Mother tongue languages Syllabus

Secondary

Implementation starting with
2021 Secondary One Cohort

Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

CONTENTS

Singapore Curriculum Philosophy

The Singapore Curriculum Philosophy represents MOE's beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs, which place every student at the heart of our educational decisions, guide the design and implementation of MOE curricula.

Summary of the Singapore Curriculum Philosophy

We believe in holistic education, centered on values, social and emotional well-being and character development.

We believe that every child wants to and can learn. We focus on children's learning needs when designing learning experiences.

We believe that learning flourishes:

- in caring and safe learning environments,
- when children construct knowledge actively,
- through the development of thinking skills and dispositions, and
- when assessment is used to address children's learning gaps.

Ministry of Education 2020

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- Learning Objectives

- Guiding Principles

- MTL Ecosystem

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning Objectives

With the Singapore Curriculum Philosophy as the overarching belief, the 2021 Secondary Mother Tongue Languages (2021 Sec MTL) syllabuses aim to engage students in joyful learning and develop them to become active and proficient users of MTL, with the three broad objectives: Communication, Culture and Connection. Teachers will build on students' prior knowledge and skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, as well as spoken and written interaction, acquired in primary school to enhance their communication skills; guide them to understand and appreciate various cultural and literary materials to strengthen their global and cross-cultural awareness; and create opportunities for them to learn and use the various language skills in authentic situations beyond the classroom.

Guiding Principles

In line with the three broad objectives, the 2021 Sec MTL syllabuses are guided by the following principles:

1. Explicit and differentiated teaching of language skills and knowledge to develop communication skills effectively.

2. Systematic infusion of culture and values to enhance a meaningful and enriching learning experience.

3. Leveraging technology and community partners to empower students to stay connected to MTLs beyond the classroom.

MTL Ecosystem

Given our language context in Singapore, effective learning of MTL would require the support of an entire MTL ecosystem involving various stakeholders, such as community partners, educational organisations, parents and the media. As such, collaboration and partnership are essential for the successful implementation of the 2021 Sec MTL syllabuses.

SECTION 2: CONTENT

2. CONTENT

MTL Syllabus Framework

The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum Framework is centred on the goal of engaging students in joy of learning, developing them to become active learners and proficient users of MTL. The three broad objectives of Communication, Culture and Connection undergird the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum's Content (Language Skills, Language Knowledge, and Cultural Values), Pedagogy and Assessment.

