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STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION: EXPLORING LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH A CASE STUDY METHOD

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the exploration of language learning within the framework of student-centered education, focusing specifically on the utilization of a case study method. The origin, benefits and advantageous features of applying this method in the learning process are given with clear explanation. Different scientists' opinions about this method are presented. It examines how this approach empowers learners to actively engage in their language acquisition journey by immersing them in real-life scenarios. Through collaborative problem-solving and inquiry-based learning, students enhance critical thinking skills, develop practical language proficiency, and acquire essential communication competencies.

Keywords: *a case study method, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, communication skills, language classrooms, Bloom's taxonomy.*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of modern society across various domains and broadening of borders with foreign partners create a need for qualified professionals proficient in foreign languages. These individuals must possess not only professional competence but also holistic development, creativity, and social engagement. These requirements

demand higher education institutions to train professionals. As the new millennium commenced, UNESCO designated the 21st century as the era of multilingualism “Learning languages throughout life”, advocating for lifelong language learning. This declaration stems from the recognition that understanding foreign languages has become a significant facet of modern human life [1]. Their knowledge serves as a pathway to adopt novel models of thinking and behavior to enhance versatility, adaptability, diplomacy, and communication skills. That’s why today’s modern teachers should not only master their subject, but also apply innovative teaching methods for their students. The case study method is the method that should be applied for language classes in order to create an active atmosphere and collaboration between students.

The case study method is an educational approach that involves examining real-life situations or scenarios in-depth to understand complex issues, make decisions, and solve problems. In this method, students or researchers analyze a particular case, which could be an individual, group, organization, event, or situation, and explore its details, context, and outcomes. The focus is on understanding the complexities and nuances of the case, often drawing on various sources of information such as interviews, documents, observations, and secondary research. The case study method encourages *critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of knowledge* by immersing participants in realistic and relevant contexts. It is widely used in fields such as business, psychology, education, sociology, and medicine as a way to bridge theory and practice and develop a deeper understanding of complex phenomena [2].

The method was first used in law schools in the United States where two parties, the plaintiff and the defendant, were brought to court and law students had to put themselves in the shoes of those opposing sides. Each case had to be solved following the rules of law and the students would develop skills and know-how to solve lawsuits. Then it was implemented in several field.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and secondary data analysis methodologies were used in this research paper to identify the benefits and use of the case study method for improving teachers' skills and teaching strategies. This approach in language learning guarantees a thorough comprehension of both the theoretical foundations and the practical implementation within real-life situations. The study extensively examined student-centered education with the help of the case study method in language classrooms. Additionally, several experiments were carried out involving seasoned instructors and subject matter experts to collect insights on practical implementations.

RESULTS

The main findings from the experiments and literatures are outlined in the results section. It highlights diversified language learning in the case study method as a crucial strategy that enables instructors to adapt lessons and assessments to meet the learning needs of each student. Practicing the case study method facilitates the professional growth of both teachers and learners. As this approach relies on collaborative effort, it can effectively alleviate the monotony language classrooms. Moreover, the application of this method turns the teachers to perform as **“a member of a class of events and to call attention to its value” [3]**. During experiments, the survey was conducted which has the following objectives:

- To determine the curiosity of teachers and students;
- To analyze the benefits and challenges of using this method;
- To identify the relevance of the method in further teaching field.

Overall, 51 respondents participated in the survey from Uzbekistan state world languages university who specialize in language teaching. More than 85% of the students approved this method and they are planning to integrate it in their future students.

DISCUSSION

Language instruction conducted through the case study methodology also fosters the development of communicative and collaborative skills among language learners as they tackle language-related challenges presented as cases. With this

approach, students perceive themselves dealing not with an imaginative, author-created language and culturally unfamiliar language lesson, but with material that realtes with their own experiences. They are tasked with solving not hypothetical problems, but issues they might encounter in real-life situations. Consequently, they discover that the language problems presented in case-based scenarios are applicable to their daily lives, enabling them to apply their newfound skills beyond the classroom setting [4]. Case studies promote the usage of critical thinking skills by students to identify and narrow an issue, formulate and assess alternative solutions, and propose a resolution. Indeed, according to Nkhoma, who examined the significance of creating case-based learning activities based on the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy of thinking skills, this method fosters profound learning by stimulating critical thinking [5].

