



***Adopting an
'Outcomes-Based' Approach
to Teaching & Learning***

- Prof Tony Liu HUNG

QAC'S approach to audit

- The main objective of QAC quality audits is to **assure the quality of student learning** in UGC-funded institutions. The audits are intended to assure the UGC and the public that institutions **deliver on the promises** they make in their role and mission statements...
- The audit examines whether the institution has **procedures** in place appropriate for its stated purposes, whether it **pursues activities** and **applies resources** to achieve those purposes, and whether there is **verifiable evidence** to show that the **purposes are being achieved**.

[*QAC Audit Manual*, 3.1]

UGC & ‘Outcomes-Based Education’ – what’s the connection?

- “The audit process is particularly concerned with the ways institutions articulate and measure the **student learning outcomes** they expect or aspire to.
- The UGC encourages institutions to adopt an **outcome-based approach to student learning**, and the QAC audit process reinforces this objective.”

[*QAC Audit Manual: 3.1*]

The Carrot



- “Institutions, at the time of their first audit between 2008 and 2011, will be at different stages in their preparations for the four year undergraduate degree and in their development of an **outcome-based approach** to student learning. This will be fully recognised by audit panels. There will be *no expectation or judgement of an institution’s progress in taking forward these initiatives as part of the audit process.*”

[QAC Audit Manual: 1.2]



The Stick

- “The UGC is determined in enhancing the quality of teaching – and promoting **outcome-based student learning** is one effective way... The Committee is bound to take action if, after a reasonable period of time, institutions show immobility or disinterest, despite UGC’s continued encouragement and emphasis.”

[UGC memo on ‘Outcome-based approaches in student learning’ (15/5/2006)]

Recent trends in higher education

- (i) Increased emphasis on **Teaching & Learning**, and recognition of the ‘scholarship of teaching’;
- (ii) Shift of focus from ‘Teaching’ to ‘**Learning**’;
- (iii) Call for greater transparency and accountability in educational institutions.



The 'Essence' of OBE

1. In education, what matters ultimately is not what is *taught*, but what is ***learned***;
2. Therefore, teachers would do well to set their course objectives in terms of ***learning outcomes***;



3. ***What*** we teach and ***how*** we teach, and how we ***assess***, ought to be ***aligned*** with the ***intended learning outcomes***, such that they are fully integrated and consistent with each other;
4. The quality of teaching is to be judged by the quality of **learning** that takes place.

The 'Logic' of OBE



‘The logic is stunningly obvious: Say what you want students to be able to do, teach them to do it and then see if they can, in fact, do it.’

[J. Biggs & C. Tang, *Teaching for Quality learning at University*, 3rd Ed, p.177. Open University, 2007.]

Designing courses in the OBE mode

- 1) Decide on the **intended learning outcomes**, i.e. what you want your students to be able to do by the end of the course;
- 2) Plan your **teaching and learning activities** around these outcomes;
- 3) Design your **assessment** methods to directly measure the **achievement** of these outcomes; and use feedback from assessments to **improve** the course.

Existing courses in SHSS: Example 1

HUMA 161 Marriage, Family and Kinship in Cross-cultural Perspectives

- **Major objectives:**
- The students will be guided to (1) understand the diverse cultural meaning and structure of kinship relations and organizations, (2) develop an appreciation of one's own culture and society as well as other cultural practices in the world, (3) acquire the technique of studying family and kin relations, and (4) learn presentation skills.



HUMA161 Course content and teaching components:

- There will be both lectures and tutorials. The lectures are designed to introduce specific topics in understanding marriage, family, and kinship. In each tutorial, we will be discussing various readings, relating them to students' own experiences. Students are required to participate in discussions and presentations in tutorials, from which they will develop the ability to organize and integrate presentation materials, and give oral presentations. Students are required to hand in a term paper (8-10 pages in length), which could focus on their own family, on research topics about marriage, family and kinship based on their life experiences, or conducting interviews on a certain lineage. Fieldtrips will also be introduced in the course allowing students a first-hand understanding of kinship in its social and cultural context.