2021 Secondary MTL Curriculum Framework
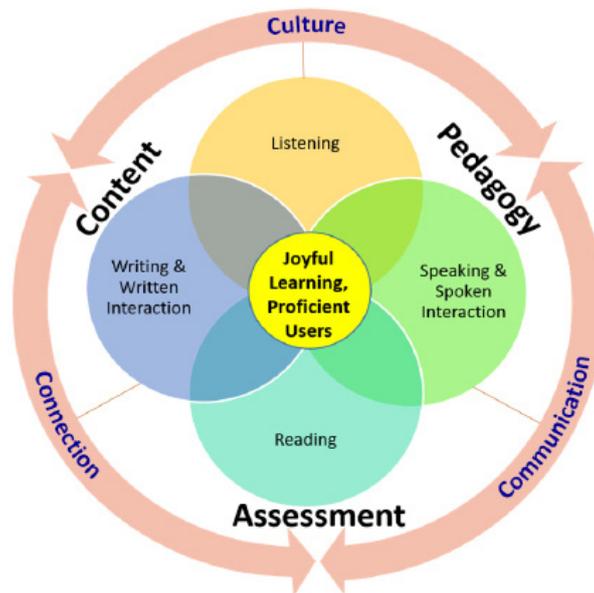
Language Skills

Students will be developed to be competent language users and confident communicators. To achieve these objectives, students have to harness the six language skills: listening and reading skills (receptive skills), speaking and writing skills (productive skills) and, spoken interaction and written interaction skills (interaction skills).
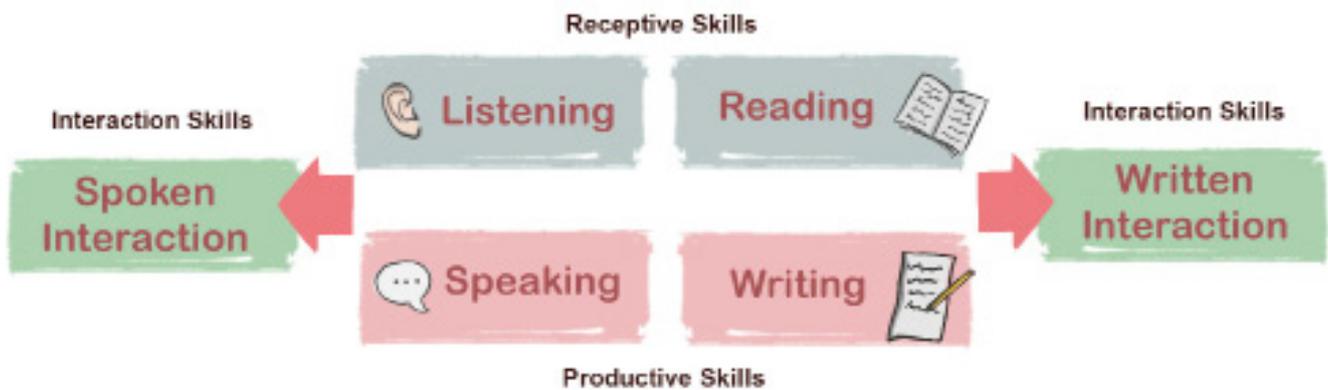
Language Knowledge

Language knowledge is the knowledge and understanding about language which a learner or user has for interpreting and creating discourse or texts in language use. Language knowledge includes two areas: Linguistics and Pragmatics.

Linguistics includes phonology, orthography, lexicon (vocabulary), grammar and knowledge of text. These aspects are the main components of language knowledge.

Pragmatics includes knowledge of cultural references, registers, varieties and functional purposes. These aspects enable users and learners to interpret or create discourse or texts that are appropriate to the language use setting and intention.
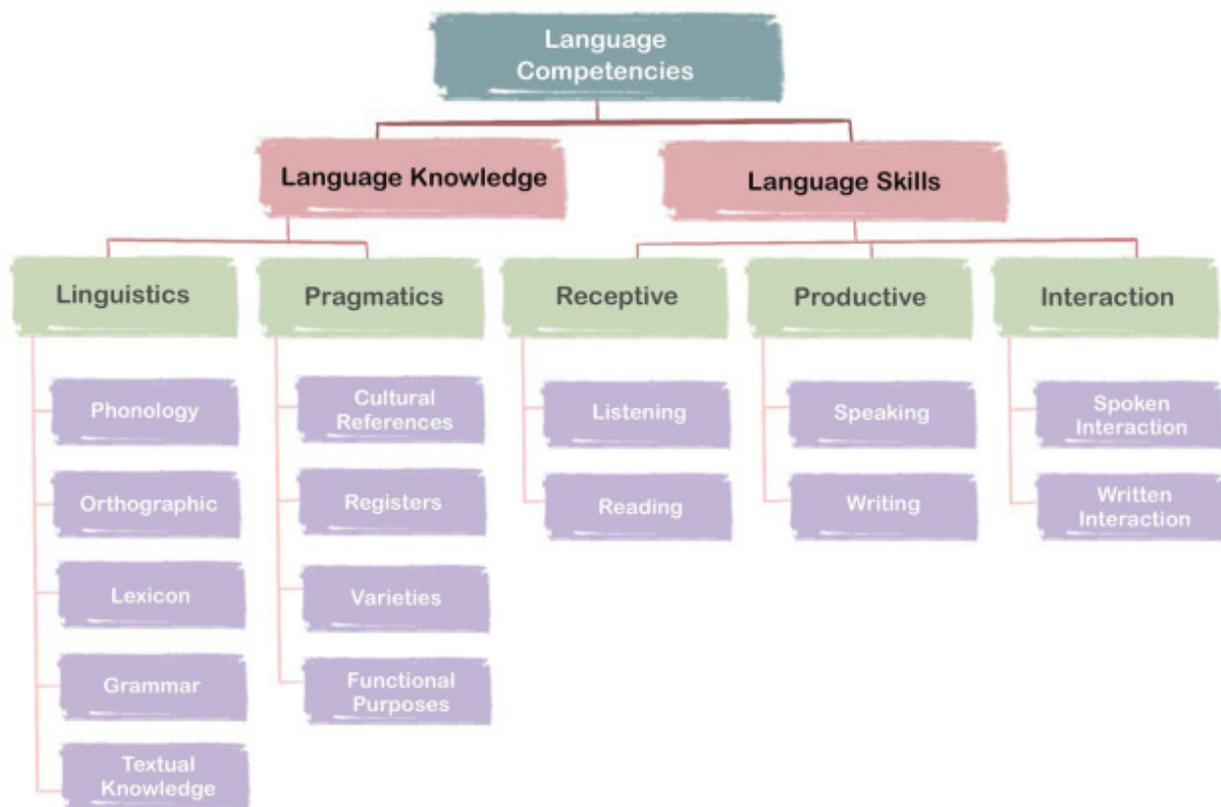
Cultural Values

