

## Supporting Material: Mantra Lingua

### TalkingPHONICS: Case Study

#### • The innovative nature of the resource

I found the Mantra Lingua Talking Phonics Pack to be an innovative solution to providing support for the teaching and learning of phonics in Early Years and Key Stage 1 closely following 'Letters and Sounds'. The use of audio and an interactive tool is a new and exciting way of motivating young children to read through phonics. The use of the interactive games and talking books enabled all the children to read a story independently without the use of other audio equipment. The TalkingPEN and resources are all very child friendly and simple to use. The familiar shape of a pen or pencil enabled the children to instinctively use the resource for its designed purpose. The audio is loud and clear, and the sensor on the pen is responsive. The TalkingPEN is simple to turn on and off, and turned off automatically if it has not been used for a while which saved the batteries.

The wire-free solution is fantastic so the children could move around freely with the TalkingPEN and pass it to one another easily especially in group situations. The consistent use of the same icons used on all the phonics resources helped the children to become familiar with the features and they very quickly gained confidence to use it independently. An example of this would be the 'magnifying glass' icon which represents the explore feature where the children could explore the 8 charts using the pen prior to playing the games. The icons also have an attached sound which reassured the children that the pen was responding to their actions and became familiar. The instructions are clear and also easy to follow, the voices are child friendly, and sensitive and encouraging if the child answers incorrectly.

The recordable talking stickers are also innovative in their own right and amazed both staff and children at the brilliance of this resource which could provide numerous opportunities for the teaching and learning of phonics as well as other subject areas. The children were delighted to find out they could not only record their voice onto a sticker but have their voice saved into a story book reading the story using expression and character voices, making sound effects to the story with their voice and instruments, and even making book reviews for others to listen to. The children chose to read 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' and thoroughly enjoyed playing their edited story back to their peers. The stickers are also simple to use and the children can easily identify each shape on the sticker and its function as they relate to the same shapes used on most audio and audiovisual equipment i.e. square for stop, triangle for play and circle for record.

The children were so impressed with the Phonics Pack that they ran to tell another member of staff all about the 'magic pen' they have been using. One child said "You can record yourself and listen to it, and put it on a sticker in a book. You can record onto it again and again and again. It's so cool and I've never seen a pen which is magic before". The functionality of being able to use the pen with or without the resources is great and the idea that you re-record over the stickers and charts at any time is well-designed and is so quick and simple to do. The pack is ready to use and requires very little preparation, and is simple to move from one activity to another without any fuss.

## **• The impact on learning and the work of the practitioner**

The Talking Phonics pack made a huge impact on the children's learning over the course of the trial period in a range of ways. I have especially noticed the progression of identifying and matching rhyming words since playing the 'snap' and 'odd one out' game cards. I played the rhyming 'snap' game with 4 Early Years children who initially found rhyming words quite tricky to identify and spent some time exploring the boards using the explore function using the pen to identify what words each child had on their board and what words might rhyme with them. We then continued to play the game to match pairs of rhyming words. The children became progressively better at matching the words and gained confidence. They enjoyed the game and wanted to play over and over again to swap boards. Both the boys and girls were equally as motivated and remained focused throughout the activity.

I also played the 'odd one out' game with the same group of 4 children which moved them on a step further to identify which card out of 3 does not rhyme. The children enjoyed picking the odd one out and began to challenge one another with 3 cards without the need for support. This enabled me to observe and make assessments of the children individually. The children gained a good grasp of rhyme and due to the written words being clearly displayed on the flashcards; they also noticed that rhyming words have the same endings and stimulated discussions about what other words rhyme. One child even made their own rhyming cards in the afternoon so that he could "play that fun game again".

I introduced the Talking Phonics Pack to the children using the Felix frog puppet, giving him an identity and background the children could relate to and respect. The puppet was very successful and the children enjoyed listening to his instructions. I also used the puppet to introduce and lead all the whole class sessions as suggested in the Talking Phonics Guidance which worked wonderfully and the children were so excited and highly motivated. The activity ideas in the guidance are easy to follow and were very successful with my class. They linked in nicely with the charts and progression is clear from the initial whole class session to the group/individual activities.

I used a range of the charts focusing on different Aspects of Phase 1 in 'Letters and Sounds'. Each chart is closely linked with each of the 7 Aspects of Phase 1 providing excellent on-hand activities for Phase 1 coverage and in a variety of interactive ways. For example, the Animal Orchestra chart has a clear link to Aspect 2: General sound discrimination- Instrumental Sounds. The children were focused and enjoyed using the charts. The chart not only linked to sound discrimination but also highlighted different instruments names and sounds (Creative Development), stimulated a variety of discussions about orchestras and bands, and animals (Speaking and Listening, and Knowledge and Understanding of the World) but also a clear link to alliteration 'a gorilla playing a guitar' and 'a monkey shaking a maraca'. The children noticed "the animals and instruments begin with the same letter".

