Педагогические науки/5. Современные методы преподавания

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# Case study and role play in language learning

Due to the recent increase in trade, travel and political and social co-operation, language competence has become a key skill in modern Europe. Great efforts have been made to improve language training at all education levels. Whereas in the past language teaching was mainly related to cultural themes with an emphasis on literature, communicative aspects in everyday international contact situations, both for personal and for professional reasons, have become more and more important and language teaching has become interwoven with subject teaching. Case studies have proven to be an excellent means for the integration of subject-specific aspects into language teaching. The use of case studies in language teaching encourages task-oriented teaching methods and problem-based learning, as the students are confronted with an authentic problem they have to solve by analyzing material in the target language. The authenticity of the cases and of the material, as well as the integration of current events have an extremely positive impact on the learners' motivation and stimulate language teaching as a whole [1].

Although case studies are used in business studies and law courses, they are still an innovative method in language teaching. The use of case studies in language teaching has a highly positive impact on the development of active and passive language skills, as it follows an integrative concept of language teaching. It also contributes to the development of soft skills such as presentation skills, problem-solving strategies and teamwork.

The case study teaching method is a highly adaptable style of teaching that involves problem-based learning and promotes the development of analytical skills. By presenting content in the format of a narrative accompanied by questions and activities that promote group discussion and solving of complex problems, case studies facilitate development of the cognitive learning; moving beyond recall of

knowledge to analysis, evaluation, and application. Similarly, case studies facilitate interdisciplinary learning and can be used to highlight connections between specific academic topics and real-world societal issues and applications. This has been reported to increase student motivation to participate in class activities, which promotes learning and increases performance on assessments. For these reasons, case-based teaching has been widely used in business and medical education for many years. Although case studies were considered a novel method of science education just 20 years ago, the case study teaching method has gained popularity in recent years [3].

Guidelines for using case studies in class. In the most straightforward application, the presentation of the case study establishes a framework for analysis. It is helpful if the statement of the case provides enough information for the students to figure out solutions and then to identify how to apply those solutions in other similar situations. Instructors may choose to use several cases so that students can identify both the similarities and differences among the cases.

Depending on the course objectives, the instructor may encourage students to follow a systematic approach to their analysis.  For example:

- What is the issue?
- What is the goal of the analysis?
- What is the context of the problem?
- What key facts should be considered?
- What alternatives are available to the decision-maker?
- What would you recommend — and why?

An innovative approach to case analysis might be to have students role-play the part of the people involved in the case. This not only actively engages students, but forces them to really understand the perspectives of the case characters. Videos can help students to visualize the situation that they need to analyze.

The case method combines two elements: the case itself and the discussion of that case. A teaching case is a rich narrative in which individuals or groups must make a decision or solve a problem. A teaching case is not a "case study" of the type

used in academic research. Teaching cases provide information, but neither analysis nor conclusions. 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 [1].

Decision cases are more interesting than descriptive ones. In order to start the discussion in class, the instructor can start with an easy, noncontroversial question that all the students should be able to answer readily. However, some of the best case discussions start by forcing the students to take a stand. Some instructors will ask a student to do a formal "open" of the case, outlining his or her entire analysis. Others may choose to guide discussion with questions that move students from problem identification to solutions. A skilled instructor steers questions and discussion to keep the class on track and moving at a reasonable pace.

In order to motivate the students to complete the assignment before class as well as to stimulate attentiveness during the class, the instructor should grade the participation quantity and especially quality during the discussion of the case. This might be a simple check, check-plus, check-minus or zero. The instructor should involve as many students as possible. In order to engage all the students, the instructor can divide them into groups, give each group several minutes to discuss how to answer a question related to the case, and then ask a randomly selected person in each group to present the group's answer and reasoning. Random selection can be accomplished through rolling of dice, shuffled index cards, each with one student's name, a spinning wheel, etc.

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.

In a case discussion, students "do" the work of the discipline, rather than watch or read about how it is done by others. By engaging in the case, students apply the concepts, techniques and methods of the discipline and improve their ability to apply them. Case discussions bring energy and excitement to the classroom, providing students with an opportunity to work with a range of evidence, and improving their ability to apply the vocabulary, theory and methods they have learned in the course. Introducing the case method, like any change in pedagogical practice, represents an investment of faculty time and energy. Is the investment worth it? I think so, but it is worth thinking about the case method relative to some alternatives, and considering the benefits and costs of introducing it [3].

