

English Language Education Key Learning Area



Teaching practices presented with the
Certificate of Merit



Let students taste the joy of learning English

Recipient of the Certificate of Merit

Ms CHEW Lai-chun, Jane
(Years of teaching: 24 years)

School

Cheung Sha Wan Catholic
Secondary School

Teaching Levels

Secondary 4 - 7
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Create interesting experiences for students to learn English; help them develop positive values and critical thinking; see them as individuals and stretch their potential; and let them taste the joy of learning.”

Interview with the Teacher

Although the education she received was traditional, Ms CHEW is innovative in the learning and teaching of English as a second language.

Traditional education

Ms CHEW still remembers her primary and secondary school teachers as kind, responsible and traditional people. The teachers gave instructions and dominated the classroom while she and her peers sat upright and listened. They would not dare query the teachers.

Nonetheless, traditional education has produced some very good students. Is there really a need to change the teacher-dominant style to a student-centred approach?

Alas! The world has changed

Ms CHEW admits, “The world has changed. There are a lot more interesting materials nowadays. Students’ ability to focus and concentrate has declined. Compared with the past, they are less patient and disciplined.”

Being a senior form English teacher, Ms CHEW is well aware of the importance of striking a balance between traditional teaching approaches and the more creative alternatives. Traditional teaching strategies that have been proved useful and effective in the past are still used in Ms CHEW’s classroom today. For example, she asks her F.4 students to keep a vocabulary book to jot down interesting words and phrases, which is crucial for students to enrich their vocabulary.

Ms CHEW’s mission is to ensure that students have a stimulating learning experience outside the classroom. She organises outdoor English activities for her students regularly. They once visited a Buddhist centre in Kowloon Bay. The students spent a whole day learning the routine and rituals of the people there. Besides learning a set of new vocabulary to describe their lifestyle, the students actually experienced it, which made learning much more meaningful.

The importance of “now”

Ms CHEW is a teacher who believes in the importance of “now”. To her, “effective teachers will always put students in the forefront and choose texts or design learning tasks that relate to their interests and needs”. Ms CHEW always uses contemporary and authentic materials from newspapers, songs, magazines, the Internet, etc.

Every activity Ms CHEW plans for her classes is structured and meaningful, aiming to give students interesting experiences and opportunities to develop critical thinking. Ms CHEW will ask high-order questions which require students to apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate data and information instead of just recalling facts.

Skills can be un-learned and re-learned, but the spirit a teacher inculcates in the students will be their life-long companion. Ms CHEW firmly believes: “We teach some by what we say, we teach more by what we do, but we teach most by who we are.” In recent years, Ms CHEW has actively participated in the teacher training programmes in Mainland China, and her school has received teachers from the Mainland to exchange teaching experiences.

The same devoted teacher

Ms CHEW said that she was happy to receive the award. “But I am not that special”, she says, “I’m just doing what I think is the best for my students.” Whatever the circumstances, Ms CHEW will always be the same devoted teacher, combining the traditional with the innovative to let students experience the joy of learning English.



“Yea! I made it!” Everyone needs small success stories to achieve bigger success.



Practice and exposure is the key to building a solid foundation of English.

I use conventional language practices to ensure my students are given frequent and regular opportunities to use English for meaningful communication. For example, my students keep their vocabulary books to meet vocabulary targets, hand in their English journals every week and do weekly newspaper reading to develop critical thinking. 1-minute individual presentations and pair interaction are regular features of classroom experience. It is only through frequent use of English that students can become more competent and confident users of English. Therefore my job as an English teacher is to put students at the centre and create meaningful and interesting tasks that maximise their use of English in class.

Experiential learning

On top of a structured programme of skills development, I like to engage students in interesting learning experiences outside the school with pre, while and post tasks. Every year, I arrange a few educational outings for each of my classes, including visits to museums, exhibitions and parks, heritage walks following different routes and film-watching. Such learning experiences extend students' understanding of the real world and make learning more pleasurable. My students really enjoy those outings and, drawing on their experiences, they produce very interesting personal reflection and group presentations. Experiential learning develops students' positive attitude to the learning of English.



Classics, action movies or chick flicks? Your choice!

Using visual and literary texts

To arouse students' interest, I use literary texts like poems, short stories, song lyrics and visual texts like documentaries, movies, Youtube videos, photos and comics for appreciation and discussion. Creative texts help students to appreciate creativity and think deeply about issues related to life and people. Moral dilemmas presented in stories and films can provoke thoughts. Discussion of characters and their choices extends students' feelings and experiences. In short, such diverse learning materials provide lots of room for personal reflection, value education and critical thinking.

Asking high-order questions

For any text, visual or textual, I like to include reflective questions, controversial topics and high-order questions to provoke thoughts, stimulate open discussion and develop positive values. I consider it an important part of my job to challenge people to think critically and responsibly. Besides an English teacher, I am also a moral guide trying to develop positive values in my students and inspire them to be passionate about life.

Seeing students as individuals under our care

I see students as individuals and help them appreciate their own worth. I challenge the able, encourage the weak and inspire both to dream and accomplish their own goals.

Whole school involvement in building an English-rich environment

I have coordinated the efforts of teachers and students to create a rich English-speaking environment. F.3 and F.4 English Ambassadors are recruited to conduct two English activities called "Say It Right" and "Spelling Quiz" for F.1 and F.2 every Tuesday. Each class above F.2 has to take turns to serve F.1 and F.2 in the weekly "Chat Chat Chat Café", host an English radio programme and present a social issue in the morning assembly. In short, students are given lots of opportunities to use English for fun.

Conclusion

My mission is to motivate students to learn English and enable them to feel the joy and success of learning English.

Assessment Summary

A role model and a language model for her students, and a dedicated teacher who shares her experiences in English language teaching with the teaching community generously.

Ms CHEW believes that an effective teacher should be a facilitator in students' construction of knowledge, a moral guide who inspires positive values in students and a coach who recognises and develops students' potentials.

Putting beliefs into practice, Ms CHEW has facilitated students' development in the English language and acquisition of learning strategies through effective application of common language practices and experiential learning. Ms CHEW does not just teach English in the classroom, she arranges educational outings for students to learn and use the language outside the school. Students have developed a very positive attitude to English learning and can use the language confidently.

Ms CHEW also tries to act as a moral guide to her students. She incorporates a variety of literary texts and genres to increase students' exposure to English and understanding of the world and people around them. She uses controversial topics and reflective questions to stimulate open discussions and provoke thoughts, and help students develop positive values.

Like a good coach, Ms CHEW identifies students' strengths and helps them stretch their potentials. She would invite students to participate in debates and speech competitions and train them tirelessly. Some of her students wrote notes of thanks to her for helping them to develop their confidence in speaking English.

Ms CHEW has contributed significantly to the development of the school as an English medium school. Her dedication and professionalism have inspired high standards of professional performances from her colleagues. Under her stewardship, the English team has created a language-rich school environment and collaborated with other subject teachers to help students use English to learn their subjects effectively.

Ms CHEW has also contributed significantly to the teaching community. She has served in the Joint Committee of the CDC and HKEAA, giving frontline views on the Curriculum and Assessment Guides. She is the School-based Assessment group coordinator, training teachers in administering their English school-based assessment. In addition to sharing her experiences with new teachers as a mentor, she reaches out to teachers and students in the education columns in Ming Pao. Ms CHEW's professionalism and contributions to the teaching community deserve recognition.



A nice cuppa during an educational outing

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Ms CHEW Lai-chun
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Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshops and classroom observation

Contact

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To develop in students a lifelong interest in English

Recipient of the Certificate of Merit

Mr CHAN Wing-por, Robert
(Years of teaching: 29 years)

School

Concordia Lutheran School
- North Point

Teaching Levels

Secondary 3 - 7
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“I strive to develop in students a lifelong interest in English, and help them to incorporate the language into their daily lives. A language should be a means of communication, enjoyment and a way of living.”

Interview with the Teacher

Mr CHAN Wing-por, a father of two, and a teacher for 29 years, thinks that students can succeed only if they have developed an interest in learning.

“Learning is a never-ending lifelong journey,” says Mr CHAN. “Students can succeed only if they have developed an interest in learning, so there is no use in forcing them.” Mr CHAN carries the same belief for his own children and for his students at Concordia Lutheran School – North Point.

Arousing students’ interest in English

Mr CHAN thinks that learning a language is like opening the gate to a new lifestyle. A person will forget what he learns quickly if he is merely peeking from the outside without entering into the new world. “It is the teacher’s responsibility to arouse students’ interest in the language, and offer opportunities for them to use it in their day-to-day lives.”

To Mr CHAN, teaching is like performing on stage and how the audience will react is important. Mr CHAN usually begins a lesson by bringing up issues of interest to students, and prompts them with questions to get their brains ticking. “Students are especially interested in celebrities and in their teachers,” he grins. The lead-in can usually whet students’ appetite, preparing them for the “main course” that follows.

