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A CASE STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CASE-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Abstract

This article examines the effectiveness of the case study method in teaching English to first-year undergraduate students majoring in English Language Teaching. In the context of the need to develop communicative competence and practical foreign language skills, the case study method represents a relevant and effective approach based on the analysis of real or realistic situations. Within the study, English lessons were designed and implemented using the case study method and included tasks focused on understanding the situation, identifying the problem, using functional language, written and oral communication, as well as group discussion and decision-making. Qualitative research methods were employed for data collection, particularly student questionnaires administered after several case-based lessons. The results indicate that the use of the case study method enhances student motivation, promotes active participation in the learning process, and increases learners' confidence in using English, especially in spoken communication. Students also reported improvements in speaking skills, vocabulary development, and the formation of critical thinking abilities. At the same time, certain challenges were identified, including difficulties in selecting appropriate lexical items and unequal participation during group work.

Keywords: *case study method; English language teaching; foreign language education; communicative competence; critical thinking; problem-based learning; qualitative research.*

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ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТИ КЕЙС-МЕТОДА В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается эффективность метода кейс-стади в обучении английскому языку студентов первого курса бакалавриата, обучающихся по направлению подготовки «Подготовка учителей английского языка». В условиях необходимости формирования коммуникативной компетенции и навыков практического использования иностранного языка метод кейс-стади представляет собой актуальный и эффективный подход, основанный на анализе реальных или приближенных к реальности ситуаций. В ходе работы были разработаны и проведены учебные занятия с использованием метода кейс-стади, включающие задания на понимание ситуации, выявление проблемы, использование функционального языка, письменную и устную коммуникацию, а также групповое

обсуждение и принятие решений. Для сбора данных применялись качественные методы исследования, в частности анкетирование студентов после проведения нескольких занятий. Результаты исследования показали, что использование метода кейс-стади способствует повышению мотивации обучающихся, их активному участию в учебном процессе и росту уверенности при использовании английского языка, особенно в устной речи. Студенты отметили развитие навыков говорения, расширение словарного запаса и формирование критического мышления. Вместе с тем были выявлены определённые трудности, связанные с подбором лексических средств и неравномерным участием в групповой работе.

Ключевые слова: метод кейс-стади; обучение английскому языку; преподавание иностранного языка; коммуникативная компетенция; критическое мышление; проблемно-ориентированное обучение; качественное исследование.

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АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУДА КЕЙС-СТАДИ ӘДІСІНІҢ ТИІМДІЛІГІ

Аңдатпа

Мақалада ағылшын тілін оқыту барасындағы кейс-стади әдісінің тиімділігі зерттеледі. Зерттеу нысаны ретінде «Ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерін даярлау» білім беру бағдарламасы аясында білім алып жатқан бірінші курс бакалавриат студенттері алынады. Коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті қалыптастыру және шет тілін практикалық тұрғыда қолдану дағдыларын дамыту қажеттілігі жағдайында кейс-стади әдісі нақты немесе өмірге жақын жағдайларды талдауға негізделген өзекті әрі тиімді оқыту тәсілі болып табылады. Зерттеу барысында кейс-стади әдісін қолдана отырып, оқу сабақтары ұйымдастырылды. Сабақтар жағдайды түсінуге, мәселені анықтауға, функционалдық тілдік бірліктерді қолдануға, жазбаша және ауызша қарым-қатынасқа, сондай-ақ топтық талқылау мен шешім қабылдауға бағытталған тапсырмаларды қамтыды. Деректерді жинау үшін сапалық зерттеу әдістер қолданылды. Бірнеше кейс-стади сабағынан кейін студенттерден сауалнама алынды. Зерттеу нәтижелері кейс-стади әдісін қолдану студенттердің оқу мотивациясын арттырып, олардың сабаққа белсенді қатысуына және ауызша сөйлеу барысында ағылшын тілін қолдануға деген сенімділігінің өсуіне ықпал ететінін көрсетті. Студенттер сөйлеу дағдыларының дамуын, сөздік қорының артқандарын және сыни ойлауларының қалыптасуын атап өтті. Сонымен қатар лексикалық бірліктерді таңдауда және топтық жұмыста студенттердің тең дәрежеде қатыса алмауына байланысты кейбір қиындықтар анықталды. Алынған нәтижелер тиісті әдістемелік қолдау көрсетілген жағдайда кейс-стади әдісін ағылшын тілін оқытуда қолданудың тиімділігін растады.