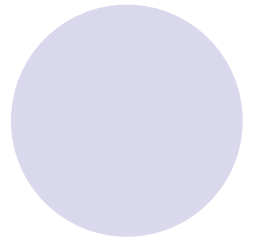
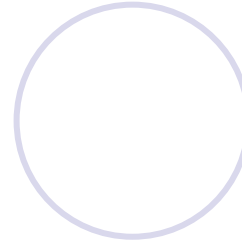
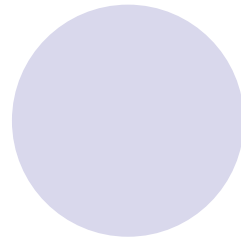
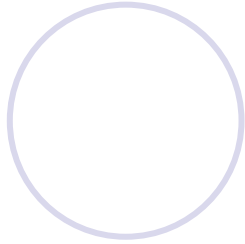
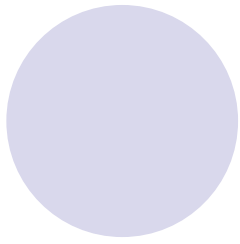


Example 2

HUMA103 Structure of the Chinese Language

- **Course description**

- This course will introduce basic concepts in linguistics which help students to describe and analyze the structure of the Chinese language... The differences between Cantonese and Mandarin as well as those observed in other Chinese dialects will be discussed. Another goal of the course is to show that social and political factors play a more important role than linguistic factors in defining the Chinese language. On completing the course, students will have a general idea of the structure of the Chinese language and will be equipped with the necessary tools to describe and analyze the structure of other languages.



HUMA103:

- Major topics to be covered:
- Assessment:
- Attendance and participation - 10%
- In-class quizzes - 10%
- Homework assignments - 20%
- Final - 60%

Unpacking OBE:

1) *Intended Learning Outcomes*

- State what you intend your students to be able to *do* by the end of the course or programme;
- As far as possible, try to state these outcomes in terms of **verbs**;
- Make sure that the outcomes are consistent with your **institutional objectives** – esp. its **graduate attributes**.

HKUST's Graduate Attributes (ABC Live)

Academic Excellence

- An in-depth grasp of at least one area of specialist or professional study, based on a forward-looking and ***inquiry-driven*** curriculum.

Broad-based education

- Intellectual breadth, flexibility, and curiosity, including an understanding of the role of ***rational, balanced inquiry and discussion***, and a grasp of ***basic values*** across the core disciplines of science, social science, engineering and the humanities.

Competencies and capacity building

- High-end, transferable competence, including ***analytical, critical, quantitative and communications skills***.

2) *Teaching & Learning Activities*

- The Intended Learning Outcomes serve as a kind of ‘blueprint’ for the Teaching & Learning Activities (TLA’s);
- Each TLA should be **aligned** with one (or more) learning outcome(s), and each learning outcome should be aligned with one (or more) TLA(s).

3) *Assessment*

- Assessment (both continuous and final) should directly measure the students' achievement of the **intended learning outcomes**;
- Assessment results and other feedback should be used for purposes of improving the course.

Examples of vague and non-outcomes-oriented course objectives

Course: *Language and Education* (PG)

- **Aim:**

To explore the varied relationships between language and education.

- **Objectives:**

To examine the role that language plays in education, in particular

1. learning as language
2. learning through language
3. learning about language.

Student feedback on the L&E course

- “After 14 weeks I doubt that I could get anything valuable on the issues of language and education. I wonder why [the lecturer] spent most of the lecture time to discuss ‘error corrections’?”
- “It is not a grammar course, so the lecturer should not focus so much on grammatical features, but the subject matter.”

Examples of traditional exam questions

Part A

3. The courts apply a number of tests to determine whether a person is or is not an employee. Describe these various tests. (20 marks)

Part B

Multiple choice questions (40 marks)

2. Examples of civil law include
- a. contract law
 - b. employment law
 - c. agency law
 - d. all of the above



Multiple choice questions

(a) Define 'minimal pair' and give 3 examples.

vs.

