

Mother Tongue Languages Symposium 2020

National Institute of Education, Asian Languages and Culture

The World of Stories – Fun in Language Learning and Values Inculcation

Stories are a great way to engage children in language learning and exposing them to the value system of a culture behind the language. Children immerse themselves in the language while enjoying the stories and pick up cultural nuances embedded in them. Being acquainted with the way values are highlighted will help children have deeper appreciation for the culture and better understanding of the language. The Asian Languages and Cultures Academic Group from the National Institute of Education is providing video resources and tips for parents to help their children learn their MTL and the corresponding cultures through story-telling, covering the whole process from selection of stories, the actual story-telling process and post story-telling discussion. This will help parents gain a better understanding of how to fully tap onto storytelling to help their children learn MTL and their values in a fun and engaging way at home.

Tips for Parents

Pre-storytelling

When deciding on a story, here are three points that parents could consider:

1. Clear values

Respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony (R3ICH) - these are the 6 all-encompassing values that are part of the MOE Character and Citizenship Education syllabus. Any of these values or a combination of them should be a part of the book of choice. By focusing on these values, parents will help their children to understand and appreciate them as well, and act as platform for the children to see how these values can be realized in their daily life.

2. Simple story line

There are basically 7 basic plots in storytelling. They are good vs evil, rags to riches, the quest, voyage and return, comedy, tragedy and rebirth. Based on the children's age, and for the impartation of values, this can be shortened to just 3:

- Good vs evil
- Rags to riches
- Quest

A simple story line will involve not more than 3 main characters (depending on the age group, stories for younger children tend to lesser main characters) and 1 main conflict. For example, a character trying to survive a challenge or having to undergo a test of resilience, and lastly, a happy ending.

3. Engaging or good illustration

Visual literacy is an important component in a child's learning. Children use all their senses to learn. Through visual imagery, children will be able to identify numbers and letters, find meaning in concepts and ideas, develop critical thinking skills and much more. There are basically 4 main components of language in visual language:

- Body language (this will involve dramatization of the story or the movement of the storyteller)
- Object language (use of objects to convey information)
- Sign and symbol language (pictorial representation of a message)
- Abstract language (graphics or logos to represent ideas)

Thus, books with good illustration will go a long way in enhancing the child's visual literacy skills.

Actual and Post Storytelling

In storytelling, remember the 3 "I"s - Interesting, Interactive and Inculcate.

For the first I, make your storytelling **INTERESTING** by choosing a particular voice that fits the character. This will bring the character in the story alive.

For the second I, be **INTERACTIVE**. Get the child to be involved in the story as well, either as one of the characters or just to voice some parts of the act. Choose one that repeats itself often so that the child knows his or her part well and can deliver it better. This will help the child learn the language and also improve on pronunciation.

For the last I, which is the post storytelling segment, **INCULCATE** values at the end of the storytelling by asking questions that clarify certain actions of the character e.g. Why do you think he did this? Could he have done it differently? Would you do the same? If so, why?

Video Resources

Lower Primary

The elephant and the rope

This story emphasizes the value of resilience. In the story, an elephant that faced a failed attempt during its younger age, grew up remaining a slave without re-attempting for success. This story video clip is designed to teach students an important life lesson – that is to not give up easily and to persevere in all their tasks.

Upper Primary

Manuneechi Cholan

This story aims to highlight the value of integrity. It illustrates a historical story about a king called Manuneechi Cholan, who ensured justice for a calf's death by considering its suffering as his own. Students will learn key cultural values of the Tamils through this story. It further highlights the importance of valuing all lives as their own and living a righteous life.