
Resolving the problem-based situation	Learning activities	Individual and group work on the tasks
Troubleshooting	Summarizing	Joint discussion of the gained results, summing up, evaluation

CONCLUSIONS. The conducted research has proven that the case study method is an efficient means of teaching English as a foreign language to develop students' professional English competence, analytical thinking and the ability to solve problems independently. It improves knowledge in the field of professional training and encourages students to comprehend complexity of the situation. Students learn how to analyze the existing situation (case), outline the main problems, provide arguments and make decisions. They are also taught to consider advantages and disadvantages of suggested decisions and make appropriate conclusions. Depending on the type of case, its structure and complexity a teacher can decide when and where it is most appropriate to be incorporated into the learning process and what learning algorithm should be selected to yield better learning outcomes.

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