



## **Case study –Kelmscott School**

We started with a group of 23 mothers that gradually increased to 30 mothers: 11 of them illiterate, 15 – below Entry Level 1; 2 - Entry level 1; and 2 - Entry Level 2. They presented with a very low self-esteem, were afraid to speak in English, and not engaging with others in activities. Some of them, who had some knowledge of English, were reluctant to help others who needed support with understanding the task and who spoke the same language. They were lacking social skills and refused to share ideas. They lacked IT skills, could not use either the mouse or the keyboard.

Most of them in their 40s or older, they found the sessions quite enjoyable as there was a wide range of differentiated worksheets for different levels to suit their needs and abilities. I have started with short tasks and ask individuals to answer, then I tried to challenge the answers and I have asked other mothers to do the same as well: to agree /disagree with the answers given. They have tried to talk to me only in the first instance but I have encouraged them to have a discussion in pairs first. After few sessions they asked to work in groups as they were sharing ideas and they found it very productive.

They showed commitment, willingness during the sessions, eager to have homework. The illiterate mothers started with shaping the letters and now they are forming words and even sentences. The mothers have asked for the sessions to be longer. They have asked if they could attend both sessions even if they are not paid for both sessions. Mothers who don't have children in our school joined as well even if they are not going to be paid at all.

“English – The Key to Integration in London” project allowed teachers and candidates to work cooperatively with each other and also with the language instructor. All class members worked as a team. The new materials helped enhance instruction by providing mothers with a physical resource they can use to develop their understanding of the topics being discussed. Teaching included the activities carefully selected by the teacher that helped mothers learn.

A variety of teaching strategies were used to ensure that all mothers have an equal opportunity for learning despite learner differences such as learning styles and strategies. Testing allowed the teacher and mothers to evaluate their learning and ensure that the material is being understood and progress is being made.

A variety of evaluation strategies were used to assess the effectiveness of the instruction being offered. These included teacher/instructor's self-evaluation, parent evaluations, and upper level evaluations. These various evaluations include both formative evaluations, conducted while the course is taking place, and summative evaluation, conducted when the course has finished.

The class participants are required to contribute their own knowledge and expertise to classroom discussions and projects. The course was framed within a constructivist perspective that embraces the belief that knowledge is socially constructed. In this perspective, learning was viewed as a developmental process that is enhanced when mothers learn to view problems and issues from multiple perspectives, constructing knowledge from their own interpretations of numerous pieces of evidence. Teaching approaches were directed toward open-ended inquiry, critical thinking and reflection, and social interaction. Instructional methods were developed to include whole class and small group discussion, individual and cooperative activities, presentations by the instructor and classmates, internet and library searches, observations of instructional videos, field experiences, and research.

### **Major achievements**

- Group projects allowed mothers and the instructor to work cooperatively with each other. Members worked as a team; and therefore, this ESOL curriculum development project created a constructivist classroom learning environment in three important ways. First, the *authenticity* of the project motivated the mothers to learn how to develop a second language curriculum.

- Parents made substantial gains in their fluency and confidence in speaking English, and in their ability to understand the spoken language. Parents at entry levels 1 and 2 used English confidently to talk in simple terms about themselves and to engage in conversation with others. At more advanced levels they were able to speak and respond appropriately in a wide range of contexts. Parents used English routinely in social and professional settings where previously they struggled or were reliant on others.

- Mothers are feeling proud that they can talk to their children in English; children are proud of their mothers that they can speak English. Mothers felt more important and appreciated when talking into English outside classroom.

- Job or promotion prospects were improved significantly for many parents who attended classes. The classes enabled them to make telephone calls to enquire about employment and participate confidently in job interviews. In their daily lives their improved speaking skills allowed them to make appointments over the telephone, discuss their children's or their own needs with education and healthcare professionals and engage confidently in everyday activities such as shopping. Some mothers have started writing formal letters to authorities for different reasons.

- Parents improved their reading and writing skills at entry levels 1 and 2 in useful practical everyday areas such as reading leaflets and filling in simple forms. At higher levels parents were able to read and produce increasingly complex text. Some parents learned how to write following British academic conventions, while parents in the workplace learnt to read and understand critical health and safety information. In many general English as well as employability programmes parents produced well-written curriculum vitae (CVs), and developed their reading skills effectively through the study of job advertisements.

- Parents' job-seeking skills were usefully developed alongside ESOL learning within the employability provision run by the Reed Recruitment Agency. Citizenship learning was well established as part of the ESOL curriculum, and contributed usefully to the promotion of community cohesion. The most common topics were: information about using services; cross-cultural themes, especially those concerning different religions and their festivals; and general aspects of British life and institutions.

During the review process, in particular, they talked about general gains in confidence and how they were now able to use English more widely in their daily lives, with their children, and at their children's schools. Parents achieving at a higher level found a new job search skills class particularly useful. One learner described how she had learnt to develop appropriate curriculum vitae and was now confidently helping friends/relatives in her community to produce their own curriculum vitae as well. She clearly saw this as a very significant tool in seeking employment in Britain. Some mothers attended a free course (Speaking English with confidence) which provided them with skills to teach speaking and listening to adults. They have offered 30 hours volunteer lessons to the community and are looking for jobs in this domain.

The majority of parents showed an interest in gaining employment. All parents were developing independent study skills in class, using dictionaries, the internet to access information, and organising materials in study folders. Parents reported that they found the individual learning plans and the goals they contained very helpful in improving their English. They very much appreciated the review process which allowed them to discuss with teachers how much progress they were making and decide their own goals.

The project was designed to equip mothers of non-EU origins with the knowledge skills and confidence to engage as active citizens in their local borough. This included helping parents understand how to use local services, and play an active role in decision making locally and take care of their neighbourhoods. Wider aims were to help parents understand that they were citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as others, and to help the local authority understand how to meet their needs more effectively. The parents were from a wide range of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. During the programme they received specifically designed ESOL training contextualised around relevant themes such as health, education and local services.

Results from a questionnaire of parents carried out near the end of the project suggested planned outcomes were achieved. All of the mothers could provide good examples of how their English language and their understanding of the community life improved. Attitudes towards other people in the community changed and were very positive. Mothers have also contributed in changing the whole school reports to parents in a parent friendly version colour coded.

***All mothers have increased their involvement in their children's education not only at home, but also in communicating and working together with teachers to raise their children's attainment levels.***

