



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

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Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshops and classroom observation

Contact

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