

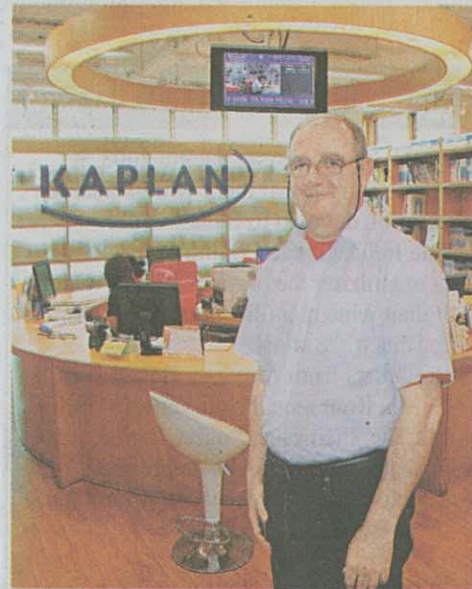


Summer Study

Global languages: Means to success

Effective communication is the key to success in today's world. For students as well as businessmen, it is important to have a good command of the global language - English - to achieve their personal and professional goals.

However, the view that English serves as the sole global language is changing fast. China's economic impact on the world is increasing by the day, and Chinese - one of the most used languages in terms of first language users - is becoming the most-learned second or foreign language worldwide.



Mr. Paul Desjardins, an English teacher at Kaplan

According to the BBC, in the UK, the number of students at colleges and universities taking Chinese as their main subject doubled between 2002 and 2005, while similar increases are reported in most Western nations.

In the US, just 6,000 students enrolled in Mandarin programs in 1998, and the figure last year soared to 50,000.

As the popularity of a language is closely tied with the economic power of those who speak the language, learning and/or improving not only English but also Chinese is considered conducive in boosting one's career and academic prospects.

Exclusive software

CURRENTLY there are myriad learning centers providing Mandarin courses for expats and Cantonese-speaking locals. There are even free online lessons and resources for beginners. However, learning a language is most effective when there is interaction and practice, and simply reading textbooks is far from enough.

According to Ms. Queenie Shek of Kaplan (HK), an educational services provider, the most difficult part for students learning Mandarin is usually Pinyin - the standard Mandarin Romanisation system.

The spectrum of students joining the organization's Putonghua courses reflects the popularity the language is gaining locally. "Students here include kids aged around eight to 12, as well as secondary school students, working adults, housewives and profession-

als," said Ms. Joan Yee, a marketing executive of Kaplan.

The organization, whose tutors have attained Grade One in the PSC exam recognized by the State Language and Writing Commission, offers an exclusive audio computer training program that helps students familiarize themselves with Pinyin and improve their pronunciation.

Active participation

For those who find it imperative to improve their English communication skills, it might be even more difficult to determine which courses or programs to join, as there are so many available on the market.

Ms. Yee pointed out various qualifications can serve different purposes. For example, TOEFL is often required when applying for US and Canadian universities, while IELTS serves the same purpose for UK and Australian universities, but is also an examination that is recognized by the SAR government for job seekers.

Ms Oi-Ying Fou, Manager (English Language & College Admissions) of Kaplan, said student interaction is crucial in learning. Students should take an active part and become more assertive if they intend to further their study abroad.

Mr. Paul Desjardins, a teacher at Kaplan, said vocabulary is often the weakest part for local students. He said small class teaching, as practiced in Kaplan, is more effective for students as they can learn from each other.



Quality teaching and learning

KAPLAN is an international organization providing test prep courses, college admission consultation and professional career training. Spending more than US\$4 million on research and development for the most up-to-date teaching material, it offers a wide range of courses, covering TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, PSAT, GMAT etc. Its teachers are all graduates from renowned universities with a passion to teach.

Students who want to seek advice on higher education will find Kaplan's college admission consultation useful. Other than regular courses, it also provides one-on-one private teaching sessions tailored to cater for learners' different needs. Kaplan offers CEF reimbursable courses.

For more information, please visit www.kaplan.com.hk.