

ERIQ FLLN: Family Language Case study

Case study title:

Using ICT with Bilingual Families to encourage independent learning

Pilot LA/provider:

Wakefield Adult Community Education

Contact name and job title:

Jacqueline Race, Skills for Families tutor

Contact details:

Tel: (020) 8662 5571 e-mail fiona.spargo-mabbs@croydon.gov.uk

Introduction

The overall aim of the 30-hour Family Language course is to develop parents' knowledge and understanding of the national curriculum as used in schools and to develop their speaking, listening and reading skills, including the use of ICT, particularly to encourage independent learning.

Description/outline of activity, process, etc:

The class takes place in a primary school and brings together parents of children in EYFS and KS1 at two different schools. The course was set up in response to the arrival of new immigrant families in the area. It is the first time that the school has offered a bilingual families course. The children are involved in the course through home activities rather than through direct input in school. The learners are Polish with mixed skills levels in English ranging from Entry 1 to Entry 3 (although only Entry 1 and Entry 2 learners were present at the session). All the learners are keen to improve their English to support their children in school and to develop skills, which will help them to gain work. They see English language skills as a very important part of their integration into English life.

Sessions take place once a week for two hours. ICT is introduced as part of the learning process for the adults and children. The learners are not familiar with ICT as a learning tool from their own school education.

The aims of the lesson were to enable learners to:

- identify materials from different web sites to develop their own and their children's language skills

- practise different reading strategies through accessing the Internet (Rs/E1.1a, Rw/E1.1a, Rw/E2.2a)
- practise speaking skills by giving opinions about the sites visited (Sd/E1.1c, Sd/E2.1d).

The Internet site addresses were provided by the tutor but parents were encouraged to share with the group any useful sites they had visited before. The learners were all fairly competent at using the keyboard and navigating around the web sites. The session also covered safe use of the Internet.

The activity gave learners the opportunity to practise different reading strategies and to choose language activities for themselves and their children which they identified as relevant in terms of level and content. The group looked at a variety of web sites that focused on developing literacy skills and English language acquisition. These included BBC sites aimed at children's learning, and other sites aimed at older learners. Most of the sites visited provided the learners with the opportunity to print off worksheets to reinforce the key learning strategy that they had been focusing on during the session.

The first sites looked at were aimed at developing children's literacy skills and the purpose of visiting these was twofold: first, to see how learners could support their children's literacy development; and second, to see whether, in the light of the learners' own developing language levels, any of the activities could be of benefit to the parents. If so then the parents could also be increasing their reading, speaking and understanding of the English language whilst sharing quality time together with their children.

Regarding the first point, the learners found that the sites provided an array of activities to support primary literacy skills and believed that they would be very useful in encouraging their children to play and learn. Moreover, they could introduce them as an alternative to the games sites that their children usually visited that did not focus on these skills.

On the second point, the words and pictures site helped with a greater understanding of phonic sounds and enabled them to read and recognise words with common spelling patterns (Rw/E2.2a) through an activity that used a variety of phoneme sounds i.e. ou-ow and air, are, ear. It also served to increase their vocabulary as they came across unfamiliar words. Listening skills (Lr/E1.2d) were also enhanced as the learners could hear any new words being pronounced. With parents having a clearer understanding of some of the spellings and phonic sounds they would now be able to support their children more confidently when exploring this site together.

Of the sites aimed at the older learner, English Banana.com (www.englishbanana.com) was particularly useful, primarily because it has a Polish/English section that helped learners to develop their knowledge of some topic based vocabulary, thereby enabling them to increase their capacity to recognise a number of words (Rw/E1.1a); and secondly, it provides a comprehensive section of grammar points suitable for learners at different levels, some of which could be accessed through interactive quizzes. There is the opportunity to print worksheets so that learners can focus on reading (Rw/E1, E2.2a) and writing (Ww/E1.1/, Ww/E2.1), during independent learning.

When they had completed the internet exploration activity, the learners practised giving opinions by talking about the usefulness of the sites, for both their own and their children's learning (Sd/E1.1c Sd/E2.1d).

Impact:

The parents became more aware of educational sites available for English language learning, both for themselves and their children. This encouraged independent learning in the session and at home. Learners reported that they had enjoyed the session and said that they would access computers at the library to continue to use the sites they identified as most useful.

Key factors for success:

The session built on existing ICT knowledge of the parents and enabled them to extend computer use safely for their own and their children's learning.

Any developments since the activity described or plans for future

Further sessions are planned for the learners of this group to use ICT.

Other additional information:

Web sites explored

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/magickey

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize

www.englishbanana.com (for adult or older children learning English)

www.learnenglish.org.uk (for adults and children)

Quotes from parents or practitioners:

One parent said that usually her children only visited Polish sites but after this session they tried out www.bbc.co.uk/wordsandpictures at the library and really enjoyed it and would play on it again.