LCaS – Language case studies

Teacher training modules on the use of case studies in language teaching at secondary and university level

A handbook

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Table of contents

Introduction

The following text summarises the outcomes of the LCaS project (Language case studies). It provides an introduction to the methodological approach used by the LCaS team, to the material developed, both for language teaching and for teacher training, and to the results of the project.

Over the past four years the LCaS team members have developed and subsequently piloted the case studies on language teaching at school and university. We have also developed teacher training modules to support our materials and we have piloted all these in various professional development workshops, and regional and central events organised by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML).

With this booklet we would like to invite language teachers and teacher trainers to use case studies in their teaching, to make their own language case studies and to integrate the case method in their teacher training.

1. The LCaS project

LCaS – Language case studies: developing teacher training modules for the use of case studies in language teaching at secondary and university level – is a project funded by the ECML in Graz within the framework of its 2nd medium-term programme, "Languages for social cohesion – Language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe". As such, it formed part of the programme's work on "Innovative approaches and new technologies".

The LCaS project demonstrates how case studies in language teaching can be used as a teaching method for upper secondary and university level language students. Using case studies is one way of introducing a task-oriented approach in language teaching and follows holistic principles in teaching. LCaS tries to familiarise language teachers with the case study method and to stimulate language teachers and teacher trainers to make their own case studies according to their teaching needs.

Scope and limitations of the project

Communicative language teaching has been a key method for many years, but classroom interaction is very often limited to that between students and teacher. The use of a problem-based learning approach and task-oriented teaching methods, such as project work, simulations and authentic case studies, have proven to be efficient means in enabling learners to improve their linguistic skills in reading comprehension, writing and speaking, and develop problem-solving strategies and teamwork. Such authentic material motivates learners, increases the learning process and has a positive impact on language competence.

Aims and objectives of the LCaS project

The aims of the LCaS project are to:

- improve language teaching at secondary and university level by introducing a task-oriented approach through the use of case studies in language teaching;
- develop teacher training modules including piloted teaching material for use in the classroom.

2. Characteristics of LCaS

Wider language teaching issues

The importance of language teaching and learning, and international exchange and co-operation has increased since the 1980s and 1990s when globalisation and communication in foreign languages became increasingly important. This has had a considerable impact on language teaching: after the domination of the grammar-and-translation method in the language classroom in Europe during most of the 20th century, "communication" and "communicative competence" have become the keywords over the last thirty years.

The grammar-translation method gave learners good theoretical knowledge about the language and provided competence in translating texts, mainly towards the mother tongue. Language classes were based on written texts, whilst oral competence was considered less important. With increasing exchanges and co-operation in the later half of the 20th century, this method was no longer suitable for the needs of learners and new techniques were applied, influenced by theories such as structuralism, transformation grammar and the communicative method.

But even the communicative method, in practice, often limited real communication in the language learning classroom to short role plays and drills. These were limited in time and were not related to other activities in the classroom, as they followed grammar and vocabulary activities or reading and listening exercises. The role plays were, in many cases, not linked to the status and experience of learners and were not very authentic. Therefore, learners were sometimes reluctant to act out a role play, or they exaggerated the dialogue so that the whole situation became hilarious. This is because some role plays require that the students take on an unrealistic or unwanted role or because they do not correspond to the learners' needs in a given situation. Typical role plays in beginners' classes are waiter-customer situations in a restaurant or a bar, a visit to a doctor or going shopping in a department store, although learners will probably never work as a waiter in the country where the target language is spoken, or as a doctor or a shop assistant. Although these present useful "drills", the context of the role play is not relevant and the results are therefore not always convincing as learners approach the tasks with limited involvement and interest.

The concept of "reality" is also important in this context: role plays simulate reality, but do not always correspond to this reality as learners take on roles that they would never play in real life. The situations that are simulated are not embedded into a specific context and quite often only one particular situation is dealt with, namely, the students listen to short dialogues on a tape, then they read the texts in their textbooks and afterwards the teacher explains the vocabulary and the grammar. At the end, the students simulate this or a similar situation. In the most exaggerated examples, a short

everyday situation, such as ordering a drink in a bar on an Italian piazza, has been transformed into a two-hour classroom situation.

Reality, however, is different. In real life no one will devote two hours to practising nothing other than ordering drinks in a restaurant. The same problem appears when course participants are asked to simulate business situations where they negotiate. On the one hand, students are unlikely to become the owners of an American company in real life; and, on the other hand, the motivation for negotiating is very different when real products are sold and the two partners have a real financial interest, than when they have been instructed to have certain attitudes.

The only aim of using role plays in this way seems to be to make the students speak, no matter what they say. Engagement and the effectiveness of the students' interaction are often neglected, as are writing tasks.

Task-oriented language teaching and learning

Task-oriented language teaching tries to compensate for these deficiencies by giving the learner tasks which are focused on language and where the learner has to act, that is, to do something. The chosen situations and scenarios should be authentic, or at least as realistic as possible, and have close links to the background knowledge and competence of the learner on a specific topic and in a specific context. This means that every participant can play his/her part in the classroom situation and that the course is based on his/her personal knowledge and interests. The teaching situation takes into consideration the learners' needs. Furthermore, the learner does not have to hide his/her true personality behind a fictitious personality. In this context, the students are more motivated to solve the tasks as they are personally addressed. In contrast to the role plays described above, the tasks are taken from the daily lives of learners. The students handle different tasks in the foreign language and improve their language competence in an indirect way, almost as a side effect. Language acquisition becomes more efficient, as the students complete the tasks and do not work as half-heartedly as is often the case when a shallow approach is taken to the linguistic scenario.

In task-oriented approaches the "role play" element is integrated into a larger task. It is not used as an aim in itself, but as a means of serving more global tasks.

Problem-based learning

Since it was first implemented more than thirty years ago at the medical school at McMaster University in Canada, problem-based learning (PBL) has become an

increasingly popular approach in education. The sciences in general have begun to take it up and, more slowly, the humanities.

By introducing the PBL model into teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP),[1] a shift can be made from the text-based approach for developing the traditional four language skills to a new way of teaching foreign languages. This model is especially appropriate for combining professional knowledge with the knowledge of a foreign language and thus for teaching languages across the curriculum. This approach also offers an opportunity for co-operation between the language teacher and the subject specialists, and thus for teaching languages for specific purposes across the curriculum. The problem can take many forms – from a simple illustration or a single research question to a more elaborate description given in the text of a case study scenario. A small, self-directed group of students (teams of three to five students) explore the problem; the students identify what they already know and what they need to learn, then they search for knowledge in a systematic way using modern technology. In the last step the teams integrate their ideas and present a possible solution to the problem in their written reports and oral presentations.[2]

Case studies that are used as a driving force for the PBL learning process, however, are made more relevant if they are designed together with a subject specialist, since language teachers of tertiary-level students cannot cope alone with the complexity of the various disciplines. A subject specialist not only acts as an adviser as to the content, but can also contribute to the design of the case study together with the language teacher. The roles of the subject specialist in this language learning process thus vary from primary expert on the content and purveyor of information, to case study co-designer. At the initial stage of the PBL process the subject specialist can be a facilitator, tutor or coach. Later, he/she acts as a provider of literature during the PBL process, and finally becomes the co-assessor of the two end products, namely, the written reports and group oral presentations. The role of the language teacher, on the other hand, is to further develop traditional language competencies and to help students develop a whole range of transferable skills for the working environment, leading to successful lifelong learning.

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1 For further information on PBL in language teaching, see the TENTEC project, a three-year EU-funded LEONARDO project (2000-03), co-funded by the British Council: www.pedc.se/tentec.

2 For further information on the different phases of PBL and the seven PBL steps see the TENTEC project: www.pedc.se/tentec. See also Jamie McKenzie's "Research cycle" (1993) http://questioning.org/Q6/research.html, which includes the five stages of "questioning and planning", "gathering new information", "sorting and sifting information, "synthesising and evaluating", and "reporting".

Global simulations, project work, case studies and Webquests

Different methods can be used in task-oriented language teaching and learning, depending on the aims and opportunities of the teaching and learning situation. The teacher can use global simulations based on the learners' knowledge and competences and stimulate their creativity. There is also project work, such as researching and developing a product that would be of use to themselves or to future groups of learners. And there are case studies that ask the students to analyse an authentic problem that is linked to their field of study, interest or work. Finally, there are Webquests, which make use of the Internet to solve a problem.

It is very important to be able to distinguish case study work, and particularly problem-based case studies, from a number of other methods, which are discussed below. These methods may form part of the whole case study work but do not satisfy the requirement that there be an authentic issue that will have a number of solutions.

Global simulations

When using global simulations in the classroom, the teacher invites learners to create a fictitious world, that is, a village, a street, an island, a residential house, a company or a farm, and to fill it with life by inventing the people living and interacting within this framework. Instead of reading the stories of "Susan and Paul" in a textbook, learners invent the characters of their class themselves and have to invent, write and act scenarios, dialogues and stories that they believe could happen, instead of simply reading them or listening to them. Although the whole situation is fictitious, it becomes more and more real to learners. When using a global simulation in teaching, according to Yaiche the "illusion du reel" ("illusion of the real"), which exists when using role plays in language teaching, is substituted by the "réalité de l'illusion" ("the reality of illusion") (Yaiche, 1996: 13).[3]

When using a global simulation in class, the teacher provides a framework and basic guidelines for the tasks to be carried out. He/she fixes the overall setting, a residential house, a street, a village, etc., and specific key points such as the number of inhabitants, percentage of males and females, number of children and adults, and nationalities. The course participants then have to create the fictitious world: invent names, describe personalities and characters. They have to fill the framework given by the teacher with

3 "Comme Alan Maley, du British Council, qui s'intéresse, lui, à l'utilisation du *role-playing* dans l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère, il [Debyser] préfère alors répondre à 'l'illusion du réel' par 'la réalité de l'illusion' et recourir à la fiction, plus réelle en fin de compte que les caricatures réductionnistes, voire hyper-réalistes des méthodes. Il est vrai que, depuis longtemps, les didactiques des langues sont confrontées au problème du réel qu'elles essaient d'intégrer dans le monde clos de la classe, sans pour autant jamais recourir aux techniques de la simulation" (Yaiche, 1996: 13).

life. In the next step the teacher will give out tasks, that is, learners have to do activities that take place in this framework. During the course, learners will collect their language products in the form of dialogues and letters and can compile these into a brochure, booklet or a website, which will survive after the end of the course.

