

Teaching and Learning of Malay Language in the 21st Century- The Singapore Experience

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ABSTRACT

Started in 1997, the Masterplans for ICT in Education drive the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education. The Third Masterplan (mp3) continues the vision of the first and second Masterplans to enrich and transform the learning environments of Singapore students and equip them with the critical competencies and dispositions to succeed in a knowledge economy. This is aligned with the student outcomes of Curriculum 2015 (C2015) which hopes to prepare students for the skills and dispositions required of tomorrow's workers. For Malay language teaching and learning in Singapore, The Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) and Educational Technology Division (ETD) of the Ministry of Education, Singapore, have developed many programmes, platforms and resources for e-learning and ICT infused lessons to take place. This, in turn, allows students to be engaged in self-directed and collaborative learning in the learning of Malay language. The responses from teachers and students have been very encouraging and many teachers have come forward to share their best ICT practices in seminars and festivals.

Key words

e-learning models, educational technology, self-directed learning, collaborative learning, Web 2.0, knowledge economy, Malay language

INTRODUCTION

The pervasive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in all aspects of daily life has changed how we live and learn. In the educational front, ICT provides an opportunity to encourage student-centered approaches to learning (John & Wheeler, 2008). Research has shown that young people exhibit a higher level of engagement and more positive attitudes towards learning where technology is incorporated (Sutherland, Robertson & John, 2009). Computer-based technologies can also be powerful tools – not just rich sources of information, but extensions of human capabilities and contexts for social interaction (Bransford et al., 2000).

As such, language learning too has to be in tune with the changing educational landscape. Traditional roles of the teacher and students are being challenged as the use of technology allows more autonomy for the student in his learning (Chia, 2007). In language learning, the interactivity of language exercises through technology-based resources such as those apparent in Web 2.0 tools is appealing and beneficial to the acquisition of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Sharma & Barrett, 2007).

CONTEXT

The first Masterplan for ICT in Education (1997 – 2002) laid a strong foundation for schools to harness ICT, particularly in the provision of basic ICT infrastructure and in equipping teachers with a basic level of ICT integration competency. The second Masterplan for ICT in Education (2003 – 2008) built on the foundation of the first Masterplan to strive for an effective and pervasive use of ICT in education by, for example, strengthening the integration of ICT into the curriculum, establishing baseline ICT standards for students, and seeding innovative use of ICT among schools. The Third Masterplan (2009 – 2014) continues the vision of the first and second Masterplans to enrich and transform the learning environments of Singapore students and equip them with the critical competencies and dispositions to succeed in a knowledge economy (MOE, 2008).

The underlying philosophy of the Masterplan for ICT in Education in Singapore is that education should continually anticipate the needs of the future and prepare pupils to meet those needs. The outcome goal focuses on self-directed and collaborative learning, which requires learners to exercise a good range of 21st century skills. It also emphasizes on cyber wellness; ensuring that students are able to use technology in a safe way and are able to take responsibility for their own well-being.

Bilingual education in English (EL) and the Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) remains a cornerstone of Singapore's education system. EL, as the common language of instruction, enables all our students to plug into a globalised world. The learning of MTLs for the various ethnic groups has provided a link to their heritage and Asian roots. Furthermore, with the rise of China and India, and the integration of ASEAN, the learning of MTLs will gain increasing relevance and provide our students and companies with a competitive edge (MOE, 2011).

The three official MTLs are Chinese (CL), Malay (ML) and Tamil (TL). MTLs as a subject take up approximately 15% of the total curriculum time. However, the key findings of the MTL review revealed that there is a long-term trend of English becoming a dominant language used in homes, as shown by yearly data of incoming Primary 1 (P1) students over the past twenty years. This rising trend is seen across all communities. For the Malays, the figure was 13% in 1991 to 37% in 2010 (MOE, 2011). The teaching of Malay language must therefore evolve so as to keep up with the changing trend.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Learning Resources and Repositories

The Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) and the Educational Technology Division (ETD) of the Ministry of Education have come up with several portals to support the teaching and learning of Malay Language in Singapore schools. These portals reside on the Edumall website (www.edumall.sg) which requires a user login access made available to teachers.

One such portal is *Tinta*, a website that features multimedia content that complements the 2008 ML primary curriculum and interactive resources for secondary schools.



Residing on this portal are 2 other separate portals for use by primary school ML teachers, which are *'Mekar Dalam Talian'* (Mekar On-line) and *Nadi*. *'Mekar Dalam Talian'* is a resource-rich portal which allows teachers to access and download the resources from virtually anywhere for use in the classroom. These resources include audio and video programmes which are tied in to the syllabus, and interactive games.



