

2026 SPRING



Prism

NTPU FLAL NEWSLETTER



*Life is like a prism.
What you see depends on how
you turn the glass.*





From the Clouds to the Counter as a Dried Fruit Ambassador



Bob Lin

"I think the time in university is the best opportunity to try such a job, because it would force you to leave your comfort zone," said Alice Tseng, a senior at FLAL, reflecting on the distillation of a transformative summer.

Alice spent her third summer vacation working as a clerk at LULU frutti, a boutique specialty shop dedicated to Taiwanese dried fruits. Located at the iconic Taipei 101, this was no ordinary part-time job. It was a rigorous training ground for professional communication, brand management, and cross-cultural diplomacy.

For a student about to enter the workforce, this experience redefined her career aspirations. It bridged the gap between academic theory and the fast-paced reality of international retail.

Most job interviews take place in sterile offices or cramped meeting rooms, but Alice's journey began at an altitude of nearly 400 meters. Her interview for LULU frutti was held in the exclusive VIP room on the 89th floor of Taipei 101, overlooking the sprawling, misty skyline of Taipei.

It was the first time, and perhaps the last time, I would ever step foot in such a prestigious space," Alice recalled with a smile. The atmosphere was surprisingly serene, contrasting with the bustling shopping mall below. The manager didn't focus on grueling technical questions or high-pressure scenarios."

Instead, the conversation centered on Alice's personality, her linguistic expertise, and her expectations for the role. It was clear that LULU frutti valued "emotional intelligence" as much as professional skills.

However, the dialogue didn't end with a handshake. The manager spent the next thirty minutes detailing the grand vision for the brand. They discussed how LULU frutti aimed to elevate traditional Taiwanese snacks into high-end gift items for the global market.

This high-altitude introduction instilled in Alice a sense of pride. She realized she wasn't just applying to be a clerk; she was joining a mission to represent Taiwanese agriculture on the world stage.

Taipei 101 serves as the global gateway to Taiwan, attracting thousands of international tourists daily. For Alice, LULU frutti counter became a miniature laboratory for cross-cultural communication. She realized her role was to act as a cultural translator for the island's bounty.

"Alice is undoubtedly the most popular clerk for foreign visitors," noted Irene, Alice's colleague. This popularity stems from Alice's linguistic bravery. While others might hesitate to engage in long conversations in English, Alice embraced every interaction as a chance to connect.



She understood that selling dried fruit was about more than just transactions; it was about storytelling. She would explain the difference between the sun-ripened Irwin mangoes and the tart, fibrous texture of local pineapples. Each piece of fruit carried the story of a Taiwanese farmer.

One of the most memorable moments involved two Asian American visitors who were browsing the shop. Instead of a standard sales pitch, Alice shared deep insights into the relationship between Taiwan's unique topography and its fruit production. She spoke of the monsoons and the fertile soil of the south.

Her profound understanding of her homeland's geography impressed the visitors so much that they lost track of time. The conversation became so engaging that they invited Alice and her colleague for a walk after work.



This interaction proved that professional knowledge, when combined with sincerity, can transcend the traditional boundaries of retail. She wasn't just a salesperson; she was a guide, an educator, and a representative of Taiwanese hospitality to those visiting from across the ocean.

Beyond the excitement of meeting foreign guests, the daily grind at LULU frutti catalyzed a significant internal shift. Alice's roommate, Amy, observed a marked change in Alice's social energy. Once reserved, Alice became noticeably extroverted and eager to share.

Stepping out of her comfort zone became a source of joy rather than a cause for anxiety. This newfound confidence bled into her academic life as well. Her English speaking skills, sharpened by the necessity of promoting technical descriptions at the counter, became more persuasive.

"I was forced to use English as long as I was at work," Alice explained. This forced immersion turned her academic knowledge into a practical, living tool. She learned to adapt her vocabulary to suit different audiences—from casual tourists to meticulous business travelers.



Moreover, her fluency became professionalized. She moved beyond basic grammar to master the nuances of marketing language. She learned how to use adjectives that wouldn't just describe a product, but would make it appeal to the specific tastes of a global clientele.

Furthermore, the flat organizational structure of LULU frutti allowed Alice to observe the machinery of business operations. She wasn't just ringing up sales; she was watching how executives managed the delicate balance of supply chains and human resources.

She learned how the brand managed working hours among staff to ensure peak performance during high-traffic periods. She also observed the decision-making process behind occasional promotional campaigns, understanding the reasons behind price adjustments and seasonal marketing.

Alice mastered the boring but essential basics that form the backbone of any successful business. Cashing, restocking, and the art of window display became second nature. Each task taught her that a luxury brand is built on the accumulation of small, perfectly executed details.

She realized that the way a product is placed on a shelf tells a story to the consumer before a word is even spoken. This managerial lens gave her a holistic view of the retail industry. She saw the connection between the farmer's field and the final elegant packaging.

Alice discovered that she thrives in environments that require her to be quick on her feet and empathetic to others' needs. The satisfaction of helping a stranger discover a new favorite flavor provided a sense of accomplishment that fueled her through the long standing hours.

For Alice, the summer was a masterclass in human nature. She learned that every guest has a unique story, and every product has a heritage worth sharing. By intertwining the two, she found a professional calling that leverages her language skills while satisfying her curiosity.

Looking back at that first interview on the 89th floor, Alice recognized it as the moment she decided to stop playing it safe. By choosing a job that demanded constant growth, she transformed her university years into a launchpad for a career without borders.

To Alice, the value of a university education isn't just found in the lecture halls, but in the brave decision to stand behind a counter and engage with the world.

Her journey is a powerful reminder that sometimes, the best way to find your path is to help others find theirs. As she prepares for graduation, Alice carries with her the scent of dried fruit and the confidence of a woman who knows she can handle whatever the world throws her way.





Seeds of Confidence Flourished at the Green Tea Festival



Ashley Chen

“I was lost at that time,” said Mary Tu, recalling her first year at FLAL. “Not sure if I should double major or do anything else. It’s like there was no focus on my life. So I decided to get part-time jobs to add more meaning to it.”

Mary is now a sophomore, and her initial motivation for getting part-time jobs was to be financially independent; however, as she participated in a variety of jobs, her self-perception evolved.

Mary’s first part-time job was at the Sanxia Green Tea Festival, a celebration dedicated to promoting local culture and the area’s famous tea. From designing and making event props to providing on-site assistance, participating in the Green Tea Festival as an event coordinator challenged Mary’s adaptability and resilience.



“The first year was crazy,” Mary laughed. “Another girl and I were once forced to count lunch boxes in the rain, and even had to go purchase and carry back meals for 60 people.”

Due to a lack of planning, staff members were asked to support other areas, even though the original team was already overwhelmed. Although the situation was chaotic, Mary’s performance impressed her team leader, Vicky Yow, a junior at FLAL. She also works as an assistant in Haishan Research Center.

“I could tell that Mary was hardworking,” said Vicky. “That’s why I invited her to work in my group this year.”

Vicky’s team was in charge of arranging educational events, including picture book readings, tea tastings, and checkpoint activities for children. The kids first read picture books and tasted different kinds of tea, then joined checkpoint games where they completed tasks at different stations.

With less than 14 days to prepare, the team struggled with the external design of the paper tunnel. The structure of the paper tunnel was fragile; any additional decoration might cause it to collapse. However, Mary suggested that the tunnel’s exterior could be painted with black markers to resemble a brick wall. In this way, the tunnel could look more realistic yet sturdy.

“Mary is the core member of my team with experience,” Vicky recalled. “Her brilliant idea was truly a lifesaver.”