In this fictitious world everything will stay fictitious, but greater authenticity is achieved than in a simple role play as this "new world" is embedded into a larger environment. In this way the classroom situation moves away from the "illusion of reality" towards the "reality of illusion".

Global simulations can be very easily combined with traditional teaching methods and traditional teaching material; that is, a specific grammar phenomenon can be introduced and explained as usual, traditional grammar exercises can be given, and in another step the grammar phenomenon can be applied in a specific situation within the global simulation framework by asking learners to use the grammar phenomenon in a dialogue they have to invent.

When using global simulation, the teaching starts with tasks and is based on the learners' imagination and creativity, whereas existing texts are only used occasionally as models or reference material. The text is the result or the product of the course.

Project work

In typical project work in a language class, the students are given a specific project as a task. There can be a number of oral and written outcomes for this project. For example, they may be invited to develop a brochure, a poster or a website on a specific topic, and to collect information on a specific aspect. The final product will be the brochure, which is of real use to the group of learners and to other groups of learners. As in global simulations, learners have to write something and have to prepare a final product, but unlike global simulations the final product is predictable and becomes the main target of the activity, which takes place in the context of a language course. The task has therefore a higher degree of authenticity and is much more realistic than a global simulation. In a global simulation, on the other hand, the invented world has no real use and will remain a fictitious world, that is, the final product is of no concrete use, and thus the teaching situation will remain a language classroom in the first place and the product a side effect.

When using project work in language teaching, there is a high risk that learners will concentrate first of all on the product and will not pay enough attention to the language aspect. In many cases, learners will prepare nice brochures with poor language, as they forget that the main aim is to improve their language skills. In such a teaching and learning situation, linguistic aspects are not always covered with the necessary regularity and intensity.

Case studies

In global simulations and project work, the main emphasis is on the production of an oral and a written text. In contrast, case studies are firmly based on the analysis and comprehension of written, and in some cases oral, material. Learners are confronted with a considerable amount of text, which they have to analyse in order to understand a given problem and to find information about the different aspects of the case. When working on a case study, learners get authentic, or "nearly authentic", that is, lightly edited, material on a given situation and have to solve a problem by completing tasks, researching and investigating. The degree of authenticity of the tasks can be situated somewhere between global simulations, which have a strong fictitious element, and project work, which is very real as far as the task and the involvement of the learners is concerned.

The use of case studies helps learners to develop research skills, which they will almost certainly need in their future professional life. The receptive nature of the task is much stronger than with the two other methods mentioned before. In addition, case studies can require less class time for the teacher and the learner than project work or global simulations, and can be easily integrated into an existing syllabus.

When working on a case study, students are asked to analyse the material (receptive element) and then develop a solution to the problem, which they will have to present orally and in writing (productive element). Reading is an integral part of the activity and learners are trained in effective reading comprehension, for example, skimming and scanning, or "diagonal reading", as they have to look for relevant information, using a fairly large amount of text. The learner will not search the text for unknown words as he/she very often does when reading shorter texts in language classes, but will analyse the content of the text in order to be able to discuss the case in the group and to present his/her proposals and recommendations to the whole class. With global simulations and project work, learners are given a productive task ("develop …", "prepare a dialogue …"). The receptive part is also included as learners have to look for models or search for information they need, but it is less explicit and less developed.

Webquests

A Webquest[4] is a tool that can be integrated in all three methods mentioned above: when using Webquests learners have to search on the Internet for information they need to fulfil the task. Webquest activities use a questionnaire to guide the learner in his/her search on the Internet. These search activities can be limited to a given text

4 For further information on webquests, see: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/materials.htm. Information on language webquests is available at: www.ecml.at/mtp2/LQuest/html/LQUEST_E_pdesc.htm and www.lquest.net.

corpus or can refer to any text on the Internet by using, for example, keywords. Language Webquests normally include more merely linguistic activities (for example, vocabulary and grammar exercises) than the three methods mentioned above, which concentrate on realistic tasks and use language as a vehicle and not as an aim in itself. Webquests can be used as a tool in global simulations, project work and case studies in order to introduce the activity or offer more guidance to learners prior to the simulation/project/case study activity itself.

When Webquest activities are based on a specific problem and when they include a large number of Internet search tasks, they are very close to case studies, either to closed case studies (if limited to a specific text corpus) or to open case studies (if it is an open Internet search).[5]

Characteristic elements of case studies

Definition

Working on a case study means analysing a problem/a dilemma in a given situation to which no single solution exists.

Kaiser (1983: 20) defines a case study as follows:

> "Darstellung einer konkreten Situation aus der betrieblichen Praxis oder dem Alltagsleben, die anhand bestimmter Tatsachen, Ansichten und Meinungen dargestellt wird, auf deren Grundlagen eine Entscheidung getroffen werden muss."

English translation:

> "Presentation of a concrete situation taken from professional or everyday life, which is displayed through specific facts, attitudes and opinions, on the basis of which a decision has to be taken."

Characteristics

Case studies use authentic material taken from print media. Sometimes audio and video material is integrated into the language case study, particularly when using Web-based case studies. They are based on a controversial or stimulating problem and show a certain degree of complexity. They include a relatively large amount of material.

5 See below for further information on closed and open case studies.

How do case studies improve language competence?

The LCaS approach follows a holistic approach in language teaching and learning: language skills are not trained separately since a number of other techniques are needed to complete LCaS work:

- as far as speaking is concerned, LCaS improves learners' skills through discussing and presenting their opinions and findings;
- learners have to study texts and will become more confident in reading them in a foreign language for specific purposes, namely, finding specific information on a given topic;
- learners are normally asked to present the results of a case study in written form, for example, by writing a report, preparing a brochure, etc. They may also prepare other documents, questionnaires and charts as part of their examination of the problem. LCaS provides an excellent opportunity to practise writing and learn new registers and formats;
- listening comprehension is developed by inviting learners to listen to each other when discussing their results, that is, they have to listen carefully to the presentations and the arguments of the other groups in order to reach compromise agreements or move forward. When audio and/or video material is integrated into the case study, listening activities become more authentic and successful and can provide opportunities for quite complex practice.

Metalinguistic skills

Case studies also stimulate team work, problem-solving skills, presentation skills, discussion skills, negotiation skills, competence in making compromises, intercultural competence and study skills. But most of all, case studies are extremely motivating: learners spend more time on reading texts in a foreign language, they feel a real need to express themselves using the target language and put more effort into preparing their presentations. The learning process is therefore intensified and becomes more successful, leading to better linguistic results in situations of authentic communication.

Differences between LCaS and case studies in other disciplines

LCaS and case studies in other disciplines are used in two different ways: in other disciplines the topic and the content of the case studies are directly related to aspects of the syllabus or subject taught or assessed; the content is the key element of the case study, and correctness and details are emphasised. When using LCaS, content is a tool and the language becomes the objective of the activity – at least in the teacher's

perspective; therefore, content is normally less detailed and results are assessed mainly for their linguistic competence.

LCaS is of general interest. At higher language levels, case studies may cover LSP topics such as natural sciences, medicine, law, business and economics.

Among subject-specific case studies, business studies cases are the most well developed for language and can often be adapted. Other case studies are often not suitable for language teaching purposes or need major changes because the degree of background knowledge required is too high or the problem is too narrow and detailed to be accessible by non-specialist students. Conversely, where too simple an approach has been taken, the content of subject-specific case studies can be enriched for intellectual stimulus and more vocational input, and the complexity of the task can be adjusted to allow for students' prior knowledge in the subject area and linguistic aims.

Types of LCaS

Differences in perspective

Several categories can be used to distinguish different types of case studies. They can be differentiated according to perspective, structure and media.

We can distinguish between retrospective and decision-making case studies (Cain and Heath, 2004: 5-6) depending on whether we are dealing with a case study in the past, for which a solution has already been developed, or a case study in the present, where a solution still has to be found. When using retrospective case studies, learners analyse a problem in the past and the decision that was taken at the time. They will evaluate that decision to see whether a "better" solution to the problem can be found. They can also evaluate the developments that took place after the decision was taken. A second way to use retrospective case studies is to divide the activity into two parts: first, only the problem is given to learners and they are invited to develop a solution; and, second, they are given information on the decision that was actually taken, against which they can then compare their own solution.

Decision-making case studies are used more frequently in teaching, as a current issue stimulates motivation and the involvement of learners: they get the feeling that their analysis is relevant to current issues.

Differences in structure

When looking at the structure of a case study we can also distinguish between open and closed case studies – a distinction first made by Mascolini and Freeman in 1982 (Almagro Esteban and Pérez Cañado, 2004: 139). When using closed case studies all

the necessary information is provided by teachers, and learners have the same information at hand when trying to solve the problem. Closed case studies can be used as a classroom activity by distributing photocopies of the case in class or providing Internet materials.

