

First Flight

Bilingualism is a cornerstone of our education system and a distinctive feature of the MOE Kindergarten (MK) curriculum. In this issue of First Flight, we look at how MKs make the learning of Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) come alive through fun and enriching experiences. Pre-school MTL Curriculum Officers from MOE's Curriculum Planning and Development Division share teaching strategies used by MK teachers to nurture early childhood bilingualism. The officers also share useful tips on how parents can support their child's MTL learning.

Warm wishes,
The MOE Kindergarten Team

LEARNING AT MOE KINDERGARTEN

Our MKs offer all three official MTLs and **language learning takes place in all aspects of the MK curriculum**. The Starlight Literacy Programme provides a platform for children to learn language explicitly and systematically. In addition, the HI-Light Programme, Weeks of Wonder (WoW) projects, daily routines and transitions, outdoor learning activities and centre-based programmes offer ample opportunities for children to use English Language (EL) and MTL as they interact with others in authentic and meaningful contexts. Through the learning experiences in the MK curriculum, children develop foundational language and literacy skills and the confidence to communicate their thoughts and ideas with those around them in both EL and their MTL.

Let's look at how our MKs nurture early childhood bilingualism!

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ WATERWAY

At MK@Waterway, K1 and K2 children engage in drama-based activities as part of their Big Book learning activity. The teachers plan activities for children to retell and dramatise the EL and MTL Big Book stories they have read. The children get to express their creativity and imagination when creating props using materials that are readily available in the classroom to re-enact the scenes in the Big Books.

To guide children in the re-enactment, teachers will point the children to the illustrations in the Big Books so that they can model the appropriate actions and gestures when expressing their lines. As the children may have limited vocabulary when retelling the stories, the teachers provide guidance for them to use the correct language. These activities deepen the children's understanding of the story and expand their vocabulary.

As the children act out the stories, they develop their oral skills and learn to express and communicate their thoughts and ideas confidently in a fun and meaningful way.



The K1 children used headbands to represent the characters in the Chinese Language (CL) Big Book - '小牛的生日礼物' (The Cow's Birthday Party). They rehearsed and helped one other to say their lines.



The K1 children worked together with their peers to brainstorm ideas on how to use the stick puppets to bring the EL Big Book story 'First Day of School' to life.



The children then took turns to present the story using the story box and the stick puppets.



Let's be polite and use both hands when passing objects to others.

给别人东西要用双手，这是基本的礼貌。

The teacher also seized the opportunity to help children develop social awareness and be respectful by encouraging them to use appropriate words and gestures when re-enacting the story.

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ WELLINGTON

At MK@Wellington, the 'Saya Wira/Wirawati Budaya!' (I Am a Hero/Heroine of Culture!) programme is a collaboration with families to inculcate the love for Malay Language (ML) and culture in children. This programme runs across four terms for K1 and K2 children and provides opportunities for children to learn more about Malay culture through fun and interesting activities.

In Term 2, the ML teachers introduced the K2 children to various types of Malay traditional snacks or "kueh" (e.g. "kueh dadar", "ondeh ondeh", "kueh lapis", "kueh kaswi", and "epok-epok"). As part of the programme, the teachers decided to teach the children how to make a traditional Malay snack.

"Kueh dadar" was chosen as it is a traditional Malay kueh that is not as well-known to the younger generation. The hands-on experience provided opportunities for the children to listen with understanding as they followed the teacher's instructions and strengthen their fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination as they scooped and put the coconut filling onto the flour skin before rolling it up.

To reinforce what they learnt, the children were encouraged to share their hands-on experience in ML with their family members. Parents and children then created posters of their favourite Malay traditional snacks or "kueh" and brought the posters to the MK to share with their peers and teacher.



The teacher conducted a step-by-step demonstration to show the children how to make "kueh dadar".



The children prepared the coconut filling, made the batter and learnt the technique to roll the "kueh".



One child made "ondeh ondeh" at home with her mother and sister. She then made a poster to share with her classmates how she made the delicious "kueh".



The children took turns to observe the various Indian traditional breakfast dishes brought by the teachers.

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ KRANJI

Mother Tongue Cultural Day is held once a month for the K1 and K2 children at MK@Kranji. For all three MTLs, the teachers incorporate hands-on activities based on these categories - Arts, Food, Games, Costumes and Music.

As part of the Mother Tongue Cultural Day held this March, the K2 children from the Tamil Language (TL) class learnt more about the various traditional Indian breakfast food items such as "dosai", "idili", "puttu" and "idiyappam". The children also learnt about the utensils traditionally used to make the dishes. The teachers brought sample dishes to the class as



The children explored Indian traditional food-making utensils.



