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Fun-Fun English : The Impact of Literature-Based Program on Students' Interests and Performances*

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Fun-Fun English is an after-school program that has provided elementary students with literature-based English language instruction. This research examined the impact of the program on students' performances and interests in learning English and challenges teachers perceive in teaching literature. A qualitative case study method has been adopted, and the data has been collected from teacher interviews, classroom observations, student survey, and work samples. This study found that the program was deemed fun and interesting, enabling students to engage in English as a foreign language. Repetitive patterns in literature and diverse scaffolding strategies were the keys to provide students with language practice opportunities. However, learner differences and creating interesting activities were the major concerns for the teachers. In addition, there was a need to allocate more time for intensive study on phonics and grammar in order for students to learn English more effectively. This study suggests that for developing more effective literature-based program, how to use literature in teaching is considered important as much as literature itself. In addition, more balanced approach of incorporating both implicit and explicit teaching of language forms needs to be adopted in meaningful contexts.

[children's literature/English teaching/students' interests/literature-based instruction]

I. INTRODUCTION

In Korea, elementary school English teachers have faced some problems in the past: textbooks with lack of consideration for learners' proficiency levels and characteristics,

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difficulties in literacy education resulted from the ineffective integration of spoken language and written language; plain and dull reading materials without storylines; writing curriculum providing insufficient opportunities to elicit personal responses, and so forth (Kim & Kweon, 2011). In order to resolve the problems, current seventh curriculum reform for elementary education emphasizes the necessity for helping students to develop whole language literacy by integrating spoken language with written language. Accordingly, elementary school teachers have begun to take interest in and attempted to adopt whole language approach by utilizing children's literature in class (Kim & Kweon, 2011).

Children's literature is valuable in diverse aspects (Ellis & Brewster, 2002; Galda & Cullinan, 2006). Literature is entertaining and informative. It enables children to be motivated and learn about their world. It provides children opportunities to understand their own feelings and gain insight into others. It is also a useful tool in helping children's language growth and development. When they listen to and read stories, they experience a broad range of language possibilities to be put in their storehouse of language resources. Literature introduces English language learners to new vocabulary and sentence structures in meaningful contexts and enriches their English language repertoire.

Children's literature can be categorized into diverse genres: poetry, traditional literature, picture books, realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, and nonfiction (Kiefer, Hepler & Hickman 2007). Among the diverse genres of literature, picture books are useful to teach elementary students who are learning English as a foreign language since picture books contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and simple structures and can encourage young learners to participate in a type of pattern practice in meaningful contexts. Illustrations in those books also provide visual clues and support children's understanding of the stories. Using the visual clues is one of the reading strategies through which foreign language learners could understand key vocabularies clearly and concretely (Ellis & Brewster, 2002).

The educational value of using picture books for English education has been recognized in much research about using English picture books. Many studies centered on the benefits of using picture books, instructional techniques for teaching stories, and ways to utilize stories in elementary classroom (Chun, 2006; Chung, 2008; Yang, 2008). However, to date, there have been limited studies about challenges in utilizing children's literature. There is a need to examine not only the effects of literature-based program on students' interests and performance, but also the challenges teachers perceive in teaching literature throughout a literature-based program. Therefore, this research aims to examine the impact of a literature-based English language teaching program on students' performances and interests and to understand teachers' experiences of using literature.

The following research questions drove this study:

1) What impact did the literature-based program give on the students' interests and performances in learning English?
2) What challenges did the teachers perceive in implementing the program?

II. STUDIES ABOUT LITERATURE-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

1. Discussions about the Role of Literature

There have been theoretical discussions about the role of literature in second and foreign language learning and teaching. Edmondson (1997) pointed out that literature did not have any advantage over other texts in teaching language. He argued that other curriculum subjects could give better insights about culture, and literature was not more motivating compared to other texts and can sometimes be de-motivating, depending on contexts. However, McKay (2001) emphasized the benefits of using literature for ESL/EFL learners. According to him, utilizing literature provides an ideal context for learners to develop language awareness. For example, individually or in small groups, learners can share their personal reactions to literature and be aware of how their interpretations have been influenced by author's choice of language form. Classroom activities using literary texts can also provide opportunities to integrate the four skills, which are reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Lastly, literature can be a useful resource for developing cross-cultural awareness because many literary texts convey aspects of different cultures, such as cultural customs, foods, and values. Paran (2008) also argued for the use of literature in language teaching and pointed out that Edmondson's view of the language learning focused on a learner as "a language learning machine" (p.469). He contended that the fundamental goal of language learning was not only about language, but also learning which could lead to the enrichment of the lives of learners, and literature could play an important role in developing the whole person.

