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MY TEACHING STORY

Academic Year 2018-19 (First Issue)



教與學發展中心
CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

香港恒生大學
THE HANG SENG UNIVERSITY
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Message from Director of Centre for Teaching and Learning

Teaching is always an enjoyable experience for me!

Pursuing excellence in teaching is always my goal!

Student Learning is always my major concern!

I am NOT ALONE!

I am very happy to work with a group of devoted colleagues at HSUHK. They are always pursuing excellence in their teaching. They are willing to spend time mentoring students to develop their potential that may lead to success in learning and future career. This year, the Centre for Teaching and Learning is launching the first issue of “My Teaching Story”. It will be a series of stories to record the teaching journey of our outstanding teachers at HSUHK. In the first issue, I have invited three Teaching Excellence Awards Recipients (2017/18), Dr. Holly Chung, Mr. Brian So and Dr. Felix Tang, to share their stories with us.

I hope you find inspiration in their stories!

Enjoy reading!

Ben Cheng

Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning



A Magician of Prepositions

by *Dr. Holly Chung*

Dear Readers,

My Teaching Story

Um... “My Teaching Story”.. What has sprung to my mind, instead, was “Oh my! Teaching story?”

I wish I could have had some edifying stories to share, or given you a light-bulb moment. I really wish...

But truly, we are our very own magician. We can wave the very same magic wand. We can weave the very same magic spell. But some magicians can pull a rabbit out of the hat, while some fall flat.

What about my magic, you may ask? Well, as a proud member of the English Language Teaching (ELT) at the Department of English, let me cast my spells, with a few prepositions.

Chapter 1: Teach, or more precisely, Be Taught **BY** students...

Back in the day at Hang Seng School of Commerce (HSSC) where my story set sail, the Form-six and Form-seven secondary students were crazy, literally, and I mean it in the most flattering way. They were





crazily driven, and insanely pushy. I felt like I was being taught BY them on a daily basis (and yes, at that time we saw each other every single day).

Once the first few words they uttered is “Why can’t I use...”, I started to sweat (mostly all over my back; I needed to pretend, on the surface, to be super calm, confident, and collected, since these kids could smell fear, from miles away...).

I remember one time the “Why can’t I use...” question was continued with “... ‘afraid to’ instead of ‘afraid of?’”. Before my index finger landed onto the “-ing” verb form to explain why the answer is “of”, my student already stopped me, “I know we need to use the -ing verb form after ‘of’ and a bare infinitive after ‘to’. But I want to know is the differences in their usages...”



I wish you could NOT find me...



Oh boy... this question really caught me off guard at that time. It also made me seriously reflect on how unreasonably caught up I was with merely grammatical technicalities, which might not keep some students' hunger pangs at bay. Sometimes, or most of the time, the students are not trying to look like the cat that ate the canary by firing questions at us. There should be way more than "after most prepositions we should use -ing verb forms but be careful with the preposition 'to'" this kind of technical explanation.

There is, and there should be, way more our students need to, and want to know: the rationale behind.

So here comes my first "preposition" magic spell: To be taught BY students themselves. I'm not saying that they are going to impact some profoundly eye-opening wisdom (well, some students might, haha). My definition of being taught BY students is: to be taught BY their curiosity about anything or nothing; to be taught BY their thirst for anything, and everything.

We don't simply teach them what WE know, or what we want THEM to know. We teach them what THEY want to know.

Chapter 2: Teach **BEFORE** students; Teach **AFTER** students

As my teaching story unfolded, it's the Hang Seng Management College (HSMC) where a new chapter began. The same workplace, but everything started anew: new students and new KINDS of students, new modules, and new leadership. It shall then need some new magic spells, my second and also my third "preposition" spells: Teach BEFORE students, and teach AFTER students.



To teach BEFORE students simply means a busload of preparation. An old chestnut, yes it is. But it is still one delicious chestnut with a mouth of truth to chew. In academia, it's to "publish or perish". If just "teaching" alone, it's to "prepare-or-pass-out".