Open case studies do not contain all the information that learners will need but include further search activities. When designed as Internet-based case studies, these search activities can take the form of general search tasks or of links to external websites containing relevant background information. When using open case studies, learners' search skills are also being tested and thus the solutions to problems may vary more than when using closed case studies as learners demonstrate their investigative skills.

Internet-based case studies will normally be a mixed type, somewhere between an open and a closed case study, depending on the amount of information that is initially given to learners and on the number of search activities.

Differences in media

Depending on whether Internet or paper-based media are chosen by the teacher, there will be different ways of using a case study in class. The choice of the medium probably has more ramifications in language teaching than in other academic disciplines.

Paper-based case studies can sometimes be used in class within a specific time limit. This allows the teacher to train learners in spontaneous oral production and oral interaction as students will not have the time to prepare their oral presentations in detail. Furthermore, learners are trained to deal with a large amount of text and to find relevant information in a large database within a limited time frame – a task many learners are not familiar with when working on texts in a foreign language. Alternatively, the paper-based cases can be distributed to groups who will work over a longer period of time to develop other skills.

When using Internet-based case studies, reading material is normally presented with more structure, helping learners to find their way through the material. Furthermore, an Internet presentation facilitates the use of pictures, charts and graphs, and improves the readability of documents. When learners are required to work through the material outside the classroom they are able to go through the material in more detail, according to their own ability. If they feel insecure about their language competence they will read the texts more closely, will spend more time on vocabulary activities and will prepare their oral presentation more accurately. Each participant and each subgroup can decide independently on how intensively they work on the case study, which will then have an influence on the quality of their work, both from a content and a language point of view.

The use of Internet-based case studies allows the teacher to include listening texts in the case study, an activity which would require the use of a tape or video recorder in a

traditional paper-based teaching situation where independent listening is much more complicated. The virtual learning environment (VLE) chosen by the case designer structures the case study and renders it more interesting and user-friendly.

Blended learning, that is the alternating use of Internet-based and paper-based case studies, with homework activities in one situation and in-class activities in the other, combined with "traditional" language learning activities, gives the teacher a chance to alternately work with the students in well-prepared and in spontaneous oral production, as in one case the learners will have enough time to prepare their arguments or discussions in detail, and in the other will have to present spontaneously with hardly any preparation. In this way, the teacher can train the learners systematically to improve their skills in spontaneous oral production and oral interaction.

The flexible structure of case studies and the diversity of their design and application can appear unfocused to the uninitiated but with a growing familiarity, gained through reading and experimentation, teachers can acquire a very powerful tool, which they can adapt to their situation and for their learner groups. Case studies also attract those teachers who enjoy selecting and designing their own materials but who welcome a strong framework. This framework can be adjusted to fulfil the demands of course programmes for learning products, learning outcomes, learner autonomy, evaluation and assessment information.

Examples of LCaS

English LCaS

"Cabo Verde"

Language: English (general English classes or business English classes)

CEFR level: B, C

There will be a meeting on the Island of Sal, one of the Cabo Verde islands, just off the West African coast, at which the future of tourism will be discussed. The inhabitants of these islands are faced with a number of socio-historic, economic, ecological and infrastructure problems and tourism is seen as an important way of raising the standard of living and economic life in general.

Tasks

Task 1: the learners work for an international tour operator. They are asked to research the situation on the islands to see if it is a suitable and profitable destination for tours. They present their ideas at the meeting and in report form.

Task 2: the learners are volunteers who are carrying out development work on the islands. They plan to attend the meeting and present information and a report on their research, which explains how appropriate and sustainable tourism could be promoted.

"Animal rights – A moral dilemma"

Language: English

CEFR level: B, C

This case study addresses the animal-rights view that rejects the concept that animals are merely capital goods or property for the benefit of humans. Students are invited to explore the issue and find out whether there are any alternative approaches to the existing exploitation of animals and their suffering. The students are divided into four teams to find out if striving for the rights of animals is striving for a more egalitarian and better world. Team 1 tries to establish if animal research is justified; Team 2 explores how animals are transported; Team 3 tackles the problem of meat in our diet and tries to find out if it is essential or optional; and Team 4 explores animal welfare in poultry production.

Tasks

Task 1: students are asked to search for information from various sources, work individually and in a team, understand and apply their newly gained knowledge, write the group written reports and give group oral presentations.

Task 2: through using peer and self-assessment rating scales students reflect upon their achievements and are involved in the assessment procedure for formative purposes (getting and giving feedback).

"Are you worth it?"

Language: English (general English classes or ESP science classes)

CEFR level: B, C

A beauty products business based on natural ingredients is taken over by another business which is at the forefront of research and development into chemical ingredients. More girls and women buy products, but do they know enough about what is in them?

Tasks

Task 1: learners investigate the advertising and marketing behaviour of the companies and the use of chemicals in cosmetics and toiletries. They try to resolve the problem of lack of knowledge among girls and decide whether science examinations matter.

Task 2: learners investigate the merger between The Body Shop and L'Oreal and evaluate the problems this merger presents.

French LCaS

"Hécatombe dans l'Hexagone: étude de cas sur l'été meurtrier 2003 en France"

Language: French (general French classes or legal French classes – depending on task)

CEFR level: B, C (depending on task)

This case study sets out the problems encountered in the summer of 2003 during the heatwave in France and other European countries. It presents the case of a lady who lived in a home for elderly people and who died during the heatwave. When returning from their holidays, her children – both working in the medical sector – learnt about the death of their mother and went to see the body before the funeral. As they discovered signs of neglect they went to court against the administration of the home for elderly people.

Tasks

Task 1: learners are asked to develop an emergency plan for similar heatwave situations in the future in order to avoid similar problems (general French class).

Task 2: learners are invited to analyse the legal situation of the case and to take a decision (legal French class).

"Pas de retraite pour le champagne"

Language: French (general French classes – levels A and B; or Business French classes – levels B and C)

CEFR level: A, B, C (depending on task)

In this case study, learners are invited to analyse the situation of a champagne company whose owner, approaching the age of retirement, wants to pass on his company. He had planned to pass it on to his son, but there are personal problems between him and his daughter-in-law which led to his son setting up his own company and not working with his father any more. The two daughters of the owner work in different sectors. Shall he pass on the company to his children, to a person from the village or the region, or sell it to one of the big champagne companies?

Tasks

Level A task: learners are invited to summarise the problem (oral activity) and to prepare a flyer for the company (written work).

Level B and level C task: learners are asked to analyse the financial situation of the company, to make SWOT[6] analysis, to develop a proposal to the problem and to present it in oral and in writing.

"L'ours brun dans les Pyrénées"

Language: French (general French classes)

CEFR level: B, C (depending on task)

This case study deals with the potential loss of biodiversity that would be caused by the extinction of bears in the Pyrenees as the last indigenous female bear was killed by hunters. The attempt of the French Government to reintroduce bears by importing bears from the Slovenian Alps has caused considerable trouble among the population: while ecologists and scientists as well as the majority of the French population are in favour of the reintroduction of bears, the inhabitants of the zones consider them a real danger to their lives, and the lives of their children and their animals.

Tasks

Learners are divided among different roles and have to defend their position as government representatives (supporting biodiversity, that is, wishing to reintroduce bears in the area), inhabitants of the area (fighting against the reintroduction of bears) or ecologists (fighting for the reintroduction of bears in the Pyrenees). They hold a meeting of all three groups and present a final report on the different positions.

German LCaS

"Altersheim Deutschland: Herausforderung oder Chance?"

Language: German (general German classes, possibly business German, depending on task)

CEFR level: B1-C1

6 SWOT analysis is an approach used to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved in a project or in a business context.

In this case study, students focus on the ageing of European and particularly German society. They collect information about the causes of this problem (for example, increasing life expectancy, improvement of medical care, migration, lower birth rates) and discuss the implicit challenges of this situation, as well as the opportunities it creates for more involvement of the older generation in the life of the community. For these tasks they are provided with relevant information sources. After this reception-oriented phase, students are invited to choose between formulating a new business idea for the elderly population (for example, a supermarket for the elderly) or developing a joint strategy to deal with specific problems of a community, such as transportation to suit the elderly, new housing solutions, strategies for new leisure needs, etc.). Students are required to discuss and present their ideas orally and then to produce a written report.

Tasks

Task 1: learners develop a new business idea to solve a particular challenge emerging in an ageing society. They then present it and write a report. According to course focus and language level, students can extend the plan to include a prospective financial report.

Task 2: learners create a combined strategy for a small town to cope with authentic challenges imposed by the ageing society: housing, transportation, intergenerational support, etc. They present their idea and then deliver a report.

"Sachsen: Was tun nach dem Uranabbau?"

Language: German

CEFR level: B2-C1

The topic for this case study is the end of uranium mining after German reunification. German-Soviet firms, like Wismut, are investing in areas such as Saxony and Thuringia, in order to stop contamination of the land, to make it more suitable for people to live and others to visit.

However, the end of uranium mining also brought new problems for the areas, in particular economic consequences of the loss of some of the biggest employers in the areas.

Students get information about the process of uranium mining and also general knowledge about these German regions. The first outcome is then a brief glossary of related terms. In a second step, students are invited to investigate the various aspects of the problem: causes and purposes of uranium mining, as well as its consequences for human health, for the environment and for the economic sustainability of a community, particularly after the mines have been closed. The result of this is a mind-map with interrelated information on this subject. Finally, students choose from this mind map one key aspect pertaining to this generic problem (for example, consequences for the

environment) and are invited to develop a strategic solution to overcome this particular problem. The class thus turns into a market of ideas for the rehabilitation of the areas where uranium is no longer extracted.

