

First Flight

At MOE Kindergarten, we believe that language learning should be fun and enjoyable. Read on to find out how the teaching and learning of languages come alive through meaningful programmes and activities. An MOE Kindergarten Lead Teacher shares the strategies that teachers use to nurture early childhood bilingualism. We also address some common misconceptions about nurturing a bilingual child and share tips on how parents can provide support for early language learners.

Warm wishes,
The MOE Kindergarten Team

BILINGUALISM is a cornerstone of Singapore's education system, and core to our identity as Singaporeans.



At MOE Kindergarten (MK), we believe that our **children are curious, active and competent learners of English (EL) and their Mother Tongue Language (MTL)**. With the understanding that our children are from varied home language backgrounds, the teaching of languages at the MK is designed to cater to diverse learners. Besides the Starlight Literacy programme which uses a systematic and structured approach to the learning of EL and MTL, the four-hour MK programme is leveraged purposefully by the teachers to create ample opportunities to encourage our children to use EL and MTL as living languages in authentic and familiar settings. We aim to nurture early childhood bilingualism as part of the holistic development of our children.

LEARNING AT MOE KINDERGARTEN

The MK curriculum provides opportunities for language learning within and beyond the classroom. Read on to find out how teachers work together to plan and carry out programmes and activities to nurture early childhood bilingualism.

Singapore's Little Treasures MOE Kindergarten @ Oasis

Kindergarten 1 (K1) children from Chinese Language (CL) classes in MOE Kindergarten @ Oasis participated in Singapore's Little Treasures, a pre-school programme by the National Heritage Board which provides opportunities for children to discover more about Singapore's multicultural heritage through museum visits and classroom activities.

Stepping into the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, the children were immersed in the Singapore of yesteryears and discovered more about local culture. They learnt and talked about the artefacts on display with their CL teachers and friends and enjoyed a treasure hunt.

After the museum visit, the teachers set up a heritage centre in the kindergarten to extend children's learning and provide an authentic setting for them to learn CL. Everyone was involved in setting up the heritage centre, with children and parents enthusiastically contributing items for the various displays.

Amongst other displays, the heritage centre featured a tailor shop and street peddler stalls, providing rich opportunities for children to learn and use CL through active participation and interaction, while developing them holistically across other learning areas too!



Street peddler stalls galore! Children role-playing as stall owners and customers, communicating in CL to buy and sell local food and learning how to count money. The variety of stalls provided opportunities for children to learn about local ethnic food and culture.

Open for business! Tailors taking customers' measurements before referring to a size chart and recommending a suitable clothing size.



Little tailors busily sewing away! Children had to pick a card featuring a shape and colour, and sew the shape using the correct thread colour. Apart from extending children's learning on shapes and colours, the activity developed their fine motor skills.

One of a Kind
MOE Kindergarten @ Blangah Rise

In conjunction with Kindness Day SG, MOE Kindergarten @ Blangah Rise embarked on a project titled "One of a Kind". The project aimed to inculcate virtues and build character in the children, thereby fostering a culture of kindness in the centre. To encourage bilingualism, the project was conducted in both EL and MTL (i.e. Chinese language (CL), Malay language (ML) and Tamil language (TL)).

The virtue of kindness was first introduced through a video clip and real-life examples on how kindness was shown to the children's friends in the centre, to their families and finally the community. The MTL teachers then continued to reinforce the concept using picture cards and stories in their respective languages. Through both EL and MTL, the children learnt about ways to demonstrate kindness in the kindergarten, before extending it to their home and the community.

The K1 children visited a senior care centre to carry out activities with the elderly. Other than using EL, the children also communicated confidently with the elderly in the centre using their respective MTLs.

The K2 children visited the neighbourhood and distributed self-made cards to members of the public to share ways of showing kindness. The children were able to practise their EL and MTL in the making of the cards and through conversations with the public.

