


ENHANCING VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH STORYTELLING:
A STUDY OF THE EFFICACY OF THIS APPROACH FOR
CHINESE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Approved:  Date: August 23, 2024
Paper Advisor

Suggested content descriptor keywords:

EfL Education, Storytelling, Vocabulary Acquisition, Student Engagement, Contextual Learning,
Chinese EFL Education

ENHANCING VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH STORYTELLING: A STUDY
ON INTERMEDIATE ESL STUDENTS

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

English Education

By

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2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Teresa M. Burns, for her invaluable guidance, patience, and expertise throughout the course of this research. Her insights and suggestions were crucial in shaping both the direction and execution of this study.

I am also thankful to the faculty and staff of the English Education Department at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville for their support and for providing a stimulating academic environment. Their commitment to excellence and innovation has been inspiring and motivational.

A special thank you goes to my peers and fellow graduate students, whose camaraderie and constructive critiques have helped me refine my ideas and strengthen my arguments. Their support and encouragement have been a source of strength throughout my academic journey.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my studies. Their belief in my abilities has been a constant source of motivation and resilience.

Thank you all for your invaluable contributions to my academic journey.

Abstract

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Binfen Shui

Under the Supervision of Dr. Teresa Burns

This seminar paper explores the effectiveness of storytelling as an innovative pedagogical tool for English as a Second Language (ESL) vocabulary acquisition within the Chinese public school system. The study utilizes a literature review methodology to analyze the potential benefits and challenges of integrating storytelling into ESL education. The review reveals that storytelling can significantly enhance vocabulary retention and student engagement by providing contextualized learning experiences that are culturally relevant and emotionally engaging. The paper presents two sample lesson plans, offering practical guidance for Chinese public school educators looking to implement storytelling in their ESL classrooms. The findings of this study suggest that storytelling is not only an effective method for improving vocabulary acquisition but also a means to create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

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Chapter I: Introduction

As a public school English teacher in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, an exciting, bustling part of the broader Guangdong Province in the People's Republic of China, my teaching experience could very well be representative of the broader ESL teaching landscape in China. Indeed, the several EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers at my school engage in a wide range of teaching techniques to promote effective vocabulary learning for the students, a critical skill in the mastery of the English language. These techniques include the traditional rote memorization method and more dynamic approaches such as multimedia learning aides, interactive student-based activities, and storytelling. Specifically, the latter has proved effective in deeply engaging students, both emotionally and cognitively, and consequently make learning more effective and fun.

This is not mere anecdote: in recent years, many research studies have been conducted to prove the effectiveness of this narrative technique. This paper will review some of that research. In my classroom specifically, this technique has been overwhelmingly successful in bridging the theory-practice gap and maintaining a lively, interactive learning environment. Moreover, the technique has also substantially improved my students' learning experience, fostering vocabulary acquisition interest among them.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a particular challenge within the context of the public school system of China. Different students come from widely different backgrounds, and while some have had sufficient exposure to English through private tutoring or

digital tools, many others have been deprived of this opportunity. Existing methods of vocabulary teaching seem ineffective for the majority of them. Due to class sizes and differential student preparation, it is practically impossible to engage all students in the language context in which words are used, so instead that leaves many students to memorize large numbers of isolated words. No study that this writer is aware of recommends massive rote memorization without practice and context as an effective method of foreign language learning!

This growing gap in engagement calls for new teaching methods that take into account different learning environments and different types of language synthesis. Since storytelling is highly adaptive and appealing to people regardless of their culture, this method appears to be a credible alternative to traditional approaches. This paper will explore whether the systematic use of storytelling in this context is uncharted territory or a well-studied teaching technique

Definition of Terms

EFL (English as a Foreign Language): English as a Foreign Language primarily refers to teaching English within a context of speakers who use English as one of their first spoken languages.

ESL (English as a Second Language): English as a Second Language primarily refers to the instruction designed to teach English to a student of any age whose native language is not English, and the student lives in a country where English is frequently spoken as a first language.

