



### Interview with the Teacher



The teacher  
presented with the  
Award for Teaching  
Excellence

Mr LAM Chi-bun  
School  
Ying Wa College



▲ Mr LAM Chi-bun

## Empowering Learners: Innovative Practices and Self-Directed Learning in English Language Education

A proud alumnus of Ying Wa College, Mr Lam Chi-bun views his teaching role as akin to “helping his younger brothers.” His strong bond with the students is palpable, as evidenced by a spontaneous, warm greeting from a student in the corridor before the interview.

Mr Lam fosters an open-door policy, inviting his “younger brothers” to communicate with him after class, sometimes even during the holidays, through various means. This allows him to gain insights into his students’ diverse and evolving needs and abilities, and also, tailor learning and teaching materials that spark their interest in learning English. “I enquire about the resources they’d prefer to use in class,” he said.



▲ Learning continues beyond the classroom

### True calling

Upon earning his university degree, Mr Lam embarked on a year-long exploration of diverse career paths, including banking and publishing. However, he discovered his true calling in the realm of education. “The role of a substitute teacher brought me unparalleled satisfaction. It offered me a canvas to unleash my creativity,” he recalled.

In his interactions with students, Mr Lam aims to cultivate a positive atmosphere. He reassures students that mistakes are not to be feared but embraced as part of the language learning journey. His written feedback often includes adorable stickers and hand-drawn smiley faces, serving as visual commendations for their efforts. “I also pose questions and offer words of encouragement. I often say, ‘keep it up, I’m looking forward to seeing more progress next time,’” he added.

### The pursuit of innovation

Mr Lam, a passionate gamer and computer science



enthusiast, has pioneered student-centred teaching approaches that blend e-learning tools. “Video games are rich in storytelling text, providing an immersive learning opportunity,” he explained. Mr Lam prides himself on his unique approach to teaching English, seamlessly blending innovation with traditional practices. “In the dynamic interplay of fresh ideas and time-honoured practices, my empathetic nature and relentless pursuit of innovation anchor my identity in the educational landscape,” he said.

Despite initial doubts from some students questioning ‘is he really teaching English?’, Mr Lam persisted. He supplemented his materials with booklets for students to read, do exercise, and understand how embedded instructions could be applied across different subjects. “I assigned games for them to follow the instructions. This method has encouraged them to read the text carefully for a thorough understanding. It’s a symbiotic relationship: students’ desire to understand other topics and current global events motivates them to apply their English skills, naturally becoming active learners,” he added.

The adoption of multi-modal learning resonates with Mr Lam’s students, creating a dynamic classroom atmosphere and maximising student engagement. A journal entry from a former student encapsulates Mr Lam’s approach: ‘I was taken aback to see a teacher so adept at stepping into our shoes, transforming the conventional English classroom into a vibrant linguistic playground.’ “This experience left such a profound impact on the student that he went on to study English at university,” Mr Lam said.

### From doubt to trust

Not only is Mr Lam a dedicated educator, but as the Chairperson of the school’s English Panel, he’s also a driving force behind the department’s ongoing improvement. He’s been instrumental in introducing innovative methods to the department. One such method is the ‘Field-Tenor-Mode’ (FTM) framework. Initially, Mr Lam faced some resistance in persuading his colleagues to embrace this new framework. Despite the challenges, he remained steadfast, fuelled by his



▲► Mr Lam has pioneered innovative and student-centred resources for English language learning

strong belief in the framework’s potential. In his own classroom, Mr Lam led by example, implemented the FTM framework first to demonstrate its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. “The FTM framework has been particularly successful in helping students, especially boys, to learn a language more effectively. It has significantly improved their fluency,” Mr Lam noted. Mr Lam’s dedication to pedagogical innovation has led him to create additional resources for his fellow teachers, initiate dialogues to address their questions, and incorporate their feedback to optimise results. “Eventually, I earned their trust,” he said.

Mr Lam cherishes the culture of knowledge sharing among the faculty at Ying Wa College. “It creates a synergistic effect. I share fresh ideas with the panel and bring new insights gained from my interactions with fellow teachers to my mentees (new teachers), seeking their input and suggestions,” Mr Lam shared. “This cross-generational dialogue keeps us abreast of the latest teaching trends,” he added.



▲ Keeping abreast of new opportunities to maximise students’ learning potentials with his team



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English Language Education - Award for Teaching Excellence

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### Teaching philosophy:

In an ever-changing world, I believe that with curiosity and self-learning competence, students will rise to the occasion. I adopt innovative and learner-centred approaches to inspire, motivate and empower students to become active and lifelong learners of English.