Түйін сөздер: кейс-стади әдісі; ағылшын тілін оқыту; шет тілін оқыту; коммуникативтік құзыреттілік; сыни ойлау; проблемалық-бағытталған оқыту; сапалық зерттеу.

Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) has evolved significantly in response to globalization, technological advancement, usage of AI and the growing demand for communicative competence. This evolution underscores the unparalleled status of English as the global lingua franca, necessitating effective pedagogical approaches that integrate innovative solutions like AI to enhance learning efficiency and quality ([Li, 2024](#); [Ulfa, 2023](#)).

Modern classrooms require instructional approaches that go beyond traditional grammar-based methods and instead emphasize meaningful language use. This shift has prompted educators to reconsider traditional *teacher-centered* approaches and to adopt pedagogical models that prioritize interaction, learner engagement, and contextualized language use. By focusing on a specific instructional setting, a case study allows for an in-depth analysis of teaching practices, learner behavior, and instructional outcomes. Furthermore, such studies are crucial for understanding how educators can leverage technology and digital resources to bridge geographical distances and expose students to authentic language contexts ([Eslit, 2023; Zulkarnain & Yunus, 2023](#)).

The present case study explores pedagogical strategies employed in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, aiming to evaluate their impact on student participation and language development, as well as to draw implications for effective English language teaching.

This study therefore aims to investigate the effectiveness of case-based learning in teaching English through an in-depth case study of EFL classroom. Specifically, it examines how the implementation of case-based learning affects students' participation, communicative ability, and perceptions of the learning process. By analyzing classroom practices and learner experiences, the study seeks to contribute practical insights into the pedagogical value of case-based learning in English language education.

Methods

The case method consists of two interconnected components: the case scenario itself and the structured discussion that follows. Cases offer a meaningful and contextualized framework for introducing new concepts and for encouraging learners to apply recently acquired knowledge. Well-designed cases are typically grounded in real-life situations, although they may be based on events from either contemporary or historical contexts (Kreber C.).

Within a case, a «decision-maker is presented with a complex situation that requires choosing among multiple possible courses of action, each of which can be justified through logical reasoning. Classroom discussions based on these cases engage students in higher-order thinking processes, such as analyzing relationships between events, identifying alternative solutions, evaluating potential decisions, and anticipating the consequences of different actions. Through this analytical dialogue, students actively construct understanding and develop problem-solving skills (Ellet W). The work of Ellet gives multiple examples and scenarios of cases that can be implemented in classrooms. Cases relatively can be divided into 3 groups: scientific research, which is oriented at accomplishing research activity; practical, which reflects real life situations; educational, the task of which is organizing educational process.

Niyazova (2014) considers the following requirements for the use of case study: learners should be exposed to a wide range of practice-oriented problems that are strategically combined to support systematic training in problem-solving and to promote deeper understanding of the instructional content. Instruction should enable students to address practical tasks by drawing on their prior professional experience, existing knowledge, and developed skills. At the same time, learners are encouraged to examine problem conditions critically, compare possible solutions, assess alternative options, and select the most appropriate course of action.

The instructional process should be implemented through diverse organizational formats, including individual work, small-group collaboration, and collective decision-making in professional or academic task scenarios. In addition, teaching should incorporate a variety of visual aids and technological tools to enhance comprehension and learner engagement. This augmented approach, which also includes the use of natural language processing and machine learning algorithms, enables real-time feedback and assessment, empowering learners to independently refine their linguistic abilities ([Konyrova, 2024](#)).

Students should also be provided with opportunities to engage in multiple types of classroom activities aimed at problem resolution. These activities may involve cognitive and instructional tasks, independent and creative work, exploratory and analytical thinking, as well as organizational and planning-related processes. Such variety supports active learning and the development of

higher-order skills. This framework prioritizes optimizing learning opportunities, facilitating interaction, fostering learner autonomy, and heightening language awareness, thereby promoting self-discovery through various communication strategies ([Henao, 2024](#)).