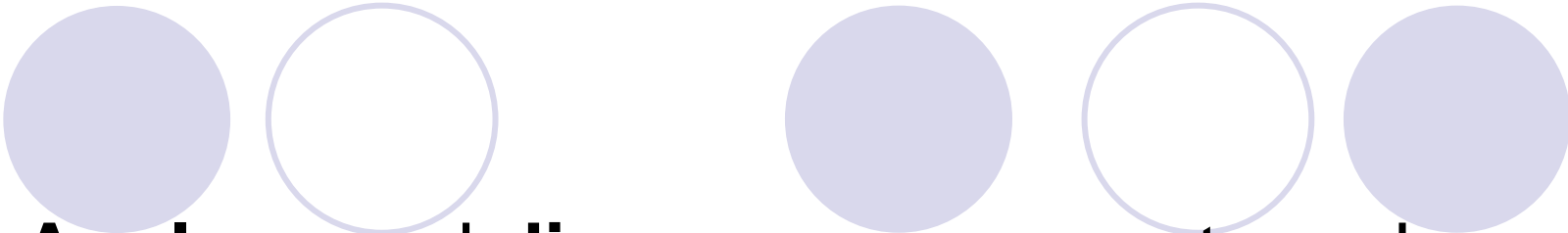
(b) Which of the following are not minimal pairs?

1. *think/sink*
2. *waste/waist*
3. *though/so*
4. *cough/rough*

Designing Learning Outcomes & aligning Teaching/Learning & Assessment - **Some illustrations:**

Ex.1: *English through Current Events* (UG)

- **Intended Learning Outcomes:**
- At the end of the course, students should be able to:
 1. Use English effectively in speaking and writing about current events;
 2. Understand spoken and written news reports in English accurately;

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3. **Analyse** and **discuss** news reports and commentaries **critically** and in an informed manner;
 4. Develop a **broad** acquaintance with current local and international events and issues, in various spheres (political, economic, social, cultural, moral, educational, etc.);
 5. Develop a **personal** and **rational** point of view on current events and issues.

Teaching & Learning Activities

- Class activities will typically take the form of:
 - (i) reading and listening to reports on the latest current events;
 - (ii) discussion of the reported event(s) in small groups, followed by a general discussion;
 - (iii) Students bringing in news items of their own choice and reporting on them to the class, followed by a discussion (depending on the class' interest).
- Other activities will include
 - (i) individual students making a 5-minute oral presentation on a particular current event, and giving a personal commentary or analysis of it;
 - (ii) class debates on controversial current issues;
 - (iii) written essays on topics of current interest.


Sample text for reading & discussion: “China's Olympic Opportunity”

Martin Lee. [Wall Street Journal](#)

3. *"By applying for the Olympics, we want to promote not just the city's development, but the development of society, including democracy and human rights," one of China's key Olympic figures, Deputy Mayor Liu Jingmin, told the Washington Post in 2001. Then, Mr. Liu said, "If people have a target like the Olympics to strive for, it will help us establish a more just and harmonious society, a more democratic society, and help integrate China into the world.*
4. *I couldn't agree more. But instead of the hoped-for reforms, the Chinese government appears to be backsliding on its promises, including in Hong Kong where we have near total political paralysis, not the promised road to full democracy. That is no reason to give up on the prospects for reform in China. But it is reason to step up the direct engagement on these pressing issues.*