Tasks

The final product of this case study is a poster explaining the solution students propose in small groups for one specific problem within the more general situation of the end of uranium mining in the former East Germany. They are invited to present this idea orally in an "idea fair", with the support of the poster they developed.

To perform this task, there are preliminary tasks in the previous steps, with concrete outcomes: collecting general information and compiling it in a subject-specific glossary, as well as formulating the problem in all its specific aspects to produce a mind-map.

"Sterbehilfe in Europa"

Language: German (general German classes)

CEFR level: B, C (depending on task)

The case study deals with the legalisation of euthanasia in Europe. Learners are invited to learn about the debate in Europe and are asked to analyse the situation of euthanasia and medically assisted suicide. After having done some research on the topic, they will present their ideas.

Tasks

Task 1: learners are members of an ethics commission and have been invited to analyse the current situation and differences concerning euthanasia in European countries. In addition they have to produce a report on current legislation in Europe and draft a proposal for a future arrangement regarding the legal situation of euthanasia. In the subsequent press conference they will have to answer questions by journalists.

Task 2: learners work as journalists and have heard about a forthcoming press conference by the ethics commission. They try to familiarise themselves with euthanasia by investigating the topic in detail. They want to be well prepared in order to be able to ask suitable questions during the press conference as they wish to arouse public interest. In addition, they are invited to analyse the legal situation and cases of euthanasia in Europe and throughout the world. Furthermore, they are asked to produce a report for a specific newspaper including all the facts that they have learned from their research.

Italian LCaS

"L'isola di Lampedusa sotto l'invasione dei clandestini"

Language: Italian (general Italian classes)

CEFR level: B, C

This case study looks into the problem caused by the large number of illegal immigrants arriving on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa. These immigrants come from North Africa and are seeking a better life in Europe. The magnitude of arrivals, however, causes serious problems on the island, as the local and regional authorities are unable to manage the large numbers of immigrants on such a small island, or to stop these people from coming to Europe.

Tasks

Learners are invited to analyse the problem and to develop an action plan in order to cope with the large number of immigrants and to reduce it in the future. For this purpose, learners are split into three groups: (a) the inhabitants of Lampedusa, who are tired of the problems created by illegal immigration from North Africa; (b) representatives of the region of Sicily and of the Italian Government, who want to stop illegal immigration, but who also need to help those who have already reached Sicilian territory and who have to take into consideration the various legal and humanitarian aspects of the problem; and (c) representatives of a humanitarian action group who try to help the people arriving from Africa and to defend their legal rights.

"Quale futuro per Rimini? Verso un turismo sostenibile"

Language: Italian (general Italian classes)

CEFR level: B, C

Rimini no longer wants to be considered as a synonym for mass tourism, and tries to develop and promote high quality tourism. With the help of local officials and inhabitants of Rimini, local enterprises in the tourism sector try to develop ideas for sustainable tourism in Rimini and its surrounding area in order to attract a larger number of well-heeled tourists.

Tasks

Learners make a SWOT analysis of the tourism sector in Rimini. What are the opportunities and what are the threats for tourism in Rimini? How can the city and its surrounding area be made more attractive, particularly for well-heeled tourists? How can the problems of mass tourism be reduced? How can the mistakes of the past be

corrected? Learners will develop an action plan for sustainable tourism in Rimini, after having analysed the situation and the suggestions made by the parties involved.

"Made in Italia? – Davvero?"

Language: Italian (general Italian or business Italian classes)

CEFR level: B, C

"Made in Italy" is a label of great acclaim used by the clothing and shoe industry. Larger and successful enterprises in this sector use subcontractors in order to be able to produce large quantities and to cut costs. But where do the subcontractors produce the products? In Italy, in eastern Europe or in East Asia? And even if the subcontractor is an Italian company, he might still use his own subcontractor in order to cut costs; and this company might produce outside Italy. Has "Made in Italy" lost its original meaning? How can we guarantee that only products faithful to the label's meaning are allowed to use it?

Tasks

Learners are split into different groups representing the parties involved: producers, subcontractors, government officials and consumer associations. They analyse the problem and develop a set of criteria that are required before obtaining permission to use the label "Made in Italy", in order to save the reputation of the label and the Italian clothing industry in general. The different groups have to come to an agreement and present their action plan and set of criteria, while taking into consideration the various interests of the individual actors.

3. Using LCaS

Language case studies do not constitute a language course on their own, but may be integrated into a language course. They serve as a tool to help learners use the language in a nearly authentic situation. These will be invited to express their opinions on a specific topic to which no single solution exists. In a language course one single LCaS may be used or a smaller number of LCaS – namely, three to four – depending on the objectives of the course. LCaS can be used, for example, in order to train reading and research skills, group work, presentation skills, competence in speaking and/or in writing, and also to revise LSP vocabulary and issues.

Steps in delivering a case study

Steps

The steps in delivering a case study are presented in a short video clip on the LCaS CD-Rom attached. The video clip shows how the LCaS case studies are used in a classroom situation by offering examples from the piloting of the cases. The clip presents the following 12 stages in using LCaS in class:

1. Presenting the LCaS to the learners
    a. Outlining the problem
    b. Allocating the roles
    c. Checking for understanding
2. Dividing the learners into small groups
    a. Reading the LCaS
    b. Understanding the scenario
3. Discussing the issue with the learners
    a. Understanding the problems
    b. Resolving difficulties
4. Research
    a. Understanding LCaS navigation
    b. Guided researches
    c. Teacher facilitation

5. Evaluating the findings
    a. Clarifying the information
    b. Weighing up the arguments
6. Preparing to present the solutions
    a. Drafting the main points
    b. Checking the timing
    c. Checking meaning and spelling
    d. Providing solutions
7. Group presentation: working from notes
    a. The group engages with the audience
    b. Making the key points
    c. Improvising
    d. Maintaining eye contact
    e. Passing on to the next speaker
8. Group presentation: using visual aids
    a. Using OHPs
    b. The strength of MS PowerPoint
    c. Answering questions
9. Plenary: groups search for a solution to the LCaS
    a. Taking turns
    b. Developing tolerance
    c. Exchanging ideas
    d. Exploring compromise
10. Giving and receiving feedback
    a. Listening to others
    b. Self-assessment
    c. Being positive
11. Self and peer assessment: watching the recordings
    a. Finding areas for improvement
    b. Looking at body language in detail

12. Reflections on LCaS work
    a. What went well
    b. What presented difficulties
    c. Ideas for the future
    d. What was learned

Of course, these stages are examples and depending on the objectives of the course and the level of competences – both linguistic and metalinguistic – certain aspects may need more attention than others in each individual group.

When using a case study in class the teacher has to pay particular attention to:

- time management (for example, how to include the case studies in a semester/weekly programme; how to plan a syllabus);
- lesson planning (for example, how to include case study work in the hourly allocation for lessons; how to present a varied set of activities; how to divide work between class work and homework; how to allow for the unexpected);
- explaining a task to students (for example, how to check for understanding; how to use clear terms and language; how to answer questions; how to elicit questions);
- organising pair work (for example, understanding class dynamics; understanding complementary skills; getting response; how not to dominate);
- organising groups (for example, understanding the benefits of group work, exploiting groups, making productive grouping, learning to stand back, eliciting feedback, understanding noise);
- preparing students to present (for example, providing examples, providing language, impromptu presentations, short presentations, changing text to spoken language, explaining psychology);
- planning and filming presentations (for example, overcoming technophobia, using the technology, planning technical details, timing a sequence of presentations, using film tips);
- organising writing classes (for example, providing models to copy, providing short response tasks, organising ideas, teaching register, combining reading and writing).

The case study approach to using case studies

A series of narratives on the experience of teachers who created and used case studies in class are available on the attached CD-Rom. The teachers present the problems they encountered in using case studies and explain how they dealt with them. These

narratives illustrate a number of unexpected situations that come up in class and help the reader to avoid similar problems when using LCaS. They can also be used for teacher training purposes when introducing teachers to the method.

Integrating LCaS into language courses

Case studies can be used in a language course to break the usual routine, or on a more regular basis in order to train particular skills. If the teacher decided to use a case study at a certain point in his/her class, this requires preparation on his/her part and a well-founded preparation of learners by training them in presentation skills and offering tools for successful academic writing.

Paper-based case studies have a particular attraction for class situations where access to ICT is limited or non-existent, and can be used to train all the skills especially spontaneous discussions and presentations. Internet-based case studies are obviously more attractive where further research on a topic would be useful and where there is a need for graphics and photos. A combination of both during a language programme answers the individual needs of different learner types and adds to a language class that focuses on oral communication.

An Internet-based case study introduces a number of activities inside and outside the class in blended learning: if it is appropriate, students can contact each other by email or if the Internet platform allows, they can post their questions to the teacher and among groups on a discussion board.

By combining case study work with a "global simulation" and with a series of thematically related listening activities and grammar exercises, all four skills as well as grammar and vocabulary can be effectively trained, for example, in a refresher course, corresponding to the holistic principle in language teaching. As part of the project, similar courses based on LCaS material at CEFR levels B2 and C1 were successfully piloted with university students both in intensive courses and semester courses in different parts of Europe. By the end of the course, students showed encouragingly positive results in oral competence and gave very positive feedback on the structure, the methodology and the materials used in the course.