Mr CHAN thinks that constant reflection on one’s teaching methods is important. “Like in movie-making, you want to appeal to the audience, but there is no guarantee that you will succeed every time. Reviewing after each lesson and thinking of ways to improve has now become my day-to-day routine.”

English as a means of communication and enjoyment

Mr CHAN enjoys drama and hopes to foster that same passion in his students. “Through drama, English is brought to life, and the words are no longer a string of meaningless symbols to students.” Mr CHAN points out that through performing skits in class, students are naturally engaged, and the learning becomes memorable.

Likewise, by introducing his students to the world of literature, Mr CHAN hopes to further arouse their interest in English. “Classics are extremely rich in terms of content, diction and human emotions. They allow students to experience the power of language, and, hopefully, keep them enthralled.” With the help of multimedia such as video clips from the Internet, Mr CHAN tries to help students develop a taste for the classics he loves so much.

Debate, which fosters discussion of clashing viewpoints, is another activity enjoyed by the senior form students. By going through preparations before the debate, the light bulbs in the students’ heads go on, and everybody learns, including those on the floor.



Mr CHAN is assisting students with their class work in the English Room.

Passion still running high

“No two students are identical,” says Mr CHAN. “It is a brand new experience for me every time I teach a new group of students. Experiences surely help; nonetheless, I have to come up with new solutions and tactics all the time.”

Throughout the years, the only thing that remains unchanged about Mr CHAN is his passion for teaching and his professionalism. “I enjoy learning, such as taking courses or reading books on my own. I am constantly stimulated by newly acquired knowledge, and this is how I keep my passion running high.”



Using English for Life and Enjoyment

Learning English should be fun

Language is fun. Learning a language should be pleasurable. Throughout the world, people go to language schools to learn another language. They do not have a practical need. They just want to learn another language for interest. Why should learning English in schools be otherwise?

Interest and learning go together

I believe that if students have a real interest in English, they will learn it well. Pleasurable learning is not just a slogan. It is an important element. Without interest and a fun element in the classroom, students can soon forget what they have learnt. On the contrary, if the learning experience is memorable, they will have a better chance of acquiring the language and be able to use it in future.

My role in the classroom is therefore to facilitate the learning of English as a means of real life communication and enjoyment. To achieve this purpose, I have to employ a repertoire of strategies and techniques.

Know your students

Understanding my students is the first step. I need to know the kind of students I am teaching. Even within the same school, different classes may have quite different characteristics. Having said that, young students generally are curious about the lives of celebrities, particularly their idols, singers and TV stars. I find that using the latest news about them or the gossip of the day is always a good way to arouse their interest in the beginning of a lesson. Show them a good picture of a character of a recent TV drama or show and you are bound to heat up the atmosphere of discussion in the start of a lesson.

Grammar in context

In teaching grammar, I try to teach only those items which students have a greater chance of using. In designing the lessons, emphasis is put on using the target language in real life. For example, students may learn to use the past perfect tense in the writing of a biography. Real life situations can always be exploited for learning and using English. These situations include those set in their own school context. For example, giving suggestions to the school for a fund raising event, checking the school's fire prevention measures before writing up a report are some of the activities I have asked students to do.

Language arts open a greater world

Thanks to the newly introduced New Senior Secondary curriculum, language arts have become a major component of the electives. Poems, songs, drama and short stories are my favourite means of making the learning of English enjoyable. In fact, all of them can be used flexibly to enhance students' interest and emotional engagement and thus resulting in deeper learning.

I have tried Shakespearean plays like *Macbeth* and classics like *A Christmas Carol* with my students. I enjoyed the lessons and so did my students. These days when a number of classics have already been reproduced with spectacular cinematic effects, teaching language arts, in particular, the classics, would be the "in" thing to do with students.

Above all, language arts expose my students to a greater world of culture and human experiences, help them to be more critical and creative, and foster in them some values to guide them for life.



Newspaper clips are often used in helping students to learn English better, as well as raising their social awareness.

Assessment Summary

A teacher with a passion for teaching and good professional knowledge, who is dedicated to developing in students a positive attitude and a life-long interest in English.

Mr CHAN's passion for teaching and his professional knowledge have made him stand out among other teachers of English. Mr CHAN is dedicated to helping students see English not just as a tool for study and work but a means of communication and enjoyment.

Mr CHAN's teaching and professionalism have made an impact on students. One of his former students expressed his gratitude to Mr CHAN for introducing him to Shakespeare's plays and Pavarotti's music, which had enriched his knowledge in English and the cultures of the English-speaking world. In another instance, a student-teacher who later became a colleague thanked Mr CHAN for inspiring her with his passion and enthusiasm about English language teaching.

As a professional English teacher, Mr CHAN keeps himself well informed of the trends and development in English language learning and teaching. In everyday teaching, he integrates language skills in real-life tasks and project learning, and helps students to understand the meanings behind the grammatical forms and structures and use language in meaningful context. Through extra-curricular activities like debates, solo verse speaking and drama competitions, Mr CHAN helps students to develop the confidence of speaking in front of an audience and experience the thrill of acting on stage.

Mr CHAN's passion for drama is reflected in his approach to the teaching of Language Arts in junior forms. He has introduced Shakespearean plays and literary classics such as *A Christmas Carol* to students. In the Language Arts lessons observed, Mr CHAN read aloud the banquet scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with feelings and successfully brought out the high-strung atmosphere after the murder of Banquo. He made use of a range of effective teaching strategies and activities to help students understand literary texts, read dialogues with feelings and learn vocabulary.

In the interview, the students said that they liked *Macbeth* and enjoyed their English lessons. Mr CHAN has shown students that English is not just the language used in their textbooks, it is a medium for performing arts and enjoyment too. He has hit on one of the aims of English language learning and teaching.



Mr CHAN believes in learning through projects, and regularly assigns pair/group projects to the students.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Please refer to contact below

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Sharing sessions and seminars

Contact

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From left to right: Ms LAW Suk-yin, Mr LAM Cheuk-lun, Aaron, Ms Valerie PRITCHARD and Ms LAU Kam-ying

Learning together through Cooperative Learning

Recipients of the Certificate of Merit

Mr LAM Cheuk-lun, Aaron (Years of teaching: 15 years)
Ms LAW Suk-yin (Years of teaching: 29 years)
Ms LAU Kam-ying (Years of teaching: 7 years)
Ms Valerie PRITCHARD (Years of teaching: 19 years)

School

Concordia Lutheran School
- North Point

Teaching Levels

Secondary 1 - 6
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Students, regardless of their abilities, can achieve success if given the right stimulus by the teachers.”

Interview with the Teachers

“Through collaboration, students learn from each other, even the shy ones would contribute to the group work.”

Accompanied by the finger-snaps, claps, and the hearty laughter of the teacher performers and student audience, the school rap of Concordia Lutheran School – North Point (CLSNP) came to its end. Mr LAM, the English Panel Chairperson, says, “Like the students, a number of the subject teachers are reluctant to speak English in front of the public; so if they can do it, why can’t the students? This is the message we want to give.”

Mr LAM Cheuk-lun, Ms LAW Suk-yin, Ms LAU Kam-ying and Ms Valerie PRITCHARD, as a team, strive to build the students’ confidence in using English and help them to reach their full potential, regardless of their diverse abilities.



Ms LAU is guiding students through a guessing game.

The Cooperative Learning Pilot Scheme

The four teachers all agree that students nowadays are highly diversified in their abilities. While some may not be able to follow in class, others may think they already know everything. Under the leadership of Mr LAM, they joined the Cooperative Learning Pilot Scheme, and strategised ways of implementing group work to enhance students’ language and generic skills.

Through collaboration, students could learn from each other; even the shy ones would contribute to the group work, creating a “noisy classroom” just as the team wished. “Weaker students can learn because they feel more at ease in groups,” Ms LAW says. “The stronger students are often asked to be the leaders, and as they try to help others, they find that they do not really know everything and they will go back and learn some more.”

The use of innovative and creative learning materials prepared by Ms LAU, such as catchy drawings, graphic arts and up-to-date news clips, also captures students’ attention and facilitates critical thinking.

A variety of learning activities

Besides adopting cooperative learning, the team also grasps every opportunity to organise activities to help students learn and use English. One of the highlights is the annual all-English musical, which involves all the teaching staff at the school. “English musical is nothing new, but with all the teachers on stage? I think this is the fun part of it,” says Mr LAM.

With the joint effort by all the teachers from every subject and department, the students’ determination to stage a good show, and the professional theatre company hired, it was not surprising that the musical of this year, “Noah’s Ark – God Remembers”, turned out to be a brilliant performance. There were close to a hundred in the cast, mostly Secondary 1 students. “They might not have perfect pronunciation or grammar; but after training, at least their utterances were loud and clear,” says Mr LAM.