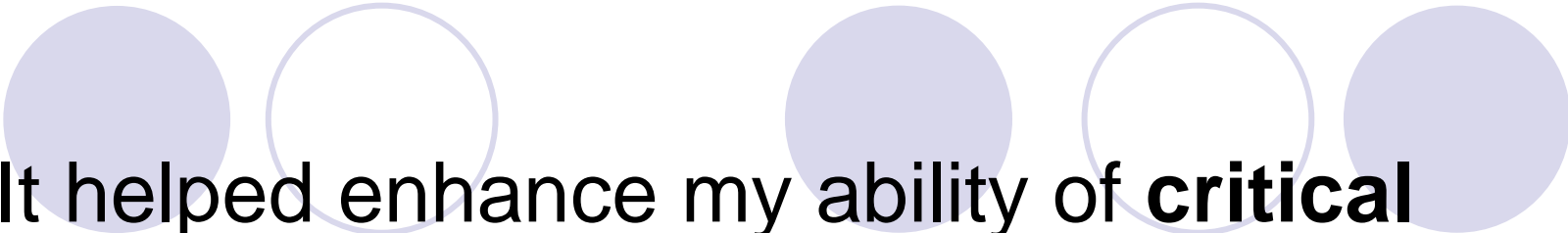
Sample Assignments

- Choose a current event (of any kind – political, economic, cultural, artistic, scientific, recreational, etc.) as reported in the mass media in recent weeks; attach a copy of the report to your assignment.
- Discuss this event, bringing out clearly why you think it is significant and worthy of attention, and proceed to give your own **analysis** and **commentary** on it. (You can, for instance, be critical and expose what you see as human failings or errors in the event itself or the way it was reported in the media, or question its truthfulness or accuracy or impartiality. Or you can support it by expanding on certain points, strengthening the position or arguments, providing further details, etc. Or you can suggest solutions to the problem, a course of action, etc.)

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- The important thing in this assignment is to **express your own thoughts and ideas**. Do *not* spend too much time reporting or repeating what is in the original news report (it is attached anyway). We do not want to turn this into a trivial exercise in paraphrasing or summarising. Refer to the material when necessary, but concentrate on analyzing and commenting on it from your point of view.

Student Feedback on the Course

- “This subject lets me know more about the current events in different parts of the world and it also trains me to have **critical thinking** in looking at the current issues.”
- “[The lecturer] can motivate us to **study by ourselves.**”
- “I feel able to get my horizon **broader**, with focus not merely on local news items.”
- “[The lecturer] encourages us to **speak up and speak freely.**”

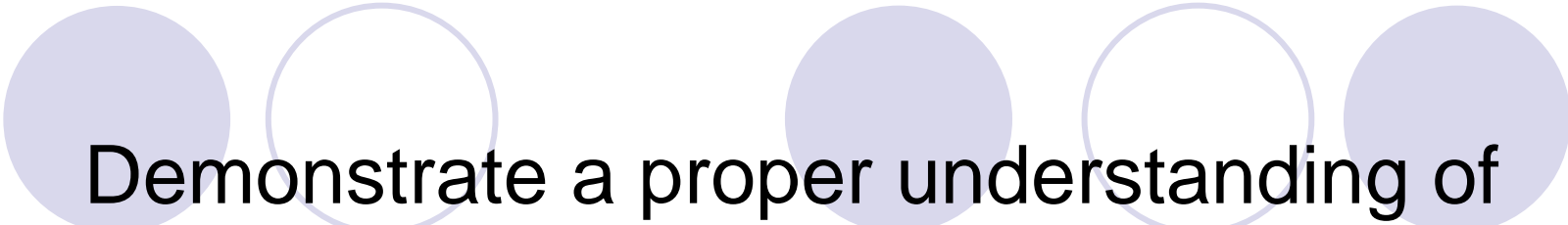
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- “It helped enhance my ability of **critical and independent thinking.**”
 - “It inspired us to **think critically** and to be more aware about things happening around us. It also encouraged us to use English more in our daily lives.”
 - “It provides student with a chance to pay more attention on current affairs, no matter in Hong Kong or in other parts of the world.”

Ex. 2: *Grammar of Modern English* (PG)

- **Intended Learning Outcomes:**

- Upon completing the course, the students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a systematic and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of standard English grammar (both written and spoken), as it is used by educated speakers today on the basis of **corpus evidence**;
2. **Apply** this knowledge for pedagogic purposes, including the teaching of English and the identification and **explanation** of **grammatical errors**;

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- The top of the slide features five decorative circles arranged horizontally. From left to right, the colors and styles are: a solid light purple circle, a hollow light purple circle, a solid light purple circle, a hollow light purple circle, and a solid light purple circle.
3. Demonstrate a proper understanding of the **nature of grammar** and grammatical ‘rules’ (and how they differ from traditional prescriptive rules), and the differences between written and spoken grammar;
 4. Use an online databank to search for **evidence** for the current state of the English language, and draw **well-supported generalizations** and **conclusions** concerning particular grammatical structures.