They drew and shared their favourite dishes with their friends.

some of the food items like "puttu" were new to most of the children. After learning more about the various dishes, the children drew their favourite Indian breakfast dish and shared the reasons why they liked the dish with their classmates.

Through these fun cultural activities, children find out and learn to appreciate their own culture. The regular interaction with their peers and teachers in their respective MTL during these activities help to build their confidence to speak in MTL as well.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Let's hear from MOE's Pre-school MTL Curriculum Officers on useful tips you can adopt to support your child's MTL learning!

Specially for Parents



Encourage the use of MTL in everyday activities - Learning can take place anytime!

- As often as you can, speak MTL at home as it will have a positive impact on your child's motivation to learn the language. Through these interactions, encourage your child to share his/her experiences and express his/her thoughts and feelings in the language.
- Observe what has caught your child's interest and take advantage of these opportunities to start conversations in MTL with him/her.
- Talk about the MTL story that your child is reading or being read to (ask questions about the characters and scenario etc.).
- For parents who may have difficulties when conversing with their child fully in MTL, you can encourage your child to teach you how to express the phrases in MTL. Your attitude towards learning MTL matters!

Participate in MTL-related activities

- Watch children's shows or videos in MTL with your child and have your child retell or act out the story in MTL.
- Play games and activities to encourage the use of the language in a fun manner (e.g. "Simon says" and "I spy with my little eye").
- Join community festive/cultural programmes and activities in your neighbourhood with your child to build their vocabulary and encourage awareness of their culture, such as Mid-Autumn Festival, Hari Raya Concert or Pongal celebration.
- Parents can also join online parent support groups to exchange interesting ideas on MTL learning at home.

Provide access to MTL resources

- Bring in more MTL resources to the home environment, e.g. watching animated movies/series, listening to radio stations.
- Visit the library with your child to borrow and read MTL storybooks, which includes those chosen by your child based on his/her interests in the topic/content.
- You can also borrow MTL audio books from the library which you could listen and read with your child (preferably following along with the print version as well).



THE FACES OF MOE KINDERGARTEN



From left to right: Mdm Usha Rani D/O S Chettiar (Senior Specialist, Tamil Language), Mdm Noor Azimah Bte Mohamed Haad (Assistant Director, Malay Language) and Ms Sin Yue Ting, Melissa (Curriculum Planning Officer, Chinese Language)

In this issue, Mdm Noor Azimah Bte Mohamed Haad (Assistant Director, Malay Language), Mdm Usha Rani d/o S Chettiar (Senior Specialist, Tamil Language) and Ms Sin Yue Ting, Melissa (Curriculum Planning Officer, Chinese Language) share with us teaching strategies used by MK teachers to nurture early childhood bilingualism.



How do MOE Kindergarten teachers nurture early childhood bilingualism in children?

The Starlight Literacy Programme (MTL) aims to encourage children's interest in learning the language, develop foundational language and literacy skills and create awareness of local ethnic cultures. Building children's interest in MTL is key to nurturing their love for the language. As part of the programme, children have opportunities to use the language in fun and meaningful ways such as through reading engaging stories, playing language games, singing and participating in hands-on activities. Teachers and children actively engage in quality interactions as they read the Big Books together.

The teaching and learning of MTL curriculum engages the children's hearts and minds and encourages them to embrace their cultural heritage. MKs use a rich variety of teaching and learning resources such as Big Books, songs and games with a distinctive Singapore flavour to provide children with familiar and authentic learning experiences that are related to "real life" situations. Language is closely linked to culture and through the MTL activities, the children learn about people, places and things around them such as local festivals, traditions and food which help them develop respect for cultural heritage and diversity.

In **Starlight Literacy (CL)**, the Big Books revolve around four main themes to guide children in finding out about themselves and the world around them. Teachers ask questions to guide children in learning key ideas and vocabulary based on the topics and scenarios depicted in the stories. This is complemented by hands-on and interactive activities that encourage children to use their senses and deepen their learning by making meaningful connections. The children are also encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings, create their own masterpieces and take the lead when playing language games.

During **Starlight Literacy (ML)**, children are exposed to purposeful play that provides opportunities for learning language and developing social skills such as through language games and role play. While playing, children are encouraged to interact with their teachers and friends using ML in a fun and meaningful context. For children who are not familiar with the language, teachers will guide and support them so that the learning experience will be a joyful one.

The stories in the **Starlight Literacy (TL)** Big Books are developed around Kayal, a 5-year-old girl and her family. Children can easily identify with Kayal and her family members, which gives children a meaningful context that they can relate with. This allows them to have meaningful discussions and conversations based on the Big Book which helps build their vocabulary and awareness of the language.

