

# The Personal TOUCH

In **NOVATION & RESEARCH**

How do you make learning a second language enjoyable? Two pre-school mother tongue educators explain their unique methods.

**T**EACHERS PLAY A crucial role in educating our children in the Mother Tongue Languages

(MTL). Children are more motivated to learn when teachers actively employ a variety of pedagogical approaches to engage them, and create opportunities for them to use their MTL confidently. For those keen to pick the minds of their peers, the annual MTL Symposium is a valuable platform to exchange views and ideas and learn from other educators and parents.

At her booth, Ms Rohaini Binte Haron, Vice Principal at PCF Bukit Panjang Blk 111 Gangsa Road, intends to showcase her method of incorporating rhymes and rhythms into her Malay language lessons. As she explains, "Simple rhymes work well for children's limited attention span [as these] help children imitate sounds and pick up the language faster."

Ms Rohaini, 53, believes it is beneficial for children to be able to speak two languages as they "can make new friends, create strong relationships

Using colourful dough to shape Tamil letters is fun and memorable for the children.



and develop important personal skills in this increasingly diverse society". Nur Elyana Ameerah, six, of PCF Bukit Panjang says, "I like to learn Malay because it makes me happy and it is fun."

To encourage her teachers to innovate, Ms Neo Guat Keng, Principal at PCF Bukit Panjang, sends them on courses, seminars and learning journeys to expose them to different teaching methods. "Teachers will do a sharing session after their experience, and contribute a fresh idea based on those ideas shared," she says.

Mrs Kamalam Srimivasan, 64, who is representing Saraswathy Kindergarten at this year's MTL Symposium, makes learning fun

and interactive for the children in her mother tongue class. "Playful activities encourage the children to talk more and in turn, they learn the language through oral communication." Shaping Tamil letters out of dough, for example, is a tactile process that helps children remember the letters and words better.

Saraswathy Kindergarten also uses technology for MTL lessons. Online songs, stories and games are not only a visual treat, they provide voice clarity to help familiarise pre-schoolers with the sounds of different words. The children are also encouraged to interview their parents in Tamil — for instance, about their occupations or Singapore's history — and video the process to share with the class. It helps them become confident speakers and raises their self-esteem, says the centre's Principal, Mrs Rajendran Tadhavathi, 54.

Vijayakumar Prajeet, six, says he likes learning Tamil, "because then I can read Tamil storybooks. I feel good about myself". ♥



PHOTOS BY EALBERT HO & MARK LEE



## MTL SYMPOSIUM 2015

The 4<sup>th</sup> Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) Symposium will be held at the Suntec Singapore Exhibition and Convention Centre, from 11am to 8pm on Saturday, 29 August 2015. The annual event promotes the learning of MTL at the pre-school and lower primary levels. This year's theme, "Our Mother Tongues as Living Languages", emphasises building a firm MTL foundation from young and making learning a family-centred effort.

Come and learn from experts, educators and the community through sharing sessions, workshops and exhibits. Admission is free. Members of the public can register at [www.mtls.com.sg](http://www.mtls.com.sg) for the sharing sessions and workshops by end-July.