

# Why Use Case Studies in Language Classes?

- L2 students often experience difficulty in coping with the reading and writing tasks set for them in content related courses.
- Case Studies provide students with a unique opportunity to **read**, **discuss** and **explore** various situations that involve “real life” language presented within specific situational contexts.



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The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

## “The Language of Business Cases”

– An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching  
Language at HKUST

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# PBL & a Step-by-Step Approach to Case Analysis – Integrating Language and Content

## Step 1: Meeting the Problem

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<b>Understanding the situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ reading for information (reading strategies);</li> <li>■ listening for information (listening strategies);</li> <li>■ understanding content;</li> <li>■ drawing inferences;</li> <li>■ identifying argument/stance of writer;</li> <li>■ identifying problem</li> </ul>	Exposure to “real-world” problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>extrapolating skills</b> (defining problems and setting goals);</li> <li>■ <b>generating skills</b> (inferring, predicting and elaborating).</li> </ul>

## Step 2: Separation of known facts from unknown facts

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<b>Research and fact-finding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group discussion: <b>Structure; Content/Critical Thinking; Interaction; Delivery;</b></li> <li>■ answering questions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“what do we know?”</li> <li>-“what do we need to know?”</li> <li>-“what are we going to do?”;</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ identifying learning objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>focusing skills</b> (defining problems and setting goals);</li> <li>■ <b>generating skills</b> (inferring, predicting and elaborating)</li> </ul>

## Step 3: Individual Research

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<b>Diagnosing problem areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Division of labour:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- deciding research roles among the group;</li> <li>- reading for information;</li> <li>- establishing relevance;</li> <li>- drawing inferences;</li> <li>- reaching (individual) conclusions;</li> <li>- preparing to report to group.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Evaluating skills</b> (establishing criteria and verifying)

## Step 4: Group Analysis

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<b>Group Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group discussion</li> <li>■ communicating individual research;</li> <li>■ exchanging information;</li> <li>■ evaluating research results (establishing need for further research, if necessary).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>recalling skills</b> (encoding and recalling information);</li> <li>■ <b>analytical skills</b> (identifying attributes and components, identifying relationships and patterns, identifying main ideas and identifying errors);</li> <li>■ synthesizing</li> </ul>

## Step 5: Solution Generation

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<b>Generating alternative solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ group discussion</li> <li>■ relating original problem to information from research;</li> <li>■ generating solutions;</li> <li>■ choosing most viable solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>generating skills</b> (inferring, predicting and elaborating);</li> <li>■ <b>integrating skills</b> (summarizing and restructuring);</li> <li>■ synthesizing</li> </ul>

## Step 6: Solution Presentation

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<p><b>Predicting outcomes and choosing among alternatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ presentation of solution to an audience:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual/group report: developing an argument in written form;</li> <li>- giving reasons for defending or opposing a point of view;</li> <li>- giving advantages/disadvantages of options;</li> <li>- justifying solution</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ oral presentation:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- answering questions from audience.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Integrating skills</b> (summarizing and restructuring)</li> <li>■ presenting an argument in written/spoken form;</li> <li>■ synthesizing</li> </ul>

## Step 7: Evaluation

Case Analysis (CA)	Language Learning Objectives	Developing Critical Thinking Skills
<p><b>Rounding out the analysis and communicating the results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Self/peer evaluation by students of: self-directed learning; problem-solving skills; skills as a group member; solution viability.</li> <li>■ a portfolio documenting students' learning through the course, containing responses to a series of language tasks and a reflection of individual learning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluating skills</b> (establishing criteria and verifying)</p>

## Samples of Student Feedback

<b>#1. (Exchange Student - L2 English Speaking Student)</b>	“I think this new approach has been extremely successful. It has been not only fun but also challenging. It has been interesting to discover how big a difference some words make in the way other people interpret and understand our message...I have learned a lot both when it comes to case analysis, but also when it comes to English.”
<b>#2. (Local - L1 English Speaking Student)</b>	“ In terms of English, it was a very balanced approach, incorporating reading, writing, oral and listening skills. It was definitely more effective than comprehension exercises that we, local students, are used to because it forces us to read between the lines.”
<b>#3. (Local - L2 English Speaking Student)</b>	“As for English, we spoke more and got a lot of chances to discuss the issue with the case study. We could also share our ideas and thoughts in the process. I learned much from my classmates. That was invaluable.”
<b>#4. (Local - L2 English Speaking Student)</b>	“All in all, the case study approach is an innovative way of learning and certainly added more colors to the course.”