Sample Assignments

- Most popular books on English grammar and usage (e.g. Fowler's famous *Modern English Usage*) adopt an openly prescriptive approach. Now that we have databanks at our disposal, we can find out for ourselves how present-day users of English *actually* use English, and how it differs from the 'rules' laid down by prescriptive grammarians.
- Given below are three examples of such prescriptive rules. Do a search on the Collins WordbanksOnline for relevant data on each of the three forms, and (i) decide whether there is any empirical basis for the prescriptive rule, and (ii) write an objective, accurate description of how each form is *actually* used in English today.
- Be sure to support your descriptions with data extracted from the databank.



- **Traditional prescriptive rules:**
Example 1: ‘*DUE TO*’

Due to is wrongly used as an adverbial of reason modifying a clause, in sentences like:

‘Due to his age, he was unable to compete’

‘The show was cancelled due to the strike’, etc.

In such sentences, *owing to* should be used instead:

‘Owing to his age, he was unable to compete’

‘The show was cancelled owing to the strike’, etc.

The proper use of *due to* is with a noun phrase (‘NP1 is due to NP2’), as in:

‘His poor health is due to heavy smoking’

‘The cancellation was due to the strike’, etc.

Data on *due to* from Collins WordbanksOnline

- 137.95 yen. The dollar gained ground due to increasing concern about the
- officials say the heavy losses are due to the extremely dangerous missions
- of outside subcontractors. Another is due to company pressure to speed up
- impact outside the city, largely due to television. Limited rioting
- a very frustrating thing for all of us due to the fact that you can't really
- criticized by social workers are due to overcrowding. Throughout the
- itself. <p> The only worthwhile act, due to its novelty value, was the group
- mothers have had extra expenses due to the General Election being held
- Health Works; Today Offer </h> <p> Due to the overwhelming response to last
- 14-year-old and it is largely due to her attitude to life. <p> I just
- seen a thousand times before - largely due to the iridescent cinematography of
- cent less likely to develop problems due to the fatty acids in fish oil. <p>
- make up to £ 1,800 - partly due to that Rolls. A nice car will
- s professional future seems in doubt due to a knee injury. Former Wimbledon
- Goodwood defeat can be ignored due to the false pace. <p> Doubts
- foreign exchange) facilities available due to a) adverse publicity; b) previous
- but perhaps more thanks were [due to] Western Samoa for gifting such
- wackiness. `Hi there," says Phil. `Due to immense peer pressure I have
- costs for the Japanese cars, this is due to the fact that their parts prices
- he says. The low valuation is also due to the company's patchy record.

