



English Immersion Education in Tong Nam School

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Tong Nam School was founded in December 1949. It is one of the private Chinese-medium schools affiliated to the Macau Chinese Educators' Association (MCEA) and popularly called a "five-star red flag schools" by Macau people. Most students are from working-class or grass-root families, so the support of English language learning from the families is relatively poor.

In order to help students to master English, we created an immersion language environment for our kindergarten students. Hence, we implemented a new curriculum. Thanks to the new curriculum, there are some remarkable improvements in the students' learning. Firstly, we notice that the speaking and listening skills of the students have been improved by immersing themselves in the English environment. They get used to this environment and feel comfortable in using this language. Secondly, the students are not afraid of speaking English any more. Instead they greet the teachers and ask questions in English without any shyness and hesitation. Thirdly, since the students have learned phonics, they can now pronounce words more accurately. In this way, it can build up their confidence in speaking and reading. Finally, the writing skill has also shown a slight improvement. However, teachers will continue to look for solutions for further improvement.

The followings are the key techniques that we use in our English teaching and we would like to share with you. We mainly use songs, rhymes, commands, stories and phonics.

Songs and Rhymes

Generally speaking, we choose one famous nursery song and rhyme to teach students every week as we believe this can help students to remember the words more easily and develop their auditory memory skills. It also helps students to be able to identify phonemes and individual sound units. At the same time, students will make improvements in their reading and spelling skills. The colorful images in the nursery songs and rhymes stimulate students' imagination and creative thinking. It also develops their interest in reading. In addition, the rhythmic gestures and clapping that go along with the nursery songs can help children develop coordination and motor skills. Performing nursery song lyrics in front of the class can give students a stronger feeling of self-confidence and stage presence.

Besides, many nursery rhymes can be used to introduce new concepts to children, such as counting, telling time, days of the week, measurements. It can help to enrich their knowledge in their early stage. For example, we have "Are You Sleeping?", "Row, Row, Row Your Boat", in K1 while we have "Eency Weency Spider", "The More We Get Together" in K2. In K3, we have songs that are related to the theme. We use the tune of the famous nursery songs and rewrite the words to match the theme of the lessons. Students get used to these songs easily and memorize them by heart because of the familiar music tunes.

Commands

We introduce commands to discipline students in class. We implement these commands in the morning exercise session, arts session, nap time, snack and lunch time. Students are learning English in their daily lives.

Stories

In our curriculum, we tell students a story each term. Usually, we choose well-known stories to enhance students' interest in reading. We invite students to act the interesting part of the stories. In this way, students can build up their creativity and self-confidence while they do the role play in class. It also enriches their imagination while they participate in the play. Students also have to work as a team in order to compete for the best performance and we believe that it is appropriate to train them at this early stage. We guide our students to create their own mini story books. After that, we tell them to colour their story books and they are encouraged to take them home to share with their parents what they have learnt in school. In this way, students will cherish their own story books and may read with their parents to enhance their relationship and communication.

The Three Little Pigs

We create a big book for the story "The Three Little Pigs". We choose the song "The Pigs are Pink and Plump" and the rhyme "This Little Pig Went to Market" to match the theme about pigs. We make pictures and word cards for students to help them with the vocabulary building. After that, students are required to retell the story on the headbands.

Phonics

Learning to read fluently is an important skill for students, so we teach phonics in the kindergarten because we believe that once the students master the phonics skill, they will be able to pronounce the words by themselves while reading. It teaches them to decipher words on their own and gives them a foundation for learning new words independently. In addition, phonics can lead to whole-word recognition, which helps students read faster and more effectively. Students will also develop the habit of reading, which can help with the accumulation of knowledge.

At the same time, we set up an English Teaching Room for English lessons. We decorate the room beautifully according to the lesson themes, so that students will be able to visualize and immerse in this attractive environment. We schedule classes to use this room daily. Students love having lessons in this room because the colourful posters there make them feel comfortable and relaxed.

We also introduce some local and international festivals to students, such as Mid-Autumn Festival in September, Halloween in October, Thanksgiving in November and Christmas in December.



Mid-Autumn Festival

We tell students the story of Mid-Autumn Festival and traditional celebrations, teach them names of traditional food and fruit, make lanterns and play games with them.

Halloween

We choose special Halloween songs and rhymes for our students to learn some new words related to Halloween. In addition, we show them pictures related to those words and let them colour the pictures. We also arrange the time for them to have trick-or-treat, so that they can have this exciting experience in their life. Another fun activity is to let them dress up to attend the Costume Contest. They love this show very much because they can dress and role-play as their own heroes.

Christmas

We tell students the story of Jesus Christ and introduce Christmas carols and rhymes to students. We also prepare colouring activities for Christmas words in order to help students understand those words. We also hold a party to celebrate this important event.

Tong Nam School also get parents involved in our reforms. One of them is to let parents tell English stories to our students. Students would pay more attention to their parents and the interaction is great.

We set up an English Day on Wednesdays. On these days, students have to communicate with their teachers and classmates in English. They greet

all their teachers and classmates in English in the morning. Some students can speak English in the beginning, but some can only speak broken English. On the whole it is a good start to provide this environment and opportunity to encourage them to learn English.

We also introduce the Fifteen Minutes Dawn Reading Program daily. Every morning, all the primary students gather in the hall with their own story books to do reading for fifteen minutes. Students bring their Chinese books on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and English books on Wednesdays. We create an environment for students so as to develop their reading habit and arouse their interest in reading as well.

‘Super Idol’ is another important English event in Tong Nam School. It is a competition for songs, rhymes, poems and plays in four different levels. Students from K1 to Primary 6 must participate in this English event. They spend their time practicing and asking teachers to help them do their best in this competition.

Tong Nam School can be described as the first school in Macau that adopted the partial English immersion program. Our teachers use English as a medium of instruction in English lessons in order to get students immersed in an English environment. We use games to teach the lessons so that they will enjoy the learning process. We also use body language, real objects or lots of visual aids to help students understand and memorize what they learn.

We believe that providing a free and comfortable environment for students to learn English will make learning easier and happier. In this way, students will not be scared of using English any more. Instead they will love English and enjoy speaking the language.