Other initiatives taken to enrich the English learning atmosphere include “Learning Diary” which helps students to consolidate what they have learnt and reflect upon it, and “English Pump Up Station” in which Mr LAM and Ms PRITCHARD participate in the activities prepared by different classes, learn English and have fun together with the students under a relaxing atmosphere.

Two years of hard work have greatly enhanced students’ confidence in using English. “We are more prepared for challenges; there is no guarantee that what we do will work, but we are daring enough to try,” say the four enthusiastic teachers as they smile together.



Students are helping each other to learn.



Teachers' Sharing

One times four equals...

We are four experienced teachers of English who are open to new initiatives. We believe that cooperative learning and teaching strategies would help us to cater to learners' different abilities and needs.

The practices

One of the cooperative strategies we have used is grouping students into “expert groups” and “learning groups”. In a reading class, students work in groups and each group reads a different article. Students are all “experts” of the articles they have read intensively. However, when students regroup, they become “learners”, learning about the other articles from the different “experts” in their new group. The following is an example.

Level	Form 4 Intermediate (24 students)
Skills covered	Reading for specific purposes
Number of texts to be covered	3 (can be of the same or different genres) The questions assigned to each group should take similar amount of time regardless of the length of the texts.
Number of Expert groups	6 (4 students each) The same text can be assigned to 2 expert groups.
Expert groups' points to note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups are of mixed abilities. • All expert group members must study the questions, make sure each member understands them, search the answers together, write the line reference (if any) and be prepared to explain to others. • Different expert groups may work at a different pace. More capable students/groups should be asked to write a summary and/or reflection of the text. Less capable students/groups could be given some sample answers for their reference. Alternatively, these students can do pre-reading at home. • Teachers act as facilitator and monitor students' progress. Make sure students work as a group, read aloud the questions and answers and ask the teacher for clarifications.
Learning groups' points to note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once all expert groups have got their answers and explanations, students are reshuffled and 8 learning groups are formed. • Each learning group consists of students from different expert groups reading different texts. • Teachers should remind students that they are now learning from other learners. They must read the articles and questions and discuss the answers. They must not copy each other's answers. The “expert” can give them explanations and the line reference (if any).
Possible problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time. Do allow for 1 lesson for expert group and 1 lesson for learning group. It is impossible for genuine peer learning to take place if both expert group and learning group tasks are done in one single lesson. • Students copying from each other. Teachers can alter the seating arrangements and/or establish house rules to prohibit such behaviour.
Teacher's role	In addition to the role as facilitator, the teacher should spend some time on whole-class teaching either in the form of introductory teaching (lead-in) or feedback (highlighting common mistakes or misunderstanding).

How cooperative learning helps

Cooperative learning allows all students to be more active in their learning. In the learning group, the students who have better English can help explain to others whose English is not as good. In return, these higher ability students can reinforce their own learning. At the same time, the students who need more help with understanding the material are being helped more as they don't have to rely just on the teacher for help. As a result, students with lower English levels can learn more during the lesson. Everyone is involved in the learning process, making the learning environment more lively and empowering.

Assessment Summary

Incorporated cooperative teaching and learning strategies to cater to learners' different abilities and needs, and implemented various initiatives to improve English learning and teaching in the school.

These four experienced teachers of English are enthusiastic and open to new initiatives. They have been trying different approaches in their own classrooms to address the issue of diverse learner abilities. In 2007, they joined the Cooperative Learning Pilot Scheme, hoping that the cooperative teaching and learning strategies would help them cater to learners' different abilities and needs. Although cooperative learning has only been implemented for three years, positive impacts on learning and teaching have been noted. Students are now more active in their learning and teachers are more student-centred.

The teachers believe that teachers should empower students with knowledge and skills so that they can take an active role in learning. They should take the role of a director instead of a knowledge-transmitter and help students to inquire and construct meaning from their learning.

In the lessons observed, the teachers succeeded in getting the senior form students to take an active role in their learning. They stood back and gave students the opportunities to construct knowledge and use English to explain and share their learning with others. In the interview, students told the Assessment Panel that they learnt a lot in the group discussions and sharing sessions. The S6 newcomers from other secondary schools found the English teachers in Concordia Lutheran School very patient and helpful and gave them a lot of opportunities to speak English inside and outside the classroom.



Besides cooperative learning, the teachers have implemented a number of initiatives to improve English learning and teaching in the school, such as staging a large-scale all-English musical involving all teaching and non-teaching staff, implementing a programme called "English Pump Up Station" in which students have to prepare language activities for the English teachers' visit.

The teachers collaborate well as a team, with each member playing a significant role in the cooperative learning scheme. Their classrooms are open to visits by the Principal, English teachers and teachers of other subjects. They are receptive to suggestions and keen to make improvements of their lessons. Their enthusiasm has fostered a culture of sharing among teachers.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Please refer to contact below

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Sharing sessions and seminars

Contact

Concordia Lutheran School – North Point

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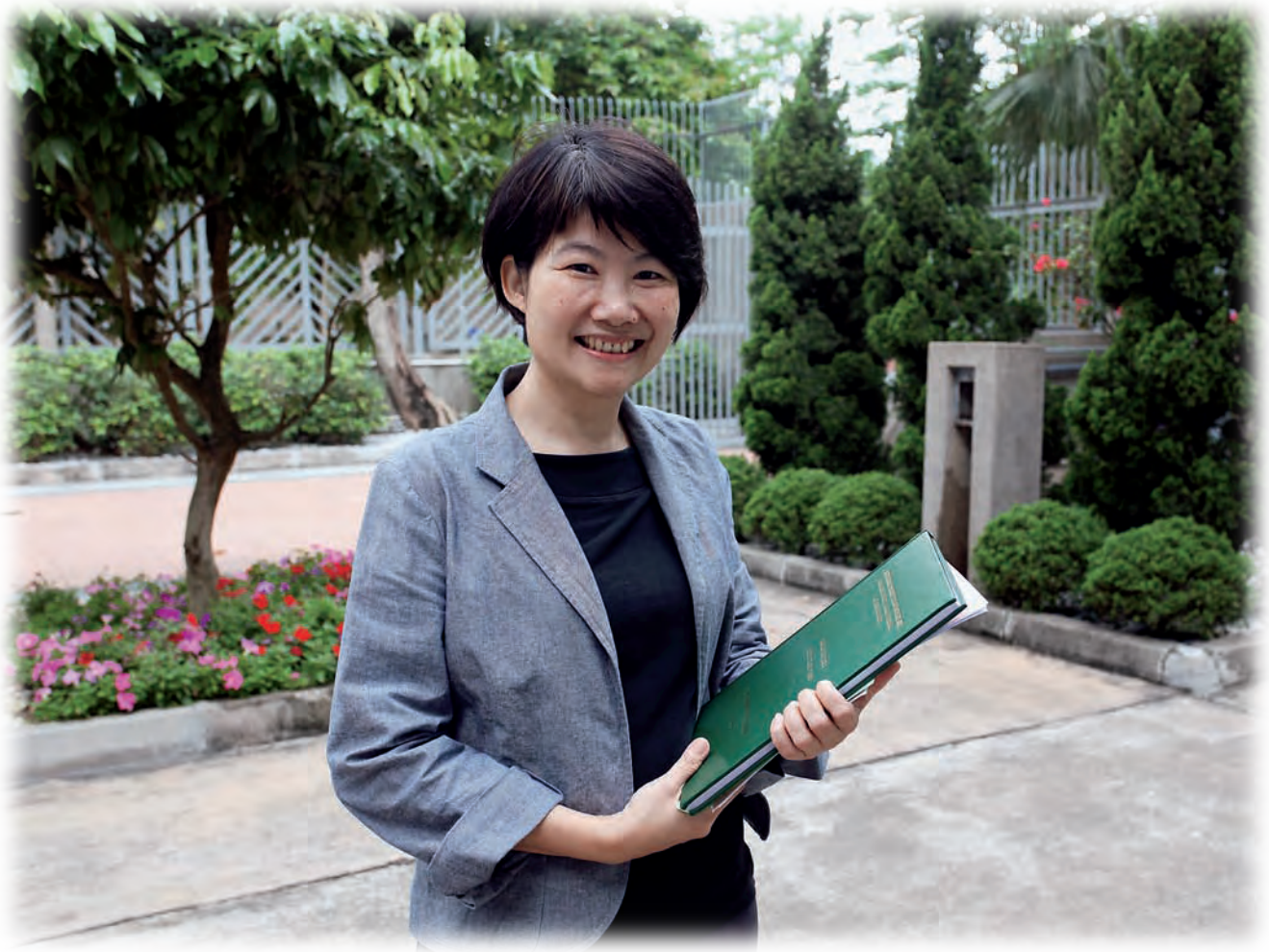
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Never give up on students

Recipient of the Certificate of Merit

Ms LAM Ka-wai
(Years of teaching: 25 years)

School

Kau Yan College

Teaching Levels

Secondary 1 - 5
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Every student can make improvement. If you do not give up on them, they will not give up on themselves.”

