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**Application of English Chunks in Middle School English Classroom**

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**Abstract**： The domestic survey shows that most of the junior students have problems in English chunks learning. Although students have spent a lot of time on vocabulary learning, they do not have the expected learning effect. It makes the efficiency of learning English greatly reduced. With regard to vocabulary learning, English chunks can help the students memorize and apply the vocabulary more effectively. The author chooses English chunks because lexical chunks are the basis of learning English. This topic is mainly studied through the rules of pronunciation and word formation. Students will have a new comprehension of how to learn English. the paper aims to analyze vocabulary to find teaching methods to exerting the impact of English chunks.

**Key words**：English chunks; teaching methods; middle school

**摘要**：国内调查显示，大部分初中生在英语词汇学习方面存在问题。单词是学习英语的基础，虽然学生花了很多时间在词汇学习上，但并没有达到理想的学习效果，这使得学习英语的效率大大降低。面对词汇学习中存在的问题，英语块可以帮助学生更有效地记忆和运用词汇。作者选择英语词块，是因为词块是学习英语的基础，主要通过发音规律和构词组成来研究这一议题。学生将对如何学习英语有新的理解。因此，为了提高教师教学的效率，使学生的教学变得简单，本文旨在对英语块进行分析，找出能充分发挥英语块影响的教学方法。

关键词： 词汇组块法；教学模式；初级中学

**Thesis Statement**

English chunks is beneficial to the word adaptation especially by guessing the composition of letters words to make up a memorizing vocabulary.

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1. **Introduction**

Vocabulary plays an important role in foreign language teaching and learning. Even though there are a lot of studies about the advantages of the lexical chunks in learning English, a large of quantities of training are lacked in real class, the learning results seems unsatisfactory.

**1.1 Research background**

With the development of studies about Second Language Acquisition, researchers are paying more attention to English chunks on language teaching and also put it into practice, which lays a foundation for language teaching. Krashen believes that human second language has two independent systems, "the acquired system’ system" and " the learned system". "The acquired system" is the result of gradual familiarity with the process in the subconscious mind, which is very similar to the process that children experience when they begin to speak. In this process, language learning needs meaningful interaction and cooperation. The Krashen’s survey shows that in junior English learning, most of the students are lack of experience, so they have similar problems in vocabulary learning. Although students have spent a lot of time on vocabulary learning, they do not have the ideal learning effect.

The lexical chunks teaching is led by the teacher. The students pay attention to the applicable context of the vocabulary, the applicable methods of the vocabulary and the role of the vocabulary in the article. They combine the words with higher frequency or the same function to remember. This expands the vocabulary of students, allowing students to recombine vocabulary in different forms such as association and understanding, thereby realizing the memorization and memory of vocabulary and mastering the way of using vocabulary. With people's in-depth study of English, the benefits of lexical chunks are increasing. When we use lexical chunks properly, we will find that we have more and more control over words. The lexical chunks can help students learn vocabulary efficiently, master the skills of reading the article, master the fixed word collocation so that we can write the correct sentence structure collocation, complete content in writing. Learning lexical chunks enables the brain to remember more information in a short time and store a large amount of words, phrases and so on in the brain, so as to express and communication more smoothly.(Yan jia,2015) Many students are required to change the way they memorize the new words, the author attempts to find out the application of English chunks in Middle School how to solve so that it would relieve students’ pressure of learning and make English teaching more efficient.

This thesis analyzes the importance of English Chunks and puts forward the corresponding measures. It can help middle school students memorize and apply the vocabulary more effectively so that they can learn better in the key stage of English learning and lay a sound foundation for English study in the future. At the same time, the teaching suggestions of this thesis can be used to improve the pertinence and validity of junior English class teaching and reduce negative transfer.