Empirical research has been conducted in order to examine the role of literature to language learning. The important factors for the contribution of literature to language learning have been addressed in research, such as the role of teacher and student. Weist (2004) examined an intermediate level of Spanish course utilizing literary texts in a University setting and pointed out the crucial role of teacher in a foreign language classroom. This study found that the classroom teacher aimed at enabling the students to understand the literary texts, and for this purpose, the instructor used a great deal of L1

rather than the foreign language, and dominated 90% of the classroom speaking. This study revealed that the more the instructional focus was on literature than language development, the more the teacher could use L1 than foreign language in class.

The role of the reader was another important factor in the contribution of literature to language learning. Kim and Kim (2010) examined reading process of elementary students when they were taught reading strategies through the use of children's literature. This study found that firstly, in the process of reading comprehension, the students used background knowledge actively and an integrated approach of incorporating both top-down approach and bottom-up approach. They also utilized inferring strategies to comprehend and showed the aspects of critical reading through reflective thinking. Secondly, they showed growth as English language learners. They cooperated with each other through think-aloud strategies and expressed their reading processes through journal writing. In addition, as the use of reading strategies increased, the students' reading comprehension ability has been improved, and their interests and confidence in reading have also been increased.

2. Pedagogical Approaches to Using Literature

There were studies which looked at pedagogical approaches to and methodologies of using literature in second or foreign language classrooms. Peregoy and Boyle (2005) discussed literature-based teaching strategies which were to help English language learners enhance in reading ability and develop meaningful experience with literature. According to them, for beginning second language readers, pattern books are useful in that they can be utilized for enhancing students' level of linguistic competence through repeated phrases, refrains, and rhymes, and for assisting story comprehension through pictures. In addition, beginning readers' illustration of stories is a way to communicate beyond words for expressing their own responses to the literature and prepare for verbal response groups. Other useful activities for beginners include shared reading with Big Books, guided reading, directed listening-thinking activity, readers' theater, and story mapping. For intermediate English language learners, cognitive mapping can be used which assists them with comprehension and memory of more complex stories. In addition, directed reading-thinking activity, writing literature response journals, and developing scripts for readers' theater and plays are recommended for intermediate-level readers.

In Korea, as the seventh curriculum reform required the integration of literacy education into the existing primary English curriculum, researchers and educators have collaborated in creating a new model to enhance whole language literacy. There was a need to create a systematic step model for teaching diverse elementary students with

different grades and language proficiency levels. Kim and Kweon (2011) created a primary English teaching model to enhance whole language literacy. They developed an eight-step model for teaching diverse elementary students with different grades and language proficiency levels through literature. The model was drawn from three theoretical foundations: TPR storytelling, whole language, and content-based instruction. TPR storytelling model developed aims at teaching early literacy skills utilizing patterned books and TPR activities to third and fourth graders. Whole language model provides fourth and fifth graders with opportunities to develop integrated language skills through diverse literature and literature response activities. Content-based instruction model is to integrate language learning with diverse school contents such as science, history, and so forth. This model is applicable to sixth graders. In this program, forty literary texts were selected and categorized into eight levels under the major three models. Teaching and learning materials useful for teaching the selected books were also provided. Kim and Kweon also examined views of teachers and/or learners about the program. After the implementation of the program, both students and teachers were asked about the efficacy of the program. They responded that the implementation of the models was successful and anticipated the efficacy of the program in elementary English teaching contexts. This model was useful for teaching diverse elementary students with different grades and language proficiency levels through literature.