Although many authors claim on effectiveness of Case study method, some research shows negative aspects. For instance, Case studies require extensive preparation by both teachers and students. Time and preparation demand can be considered as limitation on effectiveness. Zafer Çakmak and İsmail Hakan Akgün on their thesis “A Theoretical Perspective on the Case Study Method” shed light to disadvantages of case study method with a support of many resources. Although case-based instruction offers many benefits, it also presents several challenges. Developing appropriate cases requires considerable time and effort, and implementation can be difficult in large or crowded classrooms. Effective use of the method depends heavily on thorough teacher preparation and strong facilitation skills; without proper guidance, classroom discussions may become difficult to manage and assess (Zafer, Cakmak, 2018).

Additionally, case-based learning is less effective when students lack sufficient background knowledge or cognitive readiness related to the topic. Finding or designing cases that accurately match course objectives and learners’ developmental levels can be challenging. Poorly aligned or inadequately analyzed cases may limit meaningful discussion, reduce student confidence, and hinder the transfer of learning to real-life situations.

Case methods are harder to conduct in large classes, especially when students are at different proficiency levels. Learners with weaker English may struggle to prepare for or engage in discussions, reducing overall effectiveness(Zafer, Cakmak, 2018).

According to Hidayati, case studies are best suited to complex instructional contexts that involve decision-making and problem solving, but they are less effective for delivering factual content.

The findings of the present study align with the challenges identified by Mosterts(2007), who conducted an extensive review of the literature on the implementation of case-based learning. Mosterts categorized the difficulties associated with this method into pedagogical and practical challenges. Pedagogical challenges include teachers’ unfamiliarity with case-based instruction, difficulties in aligning cases with learning objectives, the complexity of designing suitable cases, selecting effective teaching strategies, and facilitating meaningful classroom discussion. Practical challenges, on the other hand, relate to contextual constraints such as class size, limited instructional time, classroom conditions, and learners’ language proficiency levels.

The results of this study suggest that many of these challenges stem primarily from student-related factors. Case-based learning requires learners to engage in higher-order cognitive processes, including analysis, evaluation, and decision-making. As a result, students with limited experience or insufficient language proficiency may struggle to understand case scenarios, follow instructions, and actively contribute to discussions. This supports Mosterts’(2007) argument that the effectiveness of the case-based method is strongly influenced by learners’ readiness and cognitive development, particularly in language learning contexts.

Another limitation is the long-term process in some fields where the case can take 10-15 pages long. Furthermore, the length of case studies may lead to reduced student focus, motivation, and class participation. To address this issue, instructors may divide cases into smaller segments; however, this approach can limit students’ ability to understand the case in its entirety. These factors represent notable limitations of the case study method in instructional practice. There are many combinations of methods where Case study can be blended in. Some research shows that since case study is student-centered, it is well-combined with decision-making, brain storming, cooperative learning, problem-solving, debate, open-ended question-answer.

The **methodology** of this research concludes the experimental practical approach. This study goes through qualitative way where the focus group was selected among the university students. The case study method requires a sufficient level of English in order to complete tasks and convey their thoughts freely. Qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on understanding meanings, experiences, perceptions, and processes rather than measuring variables with numbers.

It aims to explore how and why people think, behave, or experience a phenomenon in a particular context.

The data of this research was collected among the students of first year of bachelor degree. The focus laid on them because their motivation to learn English as future English teachers were high. The first step was to convey a questionnaire of 10 questions where the group of respondents were required to answer questions.

Research results

Participants. The quantitative data were collected through a pre-intervention survey administered to 22 first-year Bachelor's degree students majoring in English Language Teaching with Intermediate level. The survey aimed to identify students' prior learning experiences, familiarity with instructional methods, and attitudes toward speaking and communicative activities in English.

Instruments. Two research instruments were used to collect data in this study: a questionnaire survey and case study-based instructional materials. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, administered after the implementation of the case study method. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed-ended items designed to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the case study method in learning English. The survey focused on several key areas, including student motivation, classroom participation, speaking confidence, group work, perceived language skill development (speaking, vocabulary, listening, and writing), and critical thinking.

The second instrument comprised instructional case study materials developed by the researcher. These materials included short, real-life-based scenarios related to academic and professional communication (e.g., workplace emails, meeting arrangements, and misunderstandings in English). Together, these instruments enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data regarding students' learning experiences and the impact of the case study method on their English language development.

Procedure. Each case was accompanied by scaffolded tasks targeting comprehension, language use, functional writing, discussion, and problem-solving. The tasks were adapted to students' language proficiency level and were used during 2–3 classroom sessions.

