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THE CASE METHOD IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ENHANCING FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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Abstract. Development of international relations in the modern society poses an urgent challenge to train professionals capable of international communication in their professional activities. Thus, there is a need to find special effective methods to make the process of foreign language teaching more effective. This article explores the application of the case method in higher education, specifically focusing on its role in enhancing foreign language competence among university students across various disciplines. The importance of mastering foreign language speaking skills for international professional communication as well as for high perspectives in students' future career is revealed. The article outlines the primary benefits of the case method, including its ability to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The authors of the article emphasize the roles both of teachers and students in the foreign language teaching process through the application of the case study method. By presenting students with complex, professional scenarios, the method fosters the development of linguistic and pragmatic skills, which are essential for effective communication in globalized and interdisciplinary contexts. The case method allows students to acquire vocabulary, improve their grammatical proficiency, and develop fluency in using the language in professional settings.

One of the key strengths of the case method is its capacity to foster collaboration, as students work in groups to discuss and resolve the presented issues. This encourages teamwork, the ability to communicate effectively, and the development of critical thinking skills.

In conclusion, the article argues that the case method is a highly effective tool for teaching

foreign languages in higher education. It enhances students' language proficiency, problem-solving abilities, and professional competencies, preparing them for the complexities of the modern workforce. The case method's emphasis on real-world applications, critical thinking, and collaboration makes it an invaluable approach to language education across disciplines.

Key words: innovative methods of teaching foreign languages; case method; professionally oriented foreign language learning; professional competencies; student motivation; interdisciplinary connections.

Introduction. In today's interconnected world proficiency in English has become an essential skill for students, pursuing careers in different specialized sectors. As globalization continues to expand, the ability to communicate in more than one language opens up a wealth of opportunities, for students, mastering a foreign language can enhance their academic experience by providing access to a broader range of resources, research materials and cultural perspectives. Foreign-language academic journals are the primary sources of cutting-edge research, and the ability to engage with the content can vastly expand their knowledge and professional network.

Moreover, learning foreign languages at university level significantly enhances students' employability. In many professions, being able to communicate effectively in a foreign language opens doors to a wider range of job opportunities, as multinational companies and institutions seek employees who can work within diverse, global teams. For university students, mastering foreign languages goes beyond academic benefit – it is a crucial step toward building a career that is competitive on the international stage. Therefore, ensuring that students develop strong foreign-language communication skills can greatly enhance their future prospects and set them apart in a competitive job market.

Furthermore, teaching foreign languages fosters cognitive development and cross-cultural understanding, both of which are essential in today's diverse and global society. Learning a new language not only enhances communication skills but also improves problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. These cognitive benefits help students approach challenges from different angles and become more adaptable in a variety of professional and personal situations. On a cultural level, foreign language education promotes greater empathy and respect for other cultures, which is especially important in an increasingly multicultural world. As such, providing university students with the opportunity to learn foreign languages equips them with skills that go beyond language proficiency – it prepares them to navigate the globalized world with greater confidence and insight.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The case method, or situational analysis, was first developed at Harvard Business School. Originating from Harvard Business School, the case method has evolved into a versatile pedagogical tool that promotes active learning through the analysis of real or simulated situations,

encouraging students to engage in problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking. It later spread internationally and was adopted by Ukrainian higher education institutions, initially within the context of business management. Key contributions to this field were made by A. James, R.K. Jin, and M.R. Linders. P. Dale, in *The Internet TESL Journal* (2002), analyzes various types of cases. The general concepts, methodology, types of cases, and the process of establishing this method in Ukraine are discussed by Yu. Surmin and E. Mikhailova. Additionally, O. Burba, N. Denisova, and T. Smolyanskaya have contributed to the development of catalogs of educational cases and situational exercises in the field of "Public Administration."

The purpose of the research. The article is an attempt to reveal the essence of the case method as an efficient technology in developing a foreign language proficiency in modern society and to develop the major steps of integration of the case studies in the professional education for non-linguistic students as a means of forming their professional communicative competence.

The importance of the research. In the contemporary world, it is inconceivable to envision the life of a modern individual without proficiency in at least one foreign language. The necessity of foreign language acquisition extends beyond general knowledge, increasingly requiring specialized language skills tailored to specific purposes, such as academic pursuits abroad, career advancement, international business, and travel. Learning foreign languages has become a widely popular endeavor, with many individuals gaining experience through various educational channels ranging from formal schooling, university courses, and language programs to self-directed learning. However, despite the widespread participation in foreign language learning, the proportion of individuals who achieve true proficiency remains relatively low.