Storytelling: storytelling is the cultural and social activity of telling stories. No human culture is known to exist that does not tell stories. While stories may be told for entertainment, to

instill moral values, or to pass on a culture, this paper will focus upon the educational use of telling stories. As a pedagogical practice, storytelling exists as narratives, and may vary from folklore to teacher's personal narratives or be made up to teach new vocabulary or grammatical topics. This paper will use the extended definition of storytelling compiled by Ghafar (2024), and discuss that definition more thoroughly in chapter two.

Language Acquisition: Henshaw & Hawkins, in their 2022 survey of EFL best practices, define language acquisition in terms of both inputs and outputs. In this sense, both grammar and vocabulary are inputs. Input that contributes to language acquisition is essentially the students' use of the target language in a way that allows these words to have meanings the speaker or listener understands. This idea of language acquisition stresses that input is not just being exposed to the target language, but understanding it. In other words, if learners are exposed but do not understand, "then they cannot make form-meaning connections, and thus, they're not building a linguistic system in their heads that they can use for communicative purposes" (p. 67). In terms of storytelling activities, it is important to realize that Henshaw & Hawkins are building upon the definition of language acquisition proposed by Stephen Krashen (1982). Krashen's "Input Hypothesis" suggested that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level. In terms of story-telling, then, students would be exposed to stories just slightly beyond their own proficiency level.

Student Engagement: according to the Glossary of Education Reform created by the Great Schools partnership (consisting primarily of English-speaking schools), student engagement

“refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught.” The glossary further notes that improved student engagement is a common educational objective.

Vocabulary Acquisition: According to Mervin Jenkins, “Vocabulary acquisition refers to the process of learning and acquiring unfamiliar words and their meanings, either through direct instruction or through exposure to language in different contexts.” Vocabulary acquisition involves picking up, internalizing, and integrating freshly learned terms as well as the capability to see what they signify and where they should be used. In an EFL context, it is traditionally facilitated by introducing new words to students, since they have limited outside contexts for learning new words. Vocabulary acquisition is a central part of language acquisition (see definition above.)

Purpose of the Study

The goal of the current study is to investigate the ways in which storytelling can successfully become an element of EFL teaching strategies in public schools across China in order to improve vocabulary acquisition and increase student involvement. Based on my experiences in Zhuhai, this study will contribute practical examples and offer a foundation for further research in other educational environments in China.

Significance of the Study

The value of the research for such a study extends beyond individual classrooms or schools and answers a very important educational challenge within the Chinese public school system: the need for EFL teaching methods adaptable to a diverse student body. The necessity of learning English as a critical skill is needed while China continues to integrate into the global economy, affording students access to better educational and career opportunities. For these reasons, improving the quality and effectiveness of English language instruction is critical. Further, English is a required subject in Chinese schools, and therefore one students must therefore pass in order to progress.

Storytelling can be interesting and unforgettable in learning new vocabulary, but in the form of a teaching method, it can change the very outlook of teaching ESL. When this tool is used, a harmonious link forms between the natural human tendency to create narratives. If such an approach is feasible, it may be quite effective in a multicultural and multilingual environment such as Guangdong Province. Anecdotally from my own teaching experience, I believe it creates a higher level of connection to the material, induces activity in it, and can actually be a means of relating knowledge in a manner that encourages diverse cultural backgrounds and enhances learning experiences as well as new language retention. Will secondary research uphold this anecdotal experience?

In my EFL classroom, I have noted that the storytelling process also allows students to develop and hone critical and creative problem-solving skills. Through critical thinking and the ability to interpret the stories that they are narrated, the students are guided to understand and use the English language appropriately. The following research was thus carried out with the aim of

offering empirical support for the claims given and the action points that could be transferred over to the educational realm of China at large.

Methodology

This research will use literature review methodology and will depend solely on the analysis of available studies regarding the use of storytelling in ESL teaching. The literature review will include: various types of published studies in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other current case studies on integrating storytelling in language education will be investigated in this research. It will therefore identify the benefits and challenges associated with using storytelling as an effective pedagogical tool under contexts similar to those of the public schools in China.