Working with computer-based material

Most language courses are still based on paper teaching materials, that is, coursebooks, photocopied exercises, texts from newspapers and magazines, etc.; on audio tapes or CDs, for example, exercises from coursebooks, radio recordings; and on video cassettes, for example, films, TV recordings. When working with computer-based material both the teacher and the learners can use more resources than usual: they have access to a wider range of reading and audio material. When the material is available, online research activities can be integrated into the language activity, either as an optional facility or as an integral part of the exercise. In this case, learners have the full

range of knowledge and reference sources at their disposal, which makes their results far less predictable. This means that the teacher accepts that the learners might have found more detailed information on the problem than himself/herself. For this reason, the teacher should be prepared for unplanned or unexpected solutions to the problem in question and make it clear that all relevant material will be accepted. It is also important to warn the students against becoming too detailed in their findings, relying too heavily on one source or sources, or failing to question the objectivity of the sites they have accessed. These evaluative search skills can also have useful cultural lessons for the students as they struggle to decide who or what they should believe in the target language and culture.

Assessment

Innovative assessment has to be used in order to fully assess LCaS work. However:

> "It is always somewhat easier to say what innovative assessment is not, than to attempt to say what it actually is; it's not the three hour, unseen, anxiety-provoking exam, marked by a lecturer whose comments the student never sees. What, then, is it? … It is a term we use which encompasses a whole range of different techniques and methods, not all of which are new inventions. What unites them is a common goal: to improve the quality of student learning." (Mohl et al., 1996)

> "It is not the actual methods or tools of assessing which we believe should be changed in many cases, rather the underlying philosophy and the aims of their use and application." (Harris and Bell, 1990: 97)

Innovative assessment is "the redistribution of educational power" (Heron, 1981), "something which is 'done to' learners but also 'done with' and 'done by' learners" (Harris and Bell, 1990), "it is about getting to know students and the quality of their learning" (Rowntree, 1977).

In any PBL teaching situation the assessment dilemmas are:

- which results of the learning process can be expressed in mathematical figures (calculated) and what can only be monitored and guided (judged) by teacher(s) and by students themselves (during or after the process)?
- who should be involved in the assessment procedure?
- how not to overload assessment activities?
- which tools should be provided?

The assessment framework used distinguishes between:

- a process strand (students) for formative purposes: at the end of the activity a process evaluation will take place and the assessment will be done by the group members;
- a product strand (teachers and students) for summative purposes: both teachers and learners will assess the written report (or other written product) and the oral presentations using presentation schedules (teachers' assessment schedules, self/peer checklists).

The role of the teacher is to give feedback both on oral production and written products. In order to give useful feedback on the presentations, the teacher will:

- take useful notes;
- listen carefully to the students;
- discuss their performance positively; and finally
- assess and grade their presentations.

In this context the criteria for assessment and grading are very important and must be explained clearly to learners before they give their presentations. In order to assess the written work done by learners, the teacher must:

- understand the difference between close marking and impression marking;
- decide on the assessment criteria;
- give positive feedback; and
- understand different types of error.

The following assessment tools, available on the LCaS CD-Rom, can be used in a language class when using language case studies:

- written report assessment schedule;
- presentation assessment schedule;
- peer assessment of presentation;
- presentation peer check;
- presentation self-check.

In order to arrive at a final grade, the language teacher can use more modern forms of grading, for example integrating peer assessment and self-assessment, where the final grade takes into account the self-assessment grade, the group grade for writing and the oral presentation, and the teacher's grade.

Brown, Rust and Gibbs (1994: 4) argue that there are many good reasons why students should be involved in the assessment of their own and each other's work and why assessment power should be redistributed. They say:

- it encourages a sense of ownership of the process, so students are committed to the outcomes […];
- it develops a whole range of transferable skills […] and facilitates lifelong learning;
- it helps students to become more autonomous learners, better able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their own work; […]
- it encourages deep rather than surface learning […].

The roles of language teachers and students

Compared to traditional classroom settings, teachers and learners have different roles in an LCaS teaching situation.

The new roles of teachers and students

The LCaS approach integrates both blended learning and autonomous learning.

The blend consists of:

- instructor-led training (ILT), which takes place in the class and where the teacher provides:
  - build-up language tasks;
  - group discussions;
  - vocabulary input;
  - tutorial help;
  - presentation and report evaluation.
- the virtual learning environment, that is, case studies on the website: the learning materials, tasks and tutorial help are accessed via the project website. Students can access the site outside of class time and from any location.

Autonomous learning also takes place as the students fulfil a number of the criteria for autonomous learning. The learners work inside and outside the class without continuous guidance. When using the VLE, students:

- make choices about their learning modes and set the extent of their own learning aims;
- plan their own work;
- decide when to work alone or collaborate with others;
- identify problems and propose solutions;
- think creatively;
- reflect on their own performance and that of others.

By using the case studies, all these aspects were experienced within a very short space of time, creating an authentic academic or work environment. Compared to traditional classroom situations, the relationship between teacher and learner has changed: by introducing blended learning, the teacher can provide a variety of information-bearing stimulants to suit different learning styles; and using the Web and a VLE, the teacher can present unlimited information for learners. Thus, the teacher can gradually withdraw the amount of guidance and support provided and build the confidence of learners to explore. This relationship more closely resembles that of the academic and work environments.

In such an autonomous learning situation the learners can discover their own limits and compare these with others. They can more easily reflect on areas of language learning where they have strengths and weaknesses. The student feedback in the LCaS piloting has shown that, as a result of completing the case study, students felt they learned more about team work, communication and content information than about computer skills. Thus, the computer is simply a means to an end, not an end in itself.

From a professional perspective, the new role of language teachers shows:

- more emphasis on the need not just to deliver conventional courses but to be able to integrate ICT materials into learning;
- more emphasis on the ability to design blended learning courses;
- more flexibility in devising and applying assessment processes and procedures.

From the students' perspective, language teachers also have a new role, as students have higher expectations of the type of information and practice sources available in centres, which include Web access, VLE access, DVDs, satellite TV, etc., and that these are integrated in class activities.

For teacher training this means:

- more resources must be available in the language centre to help teachers, both new and experienced, to adapt their approaches to blended learning and to master new techniques;
- these resources can also be in the form of blended and autonomous learning activities.

Target groups

LCaS has successfully been used in secondary school and in university language teaching but this has required different sequences in using the material.

Working with teenagers

When using an LCaS in school, in many cases the case study will be used in a class where the second language is taught and the learners will not have frequently used the language outside the classroom, if ever. In an adult class, however, the learners have already dealt with a series of contact situations in which they had to communicate with or in a foreign language, not necessarily the second language. Adults will also have acquired more competence in learning languages.

In secondary school, students will not have exhaustive experience in giving presentations. These presentations might have followed a certain structure that will not necessarily correspond to their future university or professional needs. In particular, group presentations – a frequent tool when using LCaS – are often not very common in school, sometimes because the teacher needs to give individual grades, which is more difficult when dealing with group presentations. The teacher also has to provide support and information for the students that may be a great deal for them to take in during a short space of time, for example, guidance on oral presentations: useful phrases for introducing the presentation and passing on to a colleague, how to stress certain aspects, how to summarise key points, concluding the presentation, and inviting questions and discussions. There are also a number of writing conventions, which may not have been covered in the students' previous work, such as beginning and ending a report, structuring the text, using bullet points and highlighting and underlining. These may also be issues for adult learners but with large classes of teenagers there is also the question of maturity and discipline, which may disrupt work and a higher dependency on the teacher.

The teacher also has to keep in mind that if there is any filming of the presentations this will put a lot of stress on the learners, who are at a very critical stage in their personal development. He/she will give advice on where to stand, which media would be best – blackboard, OHP, PowerPoint presentation, etc. – and various basic techniques on how to address an audience. In order to prepare the learners, we found it useful to show them smaller sequences in advance, which allayed fears and gave some useful technical

guidelines. After the presentations, and in particular when viewing the recordings, the teacher must pay attention to giving positive feedback to the learners and encouraging peers to give positive feedback.

Working with adults

Reasons for learning a foreign language are varied. Especially, when adults begin to learn a new language, there may be a lot of reasons such as preparing for a new job, being promoted, planning a trip, and therefore wishing to be familiar with a new culture, having a new challenge in their life, or for their profession in general.

Whatever the reason might be, adults want to make sure that what they have learned is useful after having invested so much time and effort.

Why is adult learning different from learning in school or at university?

Adults usually have a different approach for the following reasons:

- they integrate their new knowledge with their life experience and background;
- they already have attitudes, which means that what they learn has to agree with those attitudes;
- new knowledge can be accepted or refused by adults. They are more critical in accepting new information than school students;
- adults normally want to make sure that they will be able to use their new skills actively and immediately.

How do adults learn?

It is easier for adults to learn:

- if the new information is consistent with their experience and everyday life;
- if they have a specific goal in which they can prove their skills;
- if they can connect the new information with the skills they have already learned since they validate the new input based on their individual values;
- if they feel themselves to be treated in a polite and friendly manner, and feel accepted as adults;
- if there is a pleasant learning atmosphere and they feel comfortable in the learning institution;
- if the teaching situation appeals to their individual interests and is influenced by them;
- if they are attracted by the teachers' topics and input;

- if they can have personal responsibility for their progress and class atmosphere.

For these reasons, a problem-based learning approach, such as projects, case studies, etc., can easily be used in adult teaching.

What can the teacher do to teach adults successfully?

The teacher can create a relaxed class atmosphere where adults can try out their new skills without fear or pressure. This means that the role of the teacher in certain situations needs to be adapted and sometimes changed – he/she can have the role of a motivator or facilitator and is therefore supposed to balance the presentation of new material, explanations and discussion with the participants. Participants can influence the lesson by asking questions or suggesting the way forward by finding a solution to a "learning problem".

Co-operation with SAS (subject-area specialists)

When using case studies in language teaching and learning, co-operation between a language teacher and a subject-area specialist can be very fruitful at various stages of the case study activity. It is particularly helpful in language courses for specific purposes where the subject-area specialist is responsible for the academic content and the language teacher concentrates on linguistic aspects.

