The Case Method In English As A Foreign Language In The Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The following article shows the research process done in a Bogotá school as applying the case method in English as a foreign language in the classroom. The paper illustrates what the research objective was and how design was done. In order to apply the Case Method into the school context, a definition of critical thinking was given, critical thinking more exactly, and the cognitive processes established by Bloom's taxonomy were integrated to the Case Method theory to analyze the role of the Case Method as developer of effective thinkers. The research method used in this study was action research since its qualitative nature, the teacher-researcher role and the need to integrate the practice and the theory during investigation aiming to reach a combination between the theory and the context where it was applied. The result of this process is shown at the end of this article, as well as the resources used through it.

Keywords: Khartoum Refinery, Refinery gaseous by products, Refinery gaseous management, Environmental Impact.

1. Introduction

The proposal of the Case Method (CM) is to provide more active learning experiences by reducing teacher-student interaction, emphasizing independent learning skills, and requiring less memorization. It was originally an answer to a requirement of the American medical colleges (Barnes, Christensen, and Hansen. 1994, 2). Aiming at improving students' academic level at Gimnasio Los Pinos School (GLP), the school principal proposed using a method applied in a course that he took, the Case Method (CM), as a tool to improve students' critical thinking skills and compromise in class. This research project was carried out with the aim of investigating the CM proposal in order to examine its applicability to teaching English. Thus, first in the theoretical framework, I analyzed the theoretical principles of this method and contrast them with language learning and critical thinking theories to analyze its strengths and weaknesses; second, I draw out, designed and applied some lessons based on the gathered theory to check how functional the CM is to teach English and to develop thinking skills in this particular context. During the lessons, I wrote down classroom routines, students' behaviours, reactions, interactions, and analyzed their work among others, in order to describe the CM in the EFL classroom and its contributions to the critical thinking development.

2. Research Objectives

To analyze the case method in relation to its application as a tool to improve critical thinking through English classes.

3. Research Design

3.1. Type of Study

The methodology opted for this research paper is action research given that its purposes, seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities as stated in Reason P. and Bradbury H. (2004, 2).

Through this paper some learning tasks were developed and applied in an English classroom at GLP School. While applying the tasks, they would be modified as much as necessary taking into account learners' opinions, assessment results, and field notes.

3.2. Setting of study and Participants

At Gimnasio Los Pinos the English classes were divided into levels; this division went from level 1 (basic) to 4 (intermediate or upper-intermediate in some cases). The participants were eleven graders who are taking the 3rd level. Their ages are between 16 and 19 years old. They were selected because of their specific characteristics: They were the eldest in the school which facilitated their understanding of the cognitive process provided their highly-developed learning knowledge (Experience) background. They hold good English language proficiency level, which allows them to use the language to understand complex tasks. As the type of research of this study was action research, it was very convenient for the Teacher-researcher since the material could be modified without altering their main topics.

The English proficiency level of these students' corresponded to the level A2 of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (2001). They are able to communicate in English in familiar situations, but they have some problems when communicating in unfamiliar conditions. Permission from parents or relatives to collect information about their sons or daughters was requested; likewise, this information had students' approval as volunteering participants. The confidentiality of their results and opinions was assured given that their identities never appeared anywhere in the written documents; they were just known by the researcher.

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3.3. Data collection instruments

The initial instrument was the interview. This was an effective instrument since it allowed following ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, Bell, J. (1993:91). The interview was not done to the complete group; it was taken from sample of the whole population due to interviewing the complete group could take too long and avoid going deeper in students' responses and perceptions about the material and class development. The interviews were conducted orally in Spanish to get as much as possible from them. Some of the questions were created based on the field-notes to clarify the understanding of their behaviours and they were applied at the end of each lesson. The basic questions were the following, although the researcher could add some wherever he considered necessary.

- What do you think about the work that has been developed recently?
- What did you like the most about the work that has been developed recently?
- What did you dislike about the work done recently?
- Would you change the lesson, how?

Besides this instrument made learners participate actively and directly on the material creation as well as its development, gave their opinions about the time spend and resources used in each activity. They also gave the research related to how effective or appropriate the CM is in the EFL.

The next instruments were evaluation and trialling or assessment results, teachers usually evaluate students' work, syllabus, methods, and techniques among others. This evaluation is sometimes done in an informal and unstructured way as trialing. In action research it may therefore simply be a matter of handling in a more structured way, (Wallace M., 1998. 46). For this research project four units were developed to practice and develop cognitive skills. These classroom activities were collected and analyzed to evaluate students' learning processes. Throughout the evaluation and trialling accurate results associated with the language learning were gathered and if the academic goals were achieved. Furthermore it strengthened results gotten from the others instruments, interviews and field notes.

