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Encouraging kids to learn Mandarin starts from listening to songs and watching cartoons

鼓勵小朋友學習「煲冬瓜」 從聽歌看卡通做起

Nowadays an increasing number of parents are having concerns over kids having to learn Mandarin while striving to learn Cantonese and English at the same time. The majority of international schools in Hong Kong have added Mandarin to their curriculum as a compulsory subject or even integrated mandarin into the teaching of other subjects. Nevertheless, the difficulties of learning Mandarin still send children running for the hills.

Why running for the hills?

1. Lack of a Mandarin speaking environment. Mandarin is a language. However, when taught as a subject, the difficulty of teaching without the presence of a supportive and interactive Mandarin language environment is immense.
2. Difficulty of enhancing interest. English teaching materials (whether it be picture books or songs) on the market are incredibly fascinating, which is an important factor in attracting children and grabbing their attention.

So, what are our solutions?

A rich language environment is significant in that it facilitates the learning of Mandarin as a tool to communicate. It is recommended that parents begin by creating an immersive learning environment to help children develop listening and speaking skills. For instance, playing songs to kids provides a first introduction to the language of Mandarin through listening whilst using picture books to further deepen their interest. We can capitalize on the convenience of the digital age to find an abundance of songs online and play to children on a regular basis.

Taiwan QiaoHu 台湾巧虎: QiaoHu is an adorable animated character that can stimulate children's interest in learning. In addition, the lively rhythm of background music is suitable for beginners. Try searching the following keywords: 「巧虎唱唱跳跳」、「巧虎音乐律动」.

MOMO親子台：『捏泥巴』(making play dough) is my personal favorite song.

中国贝瓦儿歌：Children who use traditional Chinese characters please note that this website is in simplified Chinese characters.

With regard to picture books, it would be most ideal for parents to read with children. Nonetheless, if the parents themselves are also beginners, they can join their children in learning with the help of the following methods:

1. Picture Book Garden (绘本花园)

2. Story telling for children (儿童普通话故事园地) by Hong Kong Public Libraries

Frequently listening to Mandarin songs as well as cultivating a reading habit are conducive to encouraging children's interest in learning Mandarin. This is only the beginning. We will continue generating more (and better) ideas aimed at creating a delightful, vibrant and lively atmosphere to motivate them further to learn Mandarin in the future.

This is an English translation of the blog published at

<http://www.educationpost.com.hk/zh-hk/resources/parents-guide/161230-parenting-how-to-get-kids-to-love-putonghua?spm=0.0.0.0.K35G9q>, titled “鼓勵小朋友學習「煲冬瓜」 從聽歌看卡通做起 “