Secondary Data Analysis

The data are not to be collected afresh but instead relies on the secondary data from previous studies to make an informed knowledge of the effectiveness of storytelling in diversified educational settings. Where possible, this paper will look at meta-analyses as well as primary research.

Synthesis of findings

The review will synthesize findings from various sources to present a holistic view on the best practices and potential pitfalls in the use of storytelling in the ESL classroom. A synthesis of these will help in coming up with practical recommendations on both education and policy fronts.

This literature-based study is an extension of the validation of the effectiveness of storytelling in teaching and an understanding of its theoretical and practical role within ESL education, making the application broad in the educational systems and even as far as a country like China.

Chapter II Review of Literature

An Overview of ESL Vocabulary Learning

Research in linguistics and language learning has been prolific in exploring how individuals develop their vocabulary range. Concentrating on scholars who have explored the nuances of EFL vocabulary acquisition in English reveals a blend of viewpoints that align with our previous definitions. Usually, we think of vocabulary as the same thing as “words.” In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as simply “the body of words in a particular language.” Without vocabulary, a student can’t acquire language: a student can’t make meaning of a string of words without knowing individual words.

Grasping the concept of language acquisition as a process is vital prior to examining ESL vocabulary acquisition literature. In their book *Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom* (2022), Henshaw & Hawkins spend their entire first chapter looking at commonalities among different definitions of language acquisition beyond the first language. Before we look at what a review of the literature shows us about vocabulary acquisition, let’s consider language acquisition generally. Henshaw & Hawkins, in *Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom* (2022), spend their entire first chapter reviewing different notions of how we acquire language and conclude that it is simply what occurs when a person is trying to process different messages. In an ESL or EFL setting, those messages are in a target language (in this case, English.)

Based on Lightbown & Spada's discussion of “Language Learning in Early Childhood,” which makes up the first chapter of their well-respected *How Languages are Learned* (2021),

research shows that the processes of storytelling are closely linked to learning a native language in children. By the time they are only a few years old, kids have learned the fundamental structure of their native language(s). At the same time, they have acquired the ability for form narratives. “By the age of four, most children can ask questions, give commands, report real events, and create stories about imaginary events, using correct word order and grammatical markers most of the time,” they explain. By age four, “children have acquired the basic structures of the language or languages spoken to them,” then continue to learn vocabulary at a rate of three or four words each day (p. 12). As language develops, vocabulary expands: “One of the most impressive aspects of language development in the school years is the astonishing growth of vocabulary” (p. 13). Upon entering school, children usually have a vocabulary of thousands of words, and within a few years, thousands more are added (pp. 13-14).

Lightbown & Spada's research relies upon earlier theorists such as Nagy, Herman, & Anderson (1985), who found that vocabulary may grow from a few hundred to more than a thousand words a year, and that growth depends a great deal upon how much children read. They also draw upon the work of Dee Gardner (2004), who found that vocabulary growth relies in part upon what kind of text students read; Lightbown & Spada build upon this to point out that narrative texts (in other words, stories) often use different vocabulary than non-fiction, non-narrative texts (p. 14). Lightbown & Spada draw upon various complementary theories aiming to elucidate the process of language acquisition. Their assertion is that language learning fundamentally requires a person to comprehend various messages in the target tongue, much as defined by Henshaw & Hawkins. When it comes to acquiring language, a vocabulary plays a

crucial role, forming the foundational elements of any language progression, vital for understanding.

Within the domain of ESL, a multitude of other scholars have concentrated on the development of vocabulary and methods to improve it. A significant number employ the previously mentioned studies to direct optimal methods for vocabulary creation in other languages. Nonetheless, evaluating conventional methods for vocabulary instruction in ESL classrooms is an initial step.

Vocabulary Teaching in the Traditional Way in China

Traditional Chinese EFL teaching frequently depends heavily on the routine memorization process via frequent exercises and drills like flashcards, yielding quick yet fleeting outcomes. This is not necessarily a strategy that is actively encouraged or discouraged by the Chinese Ministry of Education nor its chief press, the People's Education Press; nonetheless, in practice, it has been very common for EFL teachers to teach via these traditional methods.