Co-operation can be productive when:

- developing a case study;
- delivering the case study, namely, during the case study activity in class; and
- assessing the final (oral and written) products (for example, presentation and report).

The advantages of such co-operation are:

- better quality of the content of the case study;
- effective feedback to the learners during the preparation phase of their presentations and reports, both from a linguistic (language teacher) and a content point of view (subject-area specialist);
- better quality of the products due to stronger commitment of the learners.

Although the initial setting up of the co-operation might need more time input and commitment from both ends, everyone will benefit in the long run as they can both concentrate on their key tasks, namely, either the language aspect or the content part of the case study activity. Although this kind of co-operation is not essential, it improves

the quality of the work. Time constraints and timetabling may present difficulties in the school situation but this is a good example of working across the curriculum in schools where this approach is valued and encouraged. Successful co-operation will also depend on the personal link between the subject-area specialist and the language teacher. Co-operation on the case study must not necessarily take place at the three stages mentioned above, but may take place only in the development phase or the assessment phase, depending on the circumstances and possibilities.

The strengths of the co-operation are:

- planning the subject matter together with the students;
- viewing learning as a concept in which the social and individual processes are combined (social interdependence is pervasive in our culture);
- encouraging a sense of ownership of the process, so that students are committed to the outcomes;
- encouraging deep rather than surface learning;
- integration of different areas of knowledge (through collaboration, every teacher acquires general knowledge of the integrated topics);
- creating a positive and secure working climate;
- making students aware of what studying is and what learning is (otherwise it is like their being on a conveyor belt – too busy rolling along and keeping on top of things to worry what it is all about);
- helping students to become more autonomous learners;
- developing a whole range of transferable skills and facilitating lifelong learning.

But there can also be weaknesses in such collaboration:

- the SAS might determine the content via the problem and thus determine the answers and make it too teacher-centred at the beginning of the process;
- the problem might be initially designed as an "end-of-the chapter problem", and test factual understanding only;
- the SAS might define what is valid knowledge in advance and all other viewpoints are largely ruled out.

The benefits for the subject-area specialists are:

- an insight into his/her own teaching techniques/experience with the new approach ("whys and hows" of PBL);

- feedback on how students use knowledge acquired at his/her classes for solving problems;
- insight into what students can do in another language;
- transition from teacher as information giver to teacher as coach;
- discovering students' excitement about PBL to be rewarding and important;
- increasing trust in students' abilities.

The benefits for language teachers are:

- a better insight into the subject matter itself;
- greater confidence and improved contacts with the other two parties involved;
- a greater certainty that they are teaching the language the students will need in their later lives;
- increased importance of the foreign language within the curriculum and better appreciation of what they are doing;
- increased awareness that the success of the project depends on how firmly the triangle between the subject-area specialist, the language teacher and the project groups has been formed.

The challenges for the future are to:

- attract more subject-area specialists to co-operate;
- enhance the cross-curricular EU dimension by suggesting that subject-area specialists at different higher education institutions design joint language case studies run at different institutions or with international groups;
- help the students reach the required level of ability for autonomous learning (learning to learn should be a priority);
- help the students develop their evaluative skills by providing them with suitable assessment tools (and refine the existing ones).

Case studies and the CEFR

When developing case studies and using them in language teaching, the levels of competence presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) appear at three different stages: it is necessary to distinguish the level of the reading material (input), the level of the tasks and the level of the student production (that is, their oral presentations and written reports – output).

Whereas the level of the reading material plays a minor role, the level of the tasks is much more important and will have an impact on student production.

Text material	Tasks	Student production
		(A1)
A	A	A2
		B1
B	B	B2
		C1
C	C	C2

Table 1: Levels of competence at different stages

According to our experience, it is not possible to say that the text material of a given case study is at level B1 or B2, but it is necessary to use the broader categories "basic user" (level A), "independent user" (level B) and "proficient user" (level C) (Council of Europe, 2001: 23), as a case study will always contain easier and more difficult texts. Similarly the tasks the teacher gives to the learners will be at level A, B or C, and finer distinctions are not fruitful. Student production, however, will be at level A2 "Waystage", B1 "Threshold", B2 "Vantage", C1 "Effective Operational Proficiency" or C2 "Mastery". At student level A1, "Breakthrough", the use of case studies will probably not be useful and might have a negative impact on the motivation of the learner due to the difficulty of coping with the task and the consequent frustration of the learner.

Nevertheless, in language teaching, particularly at university level, we try to familiarise learners as early as possible with authentic texts. In the early stages of language learning, learners will therefore have to cope with a text that is at a higher level of language competence than their own competence. At beginners' level, learners will be asked to identify the key topic, main points or certain details like numbers or names. It is important, however, that the level of the tasks corresponds to some extent to their level of competence in order to guarantee that students can manage the tasks and that they are not bored by an easy task.

When preparing a case study, the language teacher therefore must not concentrate on the degree of difficulty of the texts, but has to think of a task that is suitable for his/her group of learners, a task that corresponds more or less to their level of competence.

In this context, we would expect a homogeneous distribution among the three different categories, namely, for text material at level C, the teacher prepares a level C task and the student will produce a presentation and/or report either at level C1 or at level C2:

Text material	Tasks	Student production
		(A1)
A	A	A2
		B1
B	B	B2
		C1
C	**C**	**C2**

Table 2: Homogeneous situation

In many cases, the situation described in Table 2 will be a typical teaching situation in LSP teaching in many university language centres: the students have a very good level of general language competence, but are in most cases still unfamiliar with LSP. Accordingly, the teacher will select reading material at level C and give the students a level C task.

In many situations, we might, however, get a very different and much more heterogeneous picture. Our piloting, for example, has shown that the situation very often is not as homogeneous as we would expect. In one case, where we piloted a French case study with an unknown group in upper secondary education, we used fairly difficult text material that was clearly at level C. As we did not know the level of the learners, we did not want to give them a task that would be too difficult for them and that would have a negative impact on their motivation. We therefore prepared a level B task, and were very surprised that the learners were much better than expected: in fact, their oral presentations were very good and reached level C1 in most cases, as shown in Table 3:

text material	tasks	student production
		(A1)
A	A	A2
		B1
B	**B**	B2
		C1
C	C	C2

Table 3: Heterogeneous situation during piloting at a secondary school

Example of a Business French case study and CEFR levels

During the piloting process of LCaS case studies at university level, we also encountered less positive results: in the Business French course that prepares students for the UNIcert® exam in Business French at level III[7] and that is part of the International Business Administration programme at Tübingen University, we asked students to analyse a business case study, that is, the case of the champagne producer who approaches the age of retirement and whose children will not take on the business, leaving him with an uncertain future for his family-owned enterprise.

For this case study we developed tasks at all three general levels (A, B and C). The text material also shows different degrees of difficulty and complexity. At level A, the tasks for this case study are to summarise the problems of the champagne producer in a short report and to develop a flyer for the company:

- Analysez la situation économique de la cave "Château Lavigne". Quels sont les points forts et les faiblesses de l'entreprise ? Est-ce que la situation de l'entreprise est bonne? Qu'est-ce que M. Lavigne doit faire à l'avenir?
- Faites un petit rapport écrit sur l'entreprise "Château Lavigne".
- Préparez un dépliant sur le champagne Lavigne pour les clients.
- Présentez votre rapport et votre dépliant à M. Lavigne.

7 Further information on UNIcert® is available in Eggensperger and Fischer (1998) or on the UNIcert® website: http://www.unicert-online.org. UNIcert® level III aims approximately at CEFR level C1, "Effective Operational Proficiency".

At level B, the task becomes more difficult and complex: students are asked to prepare a SWOT analysis, to analyse the possible solutions they see for the owner and to develop their proposal:

- Analysez les points forts et les faiblesses de l'entreprise à l'aide d'une analyse FFPM (forces, faiblesses, perspectives et menaces).
- Consultez les informations sur la région et sur la production du champagne, disponibles sur ce site ou accessibles par des liens externes ou encore par vos propres recherches en ligne.
- Quelles possibilités voyez-vous pour M. Lavigne? Que feriez-vous à sa place?
- Élaborez ensuite une proposition pour M. Lavigne sous forme d'un rapport écrit et d'une présentation orale.

At level C, apart from preparing a SWOT analysis and developing a proposal, the students are asked to calculate the turnover of the company and to analyse in detail different legal entities:

- Familiarisez-vous avec la situation financière de la cave "Château Lavigne" en analysant les informations disponibles. Quel est le chiffre d'affaires de l'entreprise? Combien d'argent M. Lavigne doit-il donner à ses parents et à ses beaux-parents? Combien d'argent lui reste à peu près pour vivre?
- Analysez ensuite les points forts et les faiblesses de l'entreprise à l'aide d'une analyse FFPM (forces, faiblesses, perspectives et menaces).
- Consultez les informations sur la région, sur la production du champagne, sur la législation concernant la transmission d'une propriété agricole et sur les différentes formes juridiques possibles, disponibles sur ce site ou accessibles par des liens externes ou encore par vos propres recherches en ligne.
- Quelles possibilités voyez-vous pour M. Lavigne? Que feriez-vous à sa place?
- Élaborez ensuite une proposition pour M. Lavigne sous forme d'un rapport écrit et d'une présentation orale.