However, the time allotted for elementary English education in regular classes has been an issue. It's still hard to be expected that linguistic input would be provided enough for students to improve English. After-school program can be the alternative to the lack of exposure and opportunities to learn English (Kim & Yi, 2009). In addition, after school program can also increase effectiveness of language learning through teaching by levels (Kang & Park, 2014). Especially, teaching English through literature will be able to offer to students diverse learning experiences though whole story books integrated with interesting activities (Rha, 2002; Sim & Kim, 2013).

Some studies pointed out the drawbacks of using literature. The length and linguistic difficulty were the major problems in using literary texts in foreign language classrooms (Maley, 2001). Choi (2010) studied picture-book-based English learning for children for a long period of around 11 months. English teaching classes with three first graders and two kindergarteners were observed. The result of this study showed that whole language approach provoked much difficulty focusing on the English input given by storybooks for the child learners. Rather, the learners showed positive reactions to meaning-centered smaller chunks of the language input such as the dialogues. This study suggested that in adopting whole language approach using picture story books for child learners, the approach of minimizing the burden of language input and having students practice smaller chunks of the input in meaningful

contexts was needed for more effective language processing.

Likewise, even though there has been a debate over the educational value of using storybooks for foreign language education, many studies have examined views of teachers and/or learners about language courses incorporating literature and provided empirical findings which could support the benefits of using storybooks. They have also suggested useful pedagogical approaches to and methodologies of using literature for more effective language education.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

Eight students participated in the program, but one of the students quit participating in the program after three months. The student participants were three girls and four boys. When the program started in 2014, they were second or third graders. All of the students had had previous English language learning experiences before they participated in the program. However, when the program started in 2014, their proficiency level was not high. Most of the students did not know alphabet completely and seemed to be taught word decoding skills. Only one student could read and comprehend sentences with simple structure.

The teachers were senior students in a university. They were majoring in English or doing a double major in English and Christian Education. Before the program started, the researcher provided teacher training sessions for one week in order to inform the teachers of ways to utilize children's literature in English teaching. Afterwards, while the program proceeded, the researcher observed the classes once or twice a month and video-recorded their lessons. On the last Saturday of each month, the researcher and the teachers gathered together and watched the videos and discussed their lessons. The researcher and the teachers talked about and gave feedback on their lessons to one another. In addition, through regular monitoring of the lessons, the researcher could get some information regarding how feedbacks in previous teacher training sessions have been reflected in further lessons.

2. Program

Fun-Fun English program in this study has provided elementary students with literature-based English language instruction as an after-school program for seven months. The program has been hosted by a university located in Kyonggi Province since

2010. In this program, the lessons have been conducted in the university. Two classes were formed, and each class consisted of three or four students. Each lesson has been conducted for one hour every Saturday since September, 2014. Therefore, for seven months, the students received 27 hours of teaching in total. Two of the teachers taught one class as a team. Another teacher took charge of the other class. The lessons were conducted mainly in Korean.

Basic levels of fiction and non-fiction picture books were selected with the consideration of the students' cognitive and linguistic levels. According to Kim (2013), picture books to be used for elementary students can be classified into nine categories: wordless books, predictable patterned books, books for early stages such as alphabet and concept books, traditional stories, fantasy, realistic story books, multicultural picture books, biography, and informational books. In this research, majority of the selected fiction books were predictable books with repetitive patterns, which can also be categorized into Level 1 of TPR program developed by Kim and Kweon (2011). Predictable books contain several patterns in context, and the repetitive patterns will provide opportunities for children to learn English naturally. All of the non-fiction books, except for *Planes, trains, and more* (Clyne & Grinfliths, 2004), were labelled into level 1 in the series. As the children were getting used to predictable stories, at the end of program, next level of fiction and non-fiction books were attempted to be used, such as *Guess how much I love you* (McBratney & Jeram, 2008), *Mrs. Wishy-Washy's birthday* (Cowley, 2010), *The snowman* (Briggs, 1978), and *Planes, trains, and more* (Clyne & Grinfliths, 2004). When dealing with those books, teachers had to simplify texts and structures of the stories in order to meet students' language proficiency levels. Non-fiction books were utilized once a month. The books used in class are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