One of the team members, who is also Mary’s friend, a sophomore at FLAL, Sophie You, said, “Her drawings were so delicate, and she really finished everything with speed and precision. One thing I noticed while working with her is that even though she keeps saying she’s not a service industry person, she’s actually a natural! She handles people so well.”

“For instance, whenever someone came up with a question, she never lost her cool and answered them with total ease,” Sophie explained.

Another highlight of Mary's experience was being a visual descriptor for visually impaired students.

The session of a visual description is about one hour. The descriptor stands beside the students and provides synchronized descriptions of the visual content in the film, acting as a form of live interpretation.

That said, delivering a visual description requires preparation beforehand. The descriptors will be informed of the film one month in advance. After being assigned a partner and dividing the tasks, their preparation begins.

"For me, I usually watch the film at least three times. The first time is simply to enjoy the movie." Mary explained. "During the second viewing, I start drafting the script. By the third time, I practice delivering the description along with the film and revise my script as needed, noticing details I missed the first time."

She revealed that the most challenging part of this job was describing a foreign movie because the audience may not understand the original audio. Therefore, she has to work with others as a team: one reads the dialogue aloud while the other describes the visual content.

Through assisting visually impaired students, Mary learned to put herself in other people's shoes and empathize with them.

Visual descriptions must be carefully structured, given that visually impaired audiences receive and organize information differently. For example, presenting the overall context before moving on to finer details. Without this, the listener's mental image can become disjointed and unclear.

"I think my expressive ability has improved," said Mary. "I begin to reflect on the clarity and coherence of my words."

The sense of achievement also came from her belief in equality. Mary believed this role was to create equal access to the right to watch films. "I can actually help the visually impaired students and ensure they can watch movies just like everyone else."



Drawing has always been more than just a hobby; it was something Mary grew up with, and she once worked as a freelance illustrator for two months.

She initially started posting on Facebook, but with around 200 followers, it was difficult to gain traction. Later, she turned to specialized commission groups, where she finally began receiving orders.

At the time, Mary focused on drawing portraits, offering both half-body and headshot illustrations. Colored pieces were priced between NT\$300 and NT\$500, while pencil headshots cost only NT\$50.

"When my family found out I was taking commissions, they all said my pricing was too low, especially the pencil headshots for NT\$50. Looking back, I agree with them, because it wasn't just a quick sketch," said Mary.



Eventually, Mary completed five commissions and earned around NT\$2,000 in two months, while the experience led her to a realization. She was not the type of person who could turn her passion into a job.

"I once thought about building a following to increase my exposure, but I realized managing social media is really exhausting," Mary noted.

She explained that gaining visibility required constant interaction with other artists, commenting on posts and sharing each other's work. However, she felt uncomfortable with this kind of social engagement, describing it as something that went against her feelings.



At the same time, being exposed to others' artwork often made her feel insecure, as she tended to compare herself and think that others were always better.

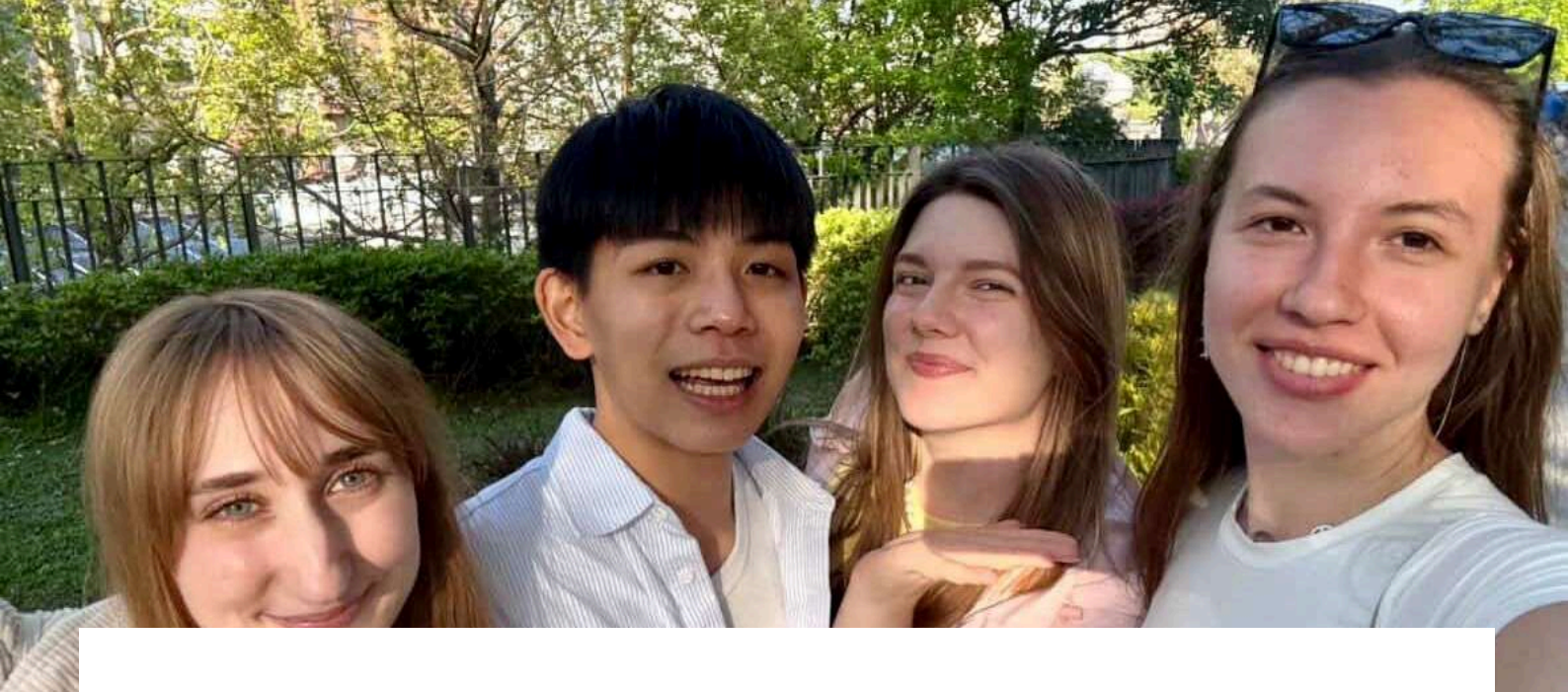
"Managing social media means constantly checking whether your posts get enough likes," she noted. "I feel like taking commissions took away the pure joy of drawing."

Working as a freelance illustrator was a turning point for Mary. She realized that her creative passion would be better kept separate from her professional life.

Mary admitted that although her resume lists a variety of jobs, she is still trying to figure out what she wants to do in the future. To step out of her comfort zone, she plans to apply for an exchange program in her senior year.

"I will go on exchange because I feel it's a way to find new sparks in life, or at least, to see how it might transform the way I think," said Mary. "I think it is important to try everything. It was through exploring different paths that I discovered what I truly like and what I don't."





A little more knowledge, a little less conflict



Alice Liu

While casually scrolling through LinkedIn one afternoon, his thumb stilled — this line had caught his attention. Without hesitation, he clicked apply. At the time, he had been working at another internship for a while, and everything had started to feel routine.

"Comfort is the enemy of progress," he said. "When your environment starts to feel comfortable, it's time to step out." As a result, he made the leap, diving into Fulbright and embarking on a new adventure.

He is Calvin Chen, a class of 2025 from FLAL currently pursuing a master's degree in International Communication Studies at NCCU. He joined Fulbright and expected to move closer to academic work.

Yet the internship was different from what he imagined. Behind its global reputation lay a series of routine administrative tasks. What Calvin found in Fulbright was not a ready-made stage, but a limited space where he had to create his own.