**1.2 The definition of the lexical chunks**

Vocabulary takes a dominant position in a language. The lexical approach is described by Michael Lewis in the early 1990s. As there is no fixed definition to define the lexical chunks. Many linguistics try to define the lexical chunks. The lexical chunks are fixed or semi-fixed multi-word or sentence that is beyond the user's current language ability and is acquired as a whole during the language acquisition process. More importantly, they can be automatically invoked and used as a whole, rather than being generated from grammar rules. (Sun Zhuangyan, 2004). In the 1970s, Becker（1975） pointed out the memory and storage, output, and use of language are not in single words, and those fixed or semi-fixed pattern structures are the smallest unit of human communication. (becker, 1975:60-63). Michael Lewis defined language is not composed of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but is composed of pre-made chunks of multiple words, so the lexical chunk should be the smallest unit of language teaching. (Michael Lewis,1993). Lexical chunks have the following characteristics: many word combinations, formal integrity, memory prefabrication, and traditional semantics. Therefore, they are considered as prefabricated word combinations and now have a relatively stable structure. (Xie Linjing,2004).

Wei Naixing(2002) summarized definition of lexical chunks and considered that the lexical chunks are a series of words that combined with certain syntactic forms which can convey certain meanings in the context. There words consist of a series of co-occurrence words occurred in different text. In the meanwhile, Wei Naixing sees probability or frequency of language form usage as the standard and finally defines chunk as different length of consecutive word segments that frequently occurred in the corpus.

This paper divides four types of chunks with regard to word form to solve the problem of English vocabulary learning, and then these four types of chunks are further organized into three groups of word formation patterns to solve the problem better of pronunciation and usage of vocabulary than before.

To sum up, although different researchers define lexical chunks from different kinds of aspects, they agree on the nature of the English chunks: chunks refer to prefabricated multi-word combination which have a certain structure and express a certain meaning. English Chunks are fixed blocks based on the length of the phrase and the grammatical form. They can contain multiple words, or therefore a sentence or a combination of grammar, collocation, and so on.

**1.3 Research purpose and signification**

Vocabulary plays an important role in students’ all-round development, especially for junior middle school students, which lays the foundation for their future English study. As we know, master lots of words is becoming the major goal in middle schools English teaching. A lot of students in middle school have only three or four years to learn English, most of the time is in the primary school. So what they have learnt is very easy. Studies show that a large amount of students hold that they don’t know how to learn English, how to memorize English words efficient and better use these words in reading, writing and speaking.(Li Ningning,2016)

There already have some researches about the lexical chunk. Most of the researchers prefer to study this topic through experiments, questionnaires, tests. Few researchers study it by action research. At present, most of research subjects are college students or senior high school students, and few studies focus on junior high school students. And the researches on the lexical-chunk approach have proved that the lexical approach is helpful for English learning. By analyzing the literature, I have compiled several specific advantages. Four advantages are suggested by the literature:

1. The lexical approach can strengthen students’ interest and confidence. (Li Ningning,2016; Jiang Yingchao,2012)

2. The lexical chunks are ideal patterns to be memorized (Jiang Yingchao,2012; Zhang Liru,2012; Yang Yongfeng,2013) .

3. The lexical chunks can improve writing, reading and expression ability (Luo Lu,2014; Li Ningning,2016; Xie Lingjing,2014;) .

4. It can enlarge students’ vocabulary by learning the lexical chunks (Luo Lu,2014; Li Ningning,2016; Xie Lingjing,2014;) .

At present, the new curriculum standard of high school English in China has pointed out that Chinese senior high school students should learn and use 3500 new English words and 400-500 idioms or fixed collocation. In addition，some new words will be added to the English examination every year in order to meet the requirements of the syllabus at the time of the college entrance examination, which fully shows that the requirement of English vocabulary for students in the current English education in China is getting higher and higher.

In the recent years, Hao Ton shows that the application of lexical chunks to middle school English teaching can effectively solve the problem of vocabulary learning efficiency. The application to English course teaching in junior high school has its main advantages. First, English chunks can effectively change the teaching concept of English teachers, improve the awareness of lexical teaching, and improve the teaching efficiency.

Secondly, it can effectively change the method of learning vocabulary, improve the learning efficiency and cultivate the student’s autonomous learning consciousness, which lays a solid foundation for the future development of the students.

The third is to enhance the students sense of English and improve their spoken English. Lots of students memorized words skillfully with chunks. They found that the speed of memorizing words is getting faster and faster. It’s one of the reasons to promote chunks. There are still many shortcomings. This method is not suitable for all students. And the Lexical chunks teaching is a big challenge for teachers, they also should learn how to teach students in this way. Through the classification and combination of chunks, aim to propose this approach to more students and teachers.