The follow up activities described in the guidance are a nice way to round up the session or as an extension for individuals, promoting independence and a progression of skills especially G&T children which require challenges. The product made from the follow-up activities also provides evidence of progression and a valuable sample of work. The activities are flexible and can be easily adapted for children with differing needs and abilities. The pack also provides a fantastic cross curricular link and could be planned into any project due to the nature of the product and its flexibility to be used both in and out of phonics sessions. The pack stimulated and encouraged speaking and listening, language development and thinking skills and reading and writing skills through phonics. However, I think it also supports creative development through creating different ideas, story telling and using instruments, and even encouraged shy children to express themselves and feel comfortable. The pack also clearly

supported and extended knowledge and understanding of the world as the children explored how to use the device and are using ICT. The charts, books, stickers and puppet in the pack broaden the range of opportunities for teaching and learning using the TalkingPEN and could be used throughout our projects in a variety of subject areas. Even the children thought of different ways we could use the resources in our class room.

## **• How the resource supports or enhances the everyday life or work of practitioners and children**

The Phonics Pack also offered itself as a great assessment tool whereby the children could record their work on the pen, stickers or books for example, and I could assess their recorded work at a later date. This also allowed for self assessment and peer assessment of the children's work and could be revisited time and time again. Through observing the interaction of the children with the resources and reviewing any recorded audio, I could make simple assessments and identify areas for development. All the teaching staff found the pack easy to use and simple to understand. They liked the activity ideas and were excited to use the resource with the children. The guidance booklet was really helpful and could reduce the time needed to plan out phonics activities and make resources.

The puppet created a wonderful opportunity to introduce the Phonics pack to the children and provided me with the chance to take on a different role. It provided a stimulus for focused talk and certainly enhanced the children's engagement and motivation. It even seemed to raise the confidence of shy children to share their ideas and join in with the activities especially during the whole class session focusing on the 'Animal Orchestra'.

The 'Out and About' chart in the Phonics pack also made a huge impression on a small SEN group of children. They thoroughly enjoyed exploring the page, listening to the different environmental sounds and finding out what sound each image made. The whole group were motivated by the resource but I especially noticed the impact it was having on the boys in the form of their improved attention spans and enthusiasm. The children found the audio amusing and enjoyed listening to and imitating the sounds repeatedly before trying the games. The chart itself stimulated so much discussion between the group, discussing sounds they had heard before and places they had visited. The children also enjoyed the game, remembering which image made a particular sound using and improving their memory and listening skills. The chart really encouraged speaking and listening amongst the group as well as taking turns. It is ideal for a range of learners whether they are kinaesthetic, visual, or auditory learners. The chart has lovely illustrations and is full of images that children can relate to and recognise. It is very Early Years friendly and could hold their interests for a sustained period of time.

I was also very impressed with the impact the 'I spy alphabet' chart had on a very shy little boy with speech and language difficulties. He was highly motivated throughout the activity and benefited hugely from the audio of the letter sounds. He explored the chart to begin with, listening to the sound each image began with. He then moved on to listen to all the letter sounds, and repeated the sounds he heard without any hesitation. The chart not only provided him with an opportunity to play a fun and stimulating phonics game but also supported his speech through the pronunciation of sounds in isolation and within words.

Although parents did not see or trial the Phonics pack, I believe the resource could be used effectively to impact children's learning at home too. The pack could easily be loaned out to parents to

provide them with another opportunity to support their child's early reading at home. The parents would benefit from seeing how early reading can be broken down into simple activities, improving their child's listening skills, general sound discrimination and then moving on to phonics. The packs could also be useful to help our local preschools prepare the children for school focusing on general sound discrimination and even home-school link workers may find the resource useful to use if they are working with a family of a child in the school.

## **• Cost effectiveness in terms of educational aims and results**

I think the Talking Phonics pack is good value for money. The pack contains a vast number of resources which are all ready to go and support different aspects of 'Letters and Sounds' for phonic progression. The guidance booklet is an excellent preparation resource for practitioners with such clear and simple instructions which eliminate the possible need for further training. The consistent use of familiar icons for similar functionalities helps to build confidence and aid the learning process. The pack focuses carefully on Phase 1 of 'Letters and Sounds' which Early Years could use throughout the year and use endlessly with different groups of children and learning objectives.

The Talking Phonics pack certainly exceeds expectations in build quality which is complimented by the aesthetically pleasing look and comfortable feel of the TalkingPEN. The children loved holding the pen and were even reluctant at times to pass it on. The cards and charts have a durable and a professional finish along with the pen-enabled books which will clearly withstand day to day use in a busy classroom environment and hopefully reduce the need for replacement. Even the stickers appear to be hard-wearing due to the number of times the children applied and re-applied the stickers onto the front cover of the book to decide where it should be placed for their book review. The puppet also appealed to the children, they loved the frog's big eyes and they took great pleasure in engaging with it both during and after the activities.

I think the Talking Phonics pack is also cost effective due to its versatility. As previously mentioned, some of the resources in the Phonics pack can be used collectively or singularly allowing flexibility and broadening the day to day use in the classroom. This also enables it to be used for other subject areas in the curriculum and within projects highlighting its practicalities and range of possibilities. It can be used with different sized groupings- whole class, group work and independent work and for a range of abilities and needs.

Ali Dibden - Year R class teacher

Ranvilles Infant School

Oldbury Way,

Fareham,

Hampshire

PO14 3BN

Tel : 01329 841653