Looking back, the internship wasn't a coincidence. Before this, Calvin had worked part-time at a Japanese company. The rigid rules there made him aware of his need for freedom. His subsequent experience, organizing international seminars, demonstrated him how powerful knowledge could be, bridging industries, academics, and governments across the world.

"I soon realized that my future career had to be both beneficial to the world and preserve personal freedom," he said. After weighing both wealth and health, he found that pursuing a path in academia might be the right fit.

"Academia not only offered a decent life but kept my thinking autonomy, and the Fulbright internship seemed like the best path forward, at least for now."

The Fulbright Program is one of the prestigious international exchange programs in the United States. For over 80 years, the program has supported students, scholars, artists, and professionals from diverse backgrounds, with a global network spanning over 160 countries.

In Fulbright, Calvin was initially responsible for organizing events, such as Thanksgiving gatherings and grantee sharing seminars. Calvin admitted that it left him feeling disappointed. The work was overly basic, far from the challenge he had come looking for.

As the organization began exploring new marketing channels, he saw an opportunity. He took the lead on running an official Threads account. His core responsibility is making formal U.S.–Taiwan academic exchange content more accessible and engaging for a wider group of potential applicants.

"The most demanding part is that I have no reference," he said. Although Calvin had prior marketing experience on Instagram, Threads operates on an entirely different algorithm with its own culture and content expectations.

Modern platforms prioritize sentiment over substance, creating a landscape where clicks are the primary currency. The real question became figuring out how to work with the algorithm without being consumed by it.





Calvin recalled the incident as a turning point in how he thought about content creation. “Another intern once made a video about turning the office into a gym. At first, it gained attention. But the executive director felt it didn’t align with Fulbright’s image, so we took the video down.”

The experience speaks to a tension behind social media management. How does a brand stay visible in an algorithm-driven space without compromising its core values?

“Once a brand builds a loyal enough following, its dependence on the algorithm naturally begins to loosen,” Calvin said.

His philosophy, paired with constant analysis and a willingness to experiment, paid off. With no reference to follow, he started testing content formats on Threads. The official Fulbright Threads account reached 11,000 followers within two weeks. It now stands at 20,500.

“I think you must be equipped with both agility and grit,” he shared. “On one hand, you need to stay aware of current events and social media trends to capture the audience’s attention. On the other hand, you also need to manage your emotions.”

Social media management can easily lead to perfectionism and anxiety over numbers and performance charts. “Finding a balance between the two is the core skill of this job,” Calvin noted.

The strategy did reach students who were interested in studying abroad. Peter Ko, a senior at FLAL, said he followed Fulbright on threads because he hoped to find scholarship opportunities that could reduce the cost of graduate study in the U.S.

“Their posts are easy to understand, and the account often leaves interesting comments under different posts,” Peter said. “That was what attracted me.”

“As a participant, I used to see international exchange as something exciting and glamorous,” Calvin said. “However, once I became an executive, I found out it is all wrapped up in administrative processes behind the scenes. The devil is in the details.”

Through the experience, Calvin gradually developed a different understanding of career growth. “I realized that the depth of a career does not come only from the responsibilities written in a job description,” Calvin said. “Sometimes, it depends more on how you use the resources around you to gradually build your own path.”

“Calvin is a person who is open to trying new things. When he was in college, he always explored and tried to find his passion. I often encountered him at international exchange events,” said Jasmine Kuo, a graduate from FLAL.

Another former intern, Jenelle Kao, who is currently on exchange at UW Madison, echoed Calvin’s sentiment.

Her duty mainly involved organizing administrative materials, assisting with events, and designing promotional posters. Occasionally, interns also had opportunities to interact with international visitors.

“It was a position that offered a general introduction to how different departments within the organization operated,” Jenelle said.

Jenelle and Calvin interned during different periods. She mentioned that Calvin’s responsibilities appeared more diverse, while her own tasks were relatively straightforward.

“My professor suggested I apply for a Fulbright internship, if I wanted to be a scholar in the future,” said Jenelle. “I was not sure about my career path at that time, but why not give it a shot?”

“This experience later became a great conversation starter at job fairs in the US. Also, I discovered a hidden interest here. I found myself enjoying event planning. I thought I could try it next, and I did.”

Like Calvin, she had found something she did not expect and chose to follow it.

As Calvin’s internship at Fulbright draws to a close, he is already looking ahead. This year, he will study abroad in Sciences Po and UC Berkeley. Both institutions offer distinct research environments. Perhaps this is the kind of stage he has always been building toward.

“I think this experience makes up for the critical thinking atmosphere that FLAL lacks,” he said. “It gives me courage in pursuing academia.”



For Calvin, the answer to “a little more knowledge, a little less conflict” was never going to be found in a perfect opportunity. It was always going to be built one unexpected turn at a time.



A Humble Vietnamese Store Harbors a Dream from Afar



Louise Liu

Staring at the screen demonstrating her first order from Carrefour, Jenny Yang, trembling with excitement, clicked the button to accept. The date—Sep. 1, 2020—became the second most memorable moment after her birthday. One of the co-founders, who was beside her at that time, described it as an embarkation of a grand expedition.

Jenny Yang is the owner of a Vietnamese grocery shop, Yue Fei, meaning Vietnamese coffee. After living in Taoyuan for nine years, Jenny decided to establish her own brand, affixing her future and passion on this island. Starting with a co-founder and an employee, Jenny was in charge of every procedure, from import to delivery. Rather than flinching from obstacles, she condensed her endeavors into that small dot on Google Maps.

“I still remember what we saw was so surreal that I suspected the order was a scam and hired a lawyer to ensure its authenticity,” recalled Jenny, who compared the feeling to a pang in her chest that paralyzed her limbs.

What maximized her thrill and doubt was not the rustiness as an amateur but the trepidation pervading every corner in the world. Then coronavirus struck, spreading misery and despair. Despite the uncertainties, that miraculous order stirred rapture, kindling the delicate glow out of the shadow.



Vietnam, where street food burgeons in prosperity, is the birthplace of her dream. Born and raised in Hanoi, Jenny learned her basic business knowledge from her mother, who ran a store selling pho, a traditional Vietnamese cuisine, for more than eight years. “My mother mastered communication with both customers and suppliers,” said Jenny. “Even chit-chats became the cornerstones of my current career.”

From a very young age, Jenny worked at the store, learning to keep accounts and take inventory. Admiring the way her mother managed the business, Jenny anchored the dream career as a shop owner.

Looking back at all the upheavals since she founded her store, Jenny thought it is more of an adventure full of delight, according to one of her employees, Yan Nguyen.

“The prospect at first was not promising. There were more obstacles and regulations as the pandemic aggravated. It’s a bit embarrassing to admit the only thing that fueled me was mere passion,” noted Jenny. She grasped the fleeting chance from that gloomy phase with unwavering belief and instinct, which are condensed by the time and difficulties she faced through her miscellaneous working experience.

After moving to Taiwan with her family in 2011, Jenny explored the new environment by applying for multiple jobs, such as an interpreter and salesperson. Among them, the most striking was the job as a salesperson, which she spent five years doing.

She was initially subjected to relentless collisions due to language barriers. One time, Jenny recalled, there was a consumer who was hysterically shrieking at her, bombarding her with insulting criticism, merely because of her misunderstanding of the order.

“It is undoubtedly traumatizing,” said Jenny. “And it became a scar that leaves me trembling sometimes when I pick up calls from customers.”

She learned from it, instead of letting the trauma rankle with fear. She probably outperformed her mother regarding the know-how of soothing people, which was an advance after that incident.