List of Children's Literature Used in Class

Fiction	Non-fiction
Big egg (Coxe, 1998) *Dancing dinos* (Lucas & Lucas, 1998) *David goes to school* (Shannon, 1999) *Guess how much I love you* (McBratney & Jeram, 2008) *I like bugs* (Brown & Karas, 1998) *I like stars* (Brown & Paley, 1998) *Mice are nice* (Ghigna & Goodell, 1998) *Mrs. Wishy-Washy's birthday* (Cowley, 2010) *My dad* (Browne & Ferguson, 2001) *Let's go visiting* (Williams & Vivas, 2003)	*Eat your vegetables* (McCormick, 2004) *Fins, wings, and legs* (Clyne & Grinfliths, 2004) *Guide to growing* (Graves, 2004) *Honey* (Kimmelman, 2004) *Make a house* (Nichols, 2004) *Planes, trains, and more* (Graves, 2004) *Push and pull* (Garrett, 2004) *Sand* (Clyne & Grinfliths, 2004) *Tae Kwon Do* (Pierce & Bonita, 2004)

Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear? (Martin & Carle, 2010)
The lion and the mouse (Herman & McCue, 1998)
The snowman (Briggs, 1978)
The very busy spider (Carle, 1989)
The very hungry caterpillar (Carle, 1994)
Snow (Shulevitz, 1999)
Walking through the jungle (Blackstone & Harter, 2011)

Lessons the teachers provided in this program were designed by an acquisition-based methodology suggested by Ellis & Brewster (2002). The methodology was developed on the basis of a three-stage model (Plan – Do – Review). The activities in the Plan stage of this model involve introducing the topic, activating learners' prior knowledge, learning about key vocabulary, and informing students of what they are going to do with the lesson. During the Do stage of this model, children are involved in one or more activities by utilizing the target language. In the Review stage, teachers provide children review and extend what they learned in the previous stages. By adopting the methodology, this program attempted to create the acquisition-rich environment using children's literature for young learners. The skills which were emphasized for young learners in this study are learning vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There were many opportunities for integrating oral skills with literacy. For example, listening to a chant led to children writing some words or sentences in the chant. The teachers provided student evaluations to their parents every month regarding what the students have learned and their performances in class. The following sample lesson procedure as shown in Table 2 illustrates how a lesson has been conducted.

TABLE 2

A Sample Lesson Procedure

Storybook	*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
Aims	To introduce key words: egg, caterpillar, cocoon, butterfly To introduce vocabulary for days of the week and fruits To read the story To learn about the life-cycle of the butterfly To introduce and practice the question and reply, *Do you like….?* (*Yes, I do/No I don't*)
Pre-activity	Showing students the cover of the book, and asking questions about the life-cycle of the butterfly: *What's this? What do caterpillars eat? What does a caterpillar become? What does it become before a caterpillar?* Asking and learning about days of the week by singing the song, *Monday, Tuesday…* Asking and learning about words for fruits

Storytelling	Showing students the book cover again and asking what they think the story is going to be about. Storytelling using pictures to help students understand. While reading, a teacher invites students to predict: *What do you think the caterpillar is going to do? What's the next day? What do you think the caterpillar is going to eat on Saturday? How long did it take for the egg to become a butterfly?*
Post-activity	Missing game in order to teach days of the week: introducing the written form of the days of the week using the flashcards. Sticking the cards on the board, asking pupils to close their eyes, removing a card and asking: *What's missing?* Survey using questions and answers: a teacher helps students conduct a survey by interviewing each other and filling in the *Do you like…?* sheets with the name of their peers. Reading comprehension using worksheets of the life-cycle of the butterfly

2. Data Collection Procedure

This study adopted a qualitative case study method in order to examine the impact of the literature-based program on students' English performance and interests, and the teachers' experiences in teaching children's literature. The data were collected from teacher interviews, classroom observations, student survey, and work samples. The researcher conducted an individual interview with three teachers. The interviews queried the teachers about the impact of the program on students' English learning and their teaching experiences. To understand students' perception on this program, the researcher conducted student survey including degree of their interests in the literature-based lessons, the elements which trigger their interests, activities they prefer, literature they enjoyed the most, how much literature-based lessons helped improve their English language, the degree of their participation, and overall evaluation of the program. The questionnaire about students' interests was asked regarding the following subcategories: stories, games, songs/chants, worksheets, videos, and hands-on experiences. Regarding the improvement of English language ability, students were also asked which skills were improved through this program among reading, writing, speaking, listening, and/or vocabulary. The researcher observed each class once or twice a month for seven months in order to examine students' performances, responses, and participation, and the teachers' teaching techniques.