Data analysis. The results indicate that grammar-based instruction dominated previous English learning experiences, as 19 out of 22 students (86.4%) reported that grammar exercises were the most common type of classroom activity. In contrast, fewer students reported regular engagement in speaking-focused tasks; 6 students (27.3%) indicated that they did not usually focus on speaking activities during prior English lessons.

Regarding classroom interaction, 13 students (59.1%) identified group or pair work as the most familiar activity after grammar and reading exercises, suggesting moderate exposure to collaborative learning. Students' attitudes toward authentic language use were generally positive, with 17 students (77.3%) expressing interest in working with real-life situations in English.

In terms of prior exposure to the case study method, only 8 students (36.4%) reported having previous experience with this instructional approach, indicating that case-based learning was relatively unfamiliar to the majority of participants. Additionally, 8 students (36.4%) reported feeling nervous when expressing their opinions in English during class, highlighting the presence of speaking anxiety before the intervention.

Overall, the quantitative findings suggest that students entered the study with limited experience in communicative and case-based instruction, a strong emphasis on grammar-focused learning, and moderate levels of anxiety related to spoken English. These results provide a baseline for evaluating the impact of the case study method implemented in the subsequent instructional phase.

Moreover, on the question "What difficulties do you usually face when speaking or discussing topics in English?" respondents answered that they face problems with pronunciation and being afraid of making grammar mistakes. Since this study focuses on the effectiveness of case study the questions on usefulness appeared too. Most respondents(90%) think that real-life

cases are beneficial and make lesson more practical and motivating. All of the students responded positively on the research question whether this method would help to improve their English. Respondents mentioned following main concerns on participating in case study method lesson:

1. Being afraid that their English level may not be suitable;
2. Expressing ideas clearly in spontaneous situations;
3. Speaking fluently under pressure;
4. Being involved in fast speech with complex terminology;
5. Feeling unconfident and unprepared.

After the lessons were conducted using the case study method, a post-intervention survey was administered to 22 first-year Bachelor's students majoring in English Language Teaching. The students' responses were coded and analyzed quantitatively to identify prevailing trends.

Students' overall perceptions of the case study method were overwhelmingly positive. 20 students (90.9%) reported that learning English through case studies was *interesting*, *motivating*, *useful*, or *engaging*, primarily due to the use of real-life situations. Only 2 students (9.1%) expressed initial discomfort or nervousness related to speaking.

Classroom participation increased noticeably after the intervention. 19 students (86.4%) stated that the case study method encouraged them to participate more actively in class discussions compared to traditional lessons. Similarly, 18 students (81.8%) reported feeling more comfortable speaking English during case study lessons, attributing this to small-group interaction and a reduced fear of making mistakes.

Regarding skill development, 17 students (77.3%) identified speaking as the skill that improved the most. Vocabulary development was reported by 16 students (72.7%), while improvements in critical thinking and problem-solving skills were noted by 15 students (68.2%). Gains in listening and writing skills were mentioned by 10 students (45.5%).

Group work was perceived as beneficial by most participants. 18 students (81.8%) indicated that working in groups supported their learning by allowing them to exchange ideas and learn from peers. However, 7 students (31.8%) reported challenges related to unequal participation within groups.

The main difficulties reported were linguistic rather than methodological. 14 students (63.6%) experienced challenges in expressing complex ideas or selecting appropriate vocabulary. To enhance the effectiveness of case study lessons, 15 students (68.2%) recommended providing more preparation time and targeted vocabulary support prior to discussions.

Overall, the quantitative results demonstrate that the case study method had a positive impact on student engagement, communicative confidence, and key language skills, while also revealing areas where additional instructional support is needed.

The findings show that most students demonstrated a clear understanding of the case scenarios, including the context, participants, and sources of miscommunication. Students were generally able to identify key issues and explain misunderstandings using appropriate language. This suggests that the case-based materials were comprehensible and well suited to the learners' level, allowing them to engage meaningfully with realistic situations and interpret problems accurately.

The results indicate that students were able to use English appropriately for practical communication purposes. Most participants demonstrated an improved ability to select clear and polite expressions, particularly when requesting clarification or explaining misunderstandings. Their written responses reflected an increased awareness of tone, formality, and structure in professional and academic contexts. Overall, the case study method supported the development of functional writing skills and pragmatic language use.