Collapsing and rebuilding, her career still confronted obstacles and clashes, even with six years of experience. “Running a business is more about interpersonal interaction than monetary trading,” said Jenny. She had to forge bonds with people, solving frictions between two parties, including employers and employees.

“If quarrels accumulate, however trivial they are, they will ultimately lead to crevices in the relationship,” said one of the employees, Tony Yeh, who witnessed the comings and goings of more than ten staff members, testifying to the importance of bonds and frictions. He also confirmed that Jenny did maneuver mediation and communication with people, a skill she inherited from her mother.

Interpersonal issues would impact the morale of a company, while discretion would cause the rise and fall of both profits and prosperity. The revenue plummeted more than NT\$30,000 at least twice a year due to oblivious blunders. Custom clearance, for instance, is one of the procedures demanding utmost wariness and schedule planning. Even a slight delay would result in postponed delivery or order cancellation, causing severe harm to business operations.

“Those mistakes are like the butterfly effect,” Jenny noted. “Even a humble one might stir irreversible consequences.” Regarding the establishment of her business as another “coming-of-age ceremony”, Jenny was forced to evolve through the suffocating pressure and responsibility. Sales revenue, accounting for 80 percent of her source of income, was also the cause of anxiety.



To maintain a stable growth of revenue, she had to manage inventory and oversee the production process. Below the surface of simple input and output, she had to keep the expiration date on track and inspect the percentage of different batches of stocks. Jenny even calculated the inventory turnover ratio of each quarter, rendering inventory management more concise and explicit.

Block by block, mistakes and experiences amass as cornerstones, embodying Jenny’s vision of her pursuit. Since the moment she commenced her own business, innumerable transitions have engulfed her, through which she became conscious of how ever-changing the world was. Notwithstanding the predicaments, her perseverance remained the same, that is, expressing her culture via food.

“The major portion of my life is based on taste buds, from Pho of my childhood to Vietnamese coffee of my adulthood,” Jenny said. Being a daughter of vendor owners, Jenny is keen on tastes. For her, Vietnamese street food is a symbol of culture and the proof of her identity. This connection transformed into nostalgia after Jenny moved to Taiwan. She fervently looked for solace in Taiwanese cuisines but ended up in vain. As a result, she resorted to what she was accustomed to.

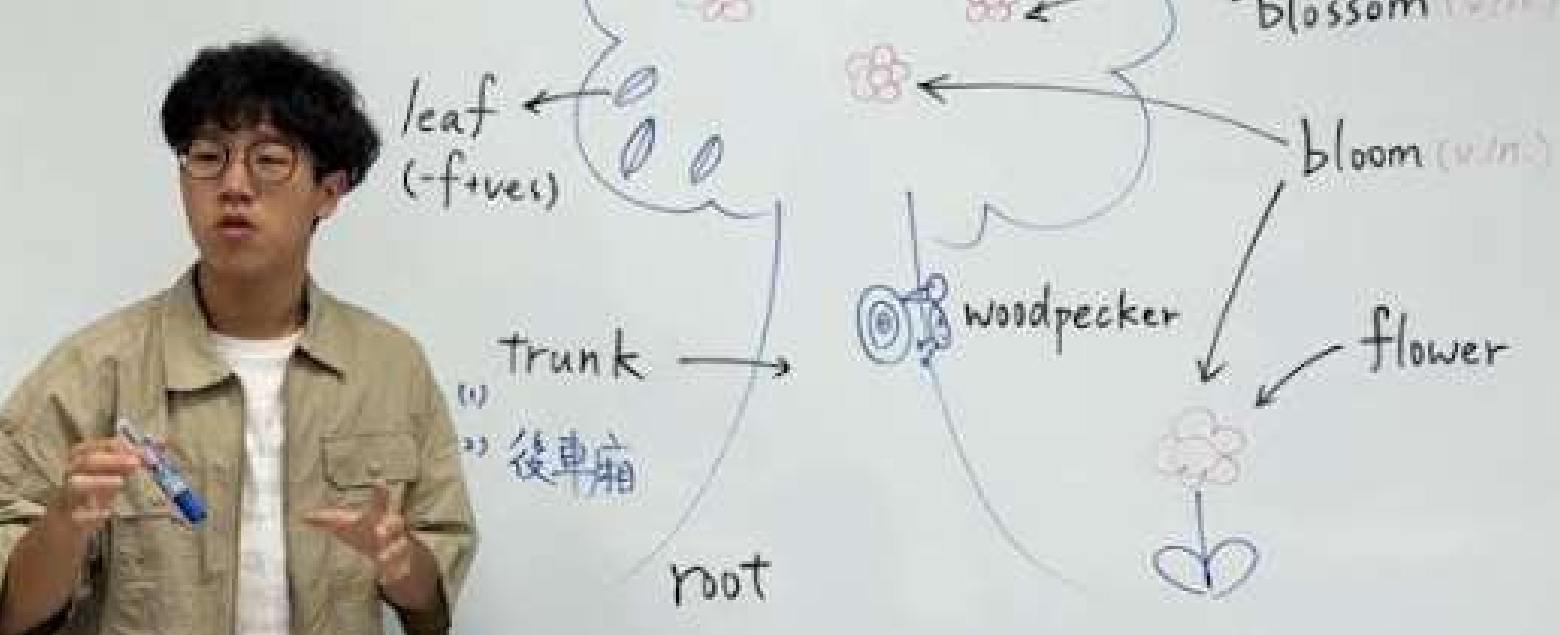


There are over 30 thousand Vietnamese in Taiwan, and many of them run Vietnamese grocery shops, the havens for Jenny, who suffered from alienation during the first few years in Taiwan. Seeing familiar commodities, Jenny unconsciously brooded on her own store, the idea that occurred to her as an epiphany. She wanted to convey that throbbing warmth to more people, highlighting the captivating facets of her hometown.

With years of experience, not only Jenny herself but also the business was honed for progress. As the number of orders increased, there were several new launch channels of her brand, such as Shopee and Coupang.

Regarding promotion, Jenny also adapted to the shifting world of social media. From hashtags to reels, she expanded customers’ access to her products by keeping up with trends. The shop metamorphosed into the brand that claimed the authenticity of Vietnamese cuisines, while the girl who was traumatized by customers matured as an independent businesswoman.

Accompanying her through each transformation, her store, Yue Fei, evolved into a part of her soul. Reminiscing about the transition from an instant whim to a promising business, Jenny already found solace through the gripping hardship and the unflinching aspiration



Teaching Like a Guide Knowing All Pitfalls on the Journey



Amy Wei

"English serves life, not exams," said Tommy Chan, a sophomore at FLAL, leaning into his mission. He helped students use the language, refusing to keep knowledge trapped in textbooks. His philosophy remained simple, focusing on fun to prevent boredom.

"Tommy transforms conversations into lessons," said Gaby Chou, Tommy's classmate at FLAL, observing his methods. Noticing a difficult word, he broke down roots and shared memory tricks.

Tommy smiled, "Giving someone a rose leaves fragrance in your hands." He viewed education as a continuous exchange of value, benefiting both the giver and the receiver.

College students often picture cashier shifts or internship applications when thinking of work. Tommy took a different path. As a sophomore at NTPU, he turned a job into a defining pursuit.



His journey began at Taipei Municipal Huajiang Senior High School. As a sophomore, he joined a rural teaching program that sent him to elementary schools. On the weekends, he worked as a volunteer tutor, helping young students learn English. At first, he expected routine tasks, but each classroom brought unexpected challenges, from varied learning levels to limited resources.

Tommy reached social media, app development, and platform partnerships. He admitted these successes required immense effort, dismissing any idea of easy victories. His trajectory showed a blend of academic rigor and entrepreneurial spirit.