MTL education is entrusted with the role of educating students their ethnic heritage, tradition, culture and values. As such, the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum will continue to infuse the learning of positive values and promote the development of good character. Units in the Sec MTL curriculum are organised around themes such as relationships with friends, families and the community. Cultural and contemporary stories will also be interwoven into the textbooks to facilitate both explicit teaching and teachable moments, and provide ample opportunities for students to have rich discussions in the classroom.

Key Features

The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum retains the strengths of the 2011 Sec MTL Curriculum, with the following enhancements:

1. More deliberate infusion of cultural knowledge and appreciation

As language and culture are intertwined, MTL learning is enriched when cultural appreciation is incorporated into discussions. Helping students to appreciate cultural differences and similarities in the course of learning MTL can lead to greater self-awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity. It can also help students to develop a stronger cultural identity that is uniquely Singaporean. As such, cultural components would be more systemically infused into the new 2021 Sec MTL curriculum to help students develop a greater appreciation of MTL culture. Specific instructions, resources and training would be provided to support and enhance the effectiveness of teaching cultural elements such as Material Civilisation, Behaviour & System, and Values & Philosophies.

Guiding questions will also be provided to teachers to facilitate meaningful discussions to help students see the relevance of these cultures. Differentiated instruction is adopted to ensure students can appreciate these cultural components, catered to their language proficiency.

The cultural elements are selected based on the following guiding principles:

1. Foster students' communication and cognitive skills;

2. Enhance students' connection to their Mother Tongue culture; and

3. Help students appreciate Mother Tongue culture in local context and with relevance to their daily experience

2. Greater students' exposure to and engagement with literary texts

Good and accessible literary texts can capture students' imagination and promote joy of reading, enabling them to go beyond the functional purpose of MTL learning. Literary texts will be carefully selected and appropriately adapted to suit the cognitive and proficiency level of students. The proportion of literary texts in the new curriculum will be increased in the lower secondary levels. Sufficient exposure to literary texts will be provided to pique students' interest and subsequently encourage them to study literature at the upper secondary level and beyond.

3. Use of contemporary issues and current affairs (CI & CA) materials to contextualise students' learning

As the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum aims to develop our students to be active and proficient users of MTL, CI & CA will be used more extensively to facilitate learning beyond classroom. The new curriculum will focus on the use of authentic contexts, and hence CI & CA resources would be categorised according to the themes of the 2021 instructional materials and will be curated according to students' learning needs, age appropriateness and language proficiency level. Time will be set aside for the reading and discussion of these issues in class and teachers will be trained to make better use of print and non-print media resources to engage students on contemporary issues. Use of CI & CA would enrich students' learning and help them to appreciate the relevance and vibrancy of MTLs in the real world around them.