Let's walk into a classroom armed cap-a-pie. That doesn't mean we're treating our students as the hostile foes. On the contrary, we're equipping ourselves as if facing our best possible opponents. We up our ammo and become a good player ourselves. Naturally our students will know that they are being well-respected as a good player themselves. At the end, no matter what, they will give you a "GG" (Good Game).

To play a good game, no matter how many times we are teaching the same module every semester, or even the same topic umpteen times within a week, it is always healthy to do a full-dress rehearsal in our mind, from head to toe, even just for a quick minute, the minute before you walk into a classroom.

The "pre-" in "PREpare" shall also involve a regular update, an update of not only our teaching material but also our antidotes or your (I intentionally switched to "your" since I myself don't have any) jokes! Just like now it's not "our College" anymore, but "our University" (Yeah!). Very soon, I'm afraid, it would be ancient history to ask our students to go "watch TV" or "read newspapers" but it's all about "going online" and "checking out the FB or IG status".

To teach AFTER students then means ANOTHER truckload of follow-up work after class.

All these years I've been asked some really fun (and some funny) questions that I myself had never ever thought of questioning:



- Why use 'keep an eye on' to mean 'to watch or monitor closely'? Don't you think 'keep BOTH eyeS on' can serve a better purpose??
- Why does 'a Dear John letter' mean a break-up note? Can I change it into "a Dear Peter letter" if my boyfriend is not John?
- Why does the idiom go as 'busy as a bee'? I don't find a bee being super busy...

No, I may not have THE answer. Or to some questions, I may never have AN answer. But never say "never", right? The "never" is now turned into "later": "Let me get back to you later!". No, we teachers do NOT know everything (and those who do, well, they lie!) In this day and age, everything is Google-able and we teachers should Google too! But of course, we Google in an intellectual and intelligent way. And that's why we teachers should make ourselves irreplaceable, as in a facilitator, a filter, and a fine-tuner.



Dr Muk-yan Wong, my partner in crime, also the hopelessly romantic poet and philosopher of the initiative "Between the Lines".



We **facilitate** our students' own discovery by asking them to do their own dig-up, tons of it.

Then students come home with tons of (or very often, too much) information, some real, some fake. Then we help them **filter**.

Then students come back and cook their own dish. No matter what, let's not fix it. It's our students' work, hard or soft, and it's still their heart and soul. We **fine-tune** it. The least or the most we teachers shall do is to garnish it, with a few drops of lemon juices, or even some ground black truffles. For better or for worse, we, together with our students, should still take pride in their own signature dish.

Chapter 3: Teach **FOR** students; Teach **WITH** students

Still the same block, my office is in. Yet, it's already the third staff card I've been given. Now, proudly present to all of us: the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, HSUHK. Here another new chapter has another new "preposition" magic spell written all over it: Tech FOR students.

Since the era of HSMC, I've started to notice something in our students: they are GOOD. In some way, they are even BETTER than many. But it's just that they have not been told enough, or sadly, at all, in their life. Their shoulders have long been burdened with lots of "Try harder next time" on their left, and some more "Redo" on their right. Some may be haunted by inferiority complex, or even identity crisis.

If our students don't KNOW how good they are, we make THEM know.



If our students don't THINK they are good enough, we make them GOOD enough.

That's why in the past couple of years, I've started to bring the "good" to them, and FOR them, to make THEM good, and to make them FEEL good.

I brought in TEDxHSMC in May 2018. It was a heck of work. But it's all worth it. I was not walking by myself. Our Department of English comrades were and still are walking hand in hand with me,



Our TEDxHSMC family (18 May 2018)

together with our troop of student volunteers. I vividly remember that at the end of our previous TEDx, I was standing in front of all volunteers, saluting. I couldn't hold it any longer. My long-sealed water-gate finally broke and I rained teardrops. All happy tears. All grateful drops. I remember I said, "I brought TEDx to our campus out of one and only one reason: I wanted you all, our students, to know that we, HSMC, could pull off an internationally-branded event, just as good as many other local and even overseas universities."