His relationship with English started with vibrant energy. Genuinely interested in the subject in elementary school, he embraced songs and games. "I liked English back then," he recalled.

Then junior high arrived, changing everything. Grammar grew difficult and vocab lists lengthened, centering every lesson on exams. Tommy fell behind, seeing the subject as a wall, running into it repeatedly. This period of struggle defined his eventual empathy for failing students.

"My grades dropped from 90 to 39," he said, recalling the shock. This drop hurt his confidence, disconnecting him from a subject he once loved. He felt the weight of failure, a feeling that would later become his tool in reaching struggling learners.

Stopping his reliance on school materials, he explored articles and videos, such as "Between You and Me" by Mary Norris and YouTube channels like Mr. Yang and Jon Peng English. He exposed himself to the natural flow of language, finding clarity through listening.

"Listening helped me understand actual usage," he said. Textbooks no longer limited his progress, his mind opening to the nuances of native speech. Performance improved as he moved away from traditional rote memorization, favoring engagement over sheer repetition.

His first teaching experiences brought back that same honesty. "I walked in thinking I could teach," he laughed, mocking his younger self. Standing in front of a student, he realized that knowing a subject differs from teaching it. This realization forced him to study pedagogy as a separate craft.

Teaching at high school helped him find his voice. Having been in their shoes, he understood the frustration of convoluted grammar. He remembered the stress of underperforming despite hard work, building a natural connection.

"I met students where they lived," he said, acknowledging their reality. Understanding the pressure allowed him to offer genuine empathy. He shared their struggles, translating his past failures into their future successes. He became a guide who knew the pitfalls of the journey.

Then Jason Lee, one of Tommy's students, challenged his growing confidence. Tommy has been teaching Jason since November 2025, but Jason lacked a foundation, rendering Tommy's approach ineffective.

"I tried teaching how I was taught," he admitted, correcting his mistake. Realizing the student needed sound first, he shifted his focus. Language started in the mouth and ear, not just on paper. He rebuilt the curriculum around the physical mechanics of speech.

He started over, prioritizing sound above all else. Slowly, the unreachable child began to respond, the approach finally fitting the learner. Tommy learned that the student's needs must always dictate the teacher's method.

"Most people take the paycheck, but Tommy researches for hours," said Leo Chou, a friend to Tommy. Leo noted how Tommy takes student failures personally, staying up late to find solutions.

"That taught me everything," Tommy said, reflecting on Jason. Teaching those close to your level felt easy. The real work involved reaching those who remain far behind, requiring patience and creative strategy.



Looking back, his willingness to start from scratch showed strength. He grew into the teacher he needed to be, unlearning old habits to form better ones. This humility allowed him to master his craft effectively, preparing him for a larger stage.

A question started nagging him: what if he reached more students? He built an Instagram account around English teaching, featuring vocabulary breakdowns and grammar tips. This digital expansion transformed his influence almost overnight.

It worked, the account reaching over 9,600 followers. A growing community of learners returns for his content daily. He provided value through clear explanations, stripping away the academic jargon that often confuses beginners.

"Social media forced clarity," he said. Having seconds to hook someone, he made his points land fast. He refined his delivery to suit the digital landscape, turning complex rules into digestible clips.

"I watched him record clips twenty times," Gaby remarked. Tommy obsessed over syllables, ensuring perfect intonation for his audience. He valued clarity above speed, refining every second of his content to ensure maximum learning impact.

Pacing and format became new territory, requiring constant experimentation. The immediate feedback loop of social media provides insights that a classroom rarely offers. He adjusted his style based on real-time data.

"Seeing a stranger's comment about finally understanding hits different," he said. This feedback reminded him of his purpose, fueling his late-night editing sessions. He found satisfaction in helping people he had never met, expanding his reach.

The Instagram presence opened an unexpected door. A well-known platform reached out to co-create a learning app, recognizing his talent. He accepted the challenge, aiming to help more people learn through technology.

"I never imagined building an app," he admitted, surprised by the opportunity. The project pushed him into a new dimension of education, involving user experience and interface design. He translated classroom instincts into a digital tool, ensuring the app felt personal.

Classrooms allow teachers to read faces and adjust instantly. Apps require thinking about every learner simultaneously, anticipating their confusion. This problem-solving differs from face-to-face interaction, offering a unique scale of impact.

The process gave him a new lens on education. He envisioned a student sitting alone at midnight, phone in hand, looking for a breakthrough. He wanted his tools to provide the answers they needed at that exact moment. His vision combined empathy with modern technology.

"A student finally getting it brings joy," Tommy said. He saw the realization on their faces before they spoke, a silent signal of success. That moment remained fresh and motivating.

Still in his university years, he continued learning. "I received many roses from mentors and students," he said. Returning to his favorite metaphor, he expressed gratitude for those who helped him. He planned to be the one passing roses to others, continuing the cycle of generosity.





Emboldening Unprivileged Kids to See Beyond Limits



Ian Lin

Have you ever considered what the ideal part-time job is? There's no doubt that being a tutor comes to mind. However, every weekday afternoon, Ian Lin was on his scooter, riding for 30 minutes toward an elementary school in Sanxia which included 70 students in total. The road was long, the pay was low, and the work was far from easy.

For Ian, a junior at FLAL, it was not just a part-time job. It was a contribution—a mentality for the kind of teacher he aspires to be.

Instead of earning around NT\$700 per hour from private tutoring, Ian chose to teach at a school that paid about NT\$200 per hour.

For the past two years, spanning four semesters, Ian worked as an English remedial instruction teacher at Dacheng Elementary School, where classrooms relied on basic tools such as blackboards and chalk rather than iPads or interactive whiteboards.



In contrast to private tutoring, Ian had to tackle kids with levels. Some found it difficult to memorize the letters or spell their own English names, while others were devoid of confidence.

Jimmy Chen, the homeroom teacher who has taught for eight years, told Ian that after a year of English instruction, some students struggled to speak smoothly from A to Z. Compared to students in the city, they had fewer opportunities to encounter English.

“Out here, what kids really need isn't pity—it's quality teaching and a fair shot,” said Ian, who realized that students were unwilling to learn English because they lacked confidence.

Therefore, he designed activities that encouraged participation and teamwork. For example, in September 2025, he designed a class competition during the class to motivate students to speak. Through group tasks, students did their utmost to solve tasks in English, building confidence during the activities.

At first, students were hesitant. But something began to change. After one lesson, 13-year-old Jay Chou approached and said, “I realized that even raising my hand means I'm improving.”

Moments like this were what kept Ian going. “Education isn't about acquiring knowledge, but lighting a spark,” he said. “The key is to create a learning environment where students can try, fail, and grow,” he said.

“Sometimes just being there with them, quietly but consistently, is all that is needed,” Ian said. Companionship took on significance as Ian grew closer to his students. Ian sometimes needed to say goodbye to his students because he taught different classes every semester. Students once said to him before he signed off, “Teacher, please come back to see us. We won't forget you.”

He recalled that moment, their words lingering, engraved in his heart.

Even after he taught a new class, those students would come after class, eager to chat with him, hoping that one day he could teach them again.

Other teachers at the school saw Ian's efforts. "Because he's closer to the students in age, he acts as an older brother," Chen said. "Children are more willing to listen to him and learn from him."

The brother-like role allowed Ian to connect with his students. "Ian was neither aloof nor authoritarian. Instead, he was approachable and understanding. This made a difference," Chen said.

"I really like teacher Ian," said Jay. "He makes me face exams bravely, telling me that it's okay to answer questions even if I'm wrong." Ian hoped his students can shift from fear to confidence, believing that even changes in mindset can have an impact.