Student Feedback on the Course

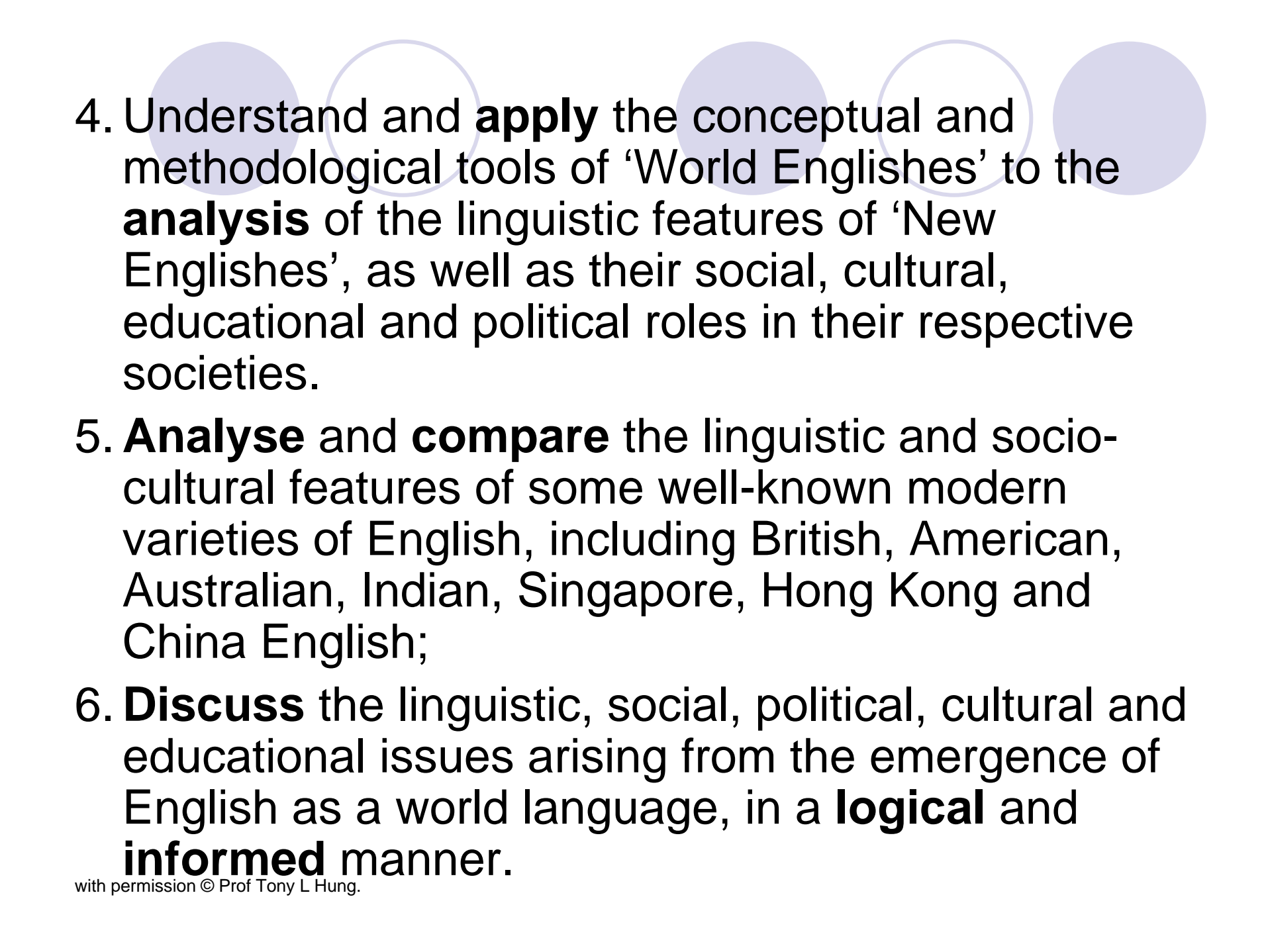
- “[The lecturer] can encourage students to **think and to discover answers themselves**. This kind of skills is useful for **self learning** in the future.”
- “It is good to keep **pushing us to think** and **give rationale** for the language use nowadays, though sometimes it's really hard to analyse the phenomenon presented.”

Ex. 3: *English as a World Language* (PG)

- Intended Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of the course, the students should be able to:

1. Describe the history and development of English from its beginnings in the 5th century to the present day;
2. **Explain** the spread of English to other parts of the world through colonization and other processes;
3. **Account for** the rise of English as a ‘world language’ in the 20th-21st centuries;

- 
4. Understand and **apply** the conceptual and methodological tools of 'World Englishes' to the **analysis** of the linguistic features of 'New Englishes', as well as their social, cultural, educational and political roles in their respective societies.
 5. **Analyse** and **compare** the linguistic and socio-cultural features of some well-known modern varieties of English, including British, American, Australian, Indian, Singapore, Hong Kong and China English;
 6. **Discuss** the linguistic, social, political, cultural and educational issues arising from the emergence of English as a world language, in a **logical** and **informed** manner.

Sample Assignments

- **Introduction:** So far in this course, we've been looking at the history and development of the English language from its beginnings to the 20th century. It is worth studying not merely to know more about the 'external' history of English, but because it teaches us a great deal about the **nature of language** itself. For instance, from the way English has evolved, you may have gained some useful insights about: vocabulary change (how new words are added, how old words change meanings, how some words die out, etc.); regional variations in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar; the appearance and development of dialects; the adoption of a standard language and the rise of 'prescriptive' grammars; the effects of contact with other languages; notions of language 'purity'; etc. In the process, you will realize how misguided many old, popular misconceptions about language really are.