Interview with the Teacher

25 years of teaching has not dampened her enthusiasm in teaching English; Ms LAM Ka-wai is still dedicated to helping her students overcome the obstacles in learning English.

For Ms LAM, teaching English is not just teaching vocabulary, grammar, listening and reading, writing and speaking, but teaching students how to learn English.

“If we only teach the meaning of a word, students will just learn that word,” Ms LAM says. “Learning to learn vocabulary is to teach students how to use a dictionary and how the meaning of a word can be retained in our long-term memory.” Ms LAM has designed a series of learner training activities to help students learn English.

Overcoming students’ obstacles in learning English

But how does Ms LAM get students to take the initiative in “learning to learn” English? First, she will find out whether the students have some affective obstacles or misconceptions deterring them from learning English.

After she has addressed their reasons for rejecting English, Ms LAM will then ask the students to reflect on their reasons for learning English.

“If they learn English just to pass examinations, they will not enjoy the learning process. We must show them that English is an international language and it is ‘a window to the world’. If they really want to know more about foreign countries and make friends with westerners, they must master the language.”

The third step is to evaluate individual students’ English proficiency. Ms LAM will ask students to set priority on what they should learn. Then she will draw up an agreement with each student on how to improve his/her English and work out a practical plan with him/her.

The last step is to modify the plan when necessary. When implementing the plan, things may go wrong and the plan must be fine-tuned. For example, if the student cannot handle the workload, Ms LAM will revise the plan with the student and make the goals achievable and manageable.

“The whole process is about encouragement,” Ms LAM explains. “You must try to build up a relationship with students. Some students are very passive. I will play games with them and give them little presents. After that, they are usually more attentive in class.”

Never give up on students

Ms LAM has conducted learner training activities whenever necessary but she emphasises that her belief of never giving up on students is more important than any of the activities.

“Some students may want to test you and see how you handle them. They just sit there not paying attention. After a few lessons when they find that you have not given up on them, they show some interest and start learning.”

Ms LAM has seen students improving a lot afterwards. Their improvement is one of the factors that motivates her to try getting through to the students.

Ms LAM gets satisfaction every day from her harmonious relationship with the students. She says, “Seeing students graduate and coming back to school to visit me gives me great strength to carry on. If we have a good relationship with the students, time passes very quickly.”



Students are enjoying themselves during the English Activity Day.



Get a fish or catch a fish? – Developing Learner Autonomy

Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime.

– An Ancient Confucius Proverb

Learning English in Hong Kong can be very difficult since over 95% of the population is Chinese. Besides, affective demotivating factors like shyness, self-awareness, peer pressure among learners, especially those aged between 13 and 15, also hinder language learning. Therefore, learning English through acquisition is inefficient and rarely produces highly successful English users. To be successful language learners, learner training is necessary.

Learner training helps students to be more efficient and skillful in language learning

In Hong Kong, there are lots of easily accessible authentic English resources which provide good language learning opportunities, e.g., newspapers, journals, multimedia learning CD-ROMs and the Internet. However, the key to success lies very much on whether students expose themselves to these resources actively and know how to retain knowledge systematically. Thus, training students how to maximise these exposures and what strategies to use is essential.

Learner training helps students to overcome affective obstacles in language learning

A learner's affective stances like personal belief, motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, inhibition, tolerance for ambiguity, etc. determine the success or failure in language learning. Misconceptions that attribute success or failure in language learning to factors other than the learner himself/herself may hinder the development of a responsible and active attitude towards learning.

Children aged between 13 and 15 are usually shy and self-conscious about making mistakes; thus they are less willing to use English. However, to be good language learners, students must overcome their affective obstacles.

To help students to be independent learners of English, I have introduced learner training activities into the S1 and S2 curricula.



Students are learning actively in groups.

Learner training activities

- **Learner training topics:** What is a good language learner, analysing my language needs, writing my own learning plan, what to do when you don't know a word, basic language learning strategies such as vocabulary building, etc.

- **When to introduce learner training:** As a structured course or interest class to be conducted after school, or an integral component of the English curriculum, or activities in the lessons during the orientation cycle.

- **Role of the teacher:** The teacher must clear students' misconceptions about language learning and help them understand that success in language learning is attributed to internal factors such as hard work and skillful use of learning strategies. Whenever necessary and possible, besides being a traditional English teacher, play the role of a counsellor, a facilitator or an informant. For example, I have tried to lower students' affective filter, teach them how to make vocabulary building more effective and show them where they can find useful materials and how they can use them, etc.

Students' feedback about the learner training course is very positive. For many of them learning English has become less threatening, more efficient and more self-directed.



Displays of students' work including journals, reflective writings on literary texts, chapter stories, etc.

Assessment Summary

Articulated a coherent philosophy of teaching based on her passion for teaching, care for her students and beliefs in learner autonomy and learning English through language arts.

Ms LAM is a supportive and charismatic teacher. She enjoys teaching and her joy and passion for teaching are shown in her cheerful countenance and warm rapport with students.

Learner autonomy is paramount in Ms LAM's language learning and teaching philosophy. To help students to become independent learners, she developed a programme on language learning strategies and a self-study phonetics package for the junior forms. She also used a variety of games and activities to motivate students and help them learn English in the classroom and beyond.

To enrich students' language learning experiences, Ms LAM introduced Language Arts to Secondary 1 to 3. Students enjoyed the stories, learnt to appreciate literary texts and applied their knowledge and skills in projects related to the themes of the stories. Some of the students were inspired to write their own books with chapter development.

Ms LAM is especially effective in motivating low-achievers. With the belief that every student could make progress or be assisted to improve, Ms LAM adapted learning materials and experiences according to students' language needs. She used journal writing to help low-achievers to develop writing skills and Reader's Theatre to coach them to read aloud with confidence and perform in front of an audience.

Ms LAM has fostered the development of a learning community in the school, with other schools and among parents. She initiated an Intranet platform for teachers to share learning and teaching materials. She encouraged the school to join the Education Bureau's STELLAR Project so that colleagues could share their experiences of teaching Language Arts with teachers of other schools. Ms LAM has extended the learning community to the parents. As the chairperson of the Home-school Cooperation Committee, she has organised activities to help parents build a language-rich environment at home and be more skillful in dealing with parent-child problems. Ms LAM's dedication to teaching, her loving care for her students and strong commitment to professional pursuance are highly appreciated.



Ms LAM is teaching students to read a drama script.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Website: www.kyc.edu.hk

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Sharing seminars

Contact

Ms LAM Ka-wai

Kau Yan College

Fu Shin Estate

Tel. No.: 2660 8308





From left to right: Ms MA Yee-nam, Ms TAM Wing-han and Mr LI Ka-kit

Diversified English Learning Experiences

Recipients of the Certificate of Merit

Mr LI Ka-kit, Alex (Years of teaching: 9 years)
Ms TAM Wing-han, Vivien (Years of teaching: 9 years)
Ms MA Yee-nam, Isabella (Years of teaching: 9 years)

School

Pui Ching Middle School

Teaching Levels

Secondary 1 - 7
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Excellence in teaching means that teachers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their students and have succeeded in creating a motivating environment which enables students to discover knowledge, manage knowledge and create knowledge.”

Interview with the Teachers

Having taught in Pui Ching Middle School for nine years, English teachers Mr LI Ka-kit, Ms TAM Wing-han and Ms MA Yee-nam have spent a lot of time creating, tweaking, and testing out new ways of teaching. Now with a well-developed curriculum, they see their hard work coming into fruition, as students are gradually improving their English skills.

A School-based Curriculum

The teachers at Pui Ching have incorporated various modules into their curriculum to enhance students' English learning experience. For the lower forms, they have designed an English Literature module to develop students' literary appreciation and understanding and to foster their analytical skills. For elite students, the teachers have developed modules integrating English Language Education with Liberal Studies, Integrated Humanities and drama education to make language learning more interesting and challenging. The teachers have effectively tailor-made the modules to cater to students' needs.

The teachers have also introduced many English activities into their curriculum, for example, an annual Drama Night, Reading Week, English Café performances, all of which arouse students' interest in learning English. Having won a number of awards for their drama performances, students have, no doubt, developed confidence in using English.



Taking learning outside the classroom, Ms MA is explaining to students what has been installed in one of the many kiosks on campus.

e-Curriculum

In addition to introducing English literature and the humanities subjects into their curriculum, the teachers have made use of technology to enliven learning and teaching. With Smartboards, Wi-fi devices, mobile phones, and video-conferencing, students at Pui Ching are immersed in technology of all kinds. They are able to use their mobile phones to download news clips every morning and have video-conferencing calls to debate or discuss issues with students in Singapore and Beijing.