The contemporary educational framework within higher education institutions is inextricably linked to the ongoing search for innovative and effective pedagogical strategies that foster the development of independent, active learners. In this context, educators bear a significant responsibility. They must identify and implement optimal teaching methods that not only enhance the curriculum but also encourage student engagement, creativity, and autonomy. The goal is to cultivate skilled, adaptable professionals capable of addressing complex tasks and performing competently in multilingual, cross-cultural environments.

At present, there exists a significant shortage of professionals who possess foreign language proficiency and are able to engage in professional discourse within international contexts. These individuals are also expected to participate actively in collaborative research and practical projects with foreign counterparts. This deficit underscores the urgent need for the integration of innovative teaching technologies,

methods, and tools aimed at stimulating cognitive engagement and enhancing the learning experience for students.

In this regard, current pedagogical priorities emphasize communication, interactivity, and the authenticity of language instruction, alongside the importance of embedding language learning within its cultural context. The ultimate objective of foreign language education is to enable learners to navigate foreign environments with ease and respond effectively to diverse communicative situations. Achieving this goal requires the creation of immersive, real-world scenarios that not only facilitate the internalization of linguistic content but also promote the development of cognitive and communicative skills. This approach equips learners with the ability to make informed rapid decisions in dynamic and challenging circumstances.

Presenting the material. The ability to speak a foreign language is considered a fundamental competence for students across all disciplines, as it is an essential component of a modern educational framework. To achieve optimal outcomes in foreign language acquisition and the development of communicative competence, educators must employ contemporary pedagogical methods that bridge academic instruction with practical application. Such an approach is crucial for fostering foreign language proficiency and fulfilling the broader competencies required of a modern individual. Consequently, the integration of active learning methods, such as the case method, remains highly relevant in the ongoing development of students' foreign language competence.

The method of teaching English based on cramming words and slogging away at grammar has exhausted its resources, which causes the necessity to search for a model of teaching considering the specific character of the profession and grounded on systemic methods and means aimed at the development of speaking skills conducive to the effective international communication. At the present time, more and more teachers are giving priority to the communicative method of English teaching. The objective matter of this method is speech itself, that is the ultimate goal is communication. This method presupposes involving the whole group into simultaneous work, creating real communicative situations. Some tasks of problematic character, proposed to the group by the teacher, and lack of time for their solving contribute to the students' mental and academic activities.

Currently, the key issue of English teaching for non-linguistic students is the complex use of foreign language skills in solving real professional problems and practical tasks. "Foreign Language" turns out to be a discipline that can enrich the content of the professional education. It creates the opportunity to implement the interdisciplinary links between the professional subjects and the English language on the basis of the case study method (Pampura, 2017, p. 117).

The core of this approach lies in presenting students with case situations, wherein a problem is formulated and analyzed. During discussions, students propose potential solutions, acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies through active, creative engagement. This includes independent information gathering, analysis from multiple perspectives, hypothesis formulation, conclusion drawing, and self-monitoring of the learning process and its outcomes.

Thus, the case method facilitates independent foreign-language activity in an artificially created professional environment, enabling the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills essential for creative professional engagement. Students are tasked with analyzing professional scenarios that require problem-solving. In doing so, they activate and apply the knowledge and language skills previously acquired. The case method takes into account students' professional training, emphasizing the ability to quickly analyze large volumes of information, make decisions under stress, enhance communication skills, and improve proficiency in all aspects of language use – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also fosters students' interests, develops their thinking and behavioral styles, which is valuable in teaching professional language.

There are several approaches as to the classification of cases in the case method. The most common approach distinguishes:

- **Practical cases:** These cases aim to reflect the situation or case as realistically as possible. Their primary goal is to teach the correct decision-making process in a specific situation through practical examples.

- **Study cases:** The primary objective of these cases is educational in nature. They present a situation within a specific context, clearly identify and formulate the problems, and require the student to diagnose the situation and make an independent decision regarding the issue at hand.

- **Research cases:** These cases are designed to engage students in research activities. Unlike study cases, they do not present a clearly defined problem but instead describe a more complex situation, often accompanied by statistical data. The aim of these cases is for students to independently identify the underlying problem, propose alternative solutions, and analyze the available resources for resolving the issue (Samoilova, Vasylenko, 2023, p. 123).

