

Reading

Passage 1

Reviving Cantonese heritage and empowering bilingual kids across borders

Eight years ago, Sophie Yeung moved from Hong Kong to Melbourne with her two-year-old daughter. But the young parent struggled to find books that taught Cantonese nursery rhymes for bilingual learners.

Yeung decided to make her own book: Little Jyutping Fighter. Released last August, it is one of the first children's books to teach Cantonese nursery rhymes with Jyutping. Jyutping uses the Roman alphabet to write Cantonese words, making it easier to learn the tones and pronunciation.

"There are many children overseas, or their parents, who aren't fluent in Cantonese. I thought it would be great to have a book that helps children understand the six tones and the basics of the language," the 35-year-old said.

Yeung is part of a growing group of mothers from Hong Kong who are making tools to help children learn Cantonese in English-speaking countries.

Cantonese, spoken by over 55 million people, is China's second most popular language, rich with unique phrases. Yet, immigrant children often struggle to continue speaking it when everyone around them speaks mostly English.

"At school, they learn English vocabulary, but home conversations in Cantonese stay shallow – about food or plans," Yeung noted. "For complex ideas, they switch to English." Her book has earned praise from parents. Its charm deepened as her daughter illustrated it.

"After I wrote a story, I'd ask her to sketch it in a funny or interesting way," Yeung said. "She was so happy and proud of her work." Three years ago, three mothers from Hong Kong started a group: Cantonese in Ireland. They organise activities to promote Cantonese language and culture while helping immigrants settle in Ireland.

"We obviously were worried about our kids [and] the continuity of Cantonese language in their lives," said 46-year-old Alice Chau Gingue, one of the group's co-founders.

The group has hosted about 100 cultural activities, such as Cantonese reading events, film meet-ups and walking tours. Peg Chiu is another of the group's co-founders. She is passionate about sharing Hong Kong's heritage with the next generation.

Last March, she released an illustrated Cantonese children's book, *The Tiger Under the Flyover*. The story is inspired by "villain hitting", a ritual to keep bad people away. "It's such a rich story – one that reflects the essence of Hong Kong and its people," Chiu shared.

For many immigrant mothers from Hong Kong, Cantonese represents their identity. “Cantonese isn’t just about speaking; it’s yum cha, kung fu, Wing Chun, mahjong, and all the traditions that come with it,” Chau said.

“Without your culture, you lose who you are.”

Questions:

1. Who is Sophie Yeung, and why did she decide to write *Little Jyutping Fighter*?

2. Name two different types of tools or activities mentioned in the passage that Hong Kong mothers are using to promote Cantonese.

3. According to the text, what is the primary challenge immigrant children face when trying to maintain fluent Cantonese?

4. What are the names of the two co-founders of the "Cantonese in Ireland" group mentioned in the passage?

5. How does the book *Little Jyutping Fighter* specifically help bilingual learners overcome the difficulty of learning Cantonese pronunciation?

6. Based on Alice Chau Ginguene's final quote, "Without your culture, you lose who you are," why is the revival of Cantonese considered crucial by these mothers?

7. What traditional Hong Kong ritual inspired Peg Chiu's children's book, *The Tiger Under the Flyover*?
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Advanced Vocabulary from the Passage:

Essence 精髓

Nursery Rhymes 兒歌

Bilingual 雙語

Illustrated 有插圖

Co-founders 共同創辦人