**1.4 Classification of English Chunks**

Many linguists and applied linguists have attempted to make a classification of lexical chunks from different aspects, even though the forms of classification are different, obviously their classification have something in common. With the continuous study of English Chunks by Michael Lewis (1997) and other western linguists, they have classified them by combining the structure, function, frequency, compactness and cohesion function of English words.

Michael Lewis(1997) divided the chunks into the following four types.

The first is words and poly-words, for example, perform/performer.

The second is English conventional collocation, such as, up to now, be badly off. A combination of different words and words may have the same meaning together. A combination of English conventional can be a lot of meanings. So collocation is the combination of words in a language that happens very often.

The third is the structure of English sentence patterns, such as, there is no doubt that....it’s no wonder that....It is a set of words expressing a statement, an order or a question.

The fourth is the conjunction between English segments. For example, first, second, next, finally...It is very helpful for the students to learn the sentences of

structure well and to read passages in English.

The following is Becker’s(1975) classification of lexical chunks.

1. Poly words: fixed combination of multi-words.
2. The restrictive phrase: referring to a phrase frame consisting of fixed words.
3. Meta-discourse: referring to phrase can replace some text.
4. The structure of sentence structure, namely, sentence patterns.
5. Situational utterance: referring to short sentence with pragmatic function in specific social situations.
6. The original fragment of the text: referring to use the original phrase to replace the discourse.

The classification divided by Becker(1975), to some degree, is generalized and do not clearly explain the distinction between structure and function, but there is no doubt that the classification lays a foundation for the study in some aspects.

**1.5 Structure of the study**

The paper is divided into three parts. The first one is the introduction of English Chunks, background, definition, classification and structure. The second one mainly presents literature review including the study about English Chunks at home and abroad. The third one shows that case study on the application of English Chunks. The methods and influence in classroom will be given.

1. **Literature review**

In Hong Xing Chu study *Chunks,* it can be seen the role of the lexical chunk method in the second language acquisition has gained more and more attention in recent years. His paper briefly introduces the definition and meaning of the lexical chunk method, analyzing the studies on the acquisition of oral and written competence of Chinese foreign language learners in terms of lexical chunks. It can be learned that the oral and written ability has been facilitated by English Chunks. These two similar studies have proved that lexical chunk approach is very helpful for students to learn English and can improve their English performance.

In China, a lot of professors conduct the analysis and have different points. Chunks are stored in our mental lexicon as a whole, so in the process of understanding, we can grab the words with distinctive characteristics and bring out the whole string without dividing these phrases, collocations and sentences into words or understanding meaning by means of grammatical analysis.

In Sun Zhuangyan’s paper, he uses the concepts of constructivism. Cognitive psychology is concerned with the way in which the human mind thinks and learns. Constructivism is based on the principle that one learns best and remembers what one learns.(Sun Zhuangyan,2005)

In *On English Vocabulary Chunk Learning Approach* of Zhai Kang, the study showed that when using the Chunks method, the learners first analyze the vocabulary form from the word shape, and divide the vocabulary into blocks, thus the learners can solve the problem of word shape learning, which is called chunks. According to the function of word form, word pronunciation, word meaning and lexical pattern, the words are divided into four parts: phonological chunk, lexical chunk and lexical block, and the highest level block is drawn out. Thus, the word formation mode of the vocabulary is obtained. And the word formation mode of the word is obtained by dividing the lexical block into the lexical block.

As for this definition, learners need to learn more about lexical chunks and what matters is that learners should choose learners' thoughts to learn the meaning of vocabulary according to the word formation pattern. Chunks are more frequent than words in real communication. It combines the advantages of grammar, semantics and context, and its form is relatively fixed. This paper first gives the definition and classification of lexical chunks, and then discusses its universal significance in language acquisition, cognitive rules and the relationship with language learning, thus proving that chunk teaching method has potential advantages in listening, speaking, reading and writing teaching, and is a feasible vocabulary teaching method.

In addition, there are some problems in *Analysis of English Chunks* by Shan Xiao Yan. First of all, she emphasizes on students’ personal experiences. Students' comprehension of chunks can be improved through many ways, and teachers also have a new understanding of chunks teaching. In order for most students to accept this learning strategy, it is necessary to improve their ability to adapt. Teachers should emphasize the central position of students, mobilize their initiative and enthusiasm, and give full play to their active role. The author believes that we should also use a variety of means to develop student’s self-evaluation self-monitoring learning ability, and guide learning.