Mobile learning, Geocaching and Smartboards enable teachers to analyse students' answers instantly. Teachers also make use of synchronised recordings in their Communication Centre to track students' discussions for self and peer evaluation.

For these three teachers, using technology is one of the approaches to teaching that makes learning more interesting. Mr LI thinks that the IT tools don't count much on their own; they should be used to assist regular teaching. Effective teaching requires a holistic approach, not just by using IT itself.

However, IT provides a good platform for communication and information sharing. The teachers have created an online resource bank for teachers to upload teaching materials and lesson plans. This fosters professional sharing among teachers.

Where there's a will, there's a way

When asked if they have ever doubted or encountered difficulties with the development of an IT-rich campus, all three teachers were unified in their affirmative response. But they are willing to try new things. Ms MA says that the teachers all share the view that if they believe something will work, eventually it will.

It is this attitude that made an IT-rich campus possible. Even more so is the sincere care that each teacher shows the students. Taking time to chat with students in and out of class on a regular basis about things academic or personal, they have built very strong teacher-student rapport. Referring to teaching at Pui Ching Middle School, Ms TAM says that the teachers really love their students and care about the next generation. She feels that what they put in now, they will see in the future.



Students enjoy using interactive Smartboards during the English lessons.



Teachers' Sharing

Raising the English standards of the students is a challenge for many teachers. We have tried to achieve “excellence” in teaching by creating a learning environment which enables students to discover knowledge, manage knowledge and create knowledge.

Our English campus

At Pui Ching, we are lucky to have an English campus which is an asset in the implementation of the English curriculum. We have a Communication Centre, English Café, Black Box Theatre and campus kiosks with pre-installed questions for action learning. Our newly IT-equipped classrooms link us up with classrooms in other countries and our e-community offers a platform for collaborative learning.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum includes three elements which are inter-related and provides a comprehensive coverage of the learning targets.

The Regular Curriculum and the Elite Curriculum

Our regular school-based curriculum is characterised by its modular design, tailor-made materials and IT activities. English Literature modules are added to further train students' literary appreciation skills, and reading and writing abilities. Together with the school-based reader modules, we have laid a firm foundation for the new English curriculum.

Our elite curriculum is interdisciplinary, combining English Language Education with Integrated Humanities, Liberal Studies and drama education. It aims to enhance students' language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills.

The e-Curriculum

The e-Curriculum enables students not only to discover knowledge but also to manage and create knowledge. Activities include:

- Mobile learning** – using mobile phones to learn, which enhances interactivity between teachers and students and enables instant polling and testing;
- World Explorer** – morning news broadcasting with related questions for students to answer;
- Geocaching** – opportunities for students to leave their classrooms and learn English using the touch-screen kiosks;
- Student Forum** – an e-community where teachers, students, parents and alumni can participate in discussions and share knowledge with one another.

The Extended Curriculum

This is a series of activities conducted outside class time to provide students with maximum exposure to the English language, e.g. Reading Week, English Literature Week, scrabble competitions, drama competitions, debates, presentations in the assembly, weekly performances in the English Café, etc. Besides providing opportunities to practise English, these activities encourage originality and team work. One of the most successful examples is the publication of *Oasis*, a collection of essays from the whole school. Senior form students' talents in desktop publishing were exemplified and their team work has served as a model for the junior forms.

Effectiveness

Since the implementation of the school-based curriculum, students have found studying English more interesting and challenging. The interesting content, frequent discussions and plentiful performing opportunities have enhanced learning effectiveness.

Conclusion

Teamwork is the foundation of success. We are fortunate to have a strong and committed English panel. With their professional support, sharing and creativity, a vibrant and sustainable English culture has been uniquely established in Pui Ching, to be passed on in the years to come.



Mobile learning is a key element in the curriculum. Using Wi-fi, students access the school's server to download new lessons each day.

Assessment Summary

Dedicated to developing a curriculum with an IT component and a range of extra-curricular activities to promote students' interest in English language learning.

The three teachers are dedicated to transforming Pui Ching Middle School into an IT-rich campus to facilitate the learning and teaching of English. They have also shown strong team spirit and leadership in curriculum development. Their school-based English curriculum includes three inter-related components: a regular curriculum with programmes for the elites, an e-Curriculum which is a variety of IT-assisted activities integrated into the regular curriculum, and an extended curriculum of extra-curricular activities.

The re-designed curriculum gives teachers the flexibility of adding new modules. One of the new modules is English Literature for the lower forms, with the teachers designing a wide range of tasks to develop students' knowledge of literary works and skills of literary appreciation. They have also taken the initiative of integrating Liberal Studies and Integrated Humanities with the English curriculum in the elite classes, with the English teachers taking charge of all the lessons. Their efforts of introducing drama to students and involving them in the different stages of drama production have also fostered a positive attitude towards English learning in students.

The e-Curriculum has enlivened and provided variety to the conventional English lessons. The teachers have worked tirelessly to explore IT tools and resources and design interactive and entertaining activities to enable students to learn English outside the classroom, anytime and anywhere. Students, especially the lower forms, told the Assessment Panel that they enjoyed learning English with the IT tools.

The teachers have also created an environment and culture for language learning outside the classroom.

Activities like the Annual Drama Night, Reading Week and English Literature Week, 3-day English Singing Contest, movie shows, annual visit to the SCMP, the English Ambassadors scheme, etc. stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning English and encourage students to use English in their daily lives. The Assessment Panel was impressed with the students' confidence and ease in using the language in class and during the interview. The teachers' efforts in promoting English language learning through IT and non-IT activities deserve recognition.



A variety of activities for English learning.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Website: www.puiching.edu.hk

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Sharing workshops

Contact

Mr LI Ka-kit

Tel. No.: 2711 9222





In Labore Gaudium – Joy in Duty

Recipient of the Certificate of Merit

Mr LAU Man-kit, Tony
(Years of teaching: 24 years)

School

Tak Sun Secondary School

Teaching Levels

Secondary 6 - 7
(Use of English)

Teaching Beliefs

“An English teacher needs to provide students with English lessons that are entertaining, unexpected, and student-friendly.”

Interview **with the Teacher**

“There is nothing wrong with the ‘old school’ teaching methods but teachers have to modify the traditional teaching approach and use it as a springboard for interesting things.”

The boys at Tak Sun Secondary School should not be unfamiliar with the many student-friendly English activities on campus, such as Monday Movie Shows, Grammar Olympics and Board Game Extravaganza. The names of the activities alone are enough to provoke expectation and excitement in the air.

Teaching is not a one-way street

Teaching requires interaction, especially with students. Mr LAU believes in innovation and creativity, which are the tricks that make his lessons unpredictable in a nice way. He remarks, “We all like surprises. Teachers should try to inject new elements into their lessons and arouse the interest of the students. Each lesson should be entertaining, exciting and enjoyable. Isn’t it a basic human instinct to thirst for something different, something alternative, something new?”

Many heartfelt thanks to his late mentors

Teachers can make or break a student. One of the studies conducted by Kati Haycock of the Education Trust in the United States shows that a child who has two, three, four strong teachers in a row will eventually excel, regardless of his/her background, while a child who has just two weak teachers in a row will never recover. Mr LAU could not agree more with the findings.

Mr LAU was lucky to have come across his first mentor, Uncle Charlie, at the young age of four or five. Graduated from St. Joseph’s College in the 60s, Uncle Charlie would visit Mr LAU at home every Sunday and teach him English grammar and colloquial English expressions. A few decades later, another mentor advised him to learn from the art of cooking. “A teacher and a cook are similar in the sense that both have to master one thing – time management.” That was the advice given by his late father-in-law.



Apart from fun, fun, fun, sometimes there is a need to sit down for serious discussion.

English is still a global lingua franca

English teaching is more than just teaching the language. English, being a global lingua franca, allows people from different countries to get access to the world of information, entertainment and knowledge. Under Mr LAU’s influence, most Tak Sun boys are familiar with fun cultural facts, for example, Eric Clapton is the Guitar God in the United Kingdom.

The importance of text ownership

Mr LAU reckons that writing just for him can be boring for his students. Thus, he always encourages his students to write letters to the Young Post and the SCMP Editor. He hopes to help them develop a sense of audience and an appreciation of writing as both a process and a product they can enjoy. Many letters of his students have been published in the Young Post and students were simply thrilled.

Joy in English language teaching (ELT)

On a day just like any other day, which can be full of surprises, the Education Bureau gave Mr LAU a call. He was informed that he had just earned an extra bonus for his hard work.

This award is surely a feather in his cap. Confessing that he is not a workaholic, Mr LAU adheres closely to the school motto – Joy in Duty.



Teacher's **Sharing**

In this age of globalisation, our young people should be good at English so as to compete with their counterparts in this global village. As an ELT professional, I would like to try my utmost to contribute to the betterment of English Language Education in Hong Kong.



