



Games such as matching words with picture cards make language learning fun

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Three ways to help children strengthen their mother tongue.

- **Speak the language at home.** Allocate a day or specific timing where everyone should use only the MTL with one another.
- **Borrow library books and watch online videos.** These help with grammar and pronunciation. Do ensure the materials are appropriate and seek advice from your child's teachers, if necessary.
- **Create a print-rich environment.** Attach labels in your MTL to furniture and other objects at home to expand your child's vocabulary.

THROUGH THE LANGUAGE LENS

HOW MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGES HELP CHILDREN DISCOVER AND STAY CONNECTED TO THEIR ROOTS.

Nurturing a love for one's mother tongue benefits children in many ways. It helps them connect with their cultural identity, heritage and the wider community across the world. Three preschool mother tongue language (MTL) teachers share how they inspire a love and appreciation for language in children.

MAKING LANGUAGE FUN

Chinese language teacher Mdm Zhang Xuan Hong from St. James' Church Kindergarten (Harding) uses teaching aids including hand puppets and games such as matching words with picture cards, to make language learning an enjoyable experience. "Learning becomes more engaging and meaningful when it is through play," says Mdm Zhang.

Nursery rhymes are easy to understand and simple in structure. "Singing and performing in Chinese not only help children gain confidence in using the language but also serve as a form of cultural

education," she adds. "When you use a language, you interact with the culture."



Learning to play the *kompang*, a traditional Malay instrument

INTEGRATING LEARNING

Mdm Siti Raudhah Binte Haji Halimi, a senior Malay language teacher at MOE Kindergarten @ Horizon, often uses Malay folklore in her storytelling sessions, which bring together language, culture and values. For example, from the tales of Sang Kancil, children can learn about resourcefulness and ingenuity.

Songs, games, dances and food are also used to enrich the MTL experience for children. For instance, after reading a story about the martial art form *silat*, the children played the *kompang*, a traditional Malay musical instrument, and practised

basic movements from the book. "It is important to provide an authentic learning experience for children to connect more effectively with the language," says Mdm Siti Raudhah.

APPRECIATING OTHER CULTURES

Tamil language teacher Mrs Jeya Rubi Caroline from PCF Sparkletots @ Sengkang East Blk 187B observes that children enjoy activities with singing, drawing, role-play and puppets. Hence, her lessons tap into the rich source of Tamil poems, songs, stories and dramas. Children also try the various rituals and customs associated with festivals such as Pongal, a harvest festival, and wear traditional outfits on special occasions.

"By learning about their cultural and language background, children will feel pride. It can also inspire interest in the cultures and languages of their friends and neighbours. This lays the foundation for mutual respect and racial harmony," she says. ●



Children practising a traditional Pongal folk dance

LET'S TALK! Educators and parents keen to know more about sparking children's interest in learning MTL can look forward to the digital Mother Tongue Languages Symposium 2021 on 28 August. Among the highlights are a panel discussion, sharing sessions, exhibits and an Online Quest for 4- to 9-year-olds. Find out more at www.mtls.edu.sg.