IV. FINDINGS

1. Benefits of Utilizing Literature

1) The Impact on English Learning

In the student survey regarding the impact of utilizing children's literature on students' English learning, all of the seven students responded that the lessons utilizing children's literature were very helpful or helpful for their English learning. Regarding the improvement of English language ability, students were also asked which skills were improved through this program among reading, writing, speaking, listening, and/or vocabulary. The students' responses varied depending on each student. They selected one skill or several skills together according to their own perception of improvement in English.

All of the three teachers also provided positive responses to the utilization of children's literature for the students' English learning in terms of overall appraisal of the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. When asked the elements contributing to the students' English learning, teacher Cha pointed out that repetitive patterns in meaningful contexts of the literature were very helpful for their English learning. She pointed out the benefits of repetitive patterns in the literature itself and provided the examples of pattern practices when using *Guide to growing* (Graves, 2004). This book displays the relationship between grown-ups and baby animals.

> When the students learn about children's literature, they learn English sentences easily. Rather, they learn them more easily. For example, it contains one sentence on a page. I teach words first and then sentences. So, they understand it. We don't teach what verbs and subjects are. They seem to understand English naturally. And here, when the sentences begin with 'pig is..', next sentence also starts with different animal names with the same structure. So the students accept the repetitions naturally. It is good. It is good for students to utilize those sentences.

Thus, the students could acquire certain language items through the natural repetition of stories, such key vocabularies and structures. They could anticipate what will happen next in stories. Frequent repetition in stories allows a type of pattern practice in meaningful contexts (Ellis & Brewster, 2002).

Teacher Cha also emphasized that the teachers themselves need to make conscious efforts for the students to be exposed repetitively to vocabularies, patterns, and sentences they previously learned. She created contexts for the students to be familiar with

language items they learned, which could be helpful for their retention of the language items. She revealed her experiences of adopting songs and games when using books like *Walking through the jungle* (Blackstone & Harter, 2011) and *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* (Martin & Carle, 2010).

> Many storybooks have songs. When I played songs back to them, at first they looked dazed, they would not follow the songs. But, I played them back again and again while they were involved in doing games. Sometimes, I used the songs for games. I played the songs back to them again and again. Then, after class, the students hummed the songs…. Then, when I asked them about the sentences, they did not forget them. I think that utilizing children's literature in this way was helpful for their English learning.

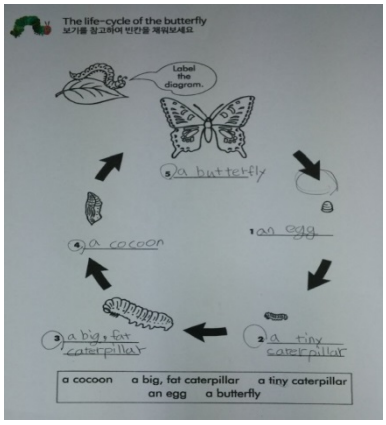
The teachers also adopted diverse scaffolding strategies to help the students learn English. They made an effort to provide questions and positive feedbacks in order to boost up student participation. In case of Hyori, one of the student participants, she did not participate actively, looked lacking in confidence, and did not show much progress in language learning in the early days of the program. But as time went by, she has shown much progress in English language learning. Her teachers pointed out that Hyori came to be interested in learning English through this program, and her English language ability has improved dramatically compared to other students' performance. Teacher Kim explained it in detail.