In the second case study, Task 2 (Writing a Message to the Group) required students to produce a short written response involving apology, explanation, and clarification. Most students successfully completed the task within the required word limit and addressed all three content points. Common features included polite expressions, clear explanations of misunderstanding, and appropriate requests for future meeting times.

During Task 3 (Solving the Problem Together), students actively participated in small-group discussions. They were able to suggest practical solutions, such as asking follow-up questions, confirming deadlines in writing, and using specific time expressions. Group representatives effectively summarized their discussions, demonstrating engagement, collaboration, and spoken fluency.

Generally, the results indicate that the case study method positively influenced students' engagement, comprehension, and practical language use. Students were able to apply English to realistic academic and professional situations, practice problem-solving, and develop communicative competence. The structured tasks and scaffolding supported learners in expressing ideas clearly while reducing anxiety, particularly in written production.

Analysis of students' post-survey responses revealed several recurring themes related to their experiences with the case study method in English language learning.

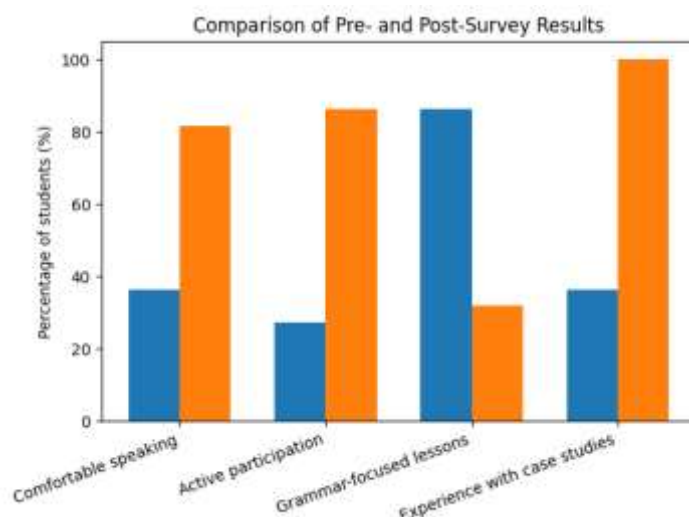
Most students reported feeling **motivated, interested, and engaged** during case study lessons. They emphasized that the use of **real-life and realistic situations** made learning more meaningful and enjoyable compared to traditional textbook-based activities. The practical nature of the cases helped students see the relevance of English for future academic and professional contexts.

A dominant theme across responses was **increased participation** in class discussions. Many students stated that case studies encouraged them to speak more actively, particularly in **small-group settings**, which reduced anxiety and fear of making mistakes. Even typically shy students reported feeling more *comfortable expressing their opinions in English*.

Students perceived noticeable improvement in their speaking and vocabulary skills, followed by listening and, to a lesser extent, writing. They highlighted learning topic-related vocabulary, polite expressions, and communication strategies such as asking for clarification, apologizing, agreeing, and disagreeing. The contextualized use of language helped students remember and apply new expressions more effectively.

The bar chart demonstrates notable differences between the pre- and post-intervention survey results (Table 1). Prior to the intervention, only 36.4% (8 out of 22) of students reported prior experience with the case study method, whereas after the intervention this figure increased to 100%. Students' comfort in speaking English improved from 63.6% reporting nervousness before the intervention to a markedly lower level after participation, with over 80% indicating increased confidence. Engagement with real-life, communicative activities remained high, increasing from 77.3% pre-intervention to over 90% post-intervention. Additionally, the dominance of grammar-focused activities decreased, shifting from 86.4% of students identifying grammar as the main classroom activity before the intervention to a more balanced skill-focused approach after the case study lessons. Overall, the results indicate that the case study method had a positive effect on students' participation, confidence, and communicative engagement in English.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Survey results



The most frequently mentioned difficulties included expressing complex ideas, finding appropriate vocabulary, and understanding instructions quickly. To improve the effectiveness of case study lessons, students commonly suggested providing more preparation time, pre-teaching key vocabulary, clearer instructions, and allowing longer discussion periods.