Zhao, Liu, & Zhang (2022) performed a meta-analysis of different methods of vocabulary teaching in China. Their study focused upon presentation modes and they used the traditional teaching method of presenting vocabulary word lists as their baseline after consulting 27 different empirical studies of Chinese EFL students. After this, they looked at eight other methods of presenting vocabulary. For younger students, they found that combining vocabulary in clusters (such as food words, animal words, etc.) and presenting these words with pictures worked better. This type of presentation can most easily be done in narrative, and perhaps leads to the method most efficacious in high school students, which is to combine the

old-style vocabulary lists with practice in guessing words from context. The latter is something that one becomes skilled at mainly through listening to narratives.

Further, as other studies have shown, the method of rote memorization is monotonous and does not captivate students' interests or cultivate a passion for the language. This method is also not optimal for developing higher-order learning skills. For instance, Zhao *et. al.* (2021) performed a very large study of the group many high schoolers aspire to become: undergraduates. After studying 21,584 junior undergraduate students at 10 Chinese universities, they determined some very important things.

First, the strategies used by the teachers were the single greatest predictor of students developing higher-order learning skills, and that secondly, these high-order skills were the biggest predictor of student engagement and often, student success. Their large study encourages teachers to seek out methods that actively engage students. Conventional teaching techniques often gives less feedback. Further, when an answer is simply “right” or “wrong,” it teaches the student nothing about contexts and context often spurs more questions and more engagement. Their research pointed directly at lack of feedback and lack of engagements as “a specific weakness in current Chinese teaching practices” (p. 1, 18).

With ongoing investigations by linguistics and language acquisition experts into better vocabulary teaching mechanisms, it's clear that conventional rote memorization methods possess flaws. Instead, narrating stories is discovered as a potent method for enhancing English as a Foreign Language, offering contextually relevant linguistic inputs that promote prolonged memory retention and involvement.

Defining Storytelling in a Vocabulary-Acquisition Context

As discussed in chapter one, Ghafar (2024) provided an extended definition of storytelling in the article “Storytelling as an Educational Tool to Improve Language Acquisition: A Review of the Literature.” Ghafar, after reviewing different definitions of storytelling in an EFL context and noting that some are limited to verbal exchanges while others involve reading physical books and digital material, points out the need for a clear definition. This, this writer builds upon Appel et al. (2021) to define storytelling as “the interaction, voice, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact used to connect a tale with listeners,” (p. 782).

Per this definition provided by Ghafar, this interaction itself is what creates the narrative. In other words, the narrative itself contains built-in feedback and social engagement. A does not exist without a person telling the tale and an audience receiving and reacting to it. Further, narratives themselves are acts that include “vocalization, dramatic and mental images, and a narrative framework to connect with an audience. The storyteller receives verbal and nonverbal input from the audience via the use of mental images” (p. 782). The nonverbal inputs can often help the students understand the language inputs.

Digital Storytelling Techniques (DST)

An unexpected part of my literature review related to the number of articles about Digital Storytelling Technique (DST) in EFL settings. Many, many articles examined using DST to improve English language learning generally and vocabulary specifically. Hava (2019) explored the role of digital storytelling as related to student engagement, motivation and satisfaction among EFL learners, and concluded that this sort of learning helped improve students’ self-confidence along with language ability. The study also affirmed that “digital storytelling could

be beneficial for facilitating vocabulary learning, writing and speaking skills in EFL education.” Similarly, Yang et. al. (2020) found that secondary EFL students who worked in groups to tell stories about some other interdisciplinary subject experienced “authentic and meaningful” learning opportunities that engaged them with the subject matter. (Incidentally, if we use Ghafar’s definition as discussed earlier, we realize that these types of DST only constitute real storytelling when they are read by an audience that can understand and react to them. Thus the writers and consumers of the story all benefit.)