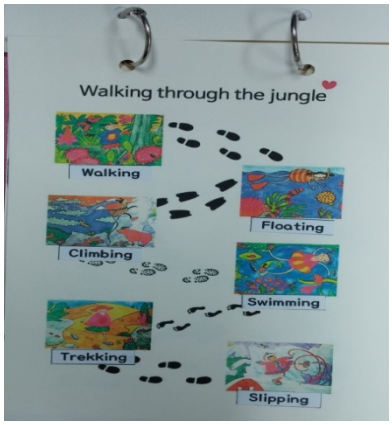
> When I wrote monthly evaluation of Hyori, I asked her mother to give her many praises. After that, I asked Hyori about it, and she said that she received a lot of positive feedbacks from her mother….In the early days of the program, she would not express her views in class. So we gave a turn to her intentionally. We gave her an opportunity to respond, especially to easier questions, and gave many praises. Then, Hyori came to acquire more confidence and respond actively even though her answer was not right. So, she came to enjoy answering to questions and expressing her views. She also memorized words very enthusiastically.

The teachers' and her mother's positive feedback helped to build up Hyori's confidence, which could induce her active participation in class and help to improve her language learning. When I met Hyori's mother by chance, she expressed her gratitude and said to me that her daughter became very interested in learning English thanks to this program and memorized words on her own. The following works shown in picture 1 were created by Hyori when she was learning about the life-cycle of the butterfly of the book, *The very hungry caterpillar*, and making a words-book utilizing key words in the book, *Walking through the jungle*.

FIGURE 1

Hyori's Works





2) The Impact on Students' Interests

Many people believe that children's literature invokes students' interests. In this student survey, all of the students responded that they felt very interested in class. During the individual interviews, the teachers also responded that the students looked interested in class. Regarding the questionnaire of what makes students interested in the program, six out of the seven students responded that overall story contents were very interesting. One of the students responded that they were so-so. When asked about the most favorite stories, they enumerated the titles of literature such as *Walking through the jungle* and *Tae Kwon Do*. The boys tended to prefer contents with physical movement like *Tae Kwon Do* compared with the girls. There must be gender differences in their preferences for contents in literature.

During the interviews, the teachers pointed out that story contents and high quality pictures and illustrations in literature could arouse students' interests. According to teacher Kim, her students showed interests in the story content when they learned the book, *The very busy spider*. Especially, they were interested in the spider's behaviors in the story. When she taught the book, she expected that the students would point out the spider's effort and sincerity of making a web without playing with its neighbors. However, unlike what she had expected, the students' focus was on the spider's relationships with others. They responded that the spider lacked social relationship skills. Thus, the students could engage in the stories while reflecting on their lives, especially their social relationships with others, and the story content could resonate with the students in the class. Teacher Kim gave a comment as follows.

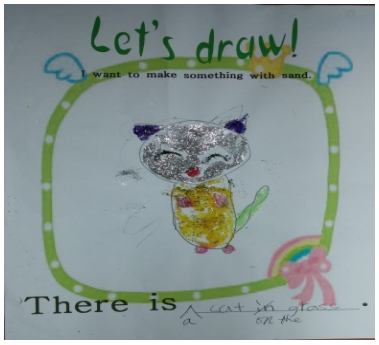
> Story contents have been interesting to the students. Rather than feeling resistance to English, the students felt interested in stories themselves and could focus on learning them. I think utilizing stories is a good way to teach English…. During the first month, I used the book, *The very busy spider*. They looked interested in the story content and remember the content very well. And, they also produced their own interpretation regarding the spider's behaviors. They said that the spider did not play with other animals, but only did its own work all day long. They suggested that it make relationships with others and play with them.

The major elements in triggering students' interests in learning English using children's literature included not only story contents themselves, but also diverse activities related to contents and certain language items they learned, such as games, songs/chants, videos, and other activities with hands-on materials and manipulatives. Regarding the questionnaires about subcategories of interests, all of the students replied that stories, games, songs/chants, videos, and hands-on experiences were interesting or very interesting. However, in response to the activity of filling out worksheets, two of the students said that they did not enjoy much, and it was so-so. As they showed it, they don't seem to like the writing activity, doing worksheets. They seemed to enjoy more active activities with hands-on materials and physical movements as many children do. Especially, writing activities might be hard to enjoy for beginners of learning English. Activities with hands-on materials and manipulatives induced student participation more actively. Teacher Song also explained what the children enjoyed as follows.