1. **Research design**

A vocabulary test is conducted. The purpose of the research, on the one hand, is to investigate the present situation of English teaching and learning vocabulary in junior middle schools. On the other hand, it is conducted to collect the advantages of English Chunks of junior middle school. Besides, it will check whether English Chunks are proper in English teaching. It is aimed at the current situation of the students’ vocabulary learning by examination in junior English class. We found two groups of students in the school. One group of students memorized words by English chunks, the other group used traditional methods to memorize words. In traditional English teaching, grammar and vocabulary are regarded as two independent parts. This concept is deeply rooted in English teaching in the country, which leads teachers and students to pay too much attention to grammar teaching, and ignore the role of vocabulary, Some teachers have over-emphasized vocabulary memory, and believe that the greater the vocabulary, the stronger the language skills of students.(Yang Yongfeng,2013) Two months later, the English learning of students using chunks improved greatly. In the process, many problems have also been found, for example, experience group students can use chunks of words skillfully to memorize words. They always do not understand the meaning of the meaning, and chunks are needed to improve.

Two classes in the same level according to the results of the last semester final exam are selected, one is experimental class, another is control class. They are taught by the same teacher. The test includes 3 types of questions. The first one is word spelling to check the vocabulary. The second one is word match for the understanding of word meaning. The third one is word guess in context. 50 papers were issued and all copies were returned, of which all were valid. The tests were held in the same time, in the middle of the semester.

We divide every five students into groups. In forty minutes, they are asked to finish all the questions. And the teacher calculated the time spent on each type of problem, and calculated the average time required by comparison.

Graph 1 The effect of English Chunks in Word Spelling

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | experiment group | control group |
| Types | 25 students learning English Chunks | 25 students not learning |
| easy words | 54% | 46% |
| difficult words | 42% | 58% |

It is revealed that as for the first question about word spelling，students in the experiment group are doing better than those in the control group by 8%. As for the easy words, there is little difference between groups. Among 25 students having learned English Chunks, the pass rate is 54% in easy words and 60% in difficult words whereas the pass rate among 25 students who have not learned, their past rate is 46% in easy words and 40% in difficult words. The pass rate differs by 6% in easy words and 20% in difficult words.

To sum up，not much difference are there in the aspect of easy words while in difficult word there are numerous differences by 20%. It can be learned that English Chunks is beneficial to memorize the difficult words.

Graph 2 The effect of English Chunks in Word Match

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types | Pass Rate of 25 students learning English Chunks | Pass Rate of 25 students not learning English Chunks |
| Word Match | 55% | 45% |

In the second step word match, it can be found that the pass rate of the experiment group is better than the control group. 25 students having learned English Chunks pass 55% whereas 45% of students having not learning English Chunks passed word match. It is found that the pass rate differs by 10%, which is similar.

Word Match aims to check the comprehension. It can be inferred from the result that English Chunks is useful to comprehend sentences.

Graph 3 The effect of English Chunks in Word Guess in context

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types | Pass Rate of 25 students learning English Chunks | Pass Rate of 25 students not learning English Chunks |
| Easy | 53% | 47% |
| Difficult | 55% | 45% |

It is revealed that in word guessing in context the pass rate of 25 students having learned English Chunks is higher. In context, it is crucial to connect the sentence meaning. English Chunks use its approaches to analyze the sentence and guess the word meaning, it makes the students' thoughts clearer than before. Through the experimental comparison, after the students master the lexical chunk method, even if it is difficult to remember words, the accuracy of memory is also higher than before. But among 25 students who have not learned English Chunks, they recite facts that they have learned by rote. So their pass rate is lower than other 25 students.

To sum up, English Chunks is beneficial to the word adaptation especially in word guessing. In face of whether easy or difficult one, the pass rate of English Chunks is higher. Therefore, application of English chunks is useful in memorizing vocabulary. As more and more students become more sensitive to words, the chunk approach has been verified.