● Question:

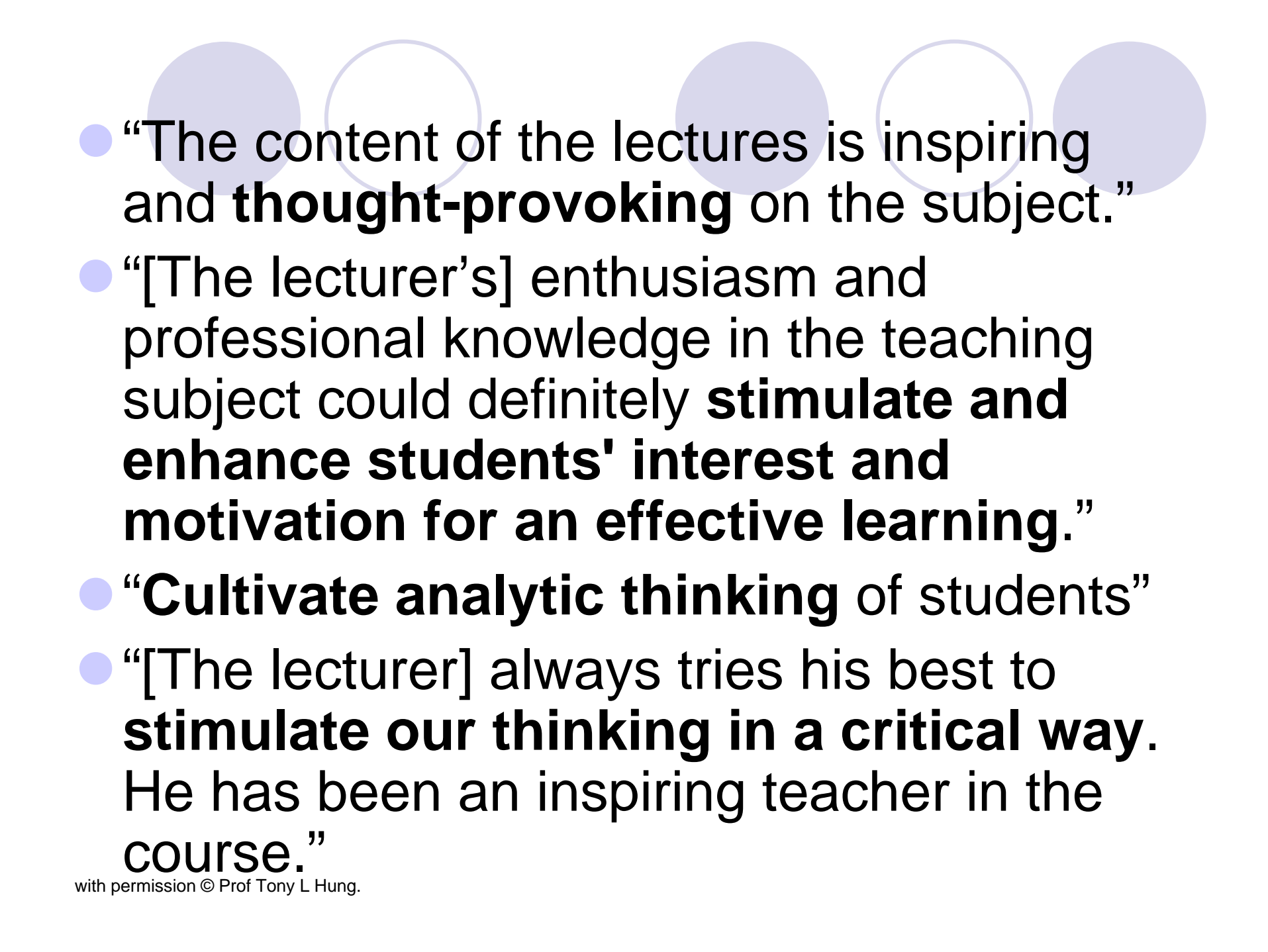
Given below are a number of claims or beliefs about language -- some of them justifiable, some not:

1. As a language develops, its **grammatical** system becomes more and more complex.
2. As a language develops, its **vocabulary** becomes more and more complex.
3. As a nation develops, one particular **variety** of its language is chosen as the 'standard' because it is intrinsically *superior* to all the other varieties.
4. English started life as a 'pure' language, but became increasingly 'corrupted' by the influx of other languages (French, Latin, etc.), until it is now very much an 'impure' or 'hybrid' language.