Simbiring and Simajuntak (2023) also looked at DST as a way for EFL learners to increase vocabulary. Their study found unequivocally that “participants who were taught using DST technique outscored those who were not exposed to DST. It indicates that digital storytelling can increase students' vocabulary more effectively” (p. 220). Their study also “supports the findings of that digital storytelling does have a good effect on learning and study practices, especially when it comes to enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge” (p. 221.) Because in some places it is a problem for students to have access to the technology needed for digital storytelling, it is important to note that the facilities in this study were provided to the Indonesian students who took part in it.

Different Methods of non-DST Storytelling

Some studies looked at different non-digital methods of storytelling as connected to vocabulary development. One, by Gau, Yang and Lee (2023) looked specifically at Chinese students and compared the effects of three different types of storytelling. In one method, teachers just told the stories. In the second, they told the stories but focused on particular words, such as the words on the vocabulary lists. In the third, teachers read the stories but then

had some follow-up activity. The study determined that *storytelling alone* led to superior student performance. It encouraged students to think critically and tell their own stories. The students who heard the most stories “generated more responses based on their own knowledge and life experience (as opposed to simply recalling facts) than did the group which completed more supplementary activities.”

Ghafar (2024) looked at both digital and traditional printed stories and did not find one superior to the other in the studies reviewed: “it is believed that the format of stories, printed or digital, that are used in the classroom does not influence how well storytelling helps second-language learners develop their language skills” (p. 783).

Significance of Contextual Education

Learning about context is proven to substantially improve the retention of vocabulary. The study by Sadowski in *Teaching Immigrant and Second-Language Students: Strategies for Success* (2004) stresses over and over the need for context. Yet EFL students are not dropped into that context in the same way as Sadowski’s second language learners. The teacher must create the context, and the easiest way to do that is with narrative.

What one realizes is that the context is the context necessary for learning the vocabulary, It is not necessarily the context of a different place or culture, though that is sometimes the case. However, students can learn about a “lion” and a “tiger” from a narrative about a trip to the zoo in a nearby Chinese city. For some people “cultural context” is a concept that has become unnecessarily charged. In teaching EFL, context simply means that the words exists in sentences and the sentences make sense as connected to something outside of the student. As the Oxford dictionary defines context, it is simply “the circumstances that form the setting for an

event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed,” and “the parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.”

If one applies this definition of context, it becomes easy to see how narrative helps teach vocabulary and improve student critical thinking skills at the same time. Related to this concept, Soleimani, Saeedi, and Mohajernia (2012) explored “The effect of keyword and context methods on vocabulary retention of Iranian EFL learners.” In this study, the “keywords” were what one might expect on a vocabulary list. They observed that while the initial use of keyword-focused approaches improved outcomes in the initial retention test, it was the context-oriented learning that resulted in enhanced long-term retention. Similarly, Barjesteh and Omran (2019) found that contextualized vocabulary learning worked better than the other options they studied.

Finally, Ghafar (2024) reviewed three different studies that showed that storytelling makes “language learning engaging, fascinating, and contextualized,” because it “boosts language competence more than standard textbook-based techniques” (p. 781). The different inputs themselves create a context, as language combines with vocalizations and pictures. At the end of this comprehensive study, he concluded that the multiple studies reviewed in this meta-analysis showed that “storytelling is crucial for improving comprehension since it is entertaining and engaging and is highly contextualized via the use of visuals, vocal repetitions, and body language, among other techniques,” (p. 788).

Conclusions from the Literature Review

This seminar paper shares the conclusions of Ghafar (2024) previously mentioned and thus encourages storytelling as a vehicle for better vocabulary acquisition. Overall, storytelling, a formidable method for learning vocabulary, must be customized to fit the unique educational environments and the needs of students. Integrating this method into language learning enables educators to effectively involve students, encourage them to retain vocabulary, and thereby improve their linguistic skills. Numerous research works have endorsed this perspective. The exhaustive review of literature clearly shows that implementing storytelling techniques in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments can be a potent approach to boost vocabulary acquisition and student involvement. This method aids in incorporating vocabulary into practical scenarios, thus improving its preservation. Specialists in linguistics and language learning emphasize the importance of a strong vocabulary and its application in relevant contexts for linguistic education.

