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**Abstract:** The paper is devoted to the case method in teaching Business English on the base of Market Leader Course Book Intermediate Business English by David Cotton, David Falvey, Simon Kent.

**Key words:** The case method, case, discussion, active learning, role play, language learning, language teaching.

The case method, we are going to discuss in our paper, has been defined in many resources differently but summarizing most of them we can conclude that the case method is a student-centered teaching strategy which forces students into real-life situations, bridges the gap between theory and practice, and provides future business executives with critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills. "In a case discussion, students "do" the work of the discipline, rather than watch or read about how it is done by others."

This method combines the two main elements: the case itself and the discussion of that case. Cases are narratives that contain information and in which individuals or groups must make a decision or solve a problem. As you can understand, teaching cases provide neither analysis nor conclusions. According to studies from Indiana University and University of Calgary cases can be short for brief classroom discussions or long and elaborate for semester-long projects; good cases focus on one issue or problem, and have a clear problem statement [1]. Cases can be acquired from the formal, purpose written material available from such sources as the Harvard Business School and the Kennedy School or constructed by faculty members from newspaper articles, cartoons, radio stories and even grocery store coupons and fliers. Cases can involve situations in which decisions must be made or problems solved, or they can involve evaluation or reconsideration of existing policies, practices or proposals. Effective cases are usually based on real events, but can be drawn from both the present and the past, even the distant past. Cases require students to make choices about what theory or concepts to apply in conducting the analysis, which is distinct from the one to one correspondence between theory and application that they see in their textbooks or hear in lectures.

The analytical work of explaining the relationships among events in the case, identifying options, evaluating choices and predicting the effects of actions is the work done by students during the classroom discussion. There are two easy ways to promote active learning through the discussion. The first method is the mini lecture format in which the instructor talks ten to twenty minutes about a particular topic and then pauses for students to consolidate their notes, find gaps, and work with classmates to fill in gaps. The second technique is an active listening lecture where students just listen to a lecture without writing notes and then, after ten to twenty minutes, the student works with a classmate or small group to recall, clarify, and elaborate on the lecture's content. In classroom discussion, students analyze the information in the case and use it to solve the problem set up by the case. The discussion can take many forms, including closely directed questioning by faculty to help students draw out the information from the case and identify the central decisions or evaluations that need to be made, more open-ended questions and discussions as students evaluate options and weigh the evidence, and small group work by students focused on specific analytical tasks. Many faculty members use role-play as a technique to put students completely in the case environment. Ideally, case method discussions involve mostly conversation between and among students, rather than discussion centered on direct participation by the faculty member. Many case method teachers describe their role as conductor, facilitator, or guide, drawing attention to their role in setting up discussion in which students are the primary participants.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned, we have come to a conclusion that the case method belongs to active learning techniques whose main components can be defined as follows: appealing to students in the affective domain, motivating them to engage with the material even when it is quite challenging; students learn the material more deeply, and work with it at a higher level, when they are active generators rather than passive recipients of knowledge; students retain more of the material they *do*

than material they simply read, hear or see; students take over the responsibility for learning, working in collaboration with classmates.

Thus case method teaching brings together three components: an appropriate case, students who are prepared to engage with the case material in a discussion, and an instructor who knows the case, has a plan for the discussion and is ready to deal with the unexpected.

The case study method has been used in many fields of education and also lends itself nicely to language learning. The main problem is where to find suitable case studies which are not too content-led and do not presuppose an in-depth knowledge of a specific subject matter. As the main aim of the language teacher is not to teach content but rather improve the student's communicative competence and oral proficiency. That's why case studies written by language teachers and adapted to the language classroom are more appropriate than case studies written by business lecturers. There are various publications on the market which respond to the language teachers' needs: Crowther-Alwyn 1997; 1999, Cotton, Falvey & Kent, 2000; 2001. Researchers state that the two distinct types of case study can be identified: those that provide the learner with targeted content input to practise a specific skill such as negotiating, interviewing, problem-solving or decision-making (Castler & Palmer, 1989) and those which are more free to interpretation and call on the teacher to choose the preferred methodology and classroom strategy (Witte 1999).

Peter Daly has divided the case study classroom into three parts: case study introduction, case study class and debriefing the class.

As for the case study introduction, it deals with the preparation of the case study, the introduction of a problem solving analysis. It is important that the case studies are well prepared in advance so that each student knows what his role or task is. It is not sufficient just to give the case study to the student and hope that they will understand how to use it. This is the mistake made by many teachers unfamiliar with the case study method. There are many ways of introducing the case study to your students: read the case study thoroughly with your students (here you can deal with any lexical or grammatical issues, ask your students to represent the background information in a visual form using the blackboard or flipchart to get a clear picture of the company background); provide the students with some input on how they should analyse the case study; pre-teach the language required to discuss the case study.

There are many publications on the market for teaching meeting skills, presentation skills or negotiation skills. It is important to select the skill you would like to focus on and teach the specific language. If we take meetings as an example, we could familiarize the students with the documents of meeting - the form and content of agendas, minutes and memos [2, `144].

Case Study Class- here the class is divided into sections including meetings, presentations of findings and discussion of recommendations. Students should be divided into two small groups (maximum six students) to discuss different aspects of the same case study. Therefore, it is a good idea to find a case study that has two distinct parts. You must remind the students that they do not have all the information they need to solve the case but based on the information available, they can make recommendations and come to preliminary decisions. You can also inform your students that in real life situation in business, we do not have all the facts required to solve a problem.

- Meeting (30 minutes) - Groups (Group A and Group B) meet to discuss their part of the case study.
- Presentation (15 minutes per group) - Group A present their findings to the other group and vice versa.
- Discussion (30 minutes) - all students come together to discuss the findings and make recommendations.

Meeting (30 minutes)

Students are divided into two groups (Group A and Group B) of four-six students to discuss their part of the case study. A chairperson is selected to lead the meeting and an agenda is drawn up. Students can be asked to prepare the agenda in advance and ensure everyone has a copy or they can write their agenda on the flipchart. Students discuss and provide recommendations, which they then represent graphically on transparencies or on the flipchart/chalkboard. You should impress on the students that their visuals should be clear, concise and coherent and long sentences are unacceptable. The students should then prepare their presentation. The facilitator should ensure that the chairperson does not monopolize the presentation but lets the other students have equal speaking time.

Presentation (15 minutes per group)

The findings of Group A are presented to Group B and vice versa. This should take approximately 15 minutes for each group including questions. Students must take detailed notes in order to participate

actively in the third part of the lesson. Students will need to clarify the issues their group did not deal with by asking questions and repeating. This section should be treated as information exchange and the facilitator should prevent further discussion of the points presented. In order to include active participation of all students in this section, you could ask the students to share the presentation speaking time equally.

Discussion (30 minutes)

A discussion of both parts ensues whereby the students compare and contrast the various findings and suggestions made. Everyone should be encouraged to participate and a consensus should be reached on the main points raised in the presentation. This further elaboration of the items on the agenda will facilitate the writing of the detailed minutes, which should be prepared as homework.

Finally, the facilitator asks the students to prepare the minutes for the following week. The minutes are prepared in groups of three so that the students can consolidate their ideas on paper.

The transparencies and the agendas are collected by the facilitator for analysis and correction.

Debriefing the Class means that the teacher gives feedback on language mistakes, managerial skills and the meeting documents and support materials used. All case study classes need to be debriefed to include the language, the skills (in this case, meeting and presentation skills) and the support documents and written communication (the transparencies, the agenda and minutes). We will now look at these elements in more detail.

**Language:** there are various ways to address the mistakes made. You can create exercises from the mistakes or you can simply go through the major mistakes and explain the correct form.

**Managerial Skills:** as regards the meeting and presentation skills, the teacher should provide feedback on how to improve these skills. The feedback should include rapport building, body language, eye contact, etc.

**Written Communication:** Having corrected the written work which resulted from the case study interaction, you can also look at such issues as the difference between spoken and written language and style switching. You will be also able to provide targeted feedback on the written documents such as visuals, agendas and minutes.

To sum up we point out that there are lots of reasons for using the case based-method in teaching Business English. First of all it reflects the methodologies and practices which students are likely to be familiar with from their professional practice. We mean such skills as analyzing data, evaluating business situations, presenting recommended courses of action. Undoubtedly the method will be appropriate to Master's students.

Secondly the case study is an overall framework which allows you to explore the various genres of business in a rich and realistic context. Such genres include the business case write-up, presentations, negotiations, meetings/discussions.

Thirdly it provides a more convincing setting for carrying out simulations (role plays). We have found out that adult learners in Business English classes are reluctant to carry out role plays, especially those role plays where language-focused presentation and restricted practice of forms is supposed to give way seamlessly to fluency-based production. Students have often remarked to us their dislike of such role plays and yet when carried out as part of Case Studies they are satisfied. Fourthly the case study allows learners to assume different 'voices' and see different perspectives. This can include the skill of taking on a 'company voice', such as when communicating with external stakeholders. The complexity of the case study allows multiple narratives to emerge from a given situation and allows students to see the different and (possibly) conflicting interests amongst stakeholders. At last for the emphasis on collaborative discourse, problem-solving, relevance to business practice and the centrality of the discussion process.

Having analyzed modern course books on Business English such as Market Leader Business English, New Market Leader Business English and others, we see that most business English course books now have case studies as part of their content, usually at the end of each unit: solve the problems of a global company (writing: memo); solve the problems of a leading brand (writing a memo); the team-building seminar: make arrangements for participants (writing: e-mail) and etc. [3, 12].

References:

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