4. Greater integration of ICT-enabled lessons for greater interactivity and customisation

Effective use of technological tools can deepen students' learning and help them achieve future-ready competencies, such as communicating and collaborating with others. Therefore, the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum will develop ICT-based resources such as video stimuli, language games and interactive lesson packages to bring about the joy of learning and create rich and meaningful learning experiences.

About 30% of the curriculum will consist of non-print materials in the form of digital text, social media and learning resources in the Student Learning Space (SLS). Teachers will be able to leverage on these resources to encourage and facilitate collaborative learning in classroom activities.

Learning Outcomes

The 2021 Sec MTL syllabuses are aligned to the 21st Century Competencies (21CC) framework, which is categorised in the three domains, namely Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills; Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-Cultural Skills; as well as Critical and Inventive Thinking Skills.

Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

Receptive Skills (Listening and Reading)	✓ Derive the underlying messages from dialogues in daily life, speeches, and reports and discussions of issues in mass media programmes. ✓ Understand the underlying messages of reading materials related to daily life. ✓ Comprehend and appreciate texts of various genres, such as newspapers, narrative texts and informative texts.
Productive Skills (Speaking and Writing)	✓ Fluently and clearly describe or recount in detail a scenario, or express their views on topics related to their daily life. ✓ Enrich their language expression with a wide array of vocabulary and sentence structures. ✓ Substantiate their views with appropriate examples and evidence.
Interactive Skills (Spoken Interaction and Written Interaction)	✓ Interact with others fluently in both physical and virtual settings. ✓ Leverage digital platforms and tools to communicate ideas effectively. ✓ Exchange views with others using appropriate language and expressions.

Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-Cultural Skills

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

✓ Learn and appreciate the culture and history of each MTL community, paying special attention to how these cultures flourished uniquely in Singapore.

✓ Respect people from diverse cultural backgrounds, with different worldviews and perspectives.

✓ Develop a sense of moral values, good character and civic responsibility.

✓ Understand and discuss the impact of contemporary issues and current affairs, both locally and globally.

Critical and Inventive Thinking Skills

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

✓ Develop key understandings from knowledge gained during their MTL lessons.

✓ Develop perspective-taking skills.

✓ Think creatively and critically, assess options and make sound decisions.

✓ Exercise discernment by evaluating the accuracy, credibility and relevance of both online and offline information.

Curriculum Differentiation

As students learn and grow at different paces, the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum consists of five courses: Basic Mother Tongue Language, Mother Tongue Language 'B', Normal (Academic) Mother Tongue Language, Express Mother Tongue Language and Higher Mother Tongue Language. These five courses vary in emphases to cater to students' diverse needs:

Course / Language Skills	Reading	Listening, Speaking & Spoken Interaction	Writing & Written Inter-action
Basic Mother Tongue Language	25%	65%	10%
Mother Tongue Language 'B'	30%	50%	20%
Normal (Academic) Mother Tongue Language	30%	45%	25%
Express Mother Tongue Language	35%	35%	30%
Higher Mother Tongue Language	30%	25%	45%

Curriculum Time

The weekly curriculum time of the respective courses is as follows:

Course	Level and no. of hours per week				
	Sec 1	Sec 2	Sec 3	Sec 4	Sec 5
Basic Mother Tongue Language	1 h 45 min – 2 h	1 h 45 min – 2 h	1 h 45 min – 2 h	1 h 45 min – 2 h	-
Mother Tongue Language 'B'	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h – 4 h #	3 h – 4 h #	-
Normal (Academic) Mother Tongue Language	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h – 4 h #	3 h – 4 h #	3 h – 4 h #
Express Mother Tongue Language	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h 30 min – 4 h	3 h – 4 h #	3 h – 4 h #	-
Higher Mother Tongue Language	4 h – 4 h 30 min	4 h – 4 h 30 min	3 h 30 min – 4 h #	3 h 30 min – 4 h #	-

The exact number of hours per week would depend on the number of subjects offered at Upper Secondary levels.

