

# STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE MULTILINGUAL LEARNING



A(3.2) Demonstrate understanding of the social, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the students and their communities

A teacher's knowledge of methodologies that promote Multilingual Education (MLE) is vital for quality learning in a linguistically diverse classroom. By using and intentionally incorporating students' mother-tongue language for learning, students grow more confident when learning new concepts in additional languages. Mother Tongue-Based (MTB) education fosters a classroom culture that values not only students' languages, but also their cultural backgrounds, heritages and traditions. Students who learn in a classroom that promotes MTB-MLE are more likely to be confident expressing their ideas and transitioning to multilingual fluency. Teachers can use these multilingual education techniques to make their teaching more inclusive.

## LIST OF STRATEGIES

Following techniques can be used during any subject with students learning in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> language. Some of these strategies have been adapted from activities developed by Susan Malone (2010).

### DISCUSS IN L1 FIRST

Before beginning a new topic, ask students to share their background knowledge on the content using their first language. This will allow you to identify what they already know and can explain. Often, students already understand a topic, they may just need to learn new vocabulary in the language of instruction. If the topic is new, explain the concept in students' first language first to give them a better understanding.



### RETELL A STORY

Read or tell a story about a topic that is familiar and interesting to your students in their home language. When you are finished, ask the students to retell the story in their own words using the language of instruction (L2). If they hesitate or struggle ask questions to help them such as "Why did that happen?", "What happened before that?", "What happened next?". If they are really stuck, give them the option to explain in their home language. This will help your students build their confidence in L2 using a story they are already familiar with.



### WRITING WITH INTENTIONAL ERRORS

- Ask students to prepare a sentence or short paragraph related to the topic being taught. The twist is the students must intentionally make mistakes in their writing.
- Remind them that errors are normal part of how we learn.
- Students then read or write their sentences on the board in front of the class. Ask the audience to listen carefully, writing down the mistakes and the corrections.
- For a large class, this activity can be done in groups of 3 to 4 students.

**For example:** Find the errors in the sentences below:

I went with my mother to visit a children at the school. He said to them that they should eat at least 4 vegetables each day.



## LISTEN AND NOTE IT DOWN

- Read a passage slowly 2-3 times in the language of instruction, pausing after each paragraph to allow students time to note important points from the reading.
- Encourage students to write in their mother tongue language and their own words when writing the main points.
- As you read walk around the classroom to check students' notes. After reading, ask different students to share 1 or 2 of the main points they've written.
- When students are finished their notes, review the passage and ask what vocabulary or concepts were difficult to understand and review them.
- To ensure students understand the passage, do a final review to explain the main points in students' mother tongue.



## INTERVIEWING EXERCISE (NOUNS)

- Prepare flashcards with pictures or new vocabulary students learned during your lesson.
- Give each student a card.
- Ask students to walk around and interview each other about the word or picture on their card.
- Once a pair has correctly guessed the object on each others' cards, have them switch cards.
- Students then move to a new person and repeat the activity.

**For example:** Grade 5, English  
Vocabulary on cards: bottle, ruler, pen  
Example questions for students to ask each other:

- What is the picture on your card used for?
- Do you have this object in your kitchen at home?



## QUICK WRITING

- Give a topic to the class. Tell students they will have 5 minutes to write as much as they can about the given topic.
- Students must use Burmese or their second language to write.
- Remind them to try and use full sentences (if they can) with correct grammar and spelling. They will make mistakes, but this is part of learning.
- Once the time is up, students exchange their papers with a partner. Ask each student to edit and correct what their partner wrote.
- After editing, ask students to share their partner's good work, highlighting what their partner did well.



## DEVELOP THE QUESTION

After reading a paragraph, share an answer statement based on the reading. Ask students to write a question to match the answer you read.

1. When developing the questions, allow students to discuss in their first language.
2. Depending on your answer statement, ask students to write both open and closed questions.
3. Explain that students need to write their questions in their second language. Assist the students who need help.
4. Afterwards allow students to share their creative questions with the group.

**Example answer statement:** The owl knew the deer was trying to trick him.

**Example question:** Why did the owl stay up in the tree instead of landing on the ground?



## IF AND THEN

This activity can be used when students are learning about cause and effect.

- Using their mother tongue, student A can begin by saying a causation sentence (begins with “If”).
- Student B attempts to say an effect in the language of instruction.
- Then ask student to switch languages and try again, making more sentences.

**For example:** Grade 7, Burmese (Conjunctions)  
 Student A says in Mon language: If Mg Mg is sick  
 Student B responds in Burmese: Then he can't come to school.



## COMPLETE THE STORY

- Have students get into small groups of 3-4 students
- Give a body paragraph from a story to each group and ask students to create an introduction and conclusion for their their paragraph.
- While working allow students to discuss in their mother tongue language.
- Once finished, students exchange their work with another group. Ask each group to check each others' work and feedback.
- Once competed, ask each group to read their completed writing in front of the class.



## WORDS AROUND THE ROOM / ON THE WALL

The following can be done in small groups:

- Print 3-5 paragraphs from the topic in the second language and 2-4 questions that correspond to each of the paragraphs.
- Post the paragraphs around the classroom walls.
- Mix the prepared questions and distribute them as cut out papers for each group.
- To answer the questions, students will walk around the room, reading the paragraphs. Students need to answer the questions in the second language but can discuss in their first language.
- Students need to note where, specifically from which paragraph, they found the answer to each question.
- Afterwards the students can discuss their answers with other groups, checking if they found their answers from the same paragraphs.
- To conclude, the teacher then asks a few students to share their answers using their first language.



## VERBAL ART

- Prepare pictures of scenes related to the lesson. (E.g., a map, picture of a street, a picture of kitchen. If you don't want to draw, you might be able to find relevant pictures in a newspaper or online)
- Give each student a picture and have students find a partner.
- Have each student describe their scene to the other, being careful not to show them the picture. Students must try to use the language of instruction as much as they can.
- Each student must draw the scene described by their partner to the best of their ability.
- Once both are finished, ask them to compare the original picture to what they drew.
- Next have students switch partners and try again.