This example shows that the tasks become more and more complex at higher levels of language competence. We would expect that in a course preparing students for an exam at level C1, they would produce a presentation and a report at level C1 when confronted with reading material at level C and a level C task, as in the example above. During the piloting, the oral presentations and written reports of one group of students

showed us, however, that they had not yet reached level C1. The following example[8] may illustrate the situation:

> Comme l'analyse FFPM nous a montré, votre entreprise est lucrative. Puisqu'il n'y a pas de solution parfaite, nous voudrions bien vous donner un conseil. Dans nos yeux, la meilleure décision serait de créer une SARL (Société à responsabilité limitée). Cette forme juridique n'exige pas de capital minimum. Le nombre minimum des associés (2) n'est pas un obstacle et ceux ne doivent pas forcément être des commerçants.
>
> Une EARL (Exploitation à responsabilité limitée) ne serait pas favorable car l'exploiteur principale devrait prendre part à l'entreprise avec à moins 50 pour cent et nous savons que vous souhaitez de quitter l'entreprise peu à peu. Nous ne conseillons pas non plus la création d'un GAEC (Groupement agricole d'exploitation en commun) parce que dans ce cas chaque associé serait obligé de travailler dans l'entreprise. Nous nous sommes aussi décidés contre une SCEV (Société civile d'exploitation viticole) à cause de la responsabilité illimitée dans cette forme juridique.

Example of student production

In the example above, the students use only a limited range of vocabulary and are not familiar with the required register (for example, "nous voudrions bien", "donner un conseil", "ceux"). They have numerous problems with grammatical aspects: correct use of article ("nombre minimum des associés", "être des commerçants"), prepositions ("dans nos yeux", "souhaiter de quitter", "dans cette forme juridique") and word endings (male-female: "l'exploiteur principale").

The teaching situation can thus be illustrated as shown in Table 4: while the text material and the tasks are at level C, the written reports prepared by the students are at a lower level (B2), although some students in the group clearly showed language competence at level C1 (for example, in a relatively rich range of LSP vocabulary).

8 In order to illustrate salient linguistic problems, mistakes and inadequacies, these have been underlined.

Text material	Tasks	Student production
		(A1)
A	A	A2
		B1
B	B	**B2**
		C1
C	**C**	C2

Table 4: CEFR levels of a pilot case study on a university LSP course

As a result we can say that when using case studies in language teaching, the teacher has to ensure that the level of the case study (in particular that of the tasks) corresponds to the level of the learners in order to avoid a situation where the students get frustrated if the texts and tasks are too difficult, or bored if the texts and tasks are too easy. As the CEFR levels appear at three different stages in the case study approach, the teacher has to think about the CEFR levels when selecting the reading material, when selecting or writing the tasks and when assessing the learners' productions – both oral and written. The key aspect in the preparatory stage is the analysis of the level of the tasks (and not of the text material); the level of competence of the learners will then appear when they deliver their solution – orally and in writing.

4. Making an LCaS

In the initial planning of the LCaS project the team intended to develop language case studies and modules, and material for training teachers how to use case studies in their teaching. During the two LCaS regional events and further professional development courses, the team discovered, however, that language teachers and teacher trainers were very keen on producing their own case studies, mainly for two reasons:

- they often consider case studies developed by others not suitable for their own teaching situation (different interests of learners, problems concerning learners' level of language competence, constraints concerning LSP topics to be covered in class);
- they feel far more competent in delivering a case study they developed themselves.

The LCaS team decided to integrate a module on how to make one's own language case study into the training modules and training material, namely, a checklist for making case studies.

Steps in making a case study

The following advice was presented to teachers who needed to know where to start in their preparation: materials or problem?

When developing a case study, the teacher should therefore consider a series of aspects during the planning stages.

1. What language skills do you want your students to practise according to your syllabus, your assessment rules and their level of competence?
2. With case studies you can achieve the following learning outcomes for written work: for example, reports, formal correspondence, charts, tables and analysis, and memos and emails.
3. With case studies you can achieve the following learning outcomes for oral work: for example, group discussion, pair work and presentations.
4. You can split the work into stages that fit into the hours available, for example, four two-hour sessions, four two-hour sessions and homework, or six two-hour sessions.
5. You can decide which method of instruction you want to use: instruction in the computer laboratory, explanation in class and some sessions in the laboratory,

explanation in class and work on paper only, or students work on their own in the laboratory.

6. You then choose a broad theme or topic (for example, health, tourism, popular music, climate change) that the students are interested in. Then narrow the theme to suit their ability and their field of study.
7. Then look for a problem in this area and collect material on the case. So, now, you have your raw material.
8. You can write your scenario or description of the case. You may also consult a subject-area specialist to see if your tasks are relevant to the students' studies.
9. Then you can plan your method of instruction.
10. This will fit into your course schedule and plan how long you want to spend in class and as homework.
11. You can write what products you want (for example, a discussion, tables or statistics, a report, a poster, letters, a presentation, etc.).
12. Finally, you can evaluate your learning outcomes and plan your assessment.

The main problem in developing case studies is for language teachers to work with authentic problems, as we discovered during the LCaS training workshops: language teachers tend to develop global simulations or project work, where they can avoid "dealing with problems", as problems are considered to be something negative in language teaching. On the other hand, the learners are very positive about LCaS work, where they can help and develop solutions to existing, authentic problems; the learners get the impression of being taking seriously, instead of the usual "games and role plays". It is therefore important to use the LCaS checklist in order to make sure that the final product is a language case study.

Characteristics of a good LCaS

A good case study normally shows the following characteristics:

- not only the case – the problem – but also the texts and the tasks are authentic;
- the case is of interest for the learner;
- the topic is stimulating, controversial and complex;
- it is a new topic for the learners (otherwise, they will not consult the reading and listening material of the case study);

- in many cases, a country-specific problem is more attractive for the learners, although this might be less the case for English, which has become the language of international communication.

5. Teacher training

Introduction to the modules: learning by doing

The LCaS modules consist of a set of worksheets, which include both questions and exercises intended for the users to reflect upon the use of case studies in the foreign language classroom, and also to guide them step by step through the development of their own case studies.

The model used as a reference was the series of workbooks on methodology for foreign language learning in the German context, "Fernstudieneinheiten" edited by Langenscheidt and the Goethe-Institut, in co-operation with the University of Kassel. These books are intended for teacher training courses, continuous training seminars or for autonomous and distance training. They guide the user through a series of very concrete tasks towards managing the respective contents. The books are addressed at the trainee and they include a brief foreword for the trainer (if needed for a teacher training course). In other words, these books do not include a manual for instructors on teacher training programmes. The instructor is free to pick whatever parts and activities he/she finds suitable for the type of course (initial training, in-service training), for the interests of the students and the duration of the course he/she is to teach. This means that he/she is free to design his/her own programme. The books are useful instruments that he/she can choose to use in the way that best suits the purpose of the course.

These modules are intended for foreign language teachers and for teacher trainees (or student teachers) who would like to know more about the use of case studies in foreign language courses and even create their own case study to use in their own class. Some of the topics that the users are invited to reflect upon may be more meaningful for teacher trainees than for professional teachers, who are more familiar with the methodological discussion. For our purposes, each user should choose exactly what they need for their specific training requirements.

"Modules" is a word that suggests a practical approach to training. Moreover, it suggests a modular concept of training design. Therefore, we developed modules that follow a hands-on approach and mirror in some way what we have seen in LCaS training events: getting familiar with the approach by following the process of creating a case study step by step.

The structure

We decided to adopt a hands-on approach when we designed the teacher training modules. For this purpose, we had to put ourselves in the trainee's shoes and consider the questions that frequently come to mind when the keyword "case studies" emerges.

In fact, these same questions have been the guideline for our regional events and to some extent also for the central LCaS event.

The questions can be grouped according to whether they relate to:

- methodological reflection;
- classroom/course issues;
- media support;
- other.

The modules we developed to be used as task-based packages are:

- case studies and foreign language learning: an introduction;
- the methodological approach;
- suitable scenarios for language case studies;
- case studies and foreign language syllabus: integration;
- ICT and language case studies;
- a step-by-step approach to designing a case study;
- evaluation issues;
- appendix: glossary.

Each of these modules contains activities and exercises to guide trainees in their reflection on the goals and the use of case studies in language classes. Besides reflection, the modules also prepare users to develop their own case studies, adapted to the specific interests of their own learners and/or the syllabus of the courses they teach.

We also include a glossary, in which users can find short definitions of concepts such as PBL, TBL, global simulation, etc., which they can look up at any time when they are reading and completing the modules.

Module 1 – Case studies and foreign language learning: an introduction

The aim of this module is to initiate reflection on case studies, what they consist of and what they can be useful for in foreign language learning. Throughout the module, the user is invited to activate his previous knowledge about case studies and then to proceed step by step towards a definition of a case study for foreign language learning.

The various tasks and activities are meant as guides for the proposed contents. The user finds exercises he/she can do by himself/herself or in a social set-up (pair work, group work). Again, we should stress that the user is not requested to go through all the proposed activities. Instead, he/she can choose by himself/herself what he/she is most

interested in, or the choice is made beforehand by the tutor, who proposes the activities to the group, depending on whether the models are used for autonomous training or for a teacher training course.

It is important to note that the point of departure is the trainee and his/her own previous knowledge. Moreover, he/she is invited to give his/her own answers before he/she can read our own proposals.

A sample sheet from the first module shows the following elements:

- brief introduction to the topic: here the user finds a short description of the context framing the tasks he/she will encounter in the module. The other modules provide likewise an introductory synopsis to the proposed tasks;
- the module then starts with an initial question to provoke reflection or discussion. Users can either work on the topic alone, collecting their own thoughts and writing down certain topics, or they can discuss the subject in an appropriate social form, depending on the setting of the teacher training seminar;
- we offer room for notes because it is important to keep your own thoughts close to the questions that elicited them;
- "our" answer: again this is our turn-taking. The answer we provide is also a brief reflection on the topic in question. It is important for the users, though, to contrast their own opinion with that of the authors, particularly in the case of individual self-training.