## Teacher's Sharing

My teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that education should be a dynamic and empowering experience that equips students with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world. Central to this philosophy are three pivotal areas that define my approach to education: promoting self-directed learning, implementing meaningful assessments, and harnessing the power of emerging technologies.

### Empowering students to take charge of their learning

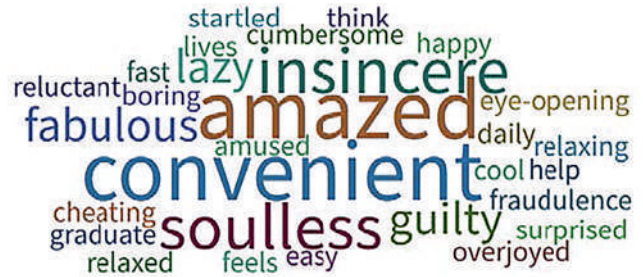
One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching is witnessing students take control of their own learning. Encouraging student autonomy is crucial because it helps them develop the confidence and skills needed to become lifelong learners. When students are given the tools and freedom to explore subjects on their own, they are more likely to stay curious and motivated, long after they leave the classroom.

To support self-directed learning, I utilise digital platforms to share study materials. These tools allow students to access resources whenever they need them, giving them the flexibility to learn at their own pace. A notable example is our thematic units on Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI). In class, we engage in lively discussions and collaborative activities that allow students to apply and expand upon what they have learned. This method promotes critical thinking and creativity, as students become the co-creators of lesson content about complex topics and their learning experience.



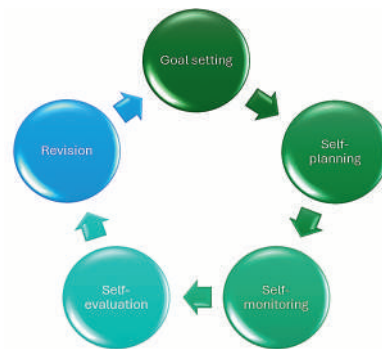
▲ Students engage in collaborative sharing of ideas via online platforms

Use one word to describe how you feel when composing your thank you letter with the assistance of the generative-AI program.



▲ Students' collaborative work from the AI-related module

Additionally, I have developed a comprehensive self-directed English Language Study Plan that guides students through the self-directed learning cycle of goal setting, self-planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and revision. This approach boosts their self-learning competence by providing a structured framework to follow. By actively participating in self-directed learning, students consistently demonstrate higher levels of understanding and retention of knowledge.



▲ The self-directed learning cycle

### Assessments that teach

I believe that assessments should be opportunities for deep learning and growth, rather than mere tools for grading. This belief has led me to adopt learning-oriented assessments, which focus on the learning process rather than just the final grade. These assessments are designed to help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, thereby fostering a continuous learning mindset.

To implement learning-oriented assessments effectively, I have restructured our writing curriculum to include three key stages: Pre-writing, While-writing, and Post-writing. Each stage is carefully designed to guide students through the learning process:

#### Pre-writing:

At this stage, students receive handouts that outline specific learning goals related to content, language, and organisation. This provides them with a clear roadmap and sets the stage for focused learning.



To further enrich our Pre-writing stage, I introduced the Field-Tenor-Mode (FTM) framework. This framework provides a new lens for writing - helping students analyse texts by considering three key aspects:

**Field** (What): The subject matter or topic of the text.

**Tenor** (Who): The relationship between the people involved in the communication, such as the writer and reader or speaker and listener.

**Mode** (How): The form of communication, whether it's written or spoken, formal or informal.

The FTM framework provides a structured approach to text analysis and production, enabling students to better understand and create complex texts.

**While-writing:**

During this stage, students draft their work and participate in self- and peer-evaluation. They use evaluation forms to assess their own and their peers' work based on the designated learning goals. This encourages them to reflect critically on their writing and make necessary improvements.

**Post-writing:**

In the final stage, students review the feedback they have received and make revisions to their work. This iterative process helps them internalise the lessons learned and apply them to future assignments.

One of the most rewarding aspects of adopting learning-oriented assessments is seeing the tangible improvements in my students' work. For example, during a project on writing feature articles, students were initially hesitant and unsure of their abilities. However, as they progressed through the stages, their confidence grew, and the quality of their writing improved significantly. By the end of the project, many students produced articles that were not only well-written but also deeply insightful.