Ian put dedication and effort into each lesson. Still, the job was not without challenges.

"Most of the time I'm enthusiastic and passionate, but everyone has moments of discouragement," Ian said. He recalled that during his sophomore year, the academic workload left him with no time to relax. Exhausted, he couldn't help but scold a child when he saw the child lacking interest in class. A conflict ensued.

"I admit I might have damaged our relationship. But we calmed down and talked things out afterwards. The child admitted that they didn't like doing homework but were willing to try," Ian said with his voice trembling.

He added that while teaching the children, he himself was learning, and the ability to control his emotions and develop empathy were lessons for him. He overcame his feelings and moved forward with courage.



Ian persisted despite the commute, income, and preparation. Every preparation before class took him two to three hours because he was always on the sequence of writing lesson plans, making teaching materials and having a rehearsal to leave nothing to chance. On weekdays, instead of relaxing after class, he taught at the school during his leisure time.



Ian's personality stemmed from his family background. He was born in a family that emphasized discipline, so Ian understood the importance of understanding others. His mother taught him to work hard, while his father taught him to listen, be empathetic, and treat others with kindness.

"If a teacher's world is big, the students' world becomes bigger too," he said.

The role of a teacher is to provide instructions that will not only facilitate learning but also facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills beyond the learning context. This belief made him not only teach English but also show his students the possibilities beyond their immediate surroundings. Through teaching English, Ian hoped to broaden his students' worldviews and created possibilities for their future lives.

This narrative is about more than just a university student's part-time work. Instead, it's about a student who chose to prioritize meaning above money and dedicated himself to endeavors that may not provide results but have long-term effects.

In a world where people view efficiency and salary as vital, Ian's choice stands in contrast. It's not an exaggerated and dramatic plan, but a warm and intentional decision.

And that is what makes Ian second to none. "Actually, for me, I am both a teacher and a student," Ian smiled. On one hand, the children's world was just a line connecting their little house near the foot of the mountain to the school. Yet, on the other hand, their imaginations constructed possibilities. As long as they saw hope, they became braver.

"They taught me contentment and gratitude," Ian said. Through observing the children's learning, Ian realized the disparity in educational resources between urban and rural areas. Unlike the students in Sanxia, others have chances to speak English, attend extracurricular activities and embrace the technology.

"Given educational resources, these children's academic performance would certainly not be worse than that of children in the city," said Ian. However, these children didn't complain. They cherished their time learning, and their eyes lit up as they strove to improve. Ian realized that he possessed much more than they did, but being able to give was his blessing.





Dancing in Ways that Infuse Balance, Vision and Unpredictability



Jason Kuo

Under the glare of stage lights, Phi realized something unsettling: no one was really looking at him. Not in the way he had imagined as a child, dancing against the studio's glass windows and chasing the attention of strangers. Twenty years later, standing on one of the largest stages in the Mandopop industry, he felt reduced to something else, not a creator but a component.

Born Zhang Yilin, he chose another name: Phi (Φ). The name grew out of a childhood nickname meaning “one-zero,” which he associates with the symbol Φ by merging the shapes of 1 and 0. Phi, the Greek letter, is commonly used to represent the golden ratio, a proportion associated with balance and harmony.

For him, the connection is personal. He describes himself as a balancer, someone who adjusts to the room, speaking more when others fall silent and stepping back when the space grows loud.

That sense of self began early. Phi's hunger for performance can be traced back to when he was five years old. Even before he understood dance, he was drawn to attention. Driven by a mother more proactive than himself, who would still take him to the studio even when he resisted, he found his way into dance almost by force. Those early years were spent at HRC Dance Studio in Taipei's Da'an District, a space that would become his foundation.

What kept him there, however, was not discipline but connection. In the studio, he met people from different backgrounds, all drawn together by the same interest. Movement replaced words. Understanding did not rely on explanation. It happened through the body.

Yet even in that shared space, another impulse took shape. From an early age, connection existed alongside competition. As a child, he developed a rivalry with a taller female student. The conflict escalated until she pushed him to the ground. Ten years later, they stood in the same front row, no longer rivals but familiar faces, talking until they were scolded by the teacher.

During his high school years, he clashed with his seniors. He rejected training methods that reduced dance to repetition. “I just felt their training methods were problematic,” he recalled. For him, practice without meaning became routine, not growth.

The conflict was about who gets to define what dance should be. Despite being dismissed, he held his ground through ability. The tension remained until the coach intervened, guiding both sides to move past it.

Looking back, Phi remembered how much he wanted to be seen. During breaks, he would run to the studio's windows and perform for parents outside. “I've been someone who loves to perform since I was a kid,” he said. At the time, his idol was Show Lo, a Taiwanese pop star known for his dance-driven performances, whom he describes as the Michael Jackson for Taiwanese kids.

His style shifted with time. He began with Locking, using it to express emotion. Around 2016, he transitioned to Hip Hop, building a more controlled persona. The shift was not only technical. It reflected a move toward structure, toward a version of himself that valued restraint as much as expression.



That quality is recognized by others in the field. “What draws me in is the sense of unpredictability,” notes Anon, a senior figure and fellow dancer in the same crew. He views Phi’s artistic and distinct style as a source of moments he can neither anticipate nor reproduce, which is ultimately what makes Phi stand out within the group.

Now 25, and nearly twenty years into his journey, Phi studies at the Department of Kinesiology, Sports and Performing Arts at the University of Taipei while balancing teaching and performance work. Since 2022, he has taught in a studio that holds around twenty students. Classes remain quiet. He speaks little, guiding through movement rather than instruction.

His students noticed the difference. Observing Phi’s restrained but precise teaching style, Mike Chen pointed out how the instructor speaks little yet guides with strong intention. “Phi’s dance is very artistic, fusing many elements in unexpected ways,” Chen explained, emphasizing that progress in the class accumulated gradually rather than being directly instructed.



For another student, Jerry Lin, the physical demands of the choreography leave a deep impression. “Because it requires strong balance and coordination,” Lin observed that the movement’s structure perfectly mirrors his instructor’s controlled and adaptive nature. Consequently, this made the training process both challenging and deeply detailed.

The routine is strict. He commutes forty minutes from Tamsui to Songshan, moving through train transfers and crowded platforms before arriving at the studio. Each class lasts an hour and fifteen minutes. Rehearsals for large-scale concerts fill the rest of his schedule. “The joy of guiding students step-by-step until they can follow my movements is irreplaceable,” he said.



Outside the studio, however, that sense of control begins to shift. His role in Jay Chou’s world tour brought him onto a larger stage, but not in the way he expected. “It wasn’t as exciting as I imagined,” he admitted. Rehearsals ran up to five days a week. Movements were fixed. Decisions came from elsewhere.

On stage, the realization became clear. “Once you’re up there, you feel that the audience isn’t really looking at us at all.”

The realization did not come with frustration so much as distance. What he had once imagined as the peak of performance began to feel like a system, one that valued precision over interpretation and consistency over intention. The structure was efficient, but it left little room for authorship. In that space, he began to understand the difference between executing movement and creating it.

However, over time, he began to see other paths. Some dancers have worked with Jay Chou for over twenty years. They have built stability, even recognition. Fans send gifts to their hotels.

That distance became clearer through another experience. A short dance video he filmed went viral, reaching over 350,000 views. Yet he felt no satisfaction. He had not choreographed the piece. The editing felt rough. The result did not feel like his.

He began to question what audiences respond to. In the digital age, visibility often comes from immediacy, strong visuals, physical energy, and quick impact. Trained dancers can deliver that, even without intention. But for Phi, that is not enough. Without authorship, the work feels detached.

