



Joint News Release

Singapore, 18 Nov 2024

NTU Singapore start-up BrookieKids launches AI-powered interactive storytelling to help young children practice their mother tongue

Local education tech startup, **BrookieKids**, has launched a groundbreaking digital library featuring over 50 Mandarin voice-interactive stories, which will grow with a monthly release of new stories.

Through these engaging, animated tales, children can converse verbally with the stories, boosting their conversational skills and Mandarin language proficiency in a fun and interactive way.

Questions are posed in every story, and the speech AI captures children's verbal responses, guiding the story's direction based on their choices.

Accessible via the mobile application *BrookieKids*, short for *Bilingual Rookies*, the stories are designed to create more opportunities for preschoolers and lower primary students aged 3 to 8 years old, to engage in playful and meaningful conversations in Mandarin within the comfort of their homes.

Founder of BrookieKids, Ms Melissa Ng, a former banker and a mother of one, said, "Many Singaporean parents recognise the importance of raising bilingual children from a young age, as language capabilities will have the most rapid development.

"As a parent myself, I know how difficult it is to balance the demands of daily life, so I thought it would be good to have an easy-to-use resource that parents can tap on for building language skills. I know from feedback that what parents appreciate most about BrookieKids, is how it enables their children to speak and interact in Mandarin—something that can be challenging to provide at home."

The new Speech AI-powered digital library in BrookieKids was developed in collaboration with the **Confucius Institute at NTU**. It is adapted from the Institute's preschool Mandarin curriculum, which has been purchased by over 500 preschools across Singapore.

Developed together with the experienced curriculum team at NTU, the interactive content in BrookieKids give parents easy access to high-quality Mandarin content, which is well-aligned with local learning standards.

Director of Confucius Institute at NTU Dr Neo Peng Fu, said, “We are excited to partner with BrookieKids on this pilot project, where we’re bringing stories from our library to life in a creative and interactive way. By adapting these stories for a new generation, we’re helping children learn their mother tongue through fun and interactive storytelling, which makes language learning more enjoyable.”

How BrookieKids was developed

As an NTU accountancy and business alumna who graduated from the **National Institute of Education (NIE)** with a Master of Education in Developmental Psychology in 2020, Melissa decided to tap into her knowledge and experience to kick-start her venture together with two other co-founders.

They started BrookieKids in 2021, where Melissa received further support from her alma mater through the **NTU Innovation and Entrepreneurship** initiative, including mentorship in business development and access to networking opportunities.

NTU’s Vice President (Innovation and Entrepreneurship) Professor Louis Phee, said the University is committed to empowering start-ups like BrookieKids to succeed and create lasting impact.

“The NTU Innovation & Entrepreneurship (I&E) initiative supports start-ups from across the NTU community — whether they originate from students, faculty, or alumni — by helping to accelerate their innovations into the marketplace. We provide entrepreneurs with the tools and mentorship needed to scale their ventures responsibly, from business development to networking opportunities, including collaborations within NTU. We invite all alumni to engage us, to seek mentorship and join our various I&E programmes,” Prof Phee said.

Currently, BrookieKids can be downloaded on both the Apple Appstore and Google Playstore and enjoy a handful of free voice-interactive stories. Parents can access the full library via a monthly or annual subscription.

“Physical interaction between adult caregivers and children remains essential and is certainly the ideal way to support learning. However, technology can also be thoughtfully integrated to enrich the quality of interactions and enhance language exposure at home,” explained Melissa.

“By blending Speech AI with captivating, animated stories, we aim to create a fun and engaging environment where children can listen more (多听) and speak more (多说) in Mandarin. These are both critical skills for building a strong foundation in language proficiency during the early years.”

Her sentiments are echoed by many young parents, including **Ms Amelia Tan**, who highlights the importance of her 5-year-old son, Jonathan, enjoying the process of learning Mandarin and building his confidence for the future.

“The cute illustrations and engaging stories make a big difference in reinforcing his learning,” says Amelia, a marketer in the banking sector. “They help him understand vocabulary and context more effectively compared to rote memorisation of Mandarin phrases. He’s learning without feeling pressured, and that makes all the difference.”

Scalable to other mother tongues

Since BrookieKids is powered by proprietary algorithms that work well with existing speech recognition technologies, it is scalable to include other languages as well.

As part of its expansion plan, the team is in discussion with a local publisher to adapt Malay bilingual books onto its platform, supporting children learning the Malay Mother Tongue.

“Our mission is to empower parents, teachers, and the community with innovative solutions that nurture joyful childhoods and inspire children to become lifelong learners and active contributors. We also look forward to partnering with preschools to explore how our suite of solutions can best support their unique needs,” adds Melissa.

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About BrookieKids

BrookieKids is the flagship product of Hummus Education, a Singapore-based edtech startup with a vision to empower communities to provide children with joyful childhoods filled with playful learning and exploration. Incorporated in 2021 and backed by the Enterprise SG Startup Founder grant, this startup is run by a group of dedicated female entrepreneurs with children in their early years. With a commitment to harnessing the power of play, they design engaging digital experiences that nurture a child's natural curiosity and love of learning.

Targeted at families with young children aged 3 to 8 years, the BrookieKids Digital App aims to create fun and memorable experiences while helping children learn Mandarin from an early age. Tried and tested by over 1,000 families, BrookieKids fosters a strong foundation and motivation, inspiring a lifelong enjoyment of the language as children progress through their academic journey and beyond.

For more information, visit www.brookiekids.com.

About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 35,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Business, Computing & Data Science, Engineering, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, Medicine, Science, and Graduate colleges.

NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Earth Observatory of Singapore, Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

Ranked amongst the world's top universities, the University's main campus is also frequently listed among the world's most beautiful. Known for its sustainability, NTU has achieved 100% Green Mark Platinum certification for all its eligible building projects. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a medical campus in Novena, Singapore's healthcare district.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg