TEACHING READING SKILLS THROUGH CASE STUDY TECHNIQUE

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Abstract. Reading is considered to be one of the key language skills that play a significant role in developing the linguistic competence, critical thinking, and academic performance of learners. However, many traditional approaches to teaching reading rely heavily on teaching vocabulary and answering comprehension questions, which do not necessarily engage learners in higher-order thinking processes. The case study technique, which was first used in business and legal education but is attracting increasing attention in language teaching because of its learner-centered and problem-solving nature, is examined in the context of English language teaching (ELT) to investigate whether teaching reading skills through the case study technique is effective, how it works, and how to apply the case study technique in reading instruction, including how it can improve reading comprehension, analytical thinking, collaborative learning, and learner motivation.

Keywords: reading skills, case study technique, English language teaching, reading comprehension, critical thinking, learner-centered learning, ELT methodology

Introduction. Reading is a complex cognitive activity that includes decoding, comprehension, and construction of meaning from written texts, and reading is a significant source of linguistic input in second and foreign language learning, which can help learners expand their vocabulary, improve their grammatical awareness, and develop critical thinking skills [7,43]; thus, it is an area that remains a major focus in ELT.

Comprehension exercises, vocabulary drills, and teacher-centered explanations are often common practice in traditional reading instruction, but these methods do not necessarily encourage learners to actively engage with texts and apply their learning to real-life contexts, which are promoted by contemporary educational theories that encourage more learner-centered approaches to learning [8,67]. The case study technique, which involves presenting learners with authentic or realistic situations to analyze, discuss, and make decisions about, can be used to turn reading into an active process of inquiry and interpretation that transforms passive reading into a meaningful learning experience [8,72]. In this paper, the application of the case study technique to teach reading skills is investigated, and its educational value in improving learners' comprehension of reading materials is analyzed.

Reading is generally defined as an interactive process between the reader and the text. According to Grabe, reading comprehension involves the simultaneous interaction of linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, cognitive strategies, and contextual understanding [5,380]. Successful readers actively construct meaning rather than merely extracting information from texts.

Researchers commonly distinguish several types of reading:

1. **Skimming** – reading quickly to obtain the general idea of a text.
2. **Scanning** – reading for specific information.
3. **Intensive reading** – detailed examination of a text for language learning purposes.
4. **Extensive reading** – reading longer texts for overall understanding and enjoyment [2, 24].

However, effective reading instruction should develop learners' ability to employ these strategies appropriately. Additionally, contemporary educational frameworks stress critical literacy, which involves teaching students to scrutinize information and think critically about it rather than simply taking it at face value. A key underpinning of the use of the case study method as a tool for interactive reading instruction is constructivist learning theory, which asserts that learners construct knowledge through active engagement with information and social interaction [9,73].

The case study technique originated in the Harvard Law School curriculum during the late nineteenth century and later became widely used in business and management education. A case study is

generally defined as a detailed description of a real or hypothetical situation that requires analysis and decision-making [6,32].

In educational settings, case studies typically include:

- A contextualized problem or situation;
- Relevant background information;
- Multiple perspectives or stakeholders;
- Questions requiring interpretation and evaluation;
- Opportunities for discussion and problem-solving.

Case studies are primarily designed to close the gap between theory and practice by allowing learners to apply knowledge to real-world scenarios, honing their analytical skills rather than just memorizing information [2,26]. Case studies are flexible and can be applied to various levels of proficiency and learning objectives; the reading texts are the main source of information for learners to identify issues, assess evidence, and suggest solutions, and reading comprehension is combined with speaking, writing, and critical thinking.

The case study technique encourages students to read with purpose. Students read to grasp a problem, identify significant difficulties, and evaluate potential solutions, rather than simply answering comprehension questions.

Students, for example, could read a case about urban environmental pollution. While reading, they must identify the reasons of the problem, compare the perspectives of various stakeholders, and provide effective remedies. Such tasks necessitate more in-depth processing of textual material, resulting in better comprehension.

According to research, meaningful interaction with texts improves retention and understanding because students actively relate new information to past knowledge [5,84].

Critical thinking is increasingly regarded as an important educational outcome. Case-study reading activities require students to:

- Analyze information.
- Identify assumptions.
- Evaluate evidence.
- Compare alternative perspectives.
- Draw conclusions.

These activities correspond to higher levels in Bloom's taxonomy, such as analysis, evaluation, and production [1,75].

For example, after reading a case about ethical difficulties in social media use, students may debate whether a company's activities were appropriate and suggest alternative solutions. Such activities enable students to progress beyond literal knowledge and towards critical interpretation.

Case study activities are typically completed in pairs or groups. Collaborative talks enable students to negotiate meaning, share interpretations, and improve communication skills.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory states that learning takes place through connection with others. Group conversations based on reading cases allow students to clarify misconceptions and co-construct knowledge [9,45].

In addition, collaborative reading exercises boost learner confidence and reduce anxiety, especially among students who struggle to read independently.

Authentic and relevant content can boost student motivation. Case studies often address real-world challenges that learners find relevant and fascinating.

For example, students could read instances linked to:

- Environmental challenges.
- Educational reforms.
- Business ethics.
- Healthcare concerns.
- Technological advancements.

Such subjects highlight the practical importance of reading and motivate students to actively participate in class discussions. Motivation is especially crucial in foreign language learning, as continuous involvement has a major impact on accomplishment [4,72].

The implementation of case studies in reading instruction can be organized into three stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

Pre-reading Stage

At this level, teachers activate students' prior knowledge and present the case's context.

Potential activities include:

• Brainstorming.
• Predicting content based on title or image.
• Discussing similar experiences.
• Introduce key vocabulary.

Before reading a case about workplace communication issues, students may discuss frequent communication challenges in professional settings.

While-reading Stage

During reading, students concentrate on comprehending the case and locating relevant facts.

Activities can include:

• Identifying the main problem.
• Highlight supporting evidence.
• Complete graphic organizers.
• Responding to analytical questions.

Students might work solo or collectively to collect information for subsequent discussion.

Post-reading Stage

The post-reading phase focuses on interpretation and problem solving.

Possible tasks include:

• Group discussions:
• Debates:
• Role plays:
• Provide written recommendations.
• Presentations.

For example, after reading a case about a conflict between employees and management, students may take on different stakeholder roles and discuss solutions.

These activities enable students to synthesize information from the text and apply it in relevant circumstances.

The case study technique provides various instructional benefits.

1. Enhances reading comprehension through deliberate reading.
2. Improves critical and analytical thinking skills.
3. Promotes learner autonomy and active involvement.
4. Encourages collaborative learning and communication.
5. Integrates classroom learning with real-world scenarios.
6. Promotes student motivation and involvement.

Furthermore, the technique promotes integrated language acquisition because reading exercises naturally lead to speaking and writing assignments.

Despite its advantages, the case study technique can bring certain difficulties.

First, finding acceptable situations necessitates extensive teacher preparation. Cases must be relevant, linguistically appropriate, and in line with learning objectives.

Second, less proficient learners may struggle with complex texts and critical debates. Teachers may need to include more scaffolding, such as vocabulary support and guided questions.

Third, case study exercises can be time-consuming, making them challenging to execute in highly regimented curriculum.

Nevertheless, these problems can be overcome with careful planning and adaption.

Conclusion

The case study technique is an innovative way to teach reading skills in the English language classroom, as it turns reading into a process of inquiry and problem solving, which promotes deeper understanding, critical thinking, collaboration, and learner engagement, as compared to traditional reading exercises that tend to emphasize factual recall and tend to be more passive.

Case-based learning can be integrated into reading instruction and supports modern learner-centered educational philosophies and constructivist theories of learning, so while more preparation and instructional support may be needed for successful implementation, the pedagogical advantages clearly outweigh the difficulties, and English language teachers are invited to incorporate case study activities into reading lessons to promote linguistic proficiency and critical thinking skills.

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