The last instrument was field notes, it was done while teaching through jotting down personal accounts of what happened in the class. This process was done privately rather than collaboratively. It also tended to be qualitative or illuminative because it revealed people's attitudes and private thoughts. As stated by Bell, J. (1993:102) they can provide valuable information about work patterns and activities.

4. Result/Findings

This research project was started by asking the students about the topic that they would like to work in class. A written question on the board, which produces the following topics agreed by consensus: music, culture and students' country, Colombia. Centering in this topic and the curricular requirements for the year four curricular units were developed to apply CM and help the students to improve their cognitive processes. So the main purpose of this project was to give the students the chance to analyze the positive and negative aspects of a case, Colombia for this project, while dealing with different kinds of information. At the end of each lesson surveys were given to the learners to in order to collect their impressions about the class work. These surveys were analyzed along with the field notes and students' production. From this analysis certain commonalities rose up, as triangulating the commonalities of each instrument the following categories were drawn:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the implementation of the case method in EFL contribute to the development of critical thinking skills in eleventh graders at the Gimnasio Los Pinos School?</td>
<td>1. Previous knowledge enhances discussions.</td>
<td>1.1 Schema activation fosters students' participation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Case Method and task development encourage critical thinking.</td>
<td>2.1 Case Method properly oriented fosters critical thinking processes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Different kinds of activities for different kinds of knowledge.</td>
<td>3.1. The kind of the activity leads to certain specific outcomes.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This chart shows the main categories obtained after evaluating the instruments individually and contrasting the findings with the others.

1. Previous knowledge enhances discussions

This category gave you an idea about the benefits gotten from letting the students search about the class topics.

1.1 Schema activation fosters students' participation.

Previous knowledge gave students tools to participate in discussions. As all the students made out the main topic of the lesson they brought to class many examples and information that helped them to see the topic in different perspectives. Examples of this are the following:

- When the students were asked about the positive features of their country their report what they had found and were delighted to see that the collected information was useful for class development. (Field notes 2, October 2008)

- A student said "What I liked most of the class today is that I was able to participate more, because I knew many of the answers" (interview, 1. September 2008)
As stated by Barnes L., Christensen C., and Hansen, B. (1994) "cases must guide the students in independent learning... they must challenge students to be involved in actively in their own education rather than being passive recipients of pre-packaged information" in this way it was very favourable for the students to use the CM within the classroom.

2. Case Method and developing a task encouraged critical thinking.

This category draws how the guidance and task development promotes critical thinking processes.

2.1 Investigating, analyzing and talking about an issue foster critical thinking processes especially when they are properly guided.

When the students started the process of looking for information, selecting what was important or not, and discussing their findings with their partners they were highly using cognitive processes development. However the guidance in the classroom helps them to go further in their argument construction. In the applied lessons there were some questions aiming to encourage the learner to use their high order thinking processes like making judgments about the purposes of the information and the author's position in relation to the discussed topic which work very good as trigger for the using of high order thinking processes. The following is an example of it.

In this example a student questions news's truthfulness and its broadcstings. She/He cited Maneuel Marulandas death as an example of how the mass media sometimes shows facts without enough support. According to Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), what the student did was Evaluating or in other words Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing which is the second higher out of the six cognitive processes.

2.2 Developing a task wraps up and fosters critical thinking.

One of the richest proofs of critical thinking development is the main task. It allowed me as researcher to appreciate students' work as a whole. On it was visible that students hold the different cognitive processes and they had to be fostered as much as possible. The following hyperlink shows the way to one of the video produced as report task and broadcasted.

on YouTube web page with the idea of leaving ground to further considerations.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4us0YWBeqI

The video demonstrates how creative the students were; how they could analyze a situation and take a position based on their own arguments; how they could remember, understand, and applied linguistic features to express themselves in a creative and critical way. Although students had to be careful about the language used in the task development. It was not the main focus of the assignment. As stated by Bowen, T. (2002) "the primary focus of classroom activity is the task and language is the instrument which the students use to complete it".

3. Different kinds of activities for different kinds of knowledge.

An integral development requires diverse activities

As designing classroom material the teacher should keep in mind the cognitive and knowledge dimension as well the different skills of the language.