Actually I wanted to say: “...even BETTER than...”.

And that shall lead to my last “preposition” magic spell: Teach **WITH** students.

Nowadays, we teachers may no longer be always “up there” for students to worship. But that doesn’t mean that we need to drag ourselves down. We just need to teach and walk WITH our students: create knowledge together, make mistakes together and grow wisdom together. I didn’t tend to do much WITH my students, honestly; that’s one of my many, many weaknesses. Perhaps I’ve got the “English-language teacher” written all over my face, or even deep in my bone and that may seem to be repelling more than appealing. Some students (and I’m not kidding) tried to turn their head, or even their whole self, away from me, even upon distance. Well, that’s only natural. I bet what’s going through their mind would be like “Oh, here comes that crazy woman who’s gonna speak English to me and make ME speak...”.

Oh yeah, I AM, and still will be, that crazy woman. But these days I have really tried to tone down my craziness (just a tiny little bit, though) and endeavoured to be more WITH the students: flying the Institute of Youth Sustainability Leadership (IYSL) flag, singing the praise of service learning, wining and dining students with the fellowship at our



*Pleasure to help paint the town, well,
'white', as in CHALK-white.*



Residential College, and celebrating the Chinese culture through the Sin Wai Kin “Root for You” programme.

Coming up, the HSUHK’s Toastmasters Club shall arrive. It’s more than making a toast.



And here we go again: in May 2019.

If you’re ready to rock the world **FOR** our students, and **WITH** our students, come join me.

Everything we do, we do it **FOR** our students. Along the way, we do it **WITH** our students.

As long as the intention is THAT pure, anything, I mean ANYTHING can happen.

Everything happens for a reason.

Find your reason. Make it happen.

Love,

Holly



Does education really matter to make a good journalist?

by Mr. Brian So

It is my great honour to share my teaching story with you as one of the recipients of Teaching Excellence Award of the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, our long-awaited name in recognition of our contribution by our society. When I joined this school six years ago, as a part-time lecturer initially, I didn't imagine that the school could develop at such a fast pace. We achieved the "goal for U" finally!



How is this amazing transformative experience of our school relevant to my teaching? I think it reminds me an important lesson - never underestimate the potential of my students and also encourage my students never to underestimate themselves. Many graduates of our Bachelor of Journalism and Communication (BJC) programme have become professional financial journalists in various media organizations in the past few years. When I occasionally watch the TV programs hosted by them or the videos on the Facebook and Instagram showing them reporting different kinds of news confidently in front of the camera, I am really proud of their accomplishments.

Honestly, I remember that many of these graduates were quite reluctant to study "finance" and "business" news when they were



students. With the fast-changing macroeconomic environment and high expectation from practitioners in the financial journalism industry, I was always tempted to “pour” all the professional financial knowledge into their brains as efficient as possible with limited time every semester. However, I always remind myself this won’t work. The students’ fear of the subject will greatly hinder their learning process. Therefore, developing their interest in the subject is always my top priority in teaching. I tried my best to share more interesting and influential work done by professional financial journalists with them. To better engage the “i-Generation”, I often introduce new mobile apps and Facebook pages related to business journalism in the course so that student can learn how to increase their literacy in business journalism with the help of smart devices, their closest companion nowadays. To further increase the use of e-learning tools, I also introduced a stock market game into the module. With the help of Google Finance and Google Sheet, students in group were required to choose 2-4 blue chip stocks in Hong Kong to invest each round and then give presentation to analyze the performance of those stocks in the classroom. Fortunately, many





students enjoyed to study in business journalism more and they are more willing to learn more about the financial world themselves.