In terms of the integration of the case method into the Ukrainian education system, Yu. Surmin (2015, p. 21) identifies several case types, categorized according to their functions: *educational, training, analytical, research, systematic, and prognostic*.

American researchers are considering another classification of cases:

- *completed cases* based on facts. Suitable for targeted analysis;

- *unfinished cases* with an open end result. Students can predict, make assumptions;
- *functional cases* that the teacher writes: the difficulty for the teacher is to achieve a real reflection of the situation;
- *cases based on real documents* – articles, reports, a set of certain data, ethnographic materials (Forostiuk, 2019, p. 147).

In general, each type of case serves an educational function, with varying degrees of emphasis on different aspects of this function depending on the type of case.

Case-based learning is inherently action-oriented. A case is a detailed description of a real-world situation, presented in a specific format, designed to teach students how to analyze various types of information, generalize findings, formulate problems, and propose solutions based on established criteria.

Formally, the following stages of student work with a case can be identified:

- familiarization with the situation;
- information analysis;
- search for a solution;
- identification of the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed solution;
- evaluation of alternatives;
- presentation of results;
- evaluation of participants;
- summarizing the results (Romanov, 2018, c. 98).

The primary objectives of the case method are to:

- activate students' participation, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of professional training;
- increase motivation within the educational process;
- foster skills in situation analysis and the development of multiple solutions;
- cultivate the ability to work with information, including the capacity to seek additional data necessary to clarify a situation;
- model solutions based on the task at hand, presenting various approaches to the development of action plans aimed at achieving the desired outcome;
- facilitate the correct decision-making process through group analysis of the situation;
- promote skills in presenting one's viewpoint clearly and accurately in both oral and written forms, and defend these views convincingly;
- develop the ability to critically assess different perspectives, self-analyze, and engage in self-monitoring and self-assessment.

Needless to say, that the case should be thoroughly thought over by the teacher. The level of the language command of the group, the students' scientific interests and

the specific character of the future profession should be taken into account. It is preceded by reading special texts on similar problems, laborious training of new vocabulary and necessary terms. The information presented in the case should correspond to the students' knowledge for the moment. It is important to create didactic and psychological conditions which promote students' cognitive activities, develop their communicative abilities, contribute to their intellectual, personal and social activities, favour positive emotional environment in the classroom (Pampura, 2017, p. 118).

Typically, cases are prepared in writing and are based on real-life experiences. Due to the high concentration of roles within cases, this method closely resembles gaming techniques and problem-based learning, which are directly applicable to the formation of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language instruction.

This approach is most effective when applied to students with intermediate to advanced levels of foreign language proficiency. However, due to the possibility of utilizing preparatory materials, students at varying proficiency levels can still participate in the process. For students in humanities-related fields the developed case scenarios offered in certain textbooks can be effectively employed. For students in technical disciplines, the situation is more challenging, as there are few pre-existing tasks, and they must navigate unfamiliar professional contexts. This is particularly true since foreign language training is typically introduced in the early years of university education, while professional courses are often taken later. Unfortunately, this discrepancy hinders the effective implementation of the case method and negatively impacts the acquisition of foreign language skills within professional fields at higher education institutions. Frequently, the problem of low success rates in learning foreign languages is due to the insufficient level of the student's qualification competence regarding aspects of their native language. This situation provokes the need for the development of the case method not only for teaching foreign languages but also for native communication. If the student successfully masters aspects of using the linguistic and lexical profile of their native language with the use of an interactive method, the hypothesis of success in mastering language-linguistic standards and the specialties of the foreign language increases (Sparks, 1993). In this context, training-oriented case tasks prove to be an appropriate solution. These types of exercises facilitate the development of both linguistic competence – such as lexical knowledge and the ability to use specialized vocabulary – and pragmatic competence, which involves the functional application of this vocabulary (Форостюк, 2019, p. 148).

During the evaluation of results, students also actively participate. However, the teacher reserves the final say in assigning grades, taking into account the results of the joint discussion. The assessment of case task outcomes and student performance during

its execution considers, on the one hand, the solution to the problem posed, and on the other, the speech skills demonstrated by students while working on the case task. Attention should be paid to the vocabulary and grammatical structures students use in both oral and written forms, as well as, of course, their pronunciation. Case-method researchers provide practical advice regarding the organization of work. They particularly emphasize the importance of fostering team spirit during case work, as this can improve the final outcome. It is noted that a clear plan for the progression of the case should be outlined, and roles should be distributed. During presentations, the necessity of engaging as many participants as possible is emphasized, and role distribution schemes for the presentation are provided.