3.1 Different kinds of activities for different kinds of knowledge.

The kind of the activity leads to certain specific outcomes. Through the data analysis I realized that some of the designed material exercises were simpler for the students to develop than others. The workable exercises, the ones that students solve without too much difficulty, are located within the remembering and understanding in the cognitive dimension and in the knowledge dimension as factual and conceptual knowledge. So when the learners have to solve exercises classified within the remembering (defining, duplicating, listing, and memorizing among others) or understanding (identifying, locating, reorganizing and translating among others) in the cognitive dimension and the factual (terminology and discrete facts among others) or conceptual (explain the concept on your own words and transfer information to new situations) in the knowledge dimension they find them uncomplicated to deal with them. As analyzing the data all of them solve this kind of exercises participate actively of this part of the classes, the following are examples of it.

![Colombia a death trap](image)

6. Watch the video and discuss what could be consequences of having violence problems in our country?

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeI7D2dn9k8)

(example taken from student's work November 2006)
A student said “At first I liked the new exercises of English class but after a while I could not understand what they are saying” (interview, 2. applied at the end of the second lesson. Field notes attachments 2).

According to Bloom (1956) "As teachers we tend to ask questions in the "knowledge" category 80% to 90% of the time. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is". Through these examples was exemplified that the students needed to be exposed to activities that develop cognitive skills different from remembering and understanding, the basic ones.

When analyzing students' task results it came up that assigning them a case and giving something to do (a task) is so functional to encourage their thinking. Within the classroom work they dealt with different kinds of material, which made them develop their cognitive abilities and face the different kinds of information available anywhere. Throughout the classroom work students showed improvement in the understanding and use of questions of the higher order cognitive processes and management of different kinds of knowledge.

When the learners answered the different assigned kinds of questions they showed very judicious positions. In the third question lesson 3 they face an inquiry about the possible assumptions that the spectator of the video "lock up Colombian boarders" could have.

In the knowledge dimension the learners showed a good management of the factual, conceptual, procedural knowledge of the language, as they were able to communicate their ideas very good. There were few problems in the procedural dimension, now that some of them showed certain problems with cohesion issues. The use of the highest category of Knowledge metacognition was shown as they recognize their surroundings, partners and teacher as medium to learn. Critical thinking was encouraged through searching about a topic, analyzing, socializing and developing a task about it.

5. Conclusion and Implications

After developing the four units based on the case method proposal the main conclusion were the following ones:

i. The CM worked as tool to encourage critical thinking as it provided learners with the opportunities to investigate, reflect, analyse and discuss about diverse topics. However it could be strengthen by using tasks, pedagogical and common, to give them opportunities to face different kinds of material encouraging the use of different cognitive process and knowledge.

ii. Implementing the CM brought into rise students' participation since it allowed them to participate actively in the class development. The idea of taking into account students' experiences involved them with the class progress as sharing, evaluating and contrasting their thoughts, knowledge and feelings about their personal surrounding.

iii. Introducing a new method in an educational context needs a lot of preparation to make it a successful experience. As teacher-researcher I spent a lot of time to get acquainted with the CM; this attitude towards the new method was sole at the school, most of the teachers decided to act as if they applied the method in the class activities. The lack of training leads teachers to different interpretation of what the method is and it looks for. Hence when it is used as a new method the teachers need to be trained to get as much as possible of its usage.

iv. While I was analyzing student's opinion and their work, I found that the case method has many positive features to be used at Gimnasio Los Pinos. As it stated before it encourage high order cognitive processes like investigating and analyzing among others. It also allows the learner with diverse kind of knowledge which permits them to expand their learner skills.

References

Appendix

10. Choose the best option to fill in the blanks.
- I _____ my father
- The _____ of the house needs paint.
- I can not stand bright ______
- I do not have a sense of ______, I am a terrible dancer.
- Did you _____ what I ask you for?
- She married her childhood ______
- I like ______ food.
- Colombia has serious problems ______, I think it is a great country.
- We ______ is important nowadays
- He gave me a bouquet ______ of ______ as anniversary gift.
- I don’t know the rules very well, I just ______ them.
- Why are you ______ like that?
- Broadway is a famous ______ in New York.
- I bought a nice star at the local ______
- Bogota’s ______ is always the same; raining all the time.
- I haven’t seen a ______ with such white sand.
- Candelaria’s ______ style is so classic.
- She is not fat; she is just ______
- How are you going to solve it? -I don’t know, something ______
- This is your ______ for being such a good student.
- I’ll ______ the house with her.
- Stop fighting you two - shake hands and make ______ with each other!
- I like its ______ It tastes delicious! Flavor

11. Solve the puzzle with the words given in the previous task. You may not need to use all of them.

Colombia is passion

12. Watch the first 45 seconds of the video without sound and answer the following questions, then compare your answers with your partner.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxtydsrX0U8

What is the video about?

