

The Smith Family Home Tutor Scheme

Literacy Workshop

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everyone's family

Low-Literacy Learners

Presented by Shelley Greer

Background

Pre-literate students present a number of challenges for tutors. Unlike other learners who are literate in their own language, pre-literate students may have had no formal contact with written language before. Teachers cannot rely on students taking notes to aid memory and promote self-study. Learners may need basic instruction in how to hold a pencil and other literacy basics that we take for granted in a literate culture.

Pre-literate learners may not recognize common pictorial representations that tutors often use to represent objects with literate learners. Pre-literate learners may not have handled books and papers or be familiar with the cultural expectations in the classroom or in the home.

Where and how do you start teaching these learners?

What do you need to teach them?

What do they need and want to know?

Why is literacy so important?

Basic survival skills – signs, directions, catching public transport, form filling, school letters, participate in a democracy – voting, reading writing skills enrich our lives

Language learning can take a lot longer if students can't read and write.

The four language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing must be built up together.

Problems with illiterate students often don't have commensurate skills

May have learnt to communicate at work (listening and speaking) but with no grammar or spelling students become stabilized very quickly very hard to move beyond that.

Vietnamese speakers have particular problems don't have final "s" sound

Don't say it or hear it or write it. Grammar is very important, the tense dictates meaning.

Who are the literacy students we are talking about?

Some Asian and African students may have a spoken language only background – there is a written language, say Dinka, but a farmer may never have learnt the written language.

Some students have the opposite e.g. Korean students have a lot of reading and writing but little speaking and listening, having grammar and vocabulary is a big plus for students in learning the language.

Many students not starting from scratch

Types of Students

- Spoken language but no written
- Written language but no access to it
- Limited literacy skills in own language
- Different script have to learn our alphabet

Best way to explain the meaning of a word without a dictionary

Give lots of examples, act it out, in a group get others to explain

Resources – We need a combination of resources

The Picture Dictionaries are good though some students might not understand all the pictures.

Where do we start?

Personal Information

Write their name first. Say it.

Address - take photographs show them outside words say the words.

People learn to write from copying

Prepare worksheets with very basic things

Name – match to word

Address – matching to words

Later can use sounds to sound out the word. Problem with English can't always sound out the word

Greetings

Hello! my name is _____ Students will usually grasp what your saying

Introductions

Start with concrete things or things that you can see

Social sight words – excursions are very valuable see words in context

Street Signs: stop danger, exit show pictures photos in context. Take students for a walk to show them.

Demonstrate signs hold up hand for stop. Walking - stop talking - stop. Have flashcards with words written on them.

Names of familiar objects around them

Chair pen, book, woman, man, window, door.

Fruit take fruit and pictures of fruit with you and names of flash cards

Clothing jeans, scarf or whatever is common attire for them

Descriptions – Student: tall, short,

Colours – hair, clothes: colour cards from paint shops are good, bring coloured pencils or textas.

The Mechanics of writing

Holding a pen, using paper,

People who've never held a pen: instruct them to relax, don't hold too tightly, don't press too hard, write left to right, top to bottom, spaces between words.

Get them to do patterns on paper to practice flow - use bigger pens, textas

Use tracing paper or baking paper from kitchen (it's cheaper).

Encourage them to practice every day as you only see them once a week.

Only give things they can manage. Observe what they can do.

Spelling - Phonics

Start with sounds first, not letter names

Start with small letters, then capitals

Have them separately on cards, introduce capitals very soon after small letters

Start with their name

Very important to work out students learning pace – must be non threatening.

Use pictures of say

boy

apple

Use these words to build up an action and recycle words

i.e. Boy eating apple.

Use pictures that resonate with students

Try and find an identifying TOPIC that they are passionate about

Build vocabulary slowly – 1 word activities to start

Bring some flowers, or an object that you can use to talk about a variety of topics i.e. colours, counting stems etc

Iconic objects Opera House - Harbour Bridge

Look at word then sound it out

Always vary activities in the hour to keep up interest

Play songs used for children, it may suit some students. A good way to remember things i.e. days of week or alphabet is through a song.