A teacher who lowers himself to the level of the students deserves love and respect.

I have a real passion for English Language and ELT. My goals are to make Tak Sun Secondary School a true and top-notch EMI school and to share my experiences with English teachers in Hong Kong.

To achieve my first goal, I have tried to create an English-speaking campus by:

Setting myself as a role model for my students and colleagues At school, I only use English with my students and all the teaching and non-teaching staff. In my daily life, I think in English and use English whenever I can. For more than 15 years, I have used only English in all ELT seminars, workshops and training courses.

Maximising the strengths of the NETs I treat the

Native English-speaking Teachers (NETs) as my buddies. I show appreciation for their cultures and recognition for their strengths. Hence, they willingly organise different cross-curricular activities which students enjoy.

Besides, I have dedicated myself to developing students' language abilities by:

Creating an English-rich learning environment My insistence on using only English has brought about an English-speaking school where students and teachers use English naturally. I also organise a variety of co-curricular activities to enable students to experience the cultures of the English-speaking world and consolidate their language skills.

Being inspirational and bringing out the best in students I do not mind spending time preparing students for the Speech Festival. I always ask them to speak the same sentence in ten or more different ways with different emotions to help them realise the huge range of possible expressions. One of my students got 96 out of 100 marks in the Solo Verse Speaking! We were overjoyed. My passion for the English language must have positive washback effects on my students. Some of my former students are now English teachers.

My second goal is to foster professional sharing and development at Tak Sun and the teaching community. I have devoted a lot of efforts to:

Building a happy and harmonious team I strongly believe that happy teachers make good teachers so I have never asked my panel members to stay after 5 pm. Sitting in the same area, we share jokes and teaching ideas every day.

Fostering sharing and learning among panel members I share with my panel members what I have learned in seminars and courses. My classroom is always open and they are free to come and observe my lessons.

Providing active support to the teaching profession Besides giving presentations in workshops and conferences, I have served as a university tutor and a mentor teacher. I enjoy sharing my teaching experiences with student-teachers.

I would never have achieved so much but for the support from my Supervisor, Principal, students' parents and colleagues at school. A thundering applause to all of them!



Students are beating their brains out and beating one another on the chessboard.

Assessment Summary

A role model for students and teachers for speaking English at all times, and a teacher dedicated to creating an English-speaking school campus.

Mr Tony LAU has a great passion for English language teaching (ELT) and devotes most of his time and efforts to creating an English-as-a-second-language environment at Tak Sun Secondary School. Besides being a role model for students and teachers for speaking English at school at all times, as the panel head, he shares his extensive knowledge of the English language, English language teaching and curriculum changes with his colleagues and the teaching community in workshops and seminars.

Mr LAU has firm beliefs of what an effective English teacher should do. Foremost is serving as a role model for students in using only English all the time at school. Helping students acquire language skills and appreciate English-speaking cultures, providing students with lessons that are entertaining and student-friendly, and reflecting on ways to improve him/herself are equally important. Mr LAU has put all these beliefs into practice and thus stands out as a professional teacher.

Mr LAU organises a variety of activities to expose students to English and English-speaking cultures, and enable them to use the language for play and personal enrichment. For example, the annual English Week with activities like “Drink of the Day” and ruby demonstration enables students to experience the British culture; the regular activities like movie shows, Pronunciation World Cup, etc. help students develop and consolidate their language skills. Mr LAU has cultivated in students a positive attitude towards English learning, as testified by his students who told the Assessment Panel that they liked and respected Mr LAU because they learnt a lot from him and his lessons were interesting.

To promote a sharing and collaborative culture among colleagues at school, Mr LAU opens his classroom for observation and organises professional sharing sessions for colleagues to discuss ELT issues and share experiences. Mr LAU has also contributed significantly to the teaching community by presenting in workshops and conferences, giving talks to teachers at their schools, contributing articles to educational journals, and serving as a university tutor and mentor teacher. Mr LAU’s professionalism and commitment to English language learning and teaching deserve recognition.



Mr LAU adheres closely to the school motto – Joy in Duty.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Please contact Mr Tony LAU

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshops and seminars

Contact

Tak Sun Secondary School

27 Ning Tai Road, Ma On Shan, Shatin, Hong Kong

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Fax: 2317 4335

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Language teaching is a scientific experiment

Recipient of the Certificate of Merit

Mr CHAN Ho-yin, Tony
(Years of teaching: 10 years)

School

Tsung Tsin College

Teaching Levels

Secondary 4 - 7
(English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Active experimentation in conjunction with meticulous reflection transforms research findings into effective teaching practices, and in this process of transformation lies the professionalism of English teachers.”

Interview with the Teacher

Effective teaching and learning of English is achieved through research-based, needs-oriented experimentation in combination with honest reflection, and the foundation for this experimentation is the mutual trust and respect between learners and their teacher.

The word “slick” refers to a skillful performance without hiccups and seemingly effortless. As the panel head of the English Department at Tsung Tsin College, Mr CHAN will be very happy to see all his students and panel members possessing the “slick” quality.

“SLICK” means something more

However, for Mr CHAN, “slick” refers to more than just polished skills. It is an acronym for the key components in English language learning and teaching: “S” for “Skills”, “L” for “Learning strategies”, “I” for “Interest”, “C” for “Confidence” and “K” for “Knowledge”. Mr CHAN strives to include these components in his lessons.

Teaching effectiveness: perception vs objectivity

If Mr CHAN were to be invited to give a talk sharing his teaching approaches, he would probably begin by urging fellow teachers: “Beware of Perceptions”.

One of the questions that Mr CHAN puts forward is: Can we trust our senses and perceptions? When a teacher leaves his classroom, he may say to himself, “This is a good lesson. I have a hunch the students like it.” Is this a fact or just perception?

A pioneer and practitioner of action research at his school, Mr CHAN challenges the generally accepted “perceptions” by initiating a more objective approach supported by scientific research. Mr CHAN holds a Bachelor of Science degree and he thinks like a scientist. If you were to convince him that a certain teaching method is good, you had better show him good reasons with concrete evidence.

Along this line of thinking, teaching effectiveness is not a matter of perception. Action research allows Mr CHAN to measure students’ learning effectiveness objectively. The classroom is where he tries out different methodologies. If a certain methodology proves to be feasible, the next question Mr CHAN asks himself would be: How can we apply this methodology in other classrooms and in other subjects?

Learners’ preferences

Mr CHAN chooses to give autonomy to his students and he sees this as an opportunity to build up mutual bonding. A case in point is the way he processes students’ written assignments. There has been fierce debate on how a student’s essay should be marked. In this regard, Mr CHAN hands the decision-making power over to his students.

Mr CHAN always asks his students questions such as: “Do you want me to mark every single mistake directly on your paper? Or do you prefer me to just write the marking codes?” It is important for the students to understand that they are responsible for their own learning. Making decisions and bearing the consequences are part of the learning process.

Teaching and learning English should be needs-oriented

A devoted Christian himself, Mr CHAN always attempts to practise what he preaches. His teaching approach is shaped by research methodologies as well as the Bible. “I respect human beings. Language is part of human behaviour. People use language to communicate their needs, and language learning and teaching is about meeting these needs.” Mr CHAN would like to think that he is an optimistic, humourous and happy teacher. “At least I got this impression from the students”, he says half-jokingly.



Students are proud of the English game stall they have designed for the English Week.



Research-based English Teaching and Learning

Introduction

The overwhelming complexity attached to the issue of how English ought to be taught as a second language is clearly reflected in the large number of research studies developed in this domain in the past few decades. In order for its findings to have any practical meaning, this vast body of research must be translated into pedagogical strategies and decisions through active experimentations and meticulous reflection in relation to local contextual factors. This article depicts four of my endeavors to achieve this integration.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

The TBLT framework put forward by D. Nunan in 2004 includes the following elements and principles:

Six Elements	Seven Principles
1. Schema Building	• Scaffolding
2. Controlled Practice	• Task Dependency
3. Authentic Listening Practice	• Recycling
4. Focus on Linguistic Elements	• Active Learning
5. Provide Freer Practice	• Integration
6. Pedagogical Task	• Reproduction to Creation
	• Reflection

These criteria now serve as the research basis for decision-making in my lesson planning. These guidelines also help me to devise major English teaching projects and provide a framework for conducting class visits and post-visit conferences.