Implementation Time Frame

The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum will be implemented in stages according to the following schedule:

| Course	Level and year of implementation				
	Sec 1	Sec 2	Sec 3	Sec 4	Sec 5
Basic Mother Tongue Language	2021	2022	2023	2024	-
Mother Tongue Language 'B'	2021	2022	2023	2024	-
Normal (Academic) Mother Tongue Language	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Express Mother Tongue Language	2021	2022	2023	2024	-
Higher Mother Tongue Language	2021	2022	2023	2024	-

SECTION 3:
PEDAGOGY

3. PEDAGOGY

The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum believes in creating MTL learning experiences that are joyful, meaningful and is infused with the relevant 21CC. In particular, the learning of MTL falls under the domain of Communication, Collaboration and Information skills in the 21CC framework. In line with this vision, our MTL teachers will deploy a repertoire of effective teaching strategies to both engage our students and equip them with the necessary language skills and knowledge.

In their pursuit of pedagogical excellence, our MTL teachers take reference from the Singapore Teaching Practice (STP)[.1] The STP describes how effective teaching and learning can take place and is guided by the Singapore Curriculum Philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of teaching and learning. With the STP as the overarching framework, our MTL teachers will continue their discussion on various teaching strategies and approaches used in to the MTL classroom. The four key features of the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum, namely a greater emphasis on culture, literary texts, contemporary issues and integration of ICT, should also be infused in the MTL lessons.

The Four Teaching Processes and Teaching Areas
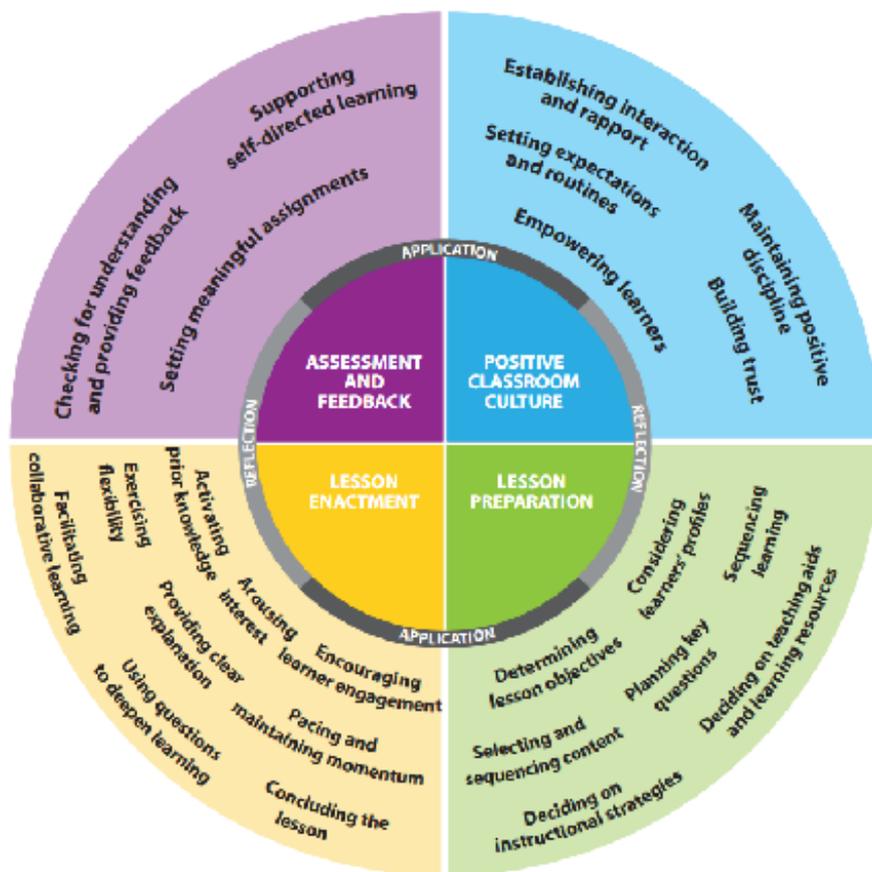
The following pedagogical approaches are key components of effective MTL teaching and learning.