Where do you think people on the video are from?

What do people on the video look like?
The Case Method in

13. After watching the video for the first time, answer the following questions orally.

- What are Colombians actually?
- What is Colombia full of?
- Do Colombian people have problems?
- What do Colombian people share?

14. After watching the video for the second time ask orally the following questions.

- How would you really get to know a country?
- How do Colombian people make you fall in love?
- How long does it take to get acquainted with Colombian festivals and celebrations?
- What kinds of climates do you find in Colombia?

15. Discuss the following questions with your partner. (Questions for clarification)

- Why does “this is a country full of colors, and flavors” mean?
- Why does the video say that “we, Colombians, are ordinary people”?
- What is the video main topic?

16. Watch the video again and complete the following abstracts.

- People who make __________________
- People who bring __________________
- The Ibero-American theater festival which by the way is __________________
- The man who has made __________________
- The only performer who has come up __________________

After watching

6. Have them talk about a relevant issue/some relevant issues

10. Read the abstracts in task 5 carefully and complete the rule below.

Use: We use relative clauses and relative pronouns like ______ to introduce and identify people and things or to give more information about them.

Examples:

The man who’s wearing the blue parka jacket
The dark dress which you wore yesterday was awesome
The pineapples that you bought yesterday were delicious

11. Relative Clauses - Formation

Complete the sentences using relative clauses. Use who and which. A Scot is a person (live in Scotland).

Ness is a monster (live in Loch Ness).
A refrigerator is a thing (keep food cool).
A Disc Jockey is someone (play music in a disco).
A bee is an insect (make honey).
A lemon is a fruit (be yellow and sour).
A watch is a thing (tell the time).
A ferry is a ship (carry people across the water).
A shop assistant is someone (work in a shop).
A key is a thing (can open and lock doors).

12. Jeopardy: work with a partner, you tell him the extra information and he she guess the first part.

Student 1: Who is neither fat nor slim.
Student 2: A chubby person is someone.

LESSON 2
Warm up

Description: the classroom will be divided in five teams; Ss will be free to sit wherever they want, on the board the game word by word will be projected in order to give Ss opportunity to use the language.

17. Unscramble the following words and complete the text using them.

fitsbene
aigncamp(x2)
veycon
raceEmb
joyen
ewgr pu
estlyhon
onic
liesimp
inio

HOW CAN YOU SHOW YOUR PASSION?

For us to reach the objective of changing the bad image of the country and (1) the obstacles that this (2) it is necessary that each and every Colombian know, understand and multiply the message of the Imagen País (3) . This is a (4) that belongs to all of us, and we will be able to (5) the economic (6) and the quality of life that it may represent for us depending on how much we value its importance and really make it a symbol of our culture.

This is your country, you were born, (7), and have lived here for a long time; and if you have ever been abroad, you have missed it, because this country calls you and (8) at you asking you to come back and (9) in telling the world why Colombia is Passion.

For that reason, do your job (10) and with passion. Learn about the good things that people have and teach it with passion. (11) your family and tell them how good it is to belong to this country with passion. Talk to foreigners about all the things they can see, eat and enjoy in this country which is full of passion. And this way, when all of us are looking towards the same place, and the rest of the world is looking at us, they will realize that this is not just any country, and therefore, all this effort will become (12) in more foreign investment, in tourism, in exports and a lot more.

If the country does well, all of us will do better. Let’s make the Colombia is Passion symbol something powerful. If all of us together manage to express, (13) and multiply the message that Colombia is a country that is worth it, we can turn Colombia is Passion into a real national (14) which will represent what we are as Colombians.

We want all Colombians to feel the passion because we want the world to know that Colombia is Passion.

18. Using the following chart to classify these words. No all the words fit into the diagram.

benefits, campaign, convey, embrace, enjoy, grew up, honestly, implies, join, overcome, screams, tangible, icon.
Mind maps are tools which help you think and learn fast and effectively. (Here, www.SmartDraw.com, you will find a free downloadable software which helps you to your mind easily)

This is an example of how useful mind maps are and how can be use in different subjects (designed using smart draw free trial.)

19. Answer and discuss the following questions based on the reading?
   (question that probe reason and evidence)
   - What is the nature of this campaign?
   - What are your reasons to give that answer?
   - What evidence is there to support your answers?

20. Based on the reading how can you show your passion? Complete the mind map
English writings usually begin with the Thesis statement. It is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas.