My above sharing may give you a wrong impression that I have solved all the teaching and learning problems after introducing e-learning tools and put the interest of students as my top priority etc. Absolutely not. Far from that. I hate to admit that the learning atmosphere could fluctuate from class to class and from time to time. The same stock market game that has inspired many students could suddenly have no magic effect on other students. No matter how much effort I have put in, it seems that the presence of boring and inattentive faces in the classroom is unavoidable. Examination paper marking could also be a very frustrating experience, especially when you found that some students made the same mistake that you repeatedly reminded them to avoid during the lecture. The unexpected outcome may make you sometimes even doubt the meaning and effectiveness of education.





Joseph J. Pulitzer, whose name is well-known because of the Pulitzer Prize, the most prestigious journalistic prize awarded yearly for the outstanding journalists in the United State, was challenged by other people a series of similar questions when he wanted to set up the first journalism school in the world a century ago: Does education really matter to make a good journalist? Is a great reporter or editor supposed to be born, not made? In his book titled as “The school of Journalism in Columbia University”, first published in 1904, Pulitzer gave a comprehensive explanation for the necessary of setting up university-level journalism school. The first objection he wanted to encounter is the belief that good journalist is inborn. Many critics argued that “a 'newspaper man' must depend solely upon natural aptitude” (P.2). However, “Pulitzer believed that “all intelligence requires development. The highest profits by it; the lowest is helpless without it” (P.3). He used Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet* as an example. This influential play was not the first play written by Shakespeare. It was indeed his nineteenth play, “written after the hard work, the experience, the exercise of faculties and the accumulation of knowledge gained by writing eighteen plays” (P.3).

Napoleon, considered one of the greatest military leaders in history, is another example given by Pulitzer. In the same essay, Pulitzer asked, “can we think of Napoleon without remembering that he had the best military education of his time at the college of Brienne, and that he was always an eager student of the great campaigns of history?” (P.5). Pulitzer interestingly described that every issue of a newspaper is like a battle-” a battle for excellence”. Therefore, he concluded that great qualities of a good journalist need development, not depending on natural aptitude only.



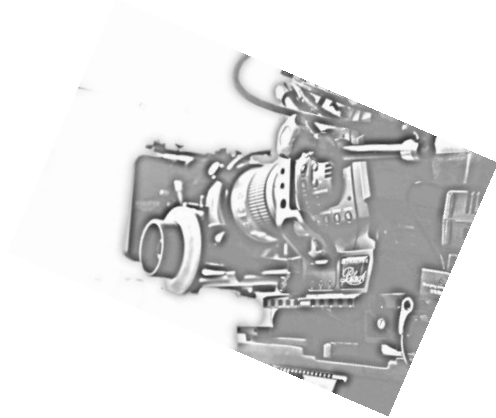
Pulitzer’s essay is a good reminder for me that education still matters. I am deeply moved by his quote “The highest profits by it; the lowest is helpless without it”. The robust growth of journalism schools around the world in the past century is an obvious proof for his belief on journalism education.

Forgive me for seemingly not being able to share a lot of teaching “tips” and “tricks” in this article, as I am still a young and novice scholar having not too much experience to talk about sophisticated teaching and learning theories. To sum up, I would like to share with you a beautiful quote from Parker J.Palmer, a well-known experienced educator in the US, another role-model in education: “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the



teacher” (P.10 from his book, “The Courage to Teach”). That is why I would like to use this article to encourage my fellows in the education journey to keep your faith in education, rather than discuss specific lecturing techniques with you. I hope every teacher can help students to find their identities, while the teachers can also find theirs at the same time.

Binn





Reference and my recommended books:

Palmer, P. J. (2017). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. John Wiley & Sons.

Pulitzer, J. (1904). *The school of journalism in columbia university: The power of public opinion*. Columbia University.

Not another just-so story 😊

by Dr. Felix Tang

It is my great honor to be one of the three recipients of this year's Teaching Excellence Awards. I was invited to share my teaching philosophy. As HSUHK is full of excellent teachers, it would be too shameless really for me to talk about my teaching excellence. Rather, I would like to share a story, or some disorganized thoughts that came to my mind when I was reflecting on my humble achievement.