Adopt a Learner-Centred Mindset

The learner is the central focus in the 21st Century MTL classroom. Being aware of the students' current language skills and prior knowledge enables our MTL teachers to apply effective teaching strategies to help students progress to a higher level.

As communication is one of the three main objectives of language learning, our MTL teachers will utilise effective questioning to allow more opportunities for students to think, make their thinking visible, and allow them to reflect, share, discuss, and debate relevant issues using MTL. When students take on a greater role in their MTL classes, they will be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and growth.

Leveraging on Collaborative Learning Theories

In order to develop our students into active contributors who can work effectively in teams, our MTL teachers refer to relevant Collaborative Learning theories, which suggest that learning can be optimised when students communicate and interact with others.[2] Coupled with the skilful use of communicative approach,[3] our MTL teachers will conscientiously make the MTL classroom a suitable setting for students to use MTL to relate to one another. In this way, our students will not only gain language knowledge, they will also use the language actively to complete meaningful tasks, thus developing the relevant language skills. A repertoire of teaching strategies will be used to create a collaborative learning environment, such as peer review, group presentations, collaborative writing and drama skits.

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[2] Vygotsky, L. (1997). Interaction between Learning and Development. In M. Gauvain & M. Cole (eds.), Readings on Development of Children. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 29-36.

[3] The communicative approach has been the nexus of language instruction in our MTL classrooms. It is an effective theory that promotes communication skills amongst learners. It illustrates how language need be used based on different contexts. The functional purpose of language is varied and can only be sharpened through effective practice.

Effective Use of E-Pedagogy

With contemporary classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, teaching and learning strategies that cater for a variety of learning profiles will be prominent in our MTL classrooms.

In order to achieve this, our teachers will familiarise themselves with e-pedagogies that are relevant to the teaching and learning of MTL. Effective use of e-pedagogies enhances language experience by providing both teachers and students access to a wide range of information in the form of sounds, images and texts that could be used to complement traditional classroom practices to develop understanding of multiple contexts and to stimulate thinking.

By mixing different learning environments and adopting both traditional pedagogical methods and new learning technologies, Blended Learning can be an effective way to incorporate Active Learning Processes with Technology to enrich students' learning. Active Learning Processes with Technology is the framework that taps on ICT to activate learning, promote thinking and discussion, facilitate demonstration of learning and monitor and provide feedback.

Teaching approaches that leverage on the affordances of digital information and communication technologies will be able to achieve the above objectives. The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum provides resources on the SLS for teachers to design learning experiences to suit the needs of digital learners. Our MTL teachers are also encouraged to go beyond delivering content to guide our students to be lifelong learners who will not only be competent in sourcing for useful materials in their MTL on the internet, but also critical in discerning various information.

Incorporation of Authentic Materials

As the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum seeks to expose students to contemporary issues and current affairs (CI & CA), teachers will actively incorporate authentic materials in their classrooms. Internet postings, videos, news, brochures, flyers, menus and signages are all possible materials for teachers to develop students' critical thinking skills and improve their viewing and reading skills. Teachers will use these materials to expose our students to current issues that affect their daily lives and facilitate meaningful discussions surrounding these issues. The discussion of CI allows the students to appreciate MTL as a living language which is relevant to their daily lives and also to provide fresh and insightful perspectives to issues. Besides discussing the content of the authentic materials, our teachers will also guide the students to appreciate the quality of language. The mastery of language structures and usages in these authentic materials will supplement the students' learning of literary texts.