Overall, the qualitative data indicate that the case study method had a positive impact on students' motivation, participation, communicative confidence, and practical language use. Despite some linguistic and organizational challenges, students perceived the method as effective, engaging, and relevant to real-life communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the case study method is an effective instructional approach for teaching English to first-year Bachelor's degree students majoring in English Language Teaching. The analysis of classroom performance and post-survey responses demonstrates that case-based instruction positively influenced students' engagement, language use, and higher-order thinking skills.

One of the most notable outcomes of the study is the increase in student motivation and participation. Students reported that learning through real-life situations made English lessons more meaningful and engaging than traditional textbook-based instruction. This supports Hidayati's claim that case studies are particularly effective in complex learning situations that require problem-solving and active learner involvement, rather than the passive transmission of factual information (Hidayati, n.d.). Similar conclusions are drawn by Suleimenova (2013), who emphasizes that contextualized and practice-oriented tasks significantly enhance learner motivation in English language classrooms in Kazakhstan. The authentic nature of the cases in the present study encouraged learners to contribute ideas and participate more actively in classroom interaction.

The results also suggest that the case study method contributes to greater speaking confidence, especially in small-group discussions. Many students reported reduced anxiety and a greater willingness to express ideas in English. This finding aligns with Mosterts' (2007) observation that case-based learning promotes active discussion and learner-centered interaction, although it also requires students to engage in higher-level thinking. In the Kazakhstani context, Zhetpisbayeva and Shelestova (2018) similarly note that interactive and discussion-based methodologies help reduce speaking anxiety among EFL learners by creating a supportive communicative environment. While Mosterts (2007) noted that inexperienced learners may initially struggle, the present study shows that with appropriate scaffolding, students can adapt to this instructional approach and benefit from increased communicative practice.

In terms of language development, students perceived noticeable improvement in speaking and vocabulary skills, as well as gains in listening and writing. The use of functional language, including clarification strategies, polite requests, and expressions for agreement and disagreement,

reflects the practical communicative focus of case-based learning. This supports Hidayati's argument that case studies enhance meaningful language use by situating learning within realistic contexts that mirror professional and academic communication. These findings also correspond with Suleimenova's (2013) assertion that communicative competence develops most effectively when learners engage with language in realistic and problem-oriented situations.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of the case study method in fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students were required to analyze situations, identify causes of misunderstandings, and propose solutions using English. This outcome corresponds with Mosterts' (2007) categorization of pedagogical challenges, which emphasizes the importance of aligning cases with learning objectives and encouraging meaningful discussion. Likewise, some resources argue that problem-based and case-oriented instruction supports the development of analytical and reflective thinking skills, which are essential for future English teachers (Zhetpisbayeva, Shelestova, 2018).

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges identified in this study reflect those reported in previous research. Students experienced difficulty expressing complex ideas and selecting appropriate vocabulary, and some group work activities resulted in unequal participation. These challenges are consistent with the practical limitations described by Mosterts (2007), including differences in students' proficiency levels and the need for careful classroom management. Similar concerns are also reported in Kazakhstani EFL contexts, where heterogeneous language proficiency can affect participation in collaborative tasks (Zhetpisbayeva, Shelestova, 2018). To address these issues, students recommended greater preparation time, explicit vocabulary support, and clearer instructions, underscoring the importance of structured facilitation in case-based instruction.

Overall, the findings support the view that the case study method is a valuable pedagogical approach in English language education. When implemented with sufficient scaffolding and aligned with students' proficiency levels, it enhances engagement, communicative competence, and critical thinking skills. However, as suggested by Hidayati, Mosterts, and Kazakhstani scholars, successful application depends on thoughtful case selection, clear instructional design, and active teacher guidance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of the case study method in teaching English to first-year Bachelor's degree students majoring in English Language Teaching. The findings indicate that case-based instruction positively influenced students' motivation, participation, and confidence in using English, particularly in speaking activities. Engaging with realistic scenarios enabled learners to apply language in meaningful contexts and supported the development of communicative competence.

The results also show that the case study method contributed to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students were required to analyze situations and propose solutions in English. However, challenges related to limited vocabulary, expressing complex ideas, and unequal group participation were also identified. These findings emphasize the need for careful scaffolding, clear instructions, and vocabulary support.

Overall, the case study method represents a valuable approach to English language teaching when appropriately planned and supported. Future research may focus on long-term effects or incorporate quantitative data to further examine its impact on language learning outcomes.

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