Teaching as a Dream

My teaching philosophy is “student-centric, life-long motivation with a genuine heart”. I first embraced this teaching philosophy from my parents.





My father was a secondary school art teacher and my mother was a primary school Chinese teacher for over thirty years. They are hard-working people who devote 101% effort into their teaching. Their teaching preparation often extended into the small hours of the day. The most satisfying reward, as my mother told me, is to see the positive change and growth in students and to witness how they become adults who bring real contribution to society. This noble goal brought her an award from the Secretary for Education of the Hong Kong Education Bureau.

My parents were very well-liked by their students; they had students celebrate their birthdays even years after the students have graduated. I take true admiration and respect towards their teaching profession; it makes me realize that teacher is one of the coolest jobs in the world—besides astronauts, bounty hunters, game designers, painters, story tellers, and water slide testers. You see, money was never the goal (Errrr, maybe except for bounty hunters). It was all about “fun” and “meaningful”.



For me, the “meaningful” part has taken root in me too. When I was in secondary school, I often thought and wondered about life—the meaning of life—and how I should live my life. My parents had given me



a special Chinese name— “Tzu-lung” symbolising "wishing our son to be a great person". I thought, as one of my parents taught in a primary school and the other taught in a secondary school, if I could teach in a university (at that time I had no idea what a university was), my parents would surely be proud of me.

Teaching as a Career Choice

I had taken a Career and Personal Plan course and some psychometric tests and found out that university professor is a career that would fit my personality. That brought me to add in ‘university professor’ to my list of aspired jobs alongside with game designer, hacker, human resource manager, and professor.

Like most people, undergraduate years were the best years of life, especially if your parents were not living with you. It was endless drinking, partying, gaming, socializing, travelling, courting, and oh yes, studying, if necessary. Following my interest and passion to stay and work in a university, I set out with the determination to become a university professor. Once this was set, the rest was very straightforward (an MBA and then a PhD). But well, the process was not very sexy so I’ll skip it so that you will keep on reading. I joined the HUSHK after I have received my PhD (it was still HSSC when I joined nearly ten years ago). Apart from offering me a balanced workload between research and teaching, it was a unique experience to participate in building a university from scratch (rather consistent with philosophy to seek fun).

I am very lucky to have entered the Business Studies Department, which was later renamed into Marketing and Management, and then



into the Department of Marketing. I am blessed with great teachers here, such as Eric Chee, Miranda Chow, HF Lau, Haksin Chan and other colleagues who have been very supportive. They are always willing to share their teaching philosophies and techniques with me. Eric always say that education is a job where we use our lives to impact the other’s lives. Miranda showed me how to take care of students from different perspectives. Professor Lau taught me the importance of great teaching. Haksin taught me what “interesting” is all about, from an academic perspective. With their help, I picked up the teaching duties smoothly and at a comfortable pace. While students at HSU may not be the smartest and the most proactive ones in learning, they have great creativity and productivity upon enough motivation.





Teaching with an ABC Style

I vow to help my students to learn, at all costs, by all means, and whatever it takes. As a Marketing teacher in the School of Business, I need to walk our talk. As a businessman, I understand every product (i.e., everyone) must have its unique selling points; as a marketer, I understand every brand (i.e., everyone) must have its own positioning. How should I position myself? Fortunately, I have met many excellent teachers in my life. They had significant impacts on developing my philosophy of good teaching and learning approach as well as shaping my style of teaching. Trying to adopt a good teaching practice is the most genuine form of giving them salute in my growth as a competent teacher. I am fascinated to strive for better teaching skills throughout the years. I always try to experiment new teaching skills with actual practices. My teaching style can be summarized as ABC:

1) *Authoritative*

My first marketing professor, Gary Mauser, was a “hunter” and a “killer” (from the GPA perspective), but I loved his lectures (stories to be specific). He was a story teller of products and brands, where marketers are featured as heroes who always intelligently satisfy the world’s most pressing needs (from building a space shuttle with broken tin cans to selling rocks to people as pets) and earned some serious money in return to feed the family.