This purposeful collaboration between EL and MTL teachers further enhanced the children's learning as they picked up theme-related vocabulary and knowledge in EL and MTL. More importantly, the children's concept of virtues and the community was also deepened as they were able to connect their learning from the EL to the MTL classes.



K1 children engaging in an exercise activity with the elderly from SilverACE Senior Activity Centre.



K2 child incorporating messages about kindness in EL and CL on his card.



Out at the neighborhood, children displayed confidence as they shared kindness messages with members of the public.

THE FACES OF MOE KINDERGARTEN

Ms Sharifah Nooraishah Binte Sayed, Lead Teacher of MOE Kindergarten @ Punggol View shares some strategies that EL and MTL MK educators use to nurture early childhood bilingualism.

I believe in the teaching and learning of languages to young children through culture and traditions. We live in a multiracial society and it is important to promote an appreciation of Singapore's culture among children, and allow them to experience the use of different languages beyond the kindergarten.

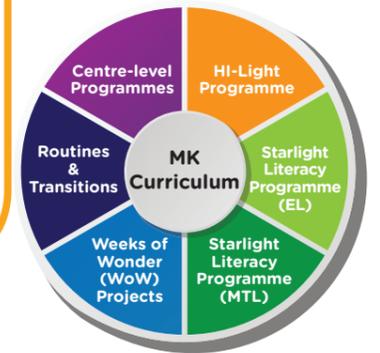


MK educators use an experiential approach to make language learning come alive by extending the learning of MTL beyond the EL and MTL Starlight Literacy Programme. For example, during learning centre time, children role-play using traditional food and costumes, and learn about different cultures through art and craft such as calligraphy and brush painting.

Throughout the curriculum, MK educators use locally-developed and culturally-relevant resources for teaching. This enables children to connect with what is taught quickly and allow them to better appreciate local culture. The resources also make children's learning of MTL more meaningful and authentic in their daily lives.

When learning of languages is done in a relevant and fun way, children can be engaged and enjoy the process with their teacher and friends. For example, multi-cultural celebrations where children learn about different festivals are planned throughout the year. Crafts and games are also introduced to help children understand the different cultures, and in the process motivate them to learn EL and their MTL.

At MK, we create opportunities for children to be exposed to and use EL and their MTL throughout the MK curriculum. For example, children are encouraged to greet their teachers and friends in the four MTLs at the start of class. The constant use of EL and MTL in their day-to-day lives allows children to feel comfortable and confident to use these languages to communicate with those around them.



SNAPSHOTS

Language learning does not take place only in the EL and MTL classrooms, but can occur at any time and place. Take a peek at how our educators incorporate the teaching of MTL within the MK curriculum!



MOE Kindergarten @ Northoaks

Enjoying a bilingual book written in EL and CL! For the daily assembly at MOE Kindergarten @ Northoaks, parent volunteers are invited to share their love for reading with the children. Teachers work closely with the parents to select developmentally appropriate EL and/or MTL books for these storytelling sessions.

MOE Kindergarten @ Waterway

It is Learning Centre time at MOE Kindergarten @ Waterway. While the EL teacher is facilitating the play activities at the other learning centres, the ML teacher takes the opportunity to talk about food items commonly found in Malay homes and the hawker centres at one of the learning centres. When the child looked for cutlery, the teacher seized the opportunity to talk about eating with hands. She showed the child how the food could be picked up with just three fingers.



MOE Kindergarten @ Springdale

Outdoor learning time provides rich opportunities for EL and MTL teachers to guide the children in expressing their imaginative selves. Children at MOE Kindergarten @ Springdale learn action and descriptive Chinese words as they wriggle through the play equipment.