Contextualised Discussion on Culture and Literary Texts

In language learning, culture provides the depth and significance behind the language knowledge and skills, while literary texts elegantly present the wisdom of our forefathers. The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum incorporates cultural components to systematically help students develop a greater appreciation of MTL cultures and their rich values.

When teachers discuss various aspects of MTL culture, students would be able to apply it in their own context to attain a deeper understanding of it, specifically its manifestations and relevance to their lives. As teachers introduce the students to literary texts, they will focus on exploring the ideas, values and expressions of the poets and writers, and how these could be applied in various creative platforms in a modern-day setting.

These contextualised discussions will help to engage students as they see the relevance of culture and literature, appreciating the fact that MTL culture is best learned via MTL.

Conclusion: Learning Beyond the Classroom

As a living language, the use of MTL should stretch beyond the classroom to further hone our students' communication skills. The tripartite partnership of home, school and community has never been more important than now. Exposing students to community-based language events would be a strong impetus to learn the language. Teachers will leverage on the programmes and events organised by the various Mother Tongue Languages Learning and Promotion Commitees[4] and other community organisations to create platforms for our students to use their MTLs beyond the schools.

Just as we hope to inspire our students towards lifelong learning of MTL, our MTL teachers will be role models, harnessing this spirit as they engage in regular professional development programmes to learn the latest pedagogies and teaching strategies, to the benefit of our students.

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[4] Namely, the Committee to Promote Chinese Language Learning (CPCLL), Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee (MLLPC) and Tamil Language Learning and Promotion Committee (TLLPC).

SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT

4. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is integral to teaching and learning and helps students become self-directed learners. It is the process of gathering and analysing evidence about student learning and development in order to improve teaching and learning.

Assessment is diagnostic and ongoing. It provides teachers day-to-day information on students' readiness for knowledge and skills sets, their interests and their approaches to learning. It is intended to enhance learning through activities undertaken by teachers when the information serves as feedback to modify instructional practice. It answers important questions such as whether students have learnt or how well they have mastered a skill or topic. Through regular and ongoing assessment, teachers make appropriate instructional decisions, and students are motivated to be self-directed learners as they work to improve themselves.

Assessment practices should be guided by 3 key messages:

> **a. Assessment is integral to the learning process.**
>
> **b. Assessment begins with clarity of purpose.**
>
> **c. Assessment should gather information to inform future practices.**

The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum adopts a learner-centred and balanced assessment philosophy. Being learner-centred, our MTL teachers will gather evidence to monitor how our students develop their language competencies and guide them in their learning. As much as possible, our students will be provided opportunities to be involved in their own assessment. A balanced assessment system consists of both Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning,[5] and schools are encouraged to support a healthy balance between the two.

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[5] Assessment of Learning (AoL) is summative in nature, in that it is usually conducted at the end of a unit, term, semester or year, in order to assess how well the student has learnt. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is formative in nature because it is conducted throughout the instructional period in order to allow teachers to promptly address learning gaps.

The following are key areas of effective MTL assessment.

Clarity of Purpose

Good assessment practice must involve a clarity of purpose. Decisions on 'what' to assess and 'how' to assess should be based on a clear purpose, in relation to the learning outcomes and good understanding of the efficacy of different assessment methods. With these in mind, our MTL teachers will strive for a comprehensive understanding of the students' language skills; ability to communicate ideas, information and opinions effectively; appreciation of cultural and societal values; and capacity in applying a variety of skills, such as critical and creative thinking skills.

Using a Variety of Assessment Modes

When assessing the students, teachers need to understand that language competency is developed over time through regular use in different settings. It is thus advisable to utilise various modes of assessment to assess students' integrated language use. Besides the national examination and school-based standardised assessments,[6] schools can utilise formative assessment modes such as Weighted Assessment[7] to provide timely feedback on students' learning. The 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum also encourages the use of alternative assessment such as speeches, debates, role-play and facilitated online forum discussion. Purposefully designed alternative assessment allows students to demonstrate their learning other than the traditional pen-and-paper tests. Our MTL teachers will also leverage on the various ICT platforms such as the SLS to assess the students while infusing the joy of learning.