- Choose any ***two*** of the above claims, and discuss each of them in some detail. In your discussion, **argue for or against** the claim, and **support your arguments with concrete evidence** from the history and development of English (and any other languages that you may want to bring in). Write about 2 pages on each topic.
- In assessing your assignment, the main focus will be on ***your own analysis and understanding*** of the topic, rather than the mere regurgitation of facts or information you've gathered elsewhere. Of course, it is essential that you have the necessary background knowledge and cite the relevant facts and examples, in order to think and argue intelligently and in an informed manner about the topic (anyone who has not done the assigned readings will be handicapped here). But remember that such knowledge only provides the *background* for your thoughts and arguments, and is not itself the primary object of this exercise. This is *not* an exercise in regurgitation or paraphrasing!

Student Feedback on the Course

- “[The lecturer] always motivates students to be **active learners.**”
- “The subject **broadens the horizons** of my view point of English.”
- “The contents are inspiring and interesting, **stimulating learners to think critically** about the current issue of English as a global language.”
- “Give us new knowledge about Englishes in different parts of the world. I knew nothing about this before taking this course, and have not **considered some controversial issues** before, like what is Standard English.”

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- “The content of the lectures is inspiring and **thought-provoking** on the subject.”
 - “[The lecturer’s] enthusiasm and professional knowledge in the teaching subject could definitely **stimulate and enhance students' interest and motivation for an effective learning.**”
 - “**Cultivate analytic thinking** of students”
 - “[The lecturer] always tries his best to **stimulate our thinking in a critical way.** He has been an inspiring teacher in the **course.**”

Other issues related to OBE

- **Teaching Evaluation** will need to incorporate an **outcome-based** perspective, and not just focus on the teacher's 'performance';
- The mode of **assessment** will need to be '**criterion-referenced**' rather than 'norm-referenced', to better reflect students' achievement of learning outcomes;
- '**Open book**' exams should be encouraged to test true learning outcomes (such as in-depth understanding and analytic and problem-solving skills) rather than mere recall and regurgitation.

Appendix 1: 'ABC LIVE': *HKUST's Graduate Attributes*

Academic Excellence

- An in-depth grasp of at least one area of specialist or professional study, based on a forward-looking and *inquiry-driven* curriculum.

Broad-based education

- Intellectual breadth, flexibility, and curiosity, including an understanding of the role of *rational, balanced inquiry and discussion*, and a grasp of *basic values* across the core disciplines of science, social science, engineering and the humanities.

Competencies and capacity building

- High-end, transferable competence, including *analytical, critical, quantitative and communications skills*.



Leadership and teamwork

- A capacity for leadership and teamwork, including the ability to motivate others, to be responsible and reliable, and to give and take direction and constructive criticism.

International outlook

- An international outlook, and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Vision and an operation to the future

- Adaptability and flexibility, a *passion for learning*, and the ability to develop clear, forward-looking goals, and *self-direction and self-discipline*

Ethical standards and compassion

- Respect for others and high standards of personal integrity
- Compassion, and a readiness to contribute to the community

Appendix 2: Some Useful Links on OBE

- **Introduction & Workshops on OBE:**

http://lc.hkbu.edu.hk/te/doc/preworkshop_reference.doc

<http://lc.hkbu.edu.hk/te/doc/preworkshop01.ppt>

<http://lc.hkbu.edu.hk/te/doc/preworkshop02.ppt>

<http://lc.hkbu.edu.hk/te/doc/preworkshop03.ppt>

- **OBE websites in HK universities:**

UST: <http://celt.ust.hk/obe/index.htm>

CityU: <http://tfq.cityu.edu.hk/obtl/>

HKU: http://www.hku.hk/caut/new1/outcome/outcome_based.htm

PolyU: <http://www.polyu.edu.hk/obe/index.php>

CUHK: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/v6/en/teaching/quality.html>