21. Decide on what the following writings are about.
   - People are poisoning the environment with chemicals merely to keep their lawns clean.
     - A. Food poisoning
     - B. Racial problems
     - C. Environmental problems
     - Continuing changes in the Social Security System makes it almost impossible to plan intelligently for one's retirement.
       - A. Teenager and personal disorders
       - B. Retirement difficulties
       - C. Communist thought
     - Hemingway's stories helped create a new prose style by employing extensive dialogue, shorter sentences, and strong Anglo-Saxon words.
       - A. Hemingway's contribution to solve the hair style problems
       - B. Three main Hemingway's contribution to produce a new writing style.
       - C. Hemingway's stories


   E.g. I like to live in Colombia because it has the tastiest coffee and the most beautiful women in the world.

   In this thesis statement is clear that the main ideas to be developed are Colombian coffee and women.
   Here write yours. Don’t forget to keep in mind the following suggestions as writing:
   - Choose a subject or idea of importance.
   - Decide on something important to say about it.
   - Explain or elaborate your basic meaning.
   - Construct one or more analogies and/or metaphors that will help organize what you are saying to events and experiences in their lives.
   - Construct one or more analogies and/or metaphors that will help readers connect what you are writing with something similar in their lives. **
Lesson 3

Warm up

1. Guess the picture. While the teacher draws different shapes on the board, try to guess what it is.

2. Read the following excerpts and write (T) if they are true or (F) if they are false. (the excerpts were chosen from the New York Times and Los Angeles Times through writing search engine “Colombia”)

Manuel Marulanda, Top Commander of Colombia’s Largest Guerrilla Group, Is Dead
By SIMON ROMERO Published: May 26, 2006
CARACAS, Venezuela — Manuel Marulanda, the guerrilla tactician whose rise from peasant (a person who is not well educated or is rude and does not behave well) origins to top commander of Latin America’s largest rebel group was a mythical feature of Colombia’s long internal war, died on March 26 in a mountainous hideout in the Meta department in central Colombia. He was believed to be 76 years old.

Rebels’ Arsenal Fuels Urban War Fears
By Paul Richter March 8, 2002
Colombian guerrillas are using a new generation of complex explosives, including suspected poison gas on at least one occasion, to mount a more aggressive style of urban warfare that they hope will allow them to influence approaching elections, U.S. officials say.

U.S. Is Losing War on Drugs in Colombia
News | By Juanita Darling | August 8, 1999
In the last two years, U.S. anti-narcotics aid to Colombia has tripled.

Drug Hauls and Kidnappings in Colombia Surged in 1998
News | December 20, 1998
National crime-fighters seized more than 59 tons of cocaine and 770 pounds of heroin, worth about $1 billion wholesale in the United States, in record drug haul in 1998, according to a police report issued Saturday.

Foreign countries have a bizarre perception about Colombians given that they just hear about Colombia in the news, and most of them are not positive generally

3. Answer and Compare with a partner the following questions
   - Why do you think they are true or false?
   - Why are you assuming that?
   - What can you assume instead?
   - Do you think that Colombia is a dangerous place for tourists?
   - Do you think that the Colombian boarders should be locked up to protect foreigners?
   - How can you verify or disapprove that assumption?

4. What can you see in the following images, where do you think they take place?

5. Find the 20 words in the crossword. All of them are closed to each other.
Colombia a death trap

argue  meant    yell
bullet  point
complain poorly
cool  powerful
cooperate pull out
doubt  rob
dezvous  scare
get back  thirty
guns  wave
hands  witnesses

6. Watch the video and discuss what could be consequences of having violence problems in our country?  
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe7E2dn08)

7. Solve white and post listening exercises. They are available at NTKSA (talleres).

8. Answer the following questions. (questions that prove implication and consequences)

- What are the assumptions within the video?
- What are the consequences of those assumptions?
- What generalizations can you make based on the video?

9. Write an argument about what are the possible problems of having this negative image.

(To see some of the feature of lesson 3 and 4 you need to check the CD room attachments and have access to the hot potatoes programme available free at )
1) **Interview**

**How does the implementation of the Case Method in EFL contribute to the development of critical thinking skills in eleven graders at Gimnasio los Pinos School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument: Interview</th>
<th>Data October- November 2008</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Students' answers</th>
<th>Researcher observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¿Cuál es su opinión sobre el trabajo desarrollado recientemente en clase?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Qué fue lo que más le gusto del trabajo hecho en clase?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>¿Qué no le gusto del trabajo en clase?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>¿Le modificaría algo a la clase? ¿Qué?</td>
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**Preguntas extras:**