Authentic Assessment

Just as it is important to bring in real world contexts in the teaching and learning of MTL, it is equally important to design authentic assessment tasks that represent how MTL can be used outside of the classroom and also in their future professions. Assessment tasks that are authentic can be replicas of the kind of problems faced by adults or professionals. This includes non-routine and multi-stage tasks that require a combination of procedural knowledge and planning skills, or tasks that require learners to produce a product or a performance.[8] In this way, students would be able to see the relevance of MTL beyond its definition as an academic subject.

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[6] Standardised assessment refers to an assessment that is administered, scored and interpreted in a consistent manner within the school, e.g., mid-year examination, end-of-year examination.

[7] Weighted Assessment (WA) is used in the Singapore context and refers to assessment where the scores form part of the computation of a student's overall results in a subject for the year. Each weighted assessment may be assigned different weightings, e.g. 10% or 15% of the overall results.

[8] Wiggins, G. P. (1993). Assessing student performance: Exploring the purpose and limits of testing. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

One example of an authentic assessment is to require students to write a formal email to an organisation to offer suggestions for improvement. Such assessment task allows students to learn about social norms and culturally-appropriate etiquette when writing. Values such as active citizenry could also be inculcated in the process.

Encouraging Reflection through Peer-Assessment and Self-Assessment

Training our students to have confidence and be a self-directed learner are part of the Desired Outcomes of Education.[9] As such, the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum encourages the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment. Self-assessment supports students to develop ownership of their learning progress and metacognition, in which they think about their own thinking, and plan, monitor and evaluate their learning processes.[10] Our MTL teachers will guide the students to reflect and summarise their own learning in terms of the various language skills, and prioritise important ideas. Teachers can use the information to close learning gaps in the next lesson.

Peer-assessment promotes the social aspect of learning and provides opportunities for students to develop strong interpersonal skills alongside academic mastery. Our MTL teachers can conduct peer-assessment in the classrooms or through online platforms. Rubrics could be provided for students to be more precise while giving constructive feedback. Teachers can also monitor and analyse students' understanding of the assessment criteria through the feedback that they provide for one another.

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[9] For more information on the Desired Outcomes of Education, please refer to https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/desired-outcomes-of-education.

[10] For more information on metacognition, please refer to Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. American Psychologist, 34(10), 906–911 and Schraw, G. (1998). Promoting general metacognitive awareness. Instructional Science 26, 113–125.

Towards Lifelong Learning

As students progress in learning MTL, it is important to note that the national examination is not the end of this journey, but merely a checkpoint in their lifelong learning of MTL. Since the national assessment is aligned with the 2021 Sec MTL Curriculum, pedagogy should drive assessment and not vice versa. Teachers and schools should focus on creating a joyful and meaningful MTL learning experience for the students, and not allow national examinations to dictate how MTL should be taught and learnt.

Moving forward, our MTL teachers will be embarking on the journey to constantly upgrade themselves in the area of assessment literacy. Assessment literacy is the ability to design and use assessment tools purposefully and effectively to diagnose and address learning gaps, and it is one of the six areas of practice in the "SkillsFuture for Educators" professional development roadmap.[11] Our MTL teachers will be equipped in the knowledge, skills and components to enact quality assessment for the betterment of our students. Just as how our MTL teachers have strived for pedagogical excellence, they will also hone their assessment skills in order to fulfil the mission to inspire the love of MTL in our students.

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[11] For more information on the SkillsFuture for Educators, please refer to https://www.moe.gov.sg/microsites/cos2020/skillfuture-for-educators.html.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

5. CONCLUSION

With the revised MTL syllabus, students will be able to learn and apply the language skills acquired in their MTL lessons in an integrated and meaningful way, achieve deeper understanding of issues and be motivated to continue the learning of MTL after formal schooling.

**CURRICULUM PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**