> It is good to use activities in class, like body movement, drawing pictures, making something. The children seemed to enjoy them…. But they don't seem to like doing worksheets. If the students do only worksheets without activities, they might be bored

In Song's class where the students learned about *Sand*, she prepared bottles and pieces of cookies to simulate how sand was made. She gave them the bottles, and each student tried to shake a bottle with the pieces of cookies to break them smaller pieces like sand. As a follow-up activity, the students created art works with sand. In another class, after learning about *Walking through the jungle*, the students created a house for animals by using paper materials. The students looked very interested in doing hands-on activities. The following shown in picture 2 are the examples of art works created by the students.

FIGURE 2
Art Works by Students





Especially, diverse games related to literature were an important trigger for arousing the students' interests. While involved in the games, the students could utilize English vocabularies and sentences they learned and could earn stickers as a reward from their teacher. Teacher Cha explained about it as follows.

> Most of our games were related to learning English. While participating in games, the students had to complete sentences with words. In order to do this, they had to bring as many words as they can and complete as many sentences as they can by using the words. Regardless of stickers, they liked those games a lot.

Teacher Kim also gave an example of using games in her class which could promote students' interests.

> The students enjoyed activities. For example, we created three kinds of foods in each of the three tables, and the students should take turns after 30 seconds. They enjoyed the game. They also liked the spider game which is related to physical movements. And especially, the girls liked drawing with colored sands because they liked drawings.

2. Challenges in Implementing the Literature-Based Program

1) Limitation in Adopting an Acquisition-Based Methodology

The teachers recognized that utilizing children's literature is definitely helpful to improve students' English language ability. However, they also pointed out that in order to improve English more effectively, there is a need to allocate time separately to

incorporate explicit instruction of basic skills such as phonics and grammar. Teacher, Cha and Song, emphasized the importance of providing basic skills explicitly.

> Teaching children's literature is definitely effective. However, it is impossible to improve students' English language ability with only utilizing children's literature. It is helpful, but it's not enough to learn English through stories in order to improve children's English ability. It is definitely helpful to be familiar with English. Children would not memorize when given isolated words-list without meaningful contexts. They tend to remember vocabularies and structures which are repeated naturally and frequently in stories.... But teaching basic skills such as phonics and grammar is surely necessary.

> The lessons have been conducted once a week around seven months. But if the instructional method is used in the current way, there must be some limitations in improving English. Therefore, there is a need to allocate more time to study basic skills intensively.

As the program proceeded, the teachers came to feel the need to provide explicit instruction of phonics and grammar. They acknowledge that stories allow children to be exposed to language in memorable and familiar contexts. However, the time given is not enough to teach focused instruction on phonics and grammar. Of course, they provided some phonics instruction when they taught literature. But they suggested the need to allocate more time to teach phonics and grammar intensively for more effective English language instruction. Teacher Kim emphasized the necessity of providing explicit instruction of basic skills connected with the literature.

> I think there are many language items and expressions to be taught in stories. But, if we provide more explicit instruction of basic skills to the current program, it will be more helpful to improve English ability. However, if the approach to build basic skills is not connected with language items found in literature, the students might not be interested in it. It is important for the students to learn English in context naturally, not through the kind of memorization.

The teachers emphasized on the need of more balanced approach integrating top-down approach with bottom-up approach because their current teaching approach has been developed more focusing on the acquisition-based methodology of teaching English utilizing children's literature.

2) Developing Interesting Activities and Considering Learner Differences

The teachers felt other challenges in preparing and teaching. One of the major challenges was to create activities which were interesting to the students. They had to spend some time searching and talking to each other to create activities which could cultivate the students' interests. But it was not an easy work. Teacher Cha revealed her endeavor in preparing activities.

> One of the challenges is to create activities. For example, science books like *Sand*. It was difficult to develop activities related to the book. We helped the students sprinkle sands on paper and had them think about what sands can make. The topic was mentioned at the end of the book. But, it was not an easy process to come up with ideas to develop interesting activities related to literature.

