

ERIQ FLLN: Family Language Case study

Case study title:

Learner Profile: Learning for change in skills and attitude

Pilot LA/provider:

Cambridgeshire Family learning

Contact name and job title:

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Introduction:

Shazia (not her real name) is a second-generation British Punjabi. She is a young mother with ideas and aspirations of today's Britain and also with ties of family and culture that have a great influence on her attitude and outlook in the modern world. She joined the 12-hour family language course, Make Play Clap and Sing, at her children's primary school to support her daughter (aged 4) and to improve her own English skills.

Description/outline of activity, process, etc.:

Over the six-week course Shazia showed a change in her approach to the role of parenting and in her attitude and confidence in her relationship and communication with the school, in particular with her daughter's nursery teacher.

Shazia wanted her daughter (D) to succeed in a society where she felt she herself had been held back by not having an English-speaking mother. She wanted her daughter to be confident. However, she did not prioritise spending time talking or reading to her daughter, and did not value learning through play.

When asked what she thought was important when buying toys for D, Shazia replied, 'Something to keep her quiet.'

Shazia took a traditional role of cooking and cleaning for her family. In her case this meant D had to amuse herself. D's language skills were slow to develop in both English and Punjabi. Shazia felt that the school was not giving her a true picture of what and how her child was learning, and nodded in agreement when one of the other learners gave her opinion that 'the slow-learning children were neglected'.

The turning point for Shazia came in week 2, when the tutor told her that D would most likely gain in confidence when she (D) became more aware of her own importance in other people's eyes and that her mother (Shazia) would have to take the lead in that by actively listening when D spoke to her.

During the course, Shazia came to realise that she could have quality conversations with D by making time to do at home the activities modelled during the sessions and also during conversations taking place to and from school and on visits to shops. D liked to play with the cheap and cheerful resources produced during the session because they had been made for her by her mother and because Shazia was confident to use the resources with her.

There is no doubt that the presence of the bilingual language support teacher (A) from the school made a huge difference to Shazia and the whole course. 'A' supported them within the discussion part of each session and helped the learners by:

- letting the learners know what kind of support their children received at the school
- knowing and describing the experiences their children were having
- reporting back to the class teacher what the learners were concerned about
- correcting any misinformation from school and parents
- reporting changes she had observed with regard to their children to the learners.

Impact:

At the end of the course the nursery teacher was able to tell the tutor how enthusiastic the parents, including Shazia, were about the course and how much better communication was with parents. The parents had all gained in confidence and oral skills to communicate with their children and the school. There appeared to be small but significant progress even in the short time for the children. School reported that Shazia was now able to approach the nursery teacher in a relaxed way and was beginning to discuss how she wanted to support D with the school's help.

All the learners were interested in other courses which might be put on at the school in the future and were put in touch with the development worker who calls regularly at the school. They felt that further learning provided at the school fitted with their home lives and culture.

Key factors for success:

Bilingual support teacher.

Recruitment programme by the school.

Activities that boosted the self-esteem and the speaking and listening skills of the parents.

Any developments since the activity described or plans for future:

This programme is now included within the family learning publicity materials to all schools and it can be requested by any primary school in the county.

Other additional information:

Pictures for body language, facial expressions and food types can be found on the Internet easily using a search engine (e.g. Google).

Quotes from parents or practitioners:

'I can see how the playing activities contribute to . . . learning. I know now how the bi-lingual support teacher works with the children. My daughter wasn't able to explain that she was getting support.'