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I Want to be an Ambassador! **Build Confidence to Learn a New Language**

In our increasingly global society, speaking multiple languages is a tremendous asset for young people as they enter the job market, or even just to socialize and collaborate with people from diverse populations. But learning a foreign language could be an intimidating task, especially if that language uses a different writing system and tones and pronunciations than the language you currently speak. Educator Mandy Fong helps to create a comfort level with learning a complex new language with this fun introduction to the most commonly spoken language on the planet: Chinese.

TRANSCRIPT

Mandy Fong:

I would like my students to know that this language is not so hard as they picture it. And this language is not for the smartest person in the world to learn it, actually everybody can do it.

So if you think about a human baby when they were born, they listen first. Then they learn to talk back. Remember those times, and then they will start to read before they go to school. And then they will learn how to write starting first grade. So this is my order from listening, speaking and reading, then writing.

So, once they know that they can listen to me. They can try to understand me, and they can actually speak after at the end of the presentation, and give them the boost on confidence level and that everybody can do Chinese.

The most difficult part to learn Chinese as a foreign language, I personally think is the speaking part because Chinese is a tonal language. In Chinese, we have four tones, or some people will say five items. So it actually will be going up, down, up and down, or flat. In tonal languages that you, you actually need to do that for each word you say.

Children speaking in Chinese. English translation:

Girl: Dumplings, noodles, hamburgers...he likes them, too...(giggles)...Let's go get it!

Boy: Yes!

If you get the tone wrong, it definitely had come up with a different character, different meaning. So for example, ma, ma, the sound sounds like MMA, but if you put it a flat tone is maaaah. This sound will give you a mother, meaning. But if you goes up maaaAHH, that will give you the numb, meaning if you go down and up. MAAahhh, this, this character we give you horse and up goes down. Maaaah. Then

give you the yelling, scolding. Not so good. It's awkward in the beginning, but once they get used to it. Actually they can speak very authentic Chinese, with the tones.



Learning to write a Chinese character could be very challenging. So they learn about the strokes and then learn about the characters. And Chinese, actually it's very logical. And it's a picture, so most of my students will say, I'm drawing Chinese, and I would say no, this is not drawing. This is called writing. And I will tell them the story how this one come to this way, and they will remember the story as they write the character.”

The character, I, *wo*. Okay, so the wo, I am the first person, and ancient time, if you are survived of the nature of the animals attacked you can proudly say, I, I am the one speaking. So this word character is a person, you know, with the hand holding a spear.



So that is the story for the students to recognize, and there's the spear on the right hand side, so this character together makes *wo*, which means I, and they will be able to repeat and writing it, and thinking about this fun stories I tell them.

Of course I'll introduce them some of the fun thing about writing because Chinese writing is an art. And we will do calligraphy to them, experience, what, what is the life like in ancient Chinese when we are not using pen and pencil, we're using paint brushes. They do know the story behind that, and that's the fun part of learning this character. If it is not fun, I don't know how, who was going to do the learning, since it's so difficult.”

I think that foreign language can teach us a lot of not only the study skills, your studies strategies. Also, they're life lessons. The more you understand other people's language, you could bridge the gap of the cultural differences. And I remember the most, the most famous quote from Nelson Mandela, is that when you talk to a person in the language he understand that

goes to his head. But if you talk to a person in the language that he know, his own language, then that goes to his heart.

My final advice for people who are consider taking this language. First I would say break your stereotype, thinking in, Chinese is hard, but not that hard. I like to do immersions, because I believe that learning a foreign language, the environment is most important factor. Create for yourself some speaking environment, for example, there are many YouTube videos, short clips. There is Chinese music, if you like certain artists.

Children speaking in Chinese. English translation:

Boy 1: What type of trees do you like?

Boy 2: I like *big* trees.

Boy 1: What type of cars do you like?

Boy 2: I like *big* cars.

Boy 1: What type of schools do you like?

Boy 2: I like *my* school!

Talk to people who knows how to speak Chinese. And if you are making this speaking part of your daily life, okay you don't feel like you're *learning* Chinese, you actually feel like you are *enjoying* Chinese. And I think the *aha* moment is what I value the most. And they would start to figure it out and figure out, and they did get it.

And I think if you get it, you make connections at the end. This knowledge is yours to keep forever.

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