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The distinction is clear for him. “Artists are defined by their vision, not their labor. Skill plus style makes you a craftsman, but skill without soul just makes you a puppet.” The statement does not reject discipline. It sets a boundary.

For now, dance remains central to his life. It is a practice, a language, and a way to move forward. But he no longer treats performance as the goal.

What he is searching for is control over what he creates, and how it takes form. If dance cannot offer that, he is prepared to leave it behind. Because for Phi, what matters is no longer whether he is seen, but whether what he creates is truly his.





Straddling between Two Worlds with Grit and Wits



Rose Gu

There are moments in student life between two worlds. One is the classroom, where learning follows assignments and exams. The other is the working world, where schedules continue beyond deadlines and fatigue. Diana Chiu, a senior at FLAL, exists in both worlds. She plans time, makes decisions, and defines her role as a university student through both experiences.

At 7:30 p.m., classrooms become empty and students leave their campus. Diana starts her next routine. She returns home and prepares for an online meeting. A few seconds later, her student joins. Diana begins the lesson. She reviews vocabulary, asks the student to read aloud, and corrects pronunciation through her headset.

Diana manages academic tasks and two part-time jobs. Her schedule includes classes, tutoring, and administrative work at the Indigenous Resource Center at NTPU. Diana must balance academic expectations with workplace responsibilities. She also uses these experiences to prepare for future career opportunities after graduation.

Her weekly routine follows a fixed structure. She attends classes from Monday to Friday. Between classes, she answers work messages, checks lesson schedules, and prepares tutoring materials. Sometimes she uses lunch breaks to revise presentations or print class notes before going to her next lecture. In the evening, she teaches online English lessons and later finishes homework or reading assignments.

Diana chose online teaching not only to save commuting time but also to gain flexible working hours that fit her academic schedule. In addition, the growing demand for online learning has provided more opportunities. Diana adapts teaching to a digital format. She prepares files, checks sound quality, and designs activities for screen-based learning.

During lessons, she asks students to turn on cameras and microphones. She begins with a short quiz. She shows vocabulary cards on screen, shares slides with images, and asks students to arrange words into sentences. When students mispronounce words, she repeats slowly and breaks words into syllables. When grammar errors appear, she writes corrected examples in chat. When students lose focus, she changes tasks.

Her teaching is not limited to error correction. She also watches facial expressions, pauses, and response speed in order to judge whether the student understands the material.

An incident during midterm season shows how she handles pressure in practice. On November 12, 2025, at around 8:00 p.m., Diana completed a long administrative shift before an evening tutoring session. She returned home, opened her laptop, and joined the meeting only a few minutes before class started. During the lesson, the student repeatedly made the same mistakes in sentence structure and became frustrated. The student stopped answering questions and looked away from the screen. The silence lasted several seconds.



Instead of continuing the planned lesson, Diana changed direction. She closed the grammar file, opened a picture-based vocabulary game, and asked the student to describe simple objects one by one. After several correct answers, the student began speaking again. She then returned to the original grammar topic.

“I was tired that day, but the student was more frustrated than I was. If I kept pushing the lesson plan, nothing would be learned. It was better to slow down first,” said Diana.

Her classmate from FLAL, Aria Liu, said, “Her timetable is full, but she follows it. She attends class, submits assignments, and logs in to work on time.” This pattern suggests that her routine depends less on motivation and more on consistency. Even when she feels tired, she still follows the plan.

Another classmate from FLAL, Elena Wang, commented, “When the student does not understand, she explains again in a different way. She does not rush.” This reflects a skill that is important in language teaching: presenting the same concept through multiple examples until it becomes clear.

Nova Huang, who worked with Diana in the administrative office at the Indigenous Resource Center of NTPU, said, “She checks details before submitting tasks. If there is an error, she corrects it immediately.”

Her tutoring experience also supports her university studies. Teaching grammar requires a clear explanation of sentence patterns. Teaching vocabulary requires knowing meaning, usage, and pronunciation. When students ask unexpected questions, she must think carefully before answering. As a result, tutoring becomes a second form of study. It forces her to review what she has learned in class and apply it in real situations.



Even with these benefits, the workload remains heavy. Balancing classes and work requires planning, emotional control, and repeated routines. She does not depend on last-minute effort. Instead, she uses calendars, reminders, and fixed schedules. She writes class deadlines in one planner and tutoring times in another digital calendar to avoid conflicts. Small habits such as preparing clothes the night before or packing books early in the morning help save time during busy days.

Beyond her structured schedule, Diana sometimes feels the pressure of switching roles within a single day, moving from student to teacher and back again. However, she gradually learns to accept this rhythm as part of her growth rather than a burden. These transitions help her understand both perspectives. When she is a student, she thinks about how teachers design lessons; when she is a tutor, she remembers how students struggle to learn.

“I arrange fixed responsibilities first. Then I use the remaining time for studying. If I do not plan ahead, I lose track of everything,” said Diana. Her system begins with non-negotiable tasks such as classes and work shifts, then adds study time around them.

Her experience also reflects a broader change in student life. University education now often includes work experience, financial responsibility, and professional skill development in addition to classroom learning. Many students move between these roles every week. Diana’s routine is one example of that shift.

Diana’s story is not built on dramatic achievements. It is built on repeated actions: attending class, opening her laptop for evening lessons, checking homework files, replying to messages, and managing time under pressure. Each action may seem small, but together they create a stable system.



Diana has learned to redefine success beyond grades or productivity. For her, success also means maintaining emotional stability and consistency in her daily routine. Even on days when she feels exhausted, she prioritizes completing essential tasks rather than giving up entirely.

This mindset allows her to sustain both academic and work responsibilities over a long period of time. She understands that growth is not achieved through sudden progress, but through continuous effort repeated every day.

Rather than separating study and work into two identities, Diana combines both into one daily structure. Her day continues beyond the classroom—not as an exception, but as a common reality for many students. She represents students who quietly manage responsibilities while continuing to move forward.



Learning to Ask the Right Questions as a Multiple Part-timer



Jonathan Wan

Most nights, before she goes to sleep, Aggie Chung writes a list for the version of herself who will wake up the next morning. The list contains the exact steps for her remote internship at a Taiwanese AI startup. She writes it at her rental apartment near campus in Sanxia, because she knows that at seven in the morning she will not be thinking clearly, and she has decided not to leave that version of herself without instructions.

Aggie is 21, a junior at FLAL. She currently works two jobs, a junior-high cram school class twice a week and the daily remote marketing internship. Aggie started with tutoring in her sophomore year, added a class at a cram school called Royal Elite English a semester later, and this past fall took on the remote role she found through Xiaoji Shanggong, a gig-work app popular among Taiwanese university students.

She has been teaching at Royal Elite English for about a year, and the work is harder than the hourly rate suggests. The students are not there because they want to be. Most of them have been signed up by their parents, and the room arrives every week pre-loaded with low-grade resentment.



Aggie understood the temptation early. She could collect the wage, do the minimum, and let the class drift. “If you go in just to collect the hourly pay,” she said, “it is painful. But if you go in wanting them to learn, it feels like you are doing something that matters.” The second mode, she discovered, was the only one she could survive. So she chose it, deliberately, week after week.

The class she is most often asked about tested that choice. A bright junior-high student, the daughter of one of the school’s managers, started getting up mid-lesson, ignoring instructions, and eventually announced she was leaving. Aggie raised her voice. She redirected her attention to the other students. Nothing worked. The girl had a kind of structural immunity. Her mother’s position at the school meant the usual consequences did not apply, and she knew it.