Vocabulary learning

Research in vocabulary learning suggests that word frequency should be introduced to students so that they can make the right decisions as to which words to learn, that both explicit vocabulary instruction and structured incidental vocabulary learning should be encouraged, and that vocabulary strategies should be taught directly. In light of these principles, systematic vocabulary teaching and vocabulary tests have been incorporated into my school's curriculum, and instruction on vocabulary strategies, together with tasks and games that recycle words, now takes up a significant portion of my lesson time. Most importantly, students are cognizant of the importance of vocabulary and their role in the language acquisition process.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)

Research evidence in CALL has inspired me to create an online discussion forum (tony-sir.com) for students to practise writing. In this forum, everyone is entitled to write and respond freely in English. Whenever a new entry is posted, points will be added to the writer's formative assessment. The main goal of this forum is to attain more genuine communication among students by enlarging the audience and facilitating interaction. Another aim is to enable students to share their ideas and thoughts by allowing more people to access their writings. Several modifications have been made to the system based on students' feedback and my own observation.

Dictogloss

In dictogloss, students in pairs or groups have to tap into their own linguistic knowledge in order to reconstruct a text that has been read to them at normal speed. This method of consolidating grammar and vocabulary learning through integrating all four macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and active use of linguistic knowledge on students' part has been demonstrated in many research studies to be effective. The efficacy of dictogloss hinges on the fact that it encourages students to actively experiment with language principles and to engage in metatalk.

Conclusion

As seen in the above four examples, research informs practice, and experimentation in conjunction with reflection is the catalyst of effective teaching. It is my conviction that only through combining research and practice can the professionalism of English teachers in Hong Kong be further enhanced.

Assessment Summary

Articulated sound language acquisition and pedagogical theories and put educational theories and findings into practice.

Mr Tony CHAN is a teacher of English with sound knowledge in language learning and teaching. He is a strong believer of action research and a reflective practitioner. He constantly reflects and evaluates his teaching practices and research findings to inform his pedagogies.

Mr CHAN makes use of real life situations and authentic materials for language learning. He encourages creative use of the language and designs tasks so that students would enjoy themselves in the learning process. Mr CHAN's efforts in creating fun situations for students to learn English have made him a popular teacher in the school.

Mr CHAN acts as a role model for his students and shares with students various learning strategies that have worked for him, and encourages them to do the same. Mr CHAN also offers plentiful opportunities for students to communicate with him, notably is the online forum, where his students respond actively to the discussion topics.

Putting theory to practice, Mr CHAN planned the lesson observed following Nunan's task-based language teaching framework. He also made use of Wajnryb's dictogloss to practise listening and note-taking with students and encourage them to examine and reflect on the use of past participle and passive voice in a news report. In the post-lesson discussion, Mr CHAN was able to reflect on the methodologies he had adopted and suitability of the materials used.

In the interview, students told the Assessment Panel that they enjoyed Mr CHAN's lessons because he was kind and humorous and he used games, role-plays, competitions etc. to teach them. One student said that he did not like English before but Mr CHAN had changed his attitude and he now liked English. Mr CHAN has obviously won students' love and respect. The Assessment Panel was impressed with the students' effort to respond in English. Some of the students struggled to express themselves but they persisted in using English as a way to show their support for their teacher. Mr CHAN's devotion to his students and his enthusiasm for putting theories into practice were commendable.



Mr CHAN teaches students language skills and learning strategies, and helps them to develop an interest in English.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Tsung Tsin College

Website: www.ttc.edu.hk

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshops or seminars

Contact

Mr Tony CHAN

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Tel. No.: 2463 7373 (School)





From left to right: Ms LAU Lai-ching, Ms HAU Ka-lai and Ms LAM Ho-yi

Using technology to enhance learning

Recipients of the Certificate of Merit

Ms HAU Ka-lai, Catherine (Years of teaching: 11 years)
 Ms LAU Lai-ching (Years of teaching: 18 years)
 Ms LAM Ho-yi (Years of teaching: 10 years)

School

Fung Kai Innovative School

Teaching Levels

Primary 1 - 6
 (English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“Information technology (IT) provides a lot of opportunities for both students and teachers. Teachers can come up with more ways to teach and students can have more tools to learn and share their work.”

Interview with the Teachers

“On top of using IT tools to enhance learning and teaching, we teach students phonics skills and introduce them to drama.”

Fung Kai Innovative School definitely has an advantage in the promotion of e-learning because it worked with Microsoft in 2007 in the “School of the Future – Innovative Schools Program”. Each of the Primary 2 – 4 students in the school has a netbook which is pre-installed with an e-textbook, e-learning sheets, e-notes and other self-learning tools.

How information technology helps

“Information technology allows students to learn at their own pace. The smart students can do more advanced work and the students lagging behind can catch up easier,” says Ms HAU. “It also allows students to do their own research and communicate with people in other parts of the world”.

Ms LAU says, “Even though there is only one teacher in the classroom, we can meet every student’s needs through monitoring his/her performance on the computer platform that connects every child in the room.”



Students enjoy using the netbooks in class.

The netbook has encouraged students to study more at home. A survey conducted on the “School of the Future – Innovative Schools Program” found that, with the netbooks, students were more interested in studying English and their motivation to revise their work at home was higher. Ms LAU says, “We have put vocabulary read by native speakers in our netbooks so that students can listen to them at home. Parents can also revise with their children and learn together.”

Ms LAU says all the students are used to the computerised homework. “When the primary two to four students are working with their computers in the playground, the primary one students will look on with envy and hope that they could be promoted to primary two earlier and have their own computers.”

Learning phonics

For the primary one students, a phonics programme is adopted to help them with the English sounds. This fun phonics programme helps students overcome their fear of speaking English. They learn the pronunciation of the sounds and words through group activities and refer to the easy symbols to get their intonation right. Ms LAM says that for students to learn English well, the important thing is not to be afraid of speaking it.

Learning through drama

Ms HAU thinks that it takes more than listening to songs and reading books for students to develop language proficiency. She introduces drama to primary four and above. By writing the script and playing the roles, students develop writing and speaking skills.

She adds that teachers also play an important role in the drama activities. “If you want the students to play the role of a vase, you must first show them how to play the role of a similar object e.g. a chair. You have to understand your students and anticipate their difficulties.”

Conclusion

In this age when everything moves so fast, teachers must have flexible minds and innovative ideas to make learning and teaching effective. These three teachers are well-prepared and willing to take up the challenges ahead.



The students are practising drama before a show.



Teachers' Sharing

Students' involvement is very important in learning and teaching. It is our belief that diversified learning experiences can help our students develop their language competency and global competitiveness.

Our Vision

Students are the core in the framework of learning and teaching and hence we have adopted a student-centred approach in developing our school-based English language curriculum. Our English team thinks that “excellence” in English Language Education means creating an environment that can provide a language-rich context for students to learn English interactively, confidently, effectively, comprehensively and coherently. Students can then make use of what they have learnt and become independent language learners. Effective use of information and communication technology plays an important role in learning and teaching, too.

Our Curriculum

As the core members in the English Panel, we have planned and organised a series of language learning opportunities for students: from providing basic learning tools to creating a language-rich learning environment and planning interactive and meaningful learning activities. We aim at helping students learn English effectively in the six years of primary education. In the meantime, the teachers are always there for the students, taking the role of an organiser, facilitator and feedback provider.

Literacy programme in junior primary

Following the literacy programme we have adopted, we teach students the “speed sounds” as well as the techniques of blending sounds into words. Students, in pairs, practise the sounds and blending as well as encoding and decoding sounds and words. We are pleased to see that our lower primary students are more confident in spelling words said aloud to them and pronouncing unfamiliar words. The activities in this programme also develop students' reading and writing skills in a structured and effective way.



Ms LAM is teaching students the English sounds.

Innovative English E-curriculum

In their mid-primary, students are given more exposure to information and communication technologies. Our English E-curriculum aims at providing students with diversified learning experiences so as to enhance their language proficiency. The learning process allows students to complete the language tasks while developing different generic skills. Our curriculum places a lot of emphasis on promoting life-long learning and enhancing students' personal and intellectual development. With the E-curriculum, students are motivated. It was a vast transformation, moving from traditional learning methods to new and innovative learning contexts, but our students have adapted to the changes quickly.

Drama in education

We further enhance our upper primary students' English competency and generic skills through drama activities. In the drama lessons, students are always the key players whereas teachers are directors and facilitators. Role playing and speaking in front of the class have given students more confidence in speaking in English. It is our aim to develop our students as effective and independent learners in the 6-year primary education.

Our Thoughts

Having used the literacy programme for the past three years, teachers have an increased sense of satisfaction in seeing that students are able to read and write independently. Students find the innovative E-curriculum more interesting. They are more engaged in their own learning and are developing into independent learners. We are encouraged to see that our efforts have a positive outcome on students. This is what keeps us going.

Assessment Summary

Pioneers in implementing an E-curriculum and maximising the use of IT both in school and at home to enhance students' English language learning experiences.

These three awarded teachers are keen to pilot initiatives for English learning and teaching. They have imported a literacy programme from the UK for Primary 1 to 3 to learn phonic skills, launched an E-curriculum using the netbook, interactive SmartBoard and various IT tools to facilitate learning, and, this year, joined SCOLAR's project Drama in Education to let students experience English through drama activities. They have provided a variety of learning tools and a language-rich environment for students to learn English interactively and confidently.