The Special Features of the Case Method: 1. Cases are real and compel students to work on real world problems that are complicated and messy. Those complications force students to hone their skills in finding and using evidence, choosing which concepts, theories and methods are relevant, and ignoring irrelevant material, no matter how interesting it may seem. 2. Cases are big. Written cases are longer than most other kinds of active learning exercises and take more time for students to prepare and for classes to discuss. Cases often have many parts and reflect many points of view, require analyses that involve several steps and involve a variety of kinds of intellectual tasks. Case discussion is public.

Case discussions, in the whole class or in small groups, help students learn effective listening and response skills, push them to present clear and reasoned arguments and enhance public speaking skills using a foreign language. They provide an opportunity for students to learn from each other, which gives them the opportunity to take ownership of their learning. From the faculty perspective, case discussion provides a great opportunity for on-the-spot assessment of student learning, since the discussion reveals information about individual student's mastery as well as a sense of the gaps in the whole group's learning. The basic requirements for a successful case teaching experience are: 1) an appropriate case; 2) students who are prepared to engage with the material in a discussion; 3) an instructor who knows the case, has a plan for the discussion, and is ready to deal with the unexpected.

To be most effective, use of the case method should be embedded in the course syllabus, so that learning to learn in this way is one of the objectives of the course, and students have ample opportunity to practice their skills as case discussants.

A case method can be effectively enhanced in class by using role play technique. The past decades have seen a marked increase in the number of language teaching textbooks and materials which include role play.

In simple words, the term 'role play' is used to cover activities where the term 'simulation' might arguably be employed. If we take, for example, a class of business people or students learning English for professional purposes, they can be given a problem to solve at a meeting. The problem and the type of meeting closely resemble those they experience in their daily work, or will experience in the foreign language situation. Each student is given a role which is within his own area of operations (e.g. an accountant). Each student is then asked to work out his own attitude to the problem, and his own strategy for dealing with it. He presents his view at the actual meeting. This is an example of simulation [2].

Role play gives the student the opportunity to practise the language, the aspects of role behaviour, and the actual roles he may need outside the classroom.

For role play to be fully successful, each student should be active almost 100% of the time. Coherent speech requires a great deal of mental activity. The listener must show the understanding of the speaker, relate what is being said to his own opinions and needs in order to be able, when his turn to speak has come, to formulate an appropriate, acceptable and understandable message [2].

Few classroom activities require the high level of mental activity suggested above. Oral exercises (drills, pattern practice, pair work, etc.) and most forms of group work, have a set, predictable pattern.

The relevance of a role play which has been chosen to suit the students' interests, experience and needs is obvious. It also gives the student a chance to use the language himself, without the direct control of the teacher. For any age group, aim or type of class, whether it is voluntary or compulsory, every student responds positively to activities, which have an obvious practical application. A feeling that

what one is doing is relevant and useful is a powerful factor in increasing the motivation to learn; increased motivation leads to increased student involvement in the learning process.

Every language teacher is faced with a similar problem: no learning group is homogeneous. Teachers are always in need of activities that can be graded to suit a wide range of abilities. Role play is an excellent exercise for dealing with this problem. Roles can be designed with 'faster' and 'slower' students in mind. Fairly fluent and confident students should get roles requiring a lot of speaking. Shyer students and those who are not very fluent in a foreign language should also participate, but according to their own abilities. Roles can be created to fit not only the linguistic ability, but also the personality of the individual student. Students with mixed abilities can prepare roles together. A 'slower' student could prepare the role with a 'faster' student, making more detailed notes during the preparation process so that he had some support when in the actual role play situation. Students are often willing to help each other in this way and should be encouraged to do so [2].

Role plays can be useful not only for developing speaking skills, but for writing skills as well, if it is a group of advanced level students. Extra writing practice can be provided by getting the students to write letters expressing different points of view to the local paper, or formal reports of their discussion, or business letters to different companies and memos to the staff.  The follow-ups of many role plays for students of business/management might take the form of letter-writing.

References:

1. Case Studies for ESL Teachers [Electronic resource]: Cambridge English, 2017. Access mode: www.cambridgeenglish.org/

2. Livingstone C. Role play in language learning/ Longman. – 1988. – 128 p.

3. Teaching materials using case studies [Electronic resource]: UK Centre for Materials Education, 2017. Access mode: http://www.materials.ac.uk/casestudies.