

E-Learning for Preschoolers? A Parent-Involved Solution for *Linguaphone China*

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Abstract: The study explores the feasibility of developing an e-learning solution to promote parental involvement in order to enhance the learning outcomes of the preschooler-level students attending weekend face-to-face English classes at Linguaphone Group, an international EFL education provider. A pilot e-learning project was initiated in two classes to help the parents to organise weekly family-based English learning activities under the instruction of the teachers. An alternative method was taken at the same time in another two classes of the same levels, where the parents received the same instruction packages in print. The result shows that the E-Learning Group's and Print Group's parents participated in the program using different strategies. The teachers' and parents' observations seem to suggest that the students' progress was associated with the degree of activeness of the parents' participation.

Problems

- Weekend English classes for preschools in China:**
 - Out of the framework of kindergartens.
 - Difficult in continually supporting students' learning during weekdays.
- Students:**
 - Do not have enough opportunities to practise during weekdays.
 - Feel frustrated due to low effectiveness of weekend learning.
- Parents:**
 - Do not have enough instruction and advice from weekend teachers.
 - May not have much idea, confidence and appropriate approaches to help and promote their children's learning at home.
- Weekend teachers:**
 - Can not observe the students' learning process day after day.
 - Lack information for learner analysis for weekly instructional design.



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Research Questions

- How were the parents involved in their children's English learning?
- How did the e-learning solution support the parental involvement?
- How could the students' English learning be enhanced by the parental involvement?

Theoretical Framework

Parental Involvement

- Effectiveness
- Parent-School Partnership
- Communicative Issues
- Possibility

E-Learning

- Representations
- Networked Learning
- Family Context
- ICT Enhanced Family-School Connections

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

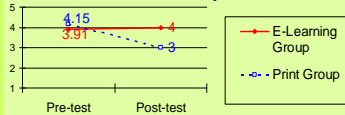
- Linguistic Input and Interaction in Family
- Transitional Shift of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Method

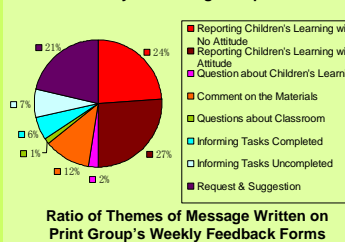
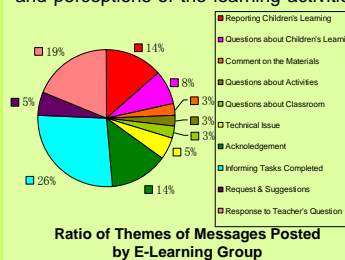
- Parental Involvement Program:** the students and the parents from the four classes were divided into two groups, *E-Learning Group* and *Print Group*, who were given different forms of family-based English learning activity packages of the same content during a five-week period. For E-Learning Group, the packages were delivered online through a learning management system—Moodle. The teachers asynchronously interact with the E-Learning Group parents online during weekdays. As for Print Group, the packages were printed and given to the parents every weekend when the students attended the classes. The teachers collected weekly feedback forms from Print Group parents every weekend, and adjusted their teaching plans based on the analysis of the parents' feedback.
- Questionnaires:** Parental Involvement Possibility Questionnaire (Pre- and Post-Tests), CALL Evaluation Questionnaire, and Parent-Teacher Communication Questionnaire.
- Telephone Interviews:** interviews with the parents and the teachers.

Results

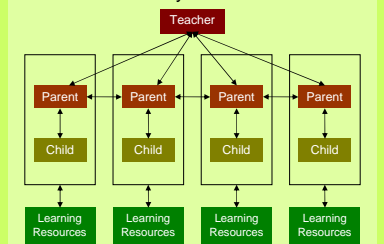
Parental Modeling: After the parental involvement program, Print Group's parents were much less likely to act as a model for their children to learn English, and such significant change has distinguished them from E-Learning Group's parents. E-Learning Group's parents basically remained the same in terms of modeling. The following figure represents the means of scores of "Modeling" in Pre- and Post-Parental Involvement Possibility Questionnaire:



Parental Involvement Preference: E-Learning Group's parents tended to work with their children together to implement the family English learning activities and they think they benefit themselves from the involvement in terms of English learning, while Print Group's parents preferred to monitor and assess their children's learning process and to report the results to the teachers so that they could request the teachers for more attention to their own children. Two groups' parents provided the teachers with different amounts of information especially for reporting children's learning and making requests and suggestions, because they had different understanding and perceptions of the learning activities:



Parent-Involved Networked Learning: The solution created a networked learning environment for E-Learning Group, where the parents served as agents in between the teacher and the students. The learning resources were not necessary to be totally electronic. Through the leverage of the parents' collaboration in the network, the teacher could easily connect with the students and utilise various non-electronic learning resources from each family to offer continual instruction when the students were away from the classrooms:



Enhancing the Outcomes of Children's English Learning:

- According to the CALL Evaluation Questionnaires completed by the E-Learning Group's parents, some critical components/variables of good CALL for enhancing linguistic input and interaction environment were not satisfied very much by the parents, such as negotiation of meaning, the link between English learning and the family environment, etc.
- The parents' feedback became an important resource for customizing the instruction. E-Learning Group's feedback came to the teachers more quickly than Print Group's, so the instruction that E-Learning Group's students received tended to be more effective.
- E-Learning Group's parents tended to enjoy learning English for themselves through the interaction with the teachers via Moodle. The behaviour that the parents learned English for themselves has increased the students' motivation and it is one kind of "modeling". The teachers' observation indicates that if the parents set the good models, their children have higher learning performance.

Acknowledgement

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