The awarded teachers' enthusiasm in teaching was mirrored in the cheerful countenance of their students and their eager responses in class and in the interview with the Assessment Panel. The students told the Panel that they enjoyed their English lessons and liked using IT to learn English. It impressed the Panel that the Primary 3 students, on top of using the IT tools efficiently, used English naturally in group discussions, without the need for any prompting from the teacher.

The Panel members also appreciated the awarded teachers' efforts to promote independent learning at home. Besides providing students with IT tools for home learning, they give parents access to the teaching materials on the school server so that they know what their children are learning and can help them with their learning. The parents told the Panel that they noted their children's increased interest in learning English, especially with the computer, and expressed their appreciation for the teachers' good effort.

The awarded teachers have facilitated a culture of sharing among colleagues and the teaching community. They share their experiences of using IT for language learning through giving lesson demonstrations, attending overseas conferences, doing media interviews and uploading video clips of their lessons onto the school server for public reference.

The awarded teachers have demonstrated good practices in curriculum design, use of IT and development of extra-curricular activities for language learning. Their good team spirit, enthusiasm in teaching, contributions to the teaching community, and, most of all, their efforts in developing students' language proficiency and positive attitudes towards learning English deserve recognition.



What a fun way to pack for a trip! Thanks to the interactive smartboard.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Website: www.fkis.edu.hk

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Seminar, workshop, school visit, lesson sharing

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From left to right: Ms Sue NG, Ms Serena LAU, Mr Terence POON, Ms Phoebe PUA and Ms Lily NG

Make it fun to learn English

Recipients of the Certificate of Merit

Mr POON Tsz-kin, Terence (Years of teaching: 11 years)
 Ms Lily NG (Years of teaching: 10 years)
 Ms NG Suet-fong, Sue (Years of teaching: 22 years)
 Ms LAU Wai-ling, Serena (Years of teaching: 24 years)
 Ms PUA Ku-fong, Phoebe (Years of teaching: 9 years)

School

Sun Fong Chung Primary School

Teaching Levels

Primary 1 - 6
 (English Language)

Teaching Beliefs

“When we design our activities, we consider whether the activities are relevant, whether the students will enjoy them and whether they will be able to learn from them.”

Interview with the Teachers

The English teachers of Sun Fong Chung Primary School share the same goal: to provide students with enjoyable language learning experiences through interesting lessons and lots of fun activities in a language-rich environment.

Interesting activities to motivate learning

Students can wear pyjamas to school when they are reading a story about not being able to sleep, and spend the whole lesson lying on mats trying to fall asleep. Students like these activities very much because they feel that they are “living out” part of the story. The group leader, Mr POON, says, “When we design our activities, we consider whether the activities are relevant and whether the children will enjoy them and whether they will be able to learn from them.”

Mr POON thinks that the teachers have adopted a teaching style that emphasises “sharing” with the students instead of “feeding” them.

Ms Lily NG says, “I want students to know that learning English is fun and enjoy the learning process as much as possible. We do not stick to the textbooks but rather bring the textbooks and other learning materials to life.”

To arouse students’ interest and motivation to study English, the teachers involve the whole school. Starting from year 2000, every year, the students and English teachers dress up in costumes to “trick or treat” during Halloween. All other teachers participate and support this activity as well.



Students are enjoying the jelly they have made.

Ms Sue NG, who has served five schools before joining this team, says, “We think and plan things outside of the box regarding learning and teaching English. For example, we spend a whole day on Halloween while other schools may spend only a few lessons. The school becomes an English-speaking community on that day.”

Other meaningful English activities

In Primary 1, the teachers will make jelly with the students. This helps the students to remember the vocabulary in the recipe. They will also remember the experience of making the delicious jelly.

Ms LAU points out that the junior students like to move around. “I used dancing and singing to teach them pronunciation and help them remember new words. They enjoyed the lessons very much.”

To encourage students to protect animals from cruelty and raise funds for the animals in need, the teachers invited officers from Animals Asia Foundation to talk to the Primary 5 and 6 students, and brought their pets to school for photo-taking. The “One Dollar One Photo!” session was a hit with students.



Mr POON brought his dog to school for photo taking as part of a fundraising event.

Traditional ways of teaching

The school has also adopted some “traditional” teaching methods. Ms PUA especially likes reading to the students. “Many storybooks in the classroom are left untouched. They are interesting stories and make good reading. I read the stories with students in class. After listening to the stories, many students look for the books and read them on their own.”

Mr POON concludes: “It is all about motivation and exposure. If we do not provide students with exciting opportunities to learn English in the school, how can we expect them to like English and use it in the future? Therefore, we strive to give students memorable learning experiences and plentiful learning opportunities.”



Love is like “A lamp to our feet and a light for our path” (Psalm 119:105).

We believe that the vital element for effective language teaching is love. We also believe that learners construct their knowledge of the language through social interactions and settings beyond the classroom and that they are learning all the time. To help our students learn English well, we have tried our best to create a school environment conducive to English language learning.

Creating a language-rich environment

We have put in a lot of effort to set up an English environment with language-rich displays and students' work. In addition, our students know that they can approach their native English-speaking teacher and local English teachers during recess and talk with them.

Motivating students to learn

We arouse students' interest and encourage their participation by preparing relevant, meaningful and fun lessons and activities that are suitable for their levels. Before we plan our lessons and activities, we try our best to think of the most interesting and authentic ways to present what we want to teach so that we can bring out the learning items effectively. The results are always encouraging when we evaluate the effectiveness of the learning and teaching of the target items.

Providing ample opportunities for students to learn and use English

We are always on the lookout for authentic experiences that allow our students to learn and use English. Just to name a few, we have students making announcements over the PA system in English; we train students to introduce the school to visitors in English; and we have invited guest speakers from different organisations, e.g., firefighters at the Tai Wo fire station, officers from Animals Asia Foundation, to our school to talk to our students.

Developing a learning community

We, teachers, are learners, too. In the past few years, we have conducted different researches and have learnt more about:

The kinesthetic approach– The approach encourages students to move around. Students' movements are the best indicators that they understand the procedure and are actively participating. We are in favour of the approach because it caters to the needs of the weaker ones. Through observing others' reactions towards the teacher's instructions, they have more cues to follow. They also feel less embarrassed to ask their teacher or classmates for clarification.

Developing students' reading skills– We have focused more on our reading workshops. We hope to develop our students into independent readers. Students practise different reading skills in class through intensive reading and are encouraged to read extensively to consolidate the skills. Last but not least, we always make sure that students are having fun when they are learning English and when they are reading.

The numerous changes we have implemented in the English curriculum and the encouraging student outcomes have attracted the attention of our colleagues who teach the Chinese language. After observing our shared reading lessons, they were inspired to experiment with some of our strategies in teaching reading in the Chinese lessons. The saying, “Two heads are better than one” applies here. We believe that through collaboration and sharing, the chances of teaching effectively are significantly higher.



Ms PUA is teaching her class how to make a cake.

Assessment Summary

Enriched students' English language learning experiences through providing a language-rich environment and relating language learning to students' kinesthetic senses and life experiences.

These five teachers joined the profession because they love teaching. Based on second language acquisition theories and proven pedagogical practices, they have made good efforts to create a language-rich environment, motivate students to learn English and provide ample opportunities for students to build up their confidence in using English. They have nurtured a school of students who enjoy learning English and speak English with ease and confidence.

To create an English-speaking environment, the teachers laid down the rule of "English only" in the English lessons for all teachers and students. By teaching students the necessary phrases for communication and giving them continuous encouragement, they have helped students to overcome their shyness and speak in English.

The teachers have renovated the reading curriculum and prepared relevant, meaningful and fun lessons and activities to enhance students' learning experiences and personal development. For example, in relation to the reader *Miss Daisy is Crazy*, they organised lessons for students to learn to play rugby. Students listened to instructions given in English and talked in English with their team-mates about strategies to win the game. Students enjoyed themselves and the lessons became one of their most memorable learning experiences.

The teachers have also provided a lot of opportunities for students to learn and use English outside the classroom. Besides excursions to the supermarket and McDonald's, there are the annual trip to the Peak to interview tourists and the Halloween celebration which requires students to use what they have learnt in the English lessons to get candies from their teachers and play games. There are also inter-class competitions with the winning classes being treated to lunch buffet or English movies in the cinema.

The Assessment Panel appreciated the efforts the teachers made to relate learning to students' kinesthetic senses and their life experiences. Their enthusiasm about teaching and the impressive performance of their students have inspired their Chinese language colleagues to experiment with shared reading in the Chinese lessons. The teachers have facilitated a learning community in the school.



"Trick or treat?" the students are asking their teacher, Ms NG.

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

Website: www.sfc.edu.hk/am/

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshops and seminars

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