He was very caring to his students. Despite that he was very tough on the grades, we all like him. I think HSU students respond in a very similar way. I conducted a small experiment in 2015. I positioned myself as a “killer” professor in two classes and positioned myself as a caring



professor in the other two classes in the first six weeks of class. I found students in the “killer” condition performed better in the mid-term exam than in those in the “caring” condition. Furthermore, “free-rider” became a lesser problem. Some students later told me that they were scared of me at the beginning, but they liked me more after they discovered that I was actually approachable when they needed my help. I guess the teaching style of more authoritative (as least for the first half of the semesters) worked well for me.





2) *Boundaryless*

I was in Grade 7 when I immigrated to Canada. I remembered I was required to do a group project with a 15-minute presentation on the Canadian history in a social study class. In Hong Kong we were usually given more specific details on how to handle the assignment, so I asked my teacher if there were some guidelines for us to follow. “Is there a written report? If so, what is the word limit?” I asked. “It is up to you to have a report or not, but there should be a 15-minute presentation to share something with the class on the Canadian history.” “What exactly is the something to share?” I was puzzled, as there was no topic, except “Canadian history”. “Anything about Canada in the past, any story, any event, it is all up to your group to decide”. While I was amazed at the unlimited possibilities and uncertainties, she added, “there is no fixed format. You can share a story via drama; you can teach the class to sing a song or to dance, or you can bring some art work relating to the Canadian history.” What? Sing and dance? In class? As an assignment? I was totally blown away by her answers.

That year, I learnt a lot on how knowledge can be demonstrated beyond oral and written reports. It was a fun and rewarding year to me. I am always aware of bringing this boundless experience to my students at HSU, whenever possible. I encourage them to propose innovative ways to demonstrate their understanding of the teaching content. Perhaps students have no idea of the notion of “pick any topic” and “submit your work in any form” to demonstrate their understanding. However, I will provide a few basic guidelines when students have no clue about what is expected from them. Meanwhile, I motivate them to deliver the deliverables in a way that is beyond my expectation.



Therefore, it is not uncommon to hear music and/or to see a mini-drama in the presentation during my marketing class. 😊

3) Cool

Being cool is important as I still remember a few not-so-cool professors from my undergraduate years: there was a HR professor who read the PowerPoints words by words for three hours! Oh gosh, yes, three hours. How can you enjoy that class when everything is plain and boring? That's the importance of being an effective teacher. After taking that class, "HR Manager" was out of my consideration in my list of career options. I also remember some cool teachers I have met in the undergraduate years, such as my Chemistry professor. You probably expect a Chemistry class to be boring, well, I did, but it turned out to be an amazing class where the Chemistry professor did one thing I like:





crazy experiments. In one class, after he asked us what color fire is, he turned off the light and literally set the lectern on fire! Yes, on fire, and a rainbow of colored flame; that's interesting, right? He put it out, and he explained the chemistry theory behind. The red color is from lithium salt (think lithium battery), the yellow color is from table salt, blue is from rubbing alcohol, for example. You can get all these chemicals from a supermarket. If he only showed us a table of these chemicals, I bet no one would have read it until before the exam and they would probably forget it immediately afterwards. But I still remember them until today. How can you forget these impressive lectures?

Last but not least, it is my great honor to be a recipient of this year's teaching excellence award. I learn a lot from my colleagues at HSUHK, especially those in the Department of Marketing and in the School of Business. I would like to thank all of them with my most sincere gratitude.

Felix Tang







Centre for Teaching and Learning

Room H002, Old Hall, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

General Enquiry

Email: ctl@hsu.edu.hk ! Telephone: 3963 5073