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**BRIDGING THE GAPS IN GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE OF GRADE-7 SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH HOME READING: A LESSON STUDY APPROACH**

**Abstract**

This article investigates the efficacy of employing home reading activities as a means to address the gaps in grammar and vocabulary knowledge among Grade 7 secondary school students. Utilizing a lesson study approach, the study aims to explore the impact of structured home reading assignments on enhancing students' linguistic proficiency. Drawing upon principles of pedagogical research and language acquisition theories, the study examines the design, implementation, and outcomes of a series of home reading interventions. Through collaborative lesson planning, observation, and reflection, educators refine instructional strategies to tailor home reading assignments to the specific linguistic needs of their students. Preliminary findings suggest that sustained engagement with appropriately leveled reading materials outside the classroom environment facilitates incremental improvements in students' grammar comprehension and lexical acquisition.

**Key words:** *EFL,**learning gaps, grammar, vocabulary, grade seven, secondary school, home reading, lesson study, language acquisition, literacy development, collaborative learning, professional development, teachers’ reflective practice.*

**Introduction**

In the pursuit of academic excellence, educators are constantly exploring innovative strategies to enhance students’ learning experiences. One such approach gaining traction is home reading, which aims to bridge the gaps in grammar and vocabulary knowledge among 7th-grade students. Through the lens of Lesson Study, an action research methodology rooted in collaborative teacher inquiry, this article delves into the results, implications, and potential of home reading initiatives in bolstering language proficiency.

**Understanding Home Reading**

Home reading refers to the practice of students reading materials outside the classroom environment. This self-directed activity not only fosters a love for reading but also serves as a powerful tool for language acquisition. By engaging with various texts, students encounter new words, grammatical structures, and contextual nuances, thereby expanding their linguistic repertoire.

Understanding home reading involves recognizing its significance beyond merely reading for leisure. Through home reading, students have the opportunity to explore diverse genres and topics that may not be covered in the classroom curriculum. This exposure to a wide range of materials not only cultivates a love for reading but also enables students to develop critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. Moreover, home reading offers a platform for students to apply the language knowledge gained in the classroom to real-world contexts, reinforcing their understanding of grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, home reading fosters autonomy and self-regulated learning as students select reading materials based on their interests and proficiency levels. As students immerse themselves in reading outside of school hours, they gradually build fluency, comprehension, and confidence in their language abilities. Overall, understanding the multifaceted benefits of home reading underscores its importance in promoting lifelong literacy skills and academic success.

**The Lesson Study Approach**

Lesson Study embodies a cyclical process of collaborative lesson planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Rooted in Japanese pedagogy, this methodology emphasizes iterative improvement through shared expertise and peer feedback. Applied to the context of home reading, Lesson Study offers a systematic framework for evaluating its effectiveness in addressing grammar and vocabulary gaps.

When applied to the realm of home reading, Lesson Study provides a structured framework for assessing its efficacy in bridging grammar and vocabulary gaps. By engaging educators in collective exploration and refinement of teaching strategies, Lesson Study not only enhances instructional practices but also fosters a culture of ongoing professional development and growth. Through this methodical approach, educators can systematically address challenges and tailor interventions to meet the diverse needs of learners, ultimately enriching the educational experience and nurturing a deeper understanding of language acquisition.

**Lesson Study Implementation**

In the initial phase of Lesson Study, educators collaboratively designed home reading assignments tailored to the needs and of 7th-grade students of NIS school who came from different learning environments and hence, varying levels of language in use. Drawing from diverse literary genres and cultural perspectives, these assignments aimed to captivate students’ imaginations while strategically targeting areas of linguistic development.

During the implementation stage, students embarked on their home reading journeys, guided by clear objectives: to attain the A2 level of language proficiency and master simple grammar constructions to express the events in the past, future and present tenses. Teachers monitored the progress through periodic assessments, tracking individual growth in grammar usage and vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, students were encouraged to maintain reading logs in their workbooks, reflecting on learning experiences and identifying areas for improvement.

As a basis for the study material the authors chose a book about a student’s life, identified as an A2-level literature sample. Each week home assignment was given to students in the form of vocabulary revision based on one of the chapters at a time. Then, having come to the lesson, they performed a series of exercises both aimed both at the check of the content understanding and grammar rules implementation. Retelling of some of the excerpts was also included in the weekly 15-minute hoework check.

**Observation and Data Collection**

Central to the Lesson Study process is the systematic observation of student engagement, comprehension, and language proficiency. Educators conduct classroom observations, document student interactions with reading materials, and administer pre- and post-assessment measures to gauge the impact of home reading interventions.

Quantitative data, including vocabulary quizzes and grammar assessments, provide empirical insights into students’ linguistic development over time. Additionally, qualitative observations capture the nuances of student engagement with diverse texts, shedding light on their evolving reading preferences, comprehension strategies, and language utilization patterns.

**Analysis of Results**

The analysis of Lesson Study findings reveals promising outcomes in leveraging home reading to enhance grammar and vocabulary knowledge among 7th-grade students. Quantitative assessments demonstrate significant improvements in students’ mastery of grammatical concepts and lexical breadth. From identifying parts of speech to deciphering complex sentence structures, students exhibit greater confidence and proficiency in applying grammatical principles within authentic contexts.

Qualitative observations underscore the transformative impact of home reading on students' language acquisition journey. Through exposure to a rich tapestry of literary works, students develop a deeper appreciation for language diversity and cultural heritage. Moreover, their ability to infer meaning from context, decipher figurative language, and employ idiomatic expressions reflects the holistic nature of language learning facilitated by home reading initiatives.

Students’ outcomes in the third term of the academic year were compared to the average academic performance level of each student during terms 1 and 2. As it was evident, students A, B, and C showed a slight positive trend in the level of performance, but the least thorough work, done by the less able child resulted in the slightest change compared to the former two.

**Implications for Practice**

The success of home reading initiatives underscores the importance of integrating authentic literacy experiences into the curriculum. By harnessing the power of diverse texts, educators can cultivate a dynamic learning environment that nurtures language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and socio-cultural awareness.

Furthermore, Lesson Study serves as a catalyst for ongoing professional development, fostering a culture of collaboration, inquiry, and continuous improvement within educational communities. By engaging in collaborative inquiry cycles, educators refine instructional practices, tailor interventions to meet diverse student needs, and cultivate a shared commitment to academic excellence. Hence, it has been decided to continue the practice with some adjustments in order to ensure the best possible performance by the end of the school year.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, home reading emerges as a potent pedagogical tool for bridging the gaps in grammar and vocabulary knowledge among 7th-grade students. Grounded in the principles of Lesson Study, this innovative approach underscores the transformative potential of collaborative inquiry, authentic literacy experiences, and data-driven decision-making in fostering language proficiency.

As educators continue to explore innovative strategies to enhance student-learning outcomes, home reading stands as a beacon of hope, empowering students to embark on a lifelong journey of discovery, imagination, and linguistic mastery. Through concerted efforts and collective engagement, we can harness the transformative power of home reading to cultivate a generation of empowered learners equipped with the language skills to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

**List of Literature:**

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