## The Course Website

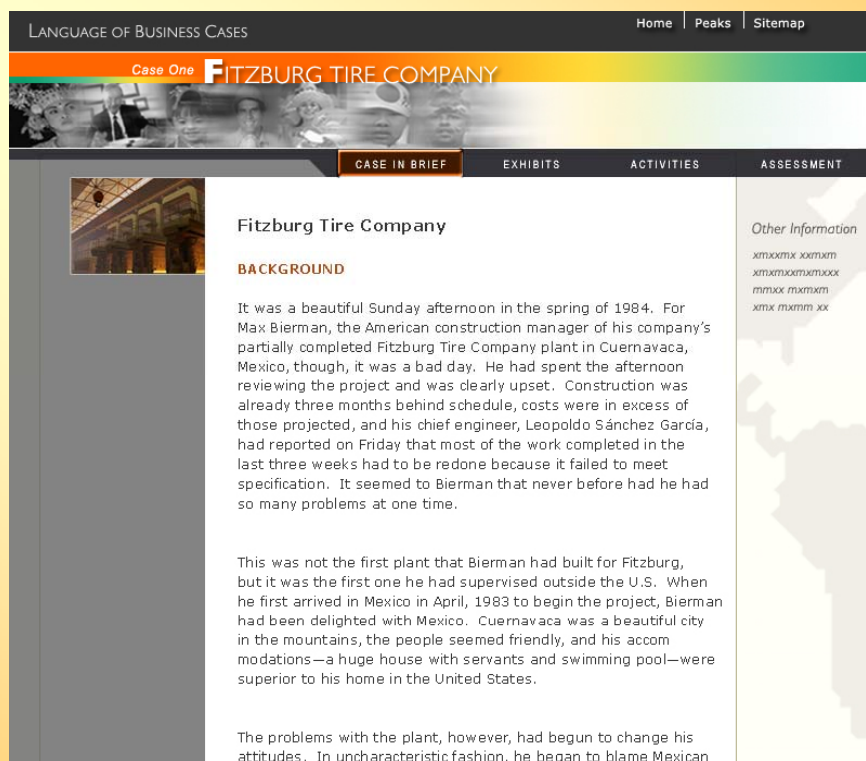


# Course Home Page



The screenshot shows the 'LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS CASES' course home page. At the top right, it says 'Language Centre'. Below the title is a navigation bar with 'SITEMAP', 'PEAKS', and 'COURSE INFORMATION'. The main content area features a world map with a color gradient from purple to yellow. Below the map are three buttons labeled 'Case One', 'Case Two', and 'Case Three'.

## Case 1



The screenshot shows the 'Case 1' page for 'FITZBURG TIRE COMPANY'. The page has a header with 'LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS CASES' and navigation links for 'Home', 'Peaks', and 'Sitemap'. Below the header is a banner for 'Case One FITZBURG TIRE COMPANY'. A navigation bar below the banner includes 'CASE IN BRIEF', 'EXHIBITS', 'ACTIVITIES', and 'ASSESSMENT'. The main content area is divided into three columns: a left sidebar with a photo of a building, a central text area, and a right sidebar titled 'Other Information' with placeholder text. The central text area contains the following content:

### Fitzburg Tire Company

**BACKGROUND**

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1984. For Max Bierman, the American construction manager of his company's partially completed Fitzburg Tire Company plant in Cuernavaca, Mexico, though, it was a bad day. He had spent the afternoon reviewing the project and was clearly upset. Construction was already three months behind schedule, costs were in excess of those projected, and his chief engineer, Leopoldo Sánchez García, had reported on Friday that most of the work completed in the last three weeks had to be redone because it failed to meet specification. It seemed to Bierman that never before had he had so many problems at one time.

This was not the first plant that Bierman had built for Fitzburg, but it was the first one he had supervised outside the U.S. When he first arrived in Mexico in April, 1983 to begin the project, Bierman had been delighted with Mexico. Cuernavaca was a beautiful city in the mountains, the people seemed friendly, and his accommodations—a huge house with servants and swimming pool—were superior to his home in the United States.


The problems with the plant, however, had begun to change his attitudes. In uncharacteristic fashion, he began to blame Mexican

# Memo

LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS CASES [Home](#) [Peaks](#) [Sitemap](#)

Case One **FITZBURG TIRE COMPANY**

CASE IN BRIEF **EXHIBITS** ACTIVITIES ASSESSMENT



**EXHIBITS**

- Video
- Written & Graphs
- Financial Figures
- Charts

**Exhibit 3: Bierman's Progress Report to the Head Office**

May 1, 1984

TO: Ann Bolck, VP, Overseas Operations  
FROM: Max Bierman, Germal Construction Manager, Cuernavaca  
SUBJECT: April Progress Report

This report covers the period from April 1 to April 30, 1984, regarding the construction of the Fitzburg Tire Plant on Cuernavaca, Mexico.

**Summary of Work Previously Completed**

From the beginning of construction in August 1983, the foundations for the main assembly facility, curing room, and storage rooms have been laid and the basic frame for the facilities erected.

**Work Completed- April 1-April 30**

Major tasks during this time period have been confined to continued work on the erection of the structural frames, on reinforcement (with H-shaped steel covered with concrete) of the internal mixing pits, and on preparation for installation of the tire-building machines and milling machines. Some delays were experienced because of procurement problems ( the steel arrived one week late), which were compounded by construction errors on the part of the subcontractor building the mixing pits. The latter problem has been corrected, and the pits are nearing completion.

**Other Information**


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# Video

LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS CASES [Home](#) [Peaks](#) [Sitemap](#)


Case One **FITZBURG TIRE COMPANY**

CASE IN BRIEF **EXHIBITS** ACTIVITIES ASSESSMENT



**EXHIBITS**

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- Charts



[Click to view script](#)

**Other Information**

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# Video


LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS CASES Home | Peaks | Sitemap

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Case One **FITZBURG TIRE COMPANY**




CASE IN BRIEF | **EXHIBITS** | ACTIVITIES | ASSESSMENT



**EXHIBITS**

- Video
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- Charts



Fitzburg.mpg

Other Information

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