Nadi is a magazine-style portal which is updated monthly. Besides featuring audio, video and interactive resources, it also has a repository of photographs related to the theme of the month. Students can also participate in a monthly quiz and post threads in the discussion forum as part of its interactivity feature.



edunadi 2.0 • Nadi • Nadi Wiki • Feedback • Kuiz • Blog • Podcast Search: All

Keluaran September 2011

Penghargaan Peta Laman Maklum Balas

Create Engage Inspire
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Educational Technology Division

NADI JAUHARI
NADI BERITA
NADI BUDAYA
NADI BAHASA
NADI RIA

*Anak buruk di tepi pantai,
Pandai melompat pandai berlari;
Biar buruk kain dipakai,
Asal hidup pandai berbudi.*

Selamat menjalani puasa, kawan-kawan! Nadi pasti kawan-kawan semua tidak sabar menanti tibanya Hari Raya Aidilfitri. Nadi juga begitu. Tetapi sebelum itu, Nadi hendak berkongsi dengan kawan-kawan pengalaman Nadi ke Bazar di Geylang Serai. Sempena bulan Ramadan ini, kawan-kawan ada cerita atau [pengalaman berpuasa](#) yang hendak kawan-kawan kongsi? Kalau ada, marilah kongsi bersama kawan-kawan yang lain di blog Nadi. Bulan ini juga, negara kita menyambut ulang tahunnya yang ke-46. Seperti bulan lalu, Nadi ingin memberikan peluang kepada kawan-kawan untuk memberikan ucapan sempena [Hari Lahir Singapura](#) di blog Nadi. Jangan ketinggalan untuk membuat ucapan khas, ya, kawan-kawan!

Sajian kali ini:

For secondary school ML teachers, audio and video resources that are tied to the current syllabus are available on the eMedia website in the Edumall.



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MTL 2011

Video and Audio Resources for Mother Tongue Languages Secondary Syllabus

Select video and audio resources based on language, level and syllabus to accompany your MTL lessons.

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Schools
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The eMedia website is also a repository for resources that was produced for past primary and secondary packages. The search function on the website enables the teacher to search for resources based on the keywords, languages or categories.

Another useful repository for ML language teachers is the upcoming iMTL portal. This portal is currently being launched in phases and once fully launched, will enable ML teachers to infuse ICT in their lessons through task-based activities which can be teacher-created or student-created. Through the task-based activities, iMTL Portal facilitates self-directed and collaborative learning through the effective use of ICT. There is provision for the usage of open tools for teachers to further design suitable learning resources or customize the questions sited in the central repository. As part as it's aims to strengthen students' proficiency in oral presentation and written production and to enhance students' interest and motivation in MTL learning, students can use the recording function via a webcam or a simple headset microphone to record their responses besides relying on type-text responses, and upload the recordings for teacher assessment.

Building teachers' capacity

In order for ICT infused lessons to take place, teachers must be trained to be proficient in ICT. The Educational Technology Division of MOE have embarked on a programme called the ICT Mentor to support schools in achieving the target for effective use of ICT for learning and teaching. Conducted in 5 Phases from 2010 to 2012, the programme aims to provide ICT Mentors with knowledge and skills on the technical affordances of ICT tools and the pedagogical principles related to the appropriate use of ICT tools for learning and teaching. In addition, ICT Mentors will acquire skills for face-to-face and online mentoring and coaching to effectively propagate good ICT practices to colleagues in schools. (MOE, 2011). Each school will have up to four trained ICT Mentors, and they will play the following key roles:

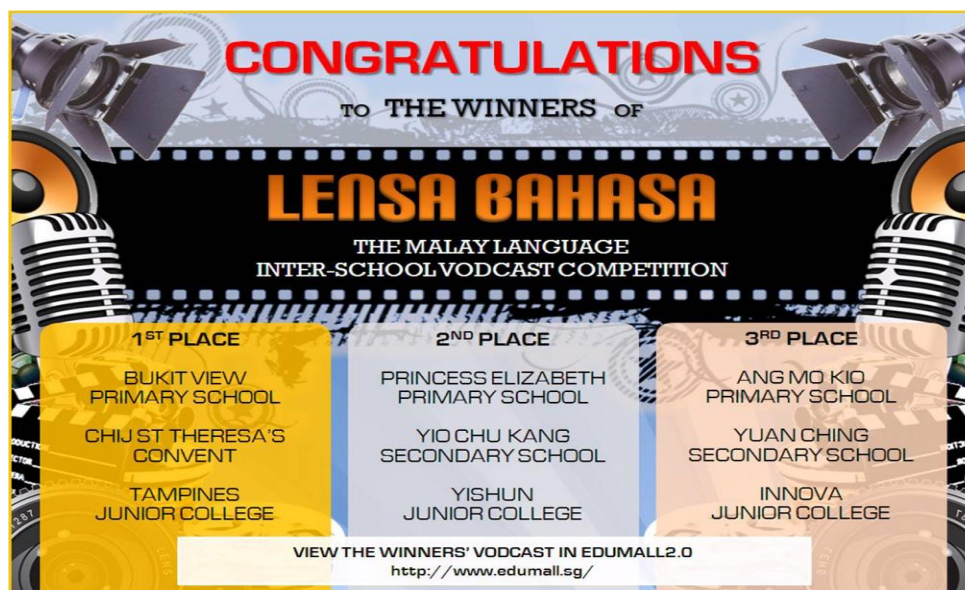
1. Serve as mentor to teachers on ICT use for learning and teaching, in particular, to deliver ICT-enriched learning experiences for students, in their respective disciplines;
2. Provide requisite knowledge on planning and delivering ICT-enriched learning experiences and champion best practices by developing lesson exemplars to showcase ICT use;
3. Facilitate the sharing of ICT resources created by teachers to propagate good ideas and practices.

Besides the ICT Mentor Programme, ETD has been collaborating with schools and Malay Language teachers on the Malay (10'M Aksara) programme since 2010. Teachers in this programme will be trained to use ICT effectively in the classroom using the resources residing on the 10M Aksara Portal. This programme aims to promote students' interest and improve their competencies in the language through regular self-paced learning activities in an enriching web-based interactive environment. ETD has designed and developed more than 600 multimedia extended reading resources aimed to heighten pupils' interest in reading. During extended reading sessions, learners can either follow a karaoke-styled animation over text with voice-over model reading or simply mouse-over unfamiliar words to access the pronunciation that comes with a brief explanation. This use of ICT has helped tentative and diffident readers overcome initial fear of reading the prescribed text.

Competitions as a platform for teacher and student-created resources

'Lensa Bahasa' is an annual vodcast competition started in 2010 for ML teachers and students to collaborate and produce video resources for use in the classroom.

Organised by the Malay Language Unit of the Curriculum Planning and Development Division of MOE, this competition has generated excitement and active participation from primary and secondary schools, and junior colleges. Winning entries are then uploaded on the Edumall website for teachers to use in the classroom. This innovative project of the Malay Language Unit officers to encourage students to use collaboration skills in video-making earned them the MOE HQ Innergy Award (Commendation).



Another platform for ML teachers and students to produce resources on a competition setting is the Schools' Digital Media Awards competition. Organised by the Educational Technology Division since 1997, this audio, video and animation competition is open to all students and teachers from the primary, secondary and junior college level. Entries from the four official languages are accepted, and winning entries are also uploaded for teacher use. In 2010, a Malay Language video entry titled 'Aku', produced by a Malay Language teacher, received the Platinum Award, the highest award for that year.

These two competition organisers also provide training and workshops for students and teachers throughout the year prior to the entry submission dateline.

Seminars as a platform to share ICT best practices

The annual Malay Language Seminar organized by the Malay Language Unit of the Curriculum Planning and Development Division of MOE allows ML teachers to share best practices which also include ICT based classroom pedagogies. Realizing the importance of harnessing ICT tools in the Malay Language classroom, the theme for the seminar in 2010 was *Embracing Alternative Assessment and ICT in Teaching and Learning of Malay Language*. 23 papers were presented during the seminar that year, majority of which the presenters shared a variety of Web 2.0 tools that they had used effectively in the classroom.

Based on the encouraging number of participants in the seminar each year, the Unit decided to embark on a festival dedicated solely to the use of ICT tools in the Malay Language classroom. Thus in July 2011, the first ever Malay Language Festival was

organized by the unit. This festival serves as an alternative platform for teachers to share their best ICT practices. About 16 schools took part in the exhibition in this inaugural festival.

REFLECTION

Based on the response and participation rate from Malay Language teachers on the programmes, seminars and ICT-based projects organized thus far, it can be seen that there is generally a deep realization on the importance on tapping on ICT for Malay language learning amongst Malay Language teachers in Singapore. This is in tandem with the various researches on the invaluable potential of ICT in language learning.

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