

Learning Theme-based Vocabulary with the 'Magic School Bus

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Abstract

1. Introduction Vocabulary knowledge is essential to enhance students' language competence and gain their self-confidence to become successful communicators in English. Vocabulary can be learned most effectively when done in meaningful contexts in which students are fully engaged with words. In Korea, however, rote memorization of vocabulary has long been a common way for students to learn English words without meaningful contexts by translating English vocabulary into Korean word by word (Carlo, 2010). Students, thus, feel frustrated by English while trying to express themselves because they do not know how to use vocabulary in different situations, even though they have devoted a lot of time to memorizing vocabulary. This book is designed to improve students' vocabulary knowledge through Extensive Reading (ER) with Theme-Based graded readers as well as the Lexical Approach in an attempt to be as communicative as possible. The group of students my Portfolio seeks to address are in the 3rd and 4th grade of primary school and their language development is between level 3 and 4 according to WIDA. They can read graded readers at their level. Some, however, still have some difficulty in interpreting words depending on different contexts because they memorize only one primary dictionary definition of a word. For example, they cannot differentiate the meaning of "heart" between "My heart beat 60 times per minutes," and "from all of my heart" as they read the 'Magic School Bus' "Has a Heart." In addition their tendency to focus on single words rather than chunks of language or sentences is another problem. 2. Method and Rationale The target leaners can benefit from ER by encountering words multiple times in meaningful contexts. Day and Bamford (1998) claim that second language learners can learn how words and expressions are being used in different contexts. They also assert that by encountering words in different contexts, learners will be able to remember and use the words more easily. The problem my target students have with learning chunks of language will be addressed with the Lexical Approach. If students learn vocabulary literally word by word, they are not likely to acquire the sense of natural English. For example, heavy rain and make a mistake are natural in English although strong rain and do a mistake are not. Lewis (1993) argues that leaners can learn and recognize collocated words as a unit, rather than learning definitions separately through the Lexical Approach My textbook supposes that the target learners will enjoy ER with the 'Magic School Bus', which is a series of children's books about science. This series presents various contextual definitions of a word and a lot of chunks of language repetitively which helps students recognize word combinations rather than individual words. In addition, each 'Magic School Bus' book deals with a special theme which provides content for students to learn. Students can be led well to the language activities and become more familiar with the content and the meaning of the topic. As suggested by Cameron (2001), new vocabulary items can be learned easily with the theme providing a meaningful context for understanding, and for the natural use of a wide range of discourse types, both written and spoken. In regards to learning vocabulary in meaningful and communicative ways, the 'Magic School Bus' is appropriate for the target students. My Textbook essentially serves as a 'post activity' book to be used after ER at home. Some titles students will enjoy reading for fun are: The 'Magic School Bus' "Has a Heart", "Takes a Moonwalk", "Rides the Wind" and "Flies with the Dinosaurs." From the titles it is evident that these books are theme-based that relate to content students are exposed to in their L1 (Korean). In the 4 units in my Textbook, they start with solving some riddles to elicit information pertinent to the theme such as "I am as large as your fist" to provide the size of the heart after reading "Has a Heart." Also target lexical chunks which are related to the theme are introduced. While solving riddles such as "I am in the middle of your chest," which provides information about the location of the heart, leaners become familiar with the meaning of the target

chunks, and they have opportunities to use them in a communicative way through various fun activities such as Bingo, memory games, chanting and drawing, for example. At the end of each unit, students have an opportunity to do a theme-related project in which they review that they have learned in the Chapter. For example, in my Sample Chapter, students are going to be provided with picture sheets of sandwich ingredients such as pickle, tomato, cheese, bacon and lettuce on which target chunks and sentences are written. They are going to complete sentences using the target chunks which they have learned and put together those sheets and make their own healthy sandwich to make their heart healthy. 3. Expected outcomes After studying my textbook, students should develop vocabulary knowledge through reading theme-based graded readers. Students will also be able to understand written texts and spoken language better than they could before by acquiring words combinations as chunks. They will also have fun doing a lot of communicative activities. Doing a theme-related project at the end of the unit such as making a healthy sandwich book will serve as being a unique and creative feature of the book, and up on completion of the Textbook they will have finished a very special English project. 4. Conclusion Traditional English vocabulary textbooks in Korea have only had students memorize words isolated from contexts causing that students lose interest and become unmotivated in English class. My Textbook, however, will help students learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts by letting them solve riddles about the interesting themes. In addition it provides a lot of opportunities to have fun with English vocabulary by playing various games, doing physical exercise and even a simple experiment based on one of the unit's themes. In the process, student will recognize, practice and produce the target chunks of language naturally and communicatively.

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COPYRIGHT 2016 BY EWHA WOMANS UNIVERSITY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
OAK . Feedback

Start studying Magic School Bus vocabulary. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. the chemical properties of the element, consisting of a nucleus containing combinations of neutrons and protons and one or more electrons bound to the nucleus by electrical attraction; the number of protons determines the identity of the element. Insulation. the covering that reduces the passage, transfer, or leakage of heat, electricity, or sound. Bound. Fastened to something. This is a list of episodes of the children's television series The Magic School Bus, which is based on the series of books of the same name written by Joanna Cole. The show's continuity is not necessarily dependent on the order in which the episodes aired. In the first episode aired ("Gets Lost In Space"), Arnold mentions that the class has already been inside a rotten log ("Meets the Rot Squad") and to the bottom of the ocean (various episodes, including "Gets Eaten," "Blows Its Top," and "Ups and