



My Feedback—

The Joy of Learning In a Pure Chinese Programme (Daisy Class)

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When the school approached us to enquire on the interest to place our 2nd child into a Pure Chinese programme, I was very surprised and excited. I have first heard of such a programme in another kindergarten few years ago while researching on preschools for our 1st child. We did not pursue this route for him due to distance issues.

Despite being effectively bilingual, I have always faced difficulties instilling interest in the Chinese language in both children. For a start, both of them refused to speak in Mandarin before they entered the kindergarten. While they have always enjoy books and shows, they were showing much resistance towards Chinese stories and shows.

I discussed the possibility of putting my daughter in the Pure Chinese programme with the family. Most of them were unsure about this approach and were worried that we would be putting her at a disadvantage. Interestingly, it was the Chinese-educated grandma who put up the strongest objection. She advised that we should be fair parents to offer my daughter similar options as her brother, who was learning well in the kindergarten's bilingual track. The father was also concerned that it being a pilot initiative, the programme has yet to prove any success at that point in time.

However, after much deliberation and chats with the school teachers, friends in education sector etc, we decided to take a leap of faith and Heidi got enrolled in the Pure Chinese programme in January 2017. And as cliché as it sounds, we have not looked back since.

As early as 1 month into the programme, we already observed positive changes in the child. She enjoyed going to school and always shared about her days willingly and cheerfully. It was Chinese New Year soon after and she came home with mini surprises daily, by singing all the CNY songs in Mandarin and telling us colours (e.g. red) in Mandarin. Grandma got the biggest surprise of all and updated us very excitedly that Heidi has starting conversing in Mandarin. Now, grandma is a strong advocate of this programme and she is very proud of how the grand-daughter acquires the language in a short span of time.

Fast forward 10 months later, we are about to end the last term in her Pre Nursery journey. I would now describe my child as a confident little girl who is effectively bilingual. There is no more awkwardness or resistance when we speak with her using Mandarin. She can now accept Chinese books, songs, prayers and shows, without much compromise to her command of English language. At home, we started her on poem recital and she grasps

them effortlessly. Very often, she will also share on her new vocabulary and check with us on the English translations. During our weekly supermarket trips, she will be pointing out what she sees in both languages, it has become a fun translation game for her. We also noticed that she can relate to her whole class of friends and teachers by their Chinese names, which is no mean feat for a young child who has just turned 3.

We are very pleased with Heidi's progress in this Pure Chinese programme. On this note, we would like to show our appreciation to her Pre N teachers – Yan Lao Shi, Peng Lao Shi and Wang Lao Shi. They have very bravely taken up the challenge to pilot this programme for a bunch of young children who used to be most comfortable with the English language. Through their guidance, the class bond is strong and the children have fostered friendship at a very young age. Many parents are perhaps concerned about keeping up with the English and Mathematics curriculum. Having coached 2 kids myself, my feel is that it is really much easier for parents to manage the other subjects. There are plenty of resources available to make the learnings interesting at home, as compared to teaching Chinese on our own.

Personally, having gone through the conventional education system and taken Higher Chinese myself, I don't think the local education system has done enough to encourage the love for the language or culture in young children. Despite the exposure I had for this language, I have friends of other races and nationalities who enjoy Chinese much more than I do and perhaps have a better grasp of the language and deeper love for the culture. I believe that language is something that we need to use, live and breathe to be good at it and ultimately, to enjoy it. The Pure Chinese programme allows Heidi and her classmates more time and in-depth appreciation of the language and culture. We are extremely grateful that the school is ready to extend the programme to the Nursery level and Heidi will continue in this programme for another year.