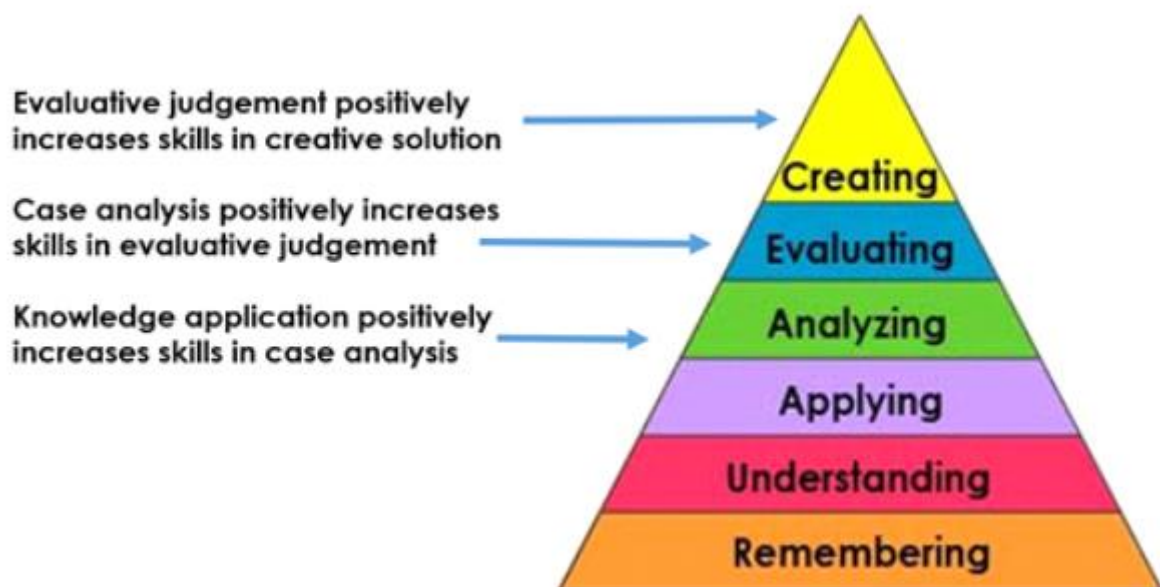


Figure 1: Bloom’s taxonomy of thinking skills

Working through case studies in student-centered education can build these six critical thinking skills:

- ⇒ **Suppressing emotions:** Engaging students in the real-life scenarios presented in case studies prompts them to put aside emotional biases and adopt an objective approach, thereby improving their capacity to make logical, evidence-based decisions.
- ⇒ **Investigation:** Case studies prompt students to delve into the details of a given scenario, encouraging them to conduct thorough research, gather relevant information, and analyze data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation.
- ⇒ **Inquiry:** Through case studies, students are prompted to ask probing questions, seek clarification, and explore various aspects of the problem at hand. This cultivates their curiosity and encourages them to engage in deeper exploration and analysis.
- ⇒ **Distinguishing fact from fiction:** Case studies often present complex situations where students must discern between reliable information and misleading or irrelevant details. This challenges them to critically evaluate evidence, identify biases, and make informed judgements.
- ⇒ **Exploration of uncertainty:** Case studies frequently involve ambiguous or uncertain situations, prompting students to navigate uncertainty with confidence. They learn to consider multiple perspectives, weigh alternatives, and make reasoned decisions even when faced with incomplete information.
- ⇒ **Attentive listening:** In discussing and analyzing case studies, students practice active listening, paying close attention to the viewpoints of their peers, considering diverse perspectives, and engaging in meaningful dialogue. This fosters empathy, respect for others' opinions, and collaborative problem-solving skills [6].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the utilization of student-centered education, particularly through the integration of the case study method, presents a dynamic and effective approach to language learning. This methodology empowers learners to actively participate in their educational journey by immersing them in real-world scenarios, thus enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving, and language proficiency. Through

collaborative exploration and inquiry, students develop a deeper understanding of language concepts and their practical applications. Moreover, the case study method nurtures essential skills such as emotional regulation, investigative inquiry, and attentive listening, which are fundamental for effective communication in diverse contexts. By embracing student-centered strategies like the case study method, educators can foster a dynamic and engaging learning environment that equips students with the skills and confidence to succeed in language acquisition and beyond. The summary stresses the ongoing need for further study and innovation in this method to improve it better.

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