1. **Application of English Chunks**

**4.1 The methods of English Chunks in Middle School Classroom**

**4.1.1 Skillful division of words**

It can be learned that English Chunks is beneficial to word adaptation. Chunks are the basic unit of language teaching. Chunks are mostly linguistic units generated according to certain grammatical rules, which do not require conscious attention to grammatical structure and shorten the time from understanding to producing linguistic information. Thus, the correctness and fluency of language use can be greatly improved.

In group teaching, teachers can proceed from the perspective of information processing to teach. According to English Chunks theory by Hans Muller, if people do not review the content of chunks in a short time, they will become unfamiliar with the content of chunks. Therefore, people can effectively memorize only nine units of information, and the effect of memory becomes worse with the increase of the number of memory units.

In the process of English teaching, teachers should pay attention to the integration of the tiny stimulating memory units, organize and process these information, and facilitate students to combine memory. Teachers can try to teach lexical chunks in the process of teaching alphabet combination and pronunciation. Then also teachers let students refer to lexical chunking teaching mode when learning word level and similar sentence structure, so as to improve students memory efficiency.

Many teachers make use of the practice to memorize words firmly to build up the students vocabulary. The twenty-six letters of words and it is also the first thing that English chunks are the basic unit of the word in English.

**4.1.2 Highlight lexical emphasis**

When teaching vocabulary, teachers should raise the awareness of key words so that students can rely heavily on memorizing words, and find some words with similar rules in vocabulary.

Many experts think focus on words that are likely to be similar to English in spelling or pronunciation, so that students can compare the key parts with the words to be memorized and use association to find a link between the two.

Thus, in the process of memorizing the key words, it is natural to associate with the new words through repeated contacts, which ensures that students can review the English vocabulary frequently and improve the efficiency of English vocabulary learning.

In English Chunks, teachers should imbue the children with the consciousness of the form of words which is an important part of English Chunks. Only by organically combining the forms of words and the meanings of words can the words be memorized efficiently and the key words with different meanings can be used as chunks. Then students combine the meaning of the key word with the meaning of the vocabulary to learn the vocabulary. It is important to note that Chinese and English are two different languages. When teachers guide students to identify key words, they should not drag them in order to get in touch with each other and spell them out of Chinese. And it is important to pursue the natural nature of association, so that students can not afford to grasp vocabulary.

**4.1.3 Enrich classroom teaching**

Teachers should help students to create a good classroom situation so as to mobilize the enthusiasm of learning English and help students actively memorize vocabulary.

Teachers should create interesting teaching methods for students so that students can have fun in the back-up of English, so students be willing to learn English and stimulate students initiative learning. English chunks can play the main role of students in English class, ensure that students can communicate with each other under the guidance of teachers and memorize words in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

In the process of learning English, if students maintain a good mentality, they will be more positive in the classroom, words will also show a high degree of attention. It is important to note that when teachers organize interesting activities for students, they should ensure that the combination of vocabulary and activity does not always cater to the students psychology and ignore the relationship between activities and memorizing single words. To ensure that students can benefit from their activities, they can first read the text thoroughly and group them.

**4.2 Application of English Chunks in Middle School Classroom**

**4.2.1 Integrate Related Words to Form Chunks**

First of all, junior middle school English teachers must correct syllables before the teaching of each unit, so that students can memorize the letter combinations of words accurately according to syllables. Secondly, in the process of explaining the vocabulary to the students, the teacher should make the students familiar with the words according to the syllables and the latent memory of the pronunciation, and let the students review the contents of the class after class.

English chunks can be properly expanded and modified to form a vocabulary chain suitable for each student. After that, teachers should strengthen the communication between students and sum up the thesaurus by checking the students' notes and error-prone points. This method can not only cultivate the students' habit of thinking independently, but also help them to construct the mode of thinking, so that they can have a new understanding of English vocabulary. **4.2.2 Look for Chunks in Teaching**

In Junior English Teaching, vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns of each unit in the textbook are taught through reading materials. In the traditional middle school, English teachers often regard the reading class as grammar lesson and the explanation course of knowledge point and vocabulary, which leads to the completely neglect of the analysis and induction of the structure of the article in the course. This kind of teaching method is familiar to everyone, but it also has many disadvantages. Teachers play a very important role in traditional English classes. They can instill a lot of knowledge into students. However, the role of students in the classroom is very small, students seldom think about themselves in the classroom, which reduces students ‘interest in autonomous learning.