Another major difficulty was found in developing and providing lessons while considering learner differences. Among the eight students, one of the students stopped participating in the classes after three months. According to teacher Cha, the student neither knew alphabets, nor did his homework sincerely. While doing worksheets in class, he very often copied other students' answers. He felt difficulties in catching up with other students and finally gave up. Teacher Cha pointed out the difficulty of meeting the students' needs because of increased learner differences.

> There were learner differences in learning English. Minsik quit participating in the program. He was struggling with catching up with other students. Hyori showed much progress and is now doing very well. It's difficult to find the appropriate levels for teaching in order to prepare lessons.

Teacher Kim also pointed out the difficulties in teaching the students who have shown different progresses of learning.

> Sangsik had known more about English at the beginning of the program compared to other students. But, as the program proceeded, Doram and Hyori acquired English faster than him. And, now Hyori is the best in English in our class. Sangsik often missed the classes because he has been doing many other activities on Saturdays.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Utilizing children's literature in this program was definitely helpful to improve students' English language ability. Both students and teachers provided positive

responses to the utilization of children's literature for enhancing English learning. The practices of repetitive patterns in the meaningful contexts utilizing literature and the diverse scaffolding strategies were the keys to provide the students with language practice opportunities. In other words, not only the characteristics of children's literature itself, but also the ways of utilizing literature in class contributed to the students' English language learning.

Using literature also invoked students' interests. In the student survey, all of the students responded that they felt very interested in class. The story contents themselves could resonate with the students. In addition, the activities such as game, song, activities with hands-on materials and manipulatives were the triggers for cultivating the students' interests. Throughout this study, it has been realized that for developing more effective literature-based program, how to use literature in teaching is considered important as much as literature itself. However, learner differences and creating interesting activities were the major concerns for the teachers. In addition, the teachers felt some limitations in adopting an acquisition-based methodology to the program. They argued for adopting a more balanced approach of incorporating explicit skills instruction and whole language instruction. There was a need to allocate more time for intensive study on phonics and grammar in order for students to learn English more effectively.

As mentioned before, many studies on literature-based English language program have emphasized benefits of using picture books, instructional techniques for teaching stories, and ways to utilize stories in classroom. This literature-based program in this study also reinforced the result found in those studies that literature-based program provided opportunities to cultivate students' interests in learning English in meaningful contexts. However, this study also found that adopting the acquisition-based methodology for the long period of the program triggered some limitations in enhancing students' English learning. The researcher and teachers recognized the methodological issue and emphasized adopting a more balanced approach in teaching English.

Regarding the similar methodical issue, there has been a great deal of debates over phonics instruction versus whole language practice in teaching reading in the U.S. Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester (1998) conducted teacher survey in order to listen for practitioners' voices and queried 1,207 elementary teachers about the reading instruction issues and practices. The survey result indicated that the vast majority of teachers embraced a balanced approach combining phonics and literature-based principles and practices. The significant majority of teachers did not stand on an extreme position regarding the issue of phonics versus whole language approach. They were seeking for a more reasonable strategy when teaching children how to read words and comprehend text. Over the past forty years, the role of literature has been expanded in many schools in the U.S. (Kiefer et al., 2007). As many educators in the U.S. argued,

implicit language instruction without accompanying appropriate explicit instruction of language forms might not be also so effective in teaching foreign language. Seeking for absorption of language forms with lack of overt attention to them goes too far in language teaching (Brown, 2007). For more effective literature-based program, the balanced approach of incorporating both implicit and explicit teaching of language forms needs to be adopted in meaningful contexts.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide pedagogical implications to developing after-school literature-based programs. Over the past few years, elementary school teachers have been interested in and attempted to adopt whole language approach by utilizing children's literature in class. However, the time allotted for teaching English in regular classes, two or three hours a week, has been an issue. Researchers and educators contended that the time allotted for teaching English in elementary education needs to be increased (Kim, 2010). In this milieu, after-school program can be an alternative way to help students to enhance whole language literacy through literature. Diverse kinds of after-school programs will provide students with opportunities to learn English through literature. More future research on diverse literature-based programs implemented in after-school settings needs to be conducted in order to better inform teachers of diverse teaching and learning strategies when utilizing literature.

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Examples in: English
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Applicable Levels: Elementary

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