There was a version of the situation in which Aggie did nothing. The student would leave, the class would settle, and the problem would technically resolve itself. She thought about it. Then she chose against it. Instead of escalating, she stopped reacting and started watching.

The mother, she noticed, rarely asked about her daughter’s progress. Aggie pulled the student aside and learned that the lessons were too easy. The girl was bored, not defiant. The disruption on the surface, Aggie realized, was the wrong problem.

The real problem was that the class did not match what the student needed. “It taught me that when you solve a problem,” she said, “you have to look at what is actually causing it, not at what it looks like on the outside.”

She printed a harder worksheet calibrated to the student’s level, met with the mother to redesign the plan, and the student stayed. She is still in the class. Her test scores have climbed from the low seventies to a steady eighty. Aggie now describes classroom management as the skill she is proud of building, not because it lets her control a room, but because it forced her to read each student as an individual case.



Kevin, who teaches alongside her at Royal Elite, describes her as a study in contrast. Off the clock she is scattered, the kind of friend who forgets things and makes small, silly mistakes. “But once she’s working,” he said, “she’s unusually careful. You can see how seriously she takes the job and the students.”

The tutoring job, which she ended two months ago, produced her most uncomfortable observation about herself. “It was a shock to see how much my attitude set theirs,” she said. The unsettling part was the inverse. If she was the ceiling, then on a tired Friday she was lowering it. She has filed the observation under future use. If she ends up working in an office someday, she figures, the same physics will apply.

Ending the tutoring was the first decision Aggie made by weighing her future against her present. She was reluctant. She had watched the student grow over the course of a year, had built a relationship with the family, and had come to feel something like attachment. “I knew we would have to part eventually,” she said. “I also knew this was the right call for the long run.”



The internship, in the calculus she had quietly built, offered something the tutoring could not: proof of work outside a classroom, exposure to a real company, and an entry on her resume that did not start with the word student.

“This is the first job that feels like real work,” she said. Her title is marketing assistant, but the role has expanded to include redesigning the company website, optimizing navigation flows, and making the visual identity look, in her phrasing, more professional. Her manager hands her vague objectives and asks for her opinion on them. She is responsible for her own projects, and the autonomy was the part that surprised her.

She does not know whether marketing is what she wants to do, or whether the AI industry is where she wants to be. Family members suggest the civil service exam and the predictable retirement. Classmates talk about graduate school, studying abroad, stacking up language certifications while the GPA is still warm. Each plan is reasonable. None of them belongs to her.

The pressure beneath the advice is real. Taiwan’s unemployment rate for 20-to-24-year-olds runs around 12 percent, the highest of any age band, and a recent National Taiwan University tracking study found that nearly two in ten of its bachelor’s graduates were still not working five years after leaving school. The window between graduation and a stable job has widened. Aggie is staring at it.

The uncertainty is not new. It has followed her since high school, a low hum that has grown louder as graduation approaches. She does not have a dream industry. She does not have a dream company. When she thinks about the years after graduation, she said, the picture is not wrong. It is missing.



What she has, instead of a plan, is a method. Look for the cause underneath the symptom. She learned that from the student who almost left. Watch what your own energy does to the people around you. She learned that on Friday nights. Build a system that survives your own bad days. She learned that from a job no one is supervising.

The method is portable. The destination is not yet selected. On most evenings she opens her notebook and writes tomorrow’s list. It is a short document. It covers the next twelve hours. The years beyond that, she said, are something she is still learning to ask the right questions about.



Teaching English Like a Magician and a Secret Agent



Howard Yang

The sound of exuberant laughter and the rhythmic clapping of hands spilled out of a brightly lit classroom on a Tuesday afternoon, cutting through the typically hushed atmosphere of the neighborhood. Inside, at the center of a circle of wide-eyed eight-year-olds, stood Vivian Chen, an English teacher since September 4, 2025.

She spent three hours a week preparing her lectures. To the outside world, she was an English teacher at a local children's language center, but to her students, she was a storyteller, a mentor, and occasionally, a secret agent in the world of linguistics. Her presence was magnetic, a blend of boundless energy and a quiet, observant patience that suggested she saw far more than just whether a student had finished their workbook.



Vivian's journey into education was not a straight path, but one paved with a genuine love for communication. Armed with a vibrant personality and a knack for making the complex feel simple, she spent years transforming the way children perceived a foreign language.

"English shouldn't be a wall that kids had to climb," Vivian said, adjusting a colorful flashcard. "It should be a door they were excited to open. My goal was to make sure they weren't just memorizing words, but found their own voices and personalities within a new tongue."

Every veteran teacher had a repertoire of war stories from the classroom, and Vivian was no exception. Some of her most cherished memories came from her early days, when she balanced the grueling schedule of a part-time teacher with her own university studies.

To break the ice with a particularly shy group of third graders, Vivian designed an elaborate Secret Agent Identification game that required students to use description vocabulary to solve a mystery.

"I told them they were all undercover spies and had to describe a suspect using only English adjectives," Vivian laughed, her eyes sparked at the memory. "One boy, usually quiet in the back, got so into character that he decided the suspect, which was actually just a drawing of a cat, was a dangerous, stinky tofu-loving criminal."



Vivian realized that when the pressure to be correct was replaced by the permission to be silly, the language flowed naturally. It was this philosophy of playful immersion that made her one of the most beloved instructors at her center. Whether she acted out the movements of a hyperactive kangaroo to teach verbs or staged a mock trial over who stole the classroom's favorite eraser, Vivian ensured that every lesson was an experience rather than a lecture.

To truly understand Vivian's impact, one had to talk to the children who occupied her small plastic chairs every week. The consensus was overwhelmingly positive, characterized by a level of enthusiasm rarely seen in traditional academic settings. These students didn't just attend class; they participated in a world Vivian built for them.

"Teacher Vivian was like a magician," said 9-year-old Leo Chou, who had been in Vivian's class for over a year. "Before, I hated English because the grammar was like math; it was just rules and formulas. But Vivian made us play games where we had to use the words to win. Last week, we pretended we were stranded on a desert island and had to negotiate for supplies. I forgot I was even speaking English until the class was over. I just wanted to make sure I got the imaginary coconuts."

Another student, 11-year-old Amy Wang, pointed to Vivian's emotional support as the reason for her newfound confidence. "I used to be very scared of making mistakes with my pronunciation," Amy explained. "But Teacher Vivian told us that mistakes were just language sparkles, showing that we were trying. Now, even if I said something wrong, I didn't feel embarrassed. I just laughed and tried again."

Parents, too, noticed the shift. Mrs. Lin, whose son was previously a silent observer in other cram schools, described Vivian's classroom as a miracle zone. "My son used to drag his feet every Tuesday," Mrs. Lin shared. "Now, he was in the car ten minutes early, practicing his English jokes. Vivian didn't just teach him English; she taught him that it was okay to be heard."

For Vivian, the job extended beyond the four walls of the classroom or the metrics of a standardized test. She viewed her role as a bridge-builder between cultures. In an increasingly globalized world, she believed that learning English was a fundamental tool for empathy and global citizenship.

"When a child learned a new language, they were learning that there were other ways to see the world," Vivian explained. "They learned that a dog was still a dog even if you called it something else. It taught them flexibility, openness, and the understanding that their way wasn't the only way."



This perspective was particularly evident in how she handled students who struggled with traditional learning. One particularly touching story involved a student named Kevin, who struggled with a severe stutter that made oral participation a nightmare. Instead of calling on him to speak in front of the whole class, Vivian started a Correspondence Corner. They exchanged short, written notes in English every day, discussing everything from movies to what they ate for lunch.

Over time, as Kevin's confidence grew, he began to whisper the words