

Chinese Assist 2006

<http://www.chineseassist.com>

Cost: \$29. A downloadable program to help students to learn vocabulary. Creates word lists from articles, dictionary entries, mouse selections or download prepared lists. Makes flashcards.

ChinesePod and the future of Mandarin learning

<http://chinesepod.com/>

By Ken Carroll

Since we launched ChinesePod last September, 5 million lessons have been downloaded from people in 110 countries. I believe the combination of the **right technology** with the **right teaching method** can go a long way towards expanding the global audience of prospective Mandarin learners.

Technology: 'Removing obstacles for learners'

We must make it easier for people to take up the study of Mandarin. The obvious channel is the internet, with its frictionless distribution, its global reach, and tools that are readily suited to learning. Here are 3 of the tools that we have found to be particularly effective:

1. Podcasting

Learners receive a fresh daily lesson, downloaded to a computer, iPod or other MP3 player. Lessons are short and focused with model dialogs and useful explanations. They can be 'consumed' whenever, and wherever the learner wishes. Crucially, podcasting creates a bond between teacher and learner that no software program can match.

2. Software:

The audio lessons are supported by a series of online tools on ChinesePod.com. These include Transcripts, Exercises, Expansion Vocabulary, Grammar, Lesson Plans, a Word Bank, Glossary, as well as Vocabulary Games, Flashcards and more.

3. The discussion forums

The forums include Blogging, a BBS, a Wiki, several Comments Sections, and more. As learners receive the lessons they can go to ChinesePod.com to engage in discussion with teachers or other learners. The forums can create a strong sense of community and provide us with invaluable feedback on how lessons are being received.

Teaching Method: 'Whose problem are we trying to solve?'

Although the technology is crucial, it is only half the battle. Learners also need content that interests them, motivates them, and inspires them to take on the significant challenge of learning Mandarin. In short, they need communicative content.

As with any syllabus, the methodology, then, should be based on learner objectives. A generic, 'one-size-fits-all' approach to instruction will fail. So too will the overly analytical style that has characterized much of existing instruction materials. We view our learners as active participants in the effort to build a relevant program. We've tried to accommodate different needs, schedules, and learning styles in both the technology and the methodology.

Ultimately, our goal is to help learners acquire spoken Mandarin as it occurs naturally. There is a long way to go, of course. ChinesePod is a work in progress, but we hope we can say that we're pointing towards the future.

Kang Xi e-Dictionary Full Text Search

康熙字典全文檢索電子版 北京師範大學出版社
出版

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Kang Xi e-Dictionary supports 100% full text search. Not only all 47,000 characters can be searched, all words and characters in the explanation section can be searched and listed. Comments in Simplified Chinese; one-touch key to switch between simplified and traditional Chinese characters. Punctuations are added in horizontal display. Switch to a scanned original page display with a mouse click.

Price: \$69

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