Therefore, in the teaching method of lexical chunks, junior middle school English teachers should pay attention to text teaching when they carry out teaching, so that enable students to analyze the teaching materials and articles through overall reading. Through this teaching method, students' thinking has been trained, and they will also be exposed to the use of chunks to deepen their understanding of chunks. As a result, the English teachers in middle schools should pay more attention to teach with English chunks.

By learning vocabulary, students can master some fixed collocations, make the expression of the article more coherent, and make the sentence structure match correctly and complete. In this way, it can not only improve the student's awareness of lexical chunks and English vocabulary application, but also contribute to the accumulation of students ability to express English in writing and lay a solid foundation for middle school students to learn and apply English in the future.

**4.2.3 Rewrite the text and highlight chunks**

In middle school English teaching, reciting the text is a very effective way to learn vocabulary, but the text in high school English is generally long, and the distribution of chunks is also quite scattered,

Therefore, in order to improve the efficiency of students and logical exercises, English teachers must abbreviate, change and imitate the texts in English textbooks, so as to turn the excessively long English articles into short and concise ones.

This effectively improve the speed of reciting by students. At the same time, the simplified article is more helpful for students to find out the existing lexical chunks, and to help students accumulate English lexical chunks more efficiently, such as collocation and sentence construction. These can improve English reading ability and English writing ability of middle school students.

* 1. **The influence of English chunks on students**

English Chunks has many impacts in listening, speaking and talking. First of all, it is helpful to improve English listening comprehension of the students, which is based on the short term records of the human brain familiarity with words. And develop the awareness of lexical chunks, foster ability and apply them to English learning. However, the human brain response ability is limited, and the vocabulary block teaching can well relieve the stress of the human brain memory, thereby effectively improving the English listening of the students.

Second, chunks improve the English-speaking ability of the students. Although some simple phrases are combined Such a combination is more consistent with the people's actual living language. It can be said that the can help to chunk train the students English language habit and logical thinking to improve the students oral English ability.

Thirdly, to facilitate the students Reading ability is to promote their English ability. In students daily English reading, if the students can master these lexical chunks, they can grasp the whole article well.

Fourthly, students take a positive attitude towards English and let them interested in English. For example, when even though lexical chunks appear in English paragraphs, the learners can understand the meaning of the whole article as long as they have a good grasp of the vocabulary of these transition classes. English is an important part of junior middle school teaching, so it is necessary to improve the efficiency of junior middle school English teaching. Lexical chunks teaching is an effective means to improve the efficiency of junior middle school English teaching.

1. **Conclusion**

English Chunks, as one of the important affective factors affecting foreign language learning, has always been study by many linguistics. But lack of widely used in foreign language teaching and research. In order for people to comprehend the practicability of English Chunks in junior English class and students’ English, a vocabulary test was conducted.

By investigating students' vocabulary, we can draw the conclusion that English Chunks is beneficial to the word adaptation especially in word guessing. In face of whether easy or difficult one, the pass rate of English Chunks is higher. Therefore, application of English Chunks is useful in memorizing vocabulary. In the English teaching, the language block has obvious promotion effect on vocabulary teaching, mainly due to the following reasons: First, one of the characteristics of the language block itself is to integrate some words with high frequency at the same time to achieve a memory together. The effect of the application. This allows students to frequently access these blocks and their words while learning English, familiar with their pronunciation, spelling and meaning. Secondly, the memory of the chunks has a great relationship with the context in which they are used. Students learn the chunks and, when they encounter the same context in the future, naturally generate associations and integrate a large number of vocabulary. , thereby improving the efficiency of memory. At the same time, the study of lexical chunks can help students remember more information in a short time while remembering the listening text information.

When it comes to the limitations of study, it does not take into account level factors. From my point of view, in future research, we need to consider other possible issues, such as study habits and interests. And the limitations of teaching environment and objective conditions. It is not enough to have only two classes in the experiment, which will affect the experimental results. Last but not least, the time is limited. We should extend the time of this experiment, observe the students' English proficiency, and master the number and efficiency of vocabulary changes in this experiment.

study efficiency is related to students' different learning level. Such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. More importantly, we should stand on the student's point of the view, do more research, on-the-spot investigation, to ensure the equality of research.

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