The enhancement of ESL teaching should transition from a conventional lecture format to the integration of storytelling techniques. Instructors ought to integrate visual tools in class and foster active involvement from students. Continuous repetition and reinforcement play crucial roles in enhancing extended retention of vocabulary.

Subsequent studies ought to explore more intimately the specific influence of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition and the longevity of its impact. Analyzing the variances in storytelling styles might yield important observations. However, in our final chapter, we will simply give an example of how such techniques can easily be adapted by teachers in Chinese public schools using materials they already have easy access to.

Chapter III Two Sample Applications for Chinese Primary School Teachers

The previous chapter reviewed the theoretical underpinnings of using storytelling to facilitate vocabulary acquisition for EFL teachers generally and teachers in China specifically. Storytelling, as defined and explored in that chapter, improves both vocabulary acquisition and student engagement and by definition forms part of contextual learning.

This chapter forms a bridge between theory and practice, by providing an example of how materials readily available to public primary school teachers in China can be used to teach vocabulary acquisition via storytelling. Many primary teachers in China use materials that are available for free download from the People's Education Publishing House (PEP), whose main site is www.pep.com.cn, with textbooks and other teaching materials available for educational use only at www.pep.com.cn/products/. My school is no exception. This chapter will briefly sketch out a lesson plan that uses free materials from this website sponsored by the Ministry of Education, then analyze how such a plan matches the best practices discussed in the previous review of literature.

This lesson plan is also easily assessable using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) ratings which are in common use within EFL courses in China.

Objectives

Create a sample lesson for using storytelling in teaching vocabulary.

Provide a plan for evaluating vocabulary acquisition and retention strategies.

Locate the compatibility of these methods to CEFR levels table in order to check against Chinese education school standards.

Sample Storytelling Lessons

Lesson 1: Beginner Level (A1 - A2)

Objective: Understand a few basic words to make friends and everyday work.

Story: "Tom and Sally's Friendship"¹

Vocabulary Focus: Common phrases (Hello, What's your name?), nouns (friend, lunch), and adjectives (new, good).

Primary school teachers will easily locate the text at the above site, and

Story Text:

Within this picture book, one finds a cute children's picture story about the friendship between two little mice. In dialog boxes, we see the first mouse saying "Hello, I'm new here." The other mouse responds, "I'm Sally. What's your name?" The dialogue and pictures continue with this basic conversation:

"My name's Tom."

"How old are you?"

"I'm five years old."

"I want to be your friend."

¹ This story is available for educational purposes only within China at https://www.sohu.com/a/552021051_121309973. In the digital version, we're looking at pictures and story on pages 11-12.

“Great! I want to be your friend, too!”

Activities:

Pre-Story Discussion: teachers might ask students questions to activate their existing knowledge of this context. For instance, one might ask, "What is it like when you meet someone new and want them to be your friend?" and "What do you say when first meeting someone?" But, being mindful of the literature we have reviewed, do not spend too much time here. The goal is to get students to simply use and understand the words in the story, which described a very typical situation.

Read the story aloud from the Storytelling Session with pictures as prompts. When they get them consistently, have your students repeat these phrases. Have students role-play the story.

Post-Story Activities:

One may follow activities provided in existing lesson plans, such as matching the picture with the story. However, if students already understand and have clearly been able to role-play the story, have them pretend to be someone else and practice introducing themselves and making friends according to the dialogue of the story.

Assessment:

Formative: Teacher observation, oral questioning during activities

Summative: Quiz over vocabulary and small writing assignment about reaching out to a new friend in which students could write about their own experiences. Either that, or students could simply write a dialogue themselves.

Lesson 2: Intermediate Level (B1 - B2)

Objective: To increase words used when talking about social interactions and outdoor activities..

Story: "A Day at Camp"²

Vocabulary Focus: Outdoor activity terms (camp, fish, fire), descriptive adjectives (naughty, clever, helpful), and action verbs (cook, laugh, eat).

