The Star

Creative ideas bring buzz to lessons

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The creation of a 'traditionally-dressed warrior model', with SK (L) Bukit Bintang 1 teacher Tuan Nur Afifah Tuan Abdul Aziz as the model, adds novelty to a group's presentation.

THERE is always room for creativity in a language classroom.

Using newspapers as material, a group of teachers proved that presentations need not always follow the format of speaking based on talking points on paper or slides on a screen. These activities can manifest in the form of a "lion dance performance" or the creation of a "traditionally-dressed warrior model", for instance.

As the teachers gave their out-of-the-box presentations, the hall at SJK(C) Sungai Way came alive with bursts of laughter in between – a striking example of how English language lessons can be engaging.

The 66 teachers – comprising 49 English language panel heads and 17 English language trainers – were participants of The Star's Newspaper-in-Education (Star-NiE) teachers' workshop held for Petaling Utama district primary school teachers on June 19.



Two teachers – Mohd Ikhwan Haiqal Ismail from SK Bandar Sri Damansara 3 (in green) and Meor Muhammad Afiq Meor Shaharuddin from SK (2) Sultan Alam Shah – perform a mock lion dance using newspapers as props.

Language School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus Gerardine Raj from the Petaling Utama District Education Office in Selangor said implementing the use of newspapers as a tool for language learning has a way of bringing out the knack teachers have for the language.

“It also opens avenues to tap into the talents of pupils, encouraging creativity in their English language literacy,” she said.

Dr Evanna Devi, who teaches at SK Bandar Utama Damansara 2, expressed appreciation for the ideas she picked up at the workshop.

“I learnt to integrate current events into classroom discussions to improve pupils’ speaking and critical thinking skills. It allows pupils to explore the world that’s present not only in the textbook, but also in different settings.

“I also learnt to create vocabulary exercises based on newspaper articles to help pupils learn new words in context. It is a brilliant idea that teachers can implement in the classroom. It is affordable and feasible,” she said.



Gerardine

Gerardine, who was also present at the Star-NiE teachers' workshop held for Petaling Utama district secondary school teachers on June 20, said both workshops promoted the four Cs and one V – communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and value – that make up the basic concepts of 21st century learning.

The second workshop, held at SMK Sultan Abdul Samad, saw the participation of 56 teachers – 48 Form One English language teachers and eight English language trainers.



Ahmad Solehin sharing his ideas during one of the activities.

Ahmad Solehin Mohamed Nor, who teaches at SMK (L) Bukit Bintang, said the workshop provided him with fresh perspectives and innovative strategies that he had not considered before.

“Among the various techniques I learnt for integrating newspaper articles into the curriculum include using headlines to teach grammar and vocabulary, and employing opinion pieces to foster critical thinking and debate among students,” he said.

Having attended the workshops, both Evanna and Ahmad Solehin said they plan to incorporate newspapers more regularly into their lessons.

This approach can provide diverse and engaging materials that can make learning more dynamic and relevant, they said.



Evanna holds up her group’s work while her team members pose with the prizes they won for their effort.

Following the workshops, the teachers will be conducting a professional learning community activity with the English language panel members of their respective schools.

“This is to share their experiences and ideas gained from the workshops, which would in turn be expected to be applied in the teaching and learning process, be it in or out of the classroom,” said Gerardine.

The workshops were conducted by Star-NiE freelance trainer Chang Siew Juen, a retired English language teacher.

Since its inception in 1997, the Star-NiE programme has supported English language teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools nationwide.

Star-NiE activities are available in StarEdu on Sundays, and in StarLifestyle on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. For Star-NiE enquiries, email starnie@thestar.com.my.