It is evident that when conducting such work, the teacher should refrain from adopting the position of the “all-knowing expert” and avoid monopolizing the final decision-making authority. Otherwise, students may not participate or may show minimal interest in the problem or situation at hand. It will also be helpful for the teacher to take notes during the discussion, either on the board or on a computer. If two opposing viewpoints are being considered, it is also advisable to present the arguments of both sides briefly in a visual format. University methodology experts at the University of Illinois suggest incorporating activities such as debates, role-playing, and simulations into the learning process (The Case Method). For further discussion of role-playing or the progress of debates, an interesting element could be the use of video recording. Students can listen to themselves from an outside perspective, which offers them the opportunity to notice their own mistakes and assess their phonetic and speech level. Students also actively participate in the evaluation process. However, the teacher retains the final decision regarding grades, taking into account the outcomes of the collective discussion.

Conclusion. Undoubtedly, the application of the case method has both advantages and risks.

Firstly, the case method enables an optimal combination of theory and practice, fostering the development of skills in working with diverse sources of information. Students do not rely on ready-made knowledge but rather learn to acquire it independently. Decisions made independently in situations that closely resemble real life are more easily remembered than rote memorization of rules.

Secondly, the process of problem-solving in the case is a creative cognitive process during which cognitive activity takes on a collective nature. Therefore, students strive to adhere to communication rules: working in groups, listening to others, and clearly articulating their viewpoints while finding solutions to problems with ambiguous solutions.

However, like any other method, the case method presents challenges in its

implementation. Primarily, it requires considerable time to prepare the case for the session. The teacher must carefully consider how to present the case and plan student activities, balancing individual and group work formats. The most challenging aspect for the teacher is evaluation, as it requires assessing each participant's contribution, activity, and originality, while simultaneously making an objective assessment of their knowledge.

The case method is a form of instruction in which both students and teachers participate in direct discussions of business situations and problems.

Based on the above, it is important to emphasize that the case method is an effective teaching method for medical students in the discipline of “Foreign Language for Professional Purposes.” This method increases the likelihood of using established strategies to resolve situations and develops skills for solving more complex problems. It provides students with an excellent opportunity to creatively apply the language material they have learned, based on their professional knowledge, and enables them to adapt to real and potentially possible situations. Situational learning teaches students to search for and apply knowledge in dynamic contexts, developing logical thinking and mental flexibility. Equally important is the fact that situation analysis significantly influences the professional development of students, contributes to their maturity, and fosters interest and positive motivation for learning. As an interactive teaching method, the case method gains positive feedback from students, who view it as an opportunity to demonstrate initiative, experience independence in mastering theoretical concepts, and acquire practical skills.

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МЕТОД КЕЙСІВ У ВИЩІЙ ОСВІТІ: ПІДВИЩЕННЯ МОВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ В МЕЖАХ РІЗНИХ ДИСЦИПЛІН

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Анотація. Розвиток міжнародних відносин ставить важливе завдання підготовки фахівців, здатних до міжнародної комунікації. Для цього необхідно вдосконалювати методи навчання іноземних мов. У статті розглядається застосування методу кейс-стаді у вищій освіті для підвищення мовної компетенції студентів. Особливу увагу приділено розвитку навичок усного мовлення, що є важливим для міжнародної професійної комунікації та кар'єрного зростання. Кейс-метод сприяє інтеграції теоретичних знань і практичних навичок, розвитку мовної та критичної компетентності студентів. Використання цього методу в груповій роботі дозволяє покращити граматичну майстерність, розвивати вільне володіння мовою та критичне мислення, що є необхідними для ефективної комунікації в глобалізованому світі.

На завершення стаття стверджує, що метод кейсів є високоефективним інструментом для викладання іноземних мов у вищій освіті. Він підвищує мовну компетентність студентів, їхні здатності до вирішення проблем та професійні навички, готуючи їх до складнощів сучасного робочого середовища. Акцент методу на реальних застосуваннях, критичному мисленні та співпраці робить його незамінним підходом до навчання мов у різних дисциплінах.

Ключові слова: інноваційні методи навчання іноземних мов; метод кейсів; професійно орієнтоване вивчення іноземних мов; професійні компетенції; мотивація студентів; міждисциплінарні зв'язки.

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