**Harnessing emerging technologies for enhanced English language learning**

Last year, I designed tasks where students used AI-generated content as a starting point. For instance, students would generate text using AI and then collaboratively analyse its quality, coherence, and relevance. This process allowed them to discern the strengths and limitations of AI, such as its ability to produce fluent text quickly but often lacking depth and contextual accuracy. By engaging in these activities, they understood that while AI can be a powerful assistant, it should

not replace their own analytical and creative abilities. Emphasising academic integrity, I facilitated discussions on the ethical implications of relying on AI for assignments, reinforcing the importance of diligence and original thinking.

	Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player 4			
Strength	54	Stm	46	Stm	87	Stm	111
Agility	66	Agil	51	Agil	109	Agil	90
Teamwork	103	Team	58	Team	145	Team	36
Courtesy	35	Cour	4	Cour	146	Cour	66
Sensitivity	44	Sensl	133	Sensl	112	Sensl	62
Patience	114	Pat	103	Pat	62	Pat	41
Intelligence	36	Int	58	Int	6	Int	34
Artistry	62	Art	148	Art	66	Art	36
Morality	8	Mor	133	Mor	128	Mor	146
Sin	2	Sin	1	Sin	2	Sin	4
Melee Attack	26	Melee A	2	Melee A	56	Melee A	0
Melee Defence	6	Melee D	59	Melee D	25	Melee D	21
Magical Attack	2	Mag A	23	Mag A	6	Mag A	56
Magical Defence	8	Mag D	84	Mag D	4	Mag D	23
Gold	241	Gold	44	Gold	782	Gold	26
Trophies	2	Trophies	1	Trophies	4	Trophies	1



▲ Mr Lam captivating his students with the 'Life Simulation Game'

In addition to generative AI, I have also explored the use of Excel games with VBA programming to make learning more enjoyable and interactive. These customised games are designed to reinforce key language concepts while keeping students engaged. The implementation of Excel VBA has transformed my teaching practice by providing a platform to introduce game-like elements that captivate students' attention.

The integration of e-learning and AI tools not only enhances academic performance but also prepares students for the digital world they will encounter in their future careers. By familiarising them with these technologies, we equip them with the skills and confidence to navigate an increasingly digital landscape.

**Continuously evolving as an educator**

My journey in teaching has been marked by continuous professional development, driven by a deep commitment to excellence and innovation. One of my key goals moving forward is to expand my involvement in professional exchanges. Engaging with fellow educators through workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects allows me to share best practices and learn from the experiences of others. Another future goal includes leading initiatives to integrate AI tools more deeply into the curriculum, using them to provide personalised learning experiences, enhance student engagement and prepare my students to excel in the rapidly changing world.



## Assessment Summary

### Student-oriented approaches:

### To boost student engagement and maximise learning potential

The awardee is a dedicated and passionate teacher who manifests a pioneering spirit to venture beyond traditional language pedagogies and embraces the integration of emerging technologies into English Language Education to develop students' language skills. He has consistently demonstrated excellence in planning, implementing and evaluating a balanced, diversified, flexible and student-centred school-based curriculum with integration of the Seven Learning Goals, values education, academic goals, and information literacy. Also, he leverages his instructional expertise to create engaging, student-centred lessons that promote active learning and real-world application of language skills.

The teacher's strategic contributions successfully cater for students' diverse learning needs, boost their engagement as well as maximise their learning potential. The Self-Directed English Language Study Plan is one of his contributions which highly motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning journey. It aims to enhance students' self-learning competence by guiding them through the hands-on implementation of the self-directed learning cycle. During the process, students are engaged in activities that guide them to review their strengths and weaknesses in learning English. The teacher has also participated in the implementation of the learning-oriented assessments in marking writing assignments to address the needs of the students. The assessments include standardised procedures as well as the adoption of the Field-Tenor-Mode (FTM) framework to help students visualise the context and stylistic requirements covered within the forms and across the vertical continuum.

In the lesson observed, the teacher maximised student learning time in the classroom by engaging them in activities which fully addressed their abilities, needs and interests. With the collaboration of innovative e-learning tools, together with effective instructional scaffolding, students became active learners of English. The teacher demonstrated excellent technological pedagogical content knowledge and his questioning techniques were effective in stretching the students' language ability and fostering their higher-order thinking skills.



▲ Mr Lam's student-centric approaches motivate students to become self-directed and active learners of English

Being an alumnus of the school, the teacher serves as an exemplary role model and a mentor for his students. Also, he has been embracing the opportunities to contribute to the professional development of other members of the school as well as to the community. He has actively created opportunities to facilitate professional exchanges with panel members, to host open classes and to share his good practices at professional development workshops. The teacher also serves as a mentor in the teaching practicum programmes and the speaker of the information sessions of tertiary institutions.

#### Ways to Obtain Information on the Teaching Practice



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