Module 2 – The methodological approach

This module is intended as a "theoretical" background for the case study approach. Users will be introduced to (or reminded of) current teaching methodologies and principles, such as PBL or TBL. They will be invited to enlarge the framework so as to consider pedagogical philosophies, such as lifelong learning, and then to narrow the PBL/TBL methodologies down to concrete approaches, for example, global simulation, Webquest and, of course, case studies.

Since this is a less practical (or hands-on) module, it includes suggestions for further reading, which users can consider, according to the time available. Again, this being a sort of background or framing of the case study approach, users will find more of our own thoughts, as well as suggestions for further reading.

Module 3 – Suitable scenarios for language case studies

Now we get more to the point. Users are invited to navigate through the case studies our team developed during the project. They can freely choose the case study according

to the foreign language they teach or what interests them the most. (Of course, they can also look at all the other case studies, if they so wish.)

By doing so, their task is first to recognise the structural features of the case study, following some topics on a grid. After this, they are invited to brainstorm for possible ideas for good case studies (which might vary according to the language they teach and the topics that happen to be relevant for the foreign language context at that moment in time; moreover, they might opt for a topic that is universal and not language specific). This brainstorming is not intended as a collection of random topics: the users should have in mind the structural features of the case studies they have just analysed, and think of scenarios that might suit these features.

The next step is to develop their idea into a concrete case study, sketching out the task, the expected outcomes, etc. They are guided through the whole process, as the grids in the modules suggest.

Module 4 – Case studies and foreign language syllabus: integration

From experience, we know that one of the main concerns of professionals when they want to try out a new approach, exercise, project, etc., is to "make it match" the syllabus of their course, that is, integrate the task in an efficient way, so that they teach what they are supposed to and in the time they have at their disposal.

Integrating a new approach in a more or less flexible syllabus is not an easy task, and it is also not easy to teach others to do it, because it is something that depends upon a lot of different factors: how flexible the curriculum really is, how large the group is, the number of lessons, the independence of the teacher in making these decisions, etc. For that reason, we offer no solution, but look at a specific case, for example, the official curriculum for German as a foreign language in Portugal.

Another possibility is to leave it completely open for the users to work on their own syllabus and include a concrete example of a script for the integration of a case study within the medium-term plan of a foreign language course. Again, help is provided for structuring the users' ideas.

Module 5 – ICT and language case studies

The case study approach presupposes work with information and communication technologies, which are nowadays normal resources in the language classroom. The topic is thus no longer new. Therefore, our intention with this module is to explore what technologies can do concretely for teachers when they are working with case studies in a class.

There are three moments or possibilities to use ICT in class:

- ICT as a source of information: not only are the case studies available online, with the description of the script, the task, the expected outcomes, but the reading materials are also available in the form of links to authentic web pages in the foreign language. The Internet will be the first tool to use;
- in almost all case studies, one of the outcomes the students have to deliver is an oral presentation of some kind. Visual aids are important these days, as they provide clarification and powerful illustrations for the points the presenter is making with his/her talk. However, poor use of the media can be distracting and confusing;
- in case of blended learning scenarios (and not only then), the Web offers several possibilities to update and publish case study outcomes.

For each of these phases we propose tasks in order to guide users, especially at one particular point: how they can make clear to their (future) learners how they should use the media while working with case studies. For this reason, it is perhaps one of the most instructive modules of the whole set. But, as usual, there is room for reflection and discussion.

Module 6 – Designing a language case study step by step

Going back to the ideas the users sketched in Module 4 (or if students come up with new ones), they are now invited to expand them into a real case study. For this, users are guided step by step towards the final version:

- Step 1 – Background: language skills, learning competences, social training;
- Step 2 – Deciding on the outcomes;
- Step 3 – Time plan;
- Step 4 – Choosing a topic (for example, from Module 4);
- Step 5 – Researching material (remembering the suggestions made in Module 5);
- Step 6 – Writing a scenario;
- Step 7 – Task description and time management.

This is just an example of the kind of task you find in this module.

Module 7 – Evaluation issues

Evaluation and assessment are hot topics, which can be seen from various viewpoints. Central to the evaluation of learners as they perform in case studies are:

- assessing their linguistic skills (oral or written outcome);
- assessing their social skills (group management, distribution of tasks, work efficiency).

Equally important is a survey of the students' and teacher's experience of using case studies. In this sense, we have developed short grids, which intend to cover the three scenarios:

- teacher evaluates students' results;
- students evaluate work with case studies;
- teacher evaluates work with case studies.

In each case, the results obtained should be analysed as a follow-up activity. Examples of such grids are available in the resources on the LCaS CD-Rom.

Glossary

A glossary is available in the resources on the LCaS CD-Rom.

LCaS tools for teacher trainers

The LCaS team has developed a series of tools for teacher trainers, the key tool being the LCaS modules presented above. Furthermore, the PowerPoint presentations from a previous LCaS event are available on the attached CD-Rom, providing further information and material that may be used in training workshops for language teachers and teacher trainers.

Key elements of the LCaS training material are the narratives written by LCaS team members and colleagues presenting problems they encountered in their initial development, in using language case studies and in training language teachers how to use and make case studies. These narratives provide exercises for use in a training session, by inviting teachers or teacher trainees to think about the problems and to develop suitable reactions and solutions to the problems encountered by other teachers. This will help them in facing similar problems in their teaching and training.

Finally, a set of further resource files has been developed that can be used in training sessions:

- pre-workshop reading material, including a feedback form on LCaS;
- video clips showing the stages of delivering LCaS in class, and presenting feedback from teachers and from a student to the case study activity;
- written student feedback to the case study activity;
- assessment tips for teachers, assessment grids for self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher evaluation, and criteria for correcting written work;
- a template and a checklist for developing language case studies, and examples of scenarios;
- an example of a timetable for a training workshop for language teachers and teacher trainers on how to use and make case studies, and a feedback form for training workshops.

6. Conclusion: LCaS experiences at the ECML

Evaluation of experiences

From 2004 to 2007, the LCaS team developed a series of case studies, which have been piloted in secondary teaching and in university language courses. These have included team-teaching situations with subject-area specialists. We have also developed teacher training material to guide teachers in making and using LCaS material and piloted this in a number of workshops financed by the ECML and on a self-financing basis.

In general, the feedback to our work was very positive, both from the learners taking part in piloting the case studies and from the language teachers and teacher trainers attending the LCaS teacher training workshops.

Assumptions confirmed (with reservations)

Our work proved that language case studies can be used both in secondary schools and in university language courses, both on general language courses and LSP courses. In most cases, learners enjoyed developing a solution to a given problem and presenting it in groups. It was, however, more difficult to make them find compromises than to try to win over the competitor, namely, to "be better" than the other groups.

Language teachers were also very positive about the approach, unless they were following very traditional ways of teaching and relying heavily on coursebooks and ready-made exercises, that is, if they lacked confidence in their own creativity and teaching. In our view, this minority of teachers would need more guidance in applying the case study method. The majority group tried more readily to use case studies in their teaching, although their workload and existing syllabi sometimes made them postpone indefinitely the integration of case studies into their teaching. Follow-up questionnaires in the future may remind them of their promises and encourage them to try new approaches.

Our impression is that most teachers will not want to use published case studies without some adaptation and are more likely to develop their own case studies, as they will feel closer to the topics and more confident in discussing them in class. Our workshop participants were all very eager to learn how to make a case study once they had understood the method and investigated our ready-made LCaS. However, it proved more difficult for us to teach how to make case studies than how to use them, as language teachers seem to try to avoid talking about problems in class. In fact, when they were asked to develop their own case studies they very often ended up drafting

scenarios for global simulations or project work rather than language case studies. To remedy this situation, the LCaS team developed a set of help files composed of checklists and templates, which assist workshop participants to develop their own case studies. These efforts were valuable as the workshop participants were normally very satisfied at the end of their training when leaving with a draft of their own case study and the knowledge of how to use it in their teaching.

We also discovered that each teacher will apply the case study method in his/her own way, namely, there is no given structure for integrating LCaS in a class: much will depend on the class time available, the language competence of the learners, and previous experience of group work and of giving presentations and formal writing. The ability of individual teachers to motivate and inspire their groups is also highly influential as one would expect, together with their ability to step out of a teacher-centred role and effectively transfer responsibilities and decision making to learners.

Suggestions and recommendations

Using the LCaS website, the LCaS team sees an opportunity for teachers who want to make and use LCaS to upload and download material and to exchange feedback. This use of a simple learning platform would facilitate distance-learning groups, with participants working on the same case in different countries.

There is certainly a need to develop case studies for languages other than the four covered by the LCaS project, that is, English, French, German and Italian. An Internet platform would allow us to broaden our target group. It would also be a first step in developing and piloting multilingual case studies for groups with different linguistic backgrounds, where team members would have to rely on the help of team members in other countries or parts of the country who would understand other parts of the corpus of text – a scenario that was first proposed at our first regional LCaS event in Oulu, Finland, in 2005. In these case studies a solution could only be achieved by co-operating at different levels of understanding, a real-life simulation for language learners that would be very instructive for them.

There is also a need to organise more professional development courses and teacher training workshops. This can be done through national and European networks, such as CercleS, national associations of university language centres or through the ministries of education. If we present the LCaS teacher training material at conferences and workshops we will be able to contribute to innovation in language teaching. In spite of a number of theoretical discussions, language teaching in numerous cases still follows rather traditional patterns, including the translation of literary texts by “students of other disciplines: medicine, law, business and economics” in university, which is not reflective of the real-life needs of students or business interests in modern European society. The introduction of a task-oriented and problem-based approach would make

language teaching more efficient and would lead to greater language competence and better understanding of our partners in other parts of Europe and beyond.

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