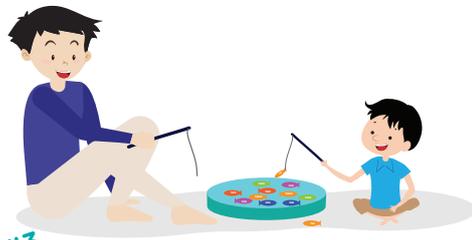
MOE Kindergarten @ Frontier

During snack time at MOE Kindergarten @ Frontier, children have the opportunity to communicate with their teachers in EL and their MTL. The TL and EL teachers also use this platform to observe, reflect on and discuss the children's progress in language learning. This informs the planning of subsequent activities in their classrooms to nurture the children's dispositions towards language learning.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

In this section, we take a look at some of the most commonly held misconceptions relating to early childhood bilingualism, and provide tips on how parents can help nurture an interest in learning and using EL and MTL.



Myth #1

Learning two languages too early will confuse a child, and affect his or her language development.

Fact: It may seem like your child is confused when he or she is learning and using two languages by mixing words from one language with words from another in a sentence. In reality, your child can recognise the differences between two languages.

Learning two languages can also help your child develop greater focus and have better concentration skills than a child who only speaks in one language as they know which language to use with whom they speak to. This certainly lays the foundation for learning.

Myth #2

Children pick up languages best through rote learning e.g. memorising and writing CL characters over and over again, and memorising how words are spelt.

Fact: Rote learning may help your child pick up more words in the short term. However, opportunities should also be provided for your child to use the language meaningfully in different contexts, e.g. reading signages, conversing with your child on topics that are of interest to him or her. This would benefit him or her in the long run.

Myth #3

My child frequently uses EL and his or her MTL in a conversation. He or she is probably struggling in learning languages.

Fact: While using EL or MTL in the same sentence is generally discouraged in language learning and application, research has found that this is an approach that might help your child to express himself or herself, and is not a sign of linguistic incompetence but part of a bilingual child's normal language development, especially in the beginning stage. Your child may also alternate between EL or MTL based on the listener and the changes in his or her social environment.

Myth #4

In order to be ready for primary school, my child will need to be able to speak, read and write well in both EL and his or her MTL.

Fact: In the early years, inculcating an interest through communicating in EL and MTL should be a priority. The focus of language learning is on oracy so that your child is able to communicate with people confidently. Pressurising your child too early may cause him or her to lose interest in the learning of EL and MTL.

3 TIPS FOR PARENTS

The early years are a significant period for your child's language development. As a parent, you play a significant role in creating opportunities for your child to learn languages. Remember to **start young, start around you!**



Create an immersive and nurturing environment

A language is first listened to, and then spoken. Provide opportunities for your child to listen to songs/rhymes/stories and converse in both EL and MTL with family and friends in familiar settings.

You can expose your child to both EL and MTL by creating a positive learning environment at home through the use of picture books, language games and music, or participate in community events related to language learning (e.g. cultural events, story-reading at public libraries) with your child. The approach should be encouraging and your child should learn in a joyful manner that promotes interest in learning the languages.



Acknowledge your child's effort in communicating in the language that he or she is less fluent in

For instance, show an interest in the words/phrases that your child uses in the language that he or she is developing in. Ask him or her what those words/phrases mean. This might motivate your child to share with you more of what he or she knows of the language and encourage him or her to use more of the language.

You may also empower your child to take on the role of a "young teacher" and share with you what he or she has learnt in his or her MTL class. While your child may not have perfected the language in his or her early stage of learning, he or she will become more interested and confident in using the languages.



Avoid over-preparation

For example, a kindergarten-aged child should not be expected to:

- Express himself or herself using vocabulary and complex sentences that are not related to his or her daily life
- Perform oral tasks (e.g. storytelling, show-and-tell) without guidance
- Know Hanyu Pinyin in CL or all the letters in TL
- Read long sentences or passages
- Write characters, letters, words without guidance

To know more about what your child should be learning before entering primary school, do speak with your child's pre-school teacher or you may wish to refer to the Mother Tongue Language (MTL) Framework that can be downloaded from the NEL Portal (www.nel.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/moekindergarten or scan the QR code to join our mailing list to receive the latest news and updates!