Why is Hanyu Pinyin not taught in MK?

Children learn words in context so that they understand the meaning of the words and can use them meaningfully in speech and writing. Developing foundational listening and speaking skills is critical for children so that they can listen with understanding and speak with confidence. These skills lay the foundation for reading, writing and learning Hanyu Pinyin, which will be taught in Primary 1. Building on the foundation that children have acquired, they will then be able to learn Hanyu Pinyin more meaningfully and effectively at Primary 1 to help them read Chinese characters and transit to more advanced literacy skills and independent reading.

Why are there no spelling tests in MK?

The Starlight Literacy Programme (EL and MTL) is designed to provide opportunities for children to enjoy learning language in an active and interactive manner to build their interest and confidence in using the language. Children learn to spell by learning letters, letter sounds and how to blend/combine the letter sounds. In MK, children practise reading, speaking and writing (including spelling) in a more purposeful way, as opposed to mechanical exercises that might promote rote language learning that is not meaningful for the children.

Children are encouraged to recognise and remember new words, letters and characters through meaningful and interactive activities such as Big Book reading, Show and Tell, writing letters on coloured sand and making shapes of letters/characters using play dough. Teachers understand children's progress in learning through observation of their performance during fun learning activities.





Language learning can occur at any time and place. At MK, ample opportunities are provided for children to be exposed to and use EL and their MTL throughout their daily interactions.

In **MOE Kindergarten @ Northoaks**, the children are greeted daily by their teachers in EL and the three MTLs when they arrive at the MK, from the health checks to the daily assembly - 'Good Morning', 'Selamat Pagi', '早安' and 'வணக்கம்'. The daily assembly is conducted by a different language teacher each day to allow all the children to listen to stories, rhymes, and songs in different languages. The opportunity to interact in different MTLs develops the children's understanding of cultural diversity and respect for other cultures.

Every class is also accompanied by their EL and MTL teachers during daily routines, indoor and outdoor activities to allow the children to listen to the use of MTL in their everyday routines and activities. When children listen to and use MTL in a variety of contexts and authentic situations, MTL becomes a living language to them and they begin to develop an interest in learning MTL.



During the daily assembly, children sing the routine greeting song with greetings in four different languages!



Teachers greet the children when they arrive at the MK in different languages.

'Love for Reading' is an initiative by **MOE Kindergarten @ Anchor Green** in partnership with the National Library Board (NLB) to nurture children's appreciation for reading. The programme also aims to nurture positive behaviours and attitudes to learning such as perseverance, reflectiveness, appreciation, inventiveness, sense of wonder and curiosity and engagement through the storybooks chosen.

In Term 2, the teachers shared the books - 'One More Time - A Story About Perseverance' by Nancy Loewen and Hazel Quintanilla and 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' by Aesop Fables in both EL and MTL with the K1 and K2 children. As the children listened to the stories twice in both EL and their MTL, it helped to reinforce their understanding of the stories.

To nurture perseverance and reflectiveness, the children were introduced to various hands-on activities like threading. The EL and MTL teachers then discussed the positive behaviours exhibited by the children through the activities in the respective languages. Over time, the teachers observed that the children made a conscious effort to reflect on their learning and persevere in their tasks instead of giving up easily.



The teacher shared the story 'One More Time' by Nancy Loewen in ML to encourage the children to persevere and not give up easily.



After listening to the story of the 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' by Aesop Fables, the children were invited to discuss and share their thoughts on the actions of the characters in the story.



A follow-up threading activity was carried out for the children to develop concentration, strengthen their fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination as they persevered to put small cut straw pieces through a string.



Educators and parents can learn more about sparking the love and joy for learning the MTLs in children at the **Mother Tongue Languages Symposium (MTLS) 2021**. This year, MTLS celebrates its 10th anniversary. Taking place on **28 August 2021 (Saturday)**, the online event highlights will include a panel discussion, live and pre-recorded sharing sessions, digital exhibits and the signature Online Quest, where parents and children can engage in interactive task-based games.

The theme for this year, **'Our Mother Tongues as Living Languages'**, focusses on the usage of our MTLs to interact in authentic settings and immersive environments, developing the keen interest and a positive attitude towards life-long learning of MTLs in our children and engaging them in meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom.

Find out more about MTLS at www.mtls.edu.sg!



Do you have any comments on our newsletter or the MOE Kindergartens? Do you have a story to share or an MOE Kindergarten staff you would like to thank? Write to us at moe_kn@moe.gov.sg. Visit www.moe.gov.sg/mk or scan the QR code to join our mailing list to receive the latest news and updates!