Story Text:

This story begins with a group of happy young people at camp, and the caption: “I am at camp with my classmates and my teacher, Mr. White. My name is Phil. I am short and have red hair. Can you see me?”

The next picture shows red-haired Phil in a boat with a girl. The caption says: “Here I am in a boat with my friend, Jill. She is teaching me how to fish. She is very clever.”

The third picture shows campers who are cooking over a campfire, while in the foreground, a little boy is putting a snake on a girl’s chair. The caption says: “We cook fish from the lake. Jack plays a trick—he puts a toy snake on Mary’s chair. We all laugh.”

The fourth picture shows the campers eating outdoors. The captions says, “It’s time for dinner. We are eating the fish. It is delicious. It is great to eat out here.”

The fifth picture shows a boy picking up garbage left by the other campers, and the caption says, “John is picking up all the rubbish from our dinner.”

² This story is also available for educational purposes only within China and downloadable for teacher use in teaching EFL. The pictures and story I describe are available at: [人教版新起点五年级上册英语电子课本（高清 PDF 版）小学资源 商业行为 \(sohu.com\)](#) on pages 11 and 12.

The sixth picture shows a little girl dancing and singing by a campfire as the other children watch. The caption says, “Everyone likes Mary’s singing and dancing. She is good at singing and dancing.”

The seventh picture shows a camper in his tent, looking for his glasses. The caption says, “It’s time to go to bed. Tom can’t find his glasses. Can you help him find them? He often loses his glasses.”

The eighth and final picture shows the teacher opening the door of the tent. The caption says, “Good night children!” “Good night, Mr. White. Thanks for a great day!”

Activities:

Pre-Reading: Ask students to discuss their experiences of outdoor activities like camping.

Read the story aloud.

Optional: Ask the students questions about this story while you read. For instance, ask the students to pick out Phil in the first picture, and so on.

Post-Story Activities: Ask participants to talk about the characters in the story and what they did. You will see that the book itself suggests some questions you may ask. (Who is clever? Who is naughty?” and so on.

Role-play (i.e. students take on the roles of characters in these situations and practice vocabulary in context). Students can then tell their imaginary camping story to other students. For instance, a student who knows a simple English song might sing it, then ask, “which camper am I?” A student might pick up a piece of rubbish from the floor, and say “Who am I?”

Of course, at the intermediate level you may have even more activities, but those can be left to the imagination of the teacher.

Assessment:

Text Type: Formative: Group presentations/role-playing and peer-feedback.

Summative: Test with vocabulary in multiple choice and short answer questions, creative writing in response to the prompt "a camping trip."

Incorporating Technology

As noted in the literature review, digital storytelling techniques or DSTs now are very popular. Many available texts now come with not only digital audio but with other tools, including web tools, that are free and easy to use. Teachers will be able to create interactive and multimedia-rich stories tailored for different types of learning styles via these platforms. Teachers will also find ways to involve parents. The key, in this teacher's opinion, is to simply start out by understanding that storytelling is a very effective way to teach vocabulary and engage students, and by knowing that there are many, many materials available within China that are free for educational use only to help our students.

Chapter IV: Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

As discussed in my first chapter, I began to explore this topic because of my own experience as an EFL teacher in Guangdong Province. Anecdotally from my own teaching experience, I believed that using storytelling to teach vocabulary created a higher level of connection to the material, induced activity with that material, and actually became a means of relating knowledge in a manner that encouraged diverse cultural backgrounds and enhanced learning experiences as well as new language retention.

After completing an exhaustive literature review that included much theoretical work and meta-analysis as well as primary studies, I found that recent scholarship confirms my own experience. I further found that “storytelling” itself, as defined by linguistic scholar and summarized by Ghafar (2023) creates multiple inputs and creates its own context as students become engaged in the material.

Finally, since my focus has been upon public school teachers in China, I concluded by showing that there are materials readily available that any teacher can use for educational purposes. In fact, my own school uses such materials. I recommend that public school EFL teachers in China (and for that matter, EFL English teachers anywhere) use storytelling as an interactive and effective way of teaching vocabulary.

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