

Tuesday English News Report

*App to teach Chinese writing is a **hit** with **local** and **expatriate** kids*

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When digital marketing **specialists** Venus Lee Lan-kiu and Royce Lee Yat-pui created their Chinese-language learning app last year, their first thought was to test the beta version on a focus group made up of local Chinese children.

But a chance **encounter** with an English-speaking boy showed them their digital learning tool had far greater **potential** than they realised.

The boy had been taking part in a session for another product, but the partners decided to also show him their new app, My Chinese Copybook: Elementary Class.

"Without much instruction, the child began to write, and was able to pick up four to five Chinese characters in a short time. His mum [an expatriate] thought it was really amazing," recalls Venus.

That was when the two Lees (no relation) realised that their app could benefit expatriates who want to pick up the language as well as Chinese learners. Before long, they had **incorporated** English instructions in the app.

The pair set up education apps developer Aedify in 2011, after their digital marketing firm was bought by another company. The partners decided the challenge lay in education.

They researched which digital educational products had succeeded **overseas**, and sought advice from teachers and principals in Hong Kong. Focus groups with local parents and children also played a part.

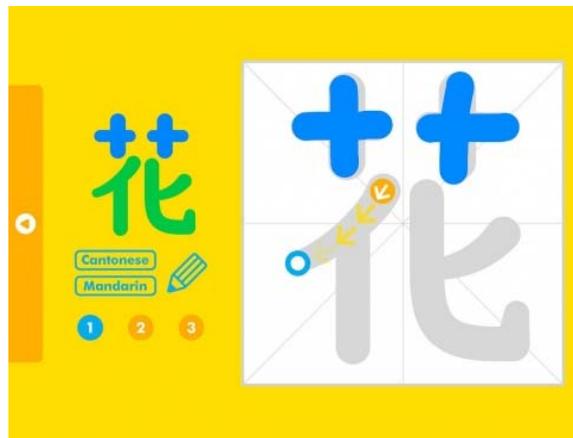
This resulted in a series of educational apps for tablets under the Toothy Buddies brand. The first, Carnival of Animals, uses a musical suite by Camille Saint-Saens to introduce children to concepts like **pitch** and rhythm through interactive, animal-based stories.

The second, Write Dance, adapts a programme created in the West to introduce Chinese handwriting using music.

My Chinese Copybook, the third app, focuses on teaching children how to write Chinese characters, including the correct stroke order and the spatial arrangement.

Released in March, the paid version quickly rose to the top of Hong Kong's iTunes app chart in the education category, and it remains a recommended app. "We hope to bring happiness to children when they learn with our apps. We believe learning should neither be painful nor a struggle," Venus says.

The app is interactive, and aims to give feedback without **discouraging** young users.



1. What do you think?

2. Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using words from the box.

hit	local	expatriate / expat	specialist
encounter	potential	incorporate	overseas
pitch	discouraging		

- John lives in another country. He lives _____.
- He is only five years old but he can already play the piano well. He has so much _____.
- A person who is an expert and knows a lot about a certain subject is known as a _____.
- Having a clown at Josh's 5th birthday was a real _____ with all the children.
- I am English but I live in Hong Kong. I am an _____.
This word can be used as a noun or an adjective and is often shortened.
- If you live in a place and you come from there, you are a _____.
This can also be used as a noun or an adjective.
- Another word for meeting someone or something, often by chance. I had a scary _____ with a shark while I was swimming in the sea in Australia.
- It's really _____ when the teacher criticizes your work all the time.
- To add and combine thoroughly with something. He decided to _____ more fruit in his diet.
- The sound variation of your voice (high or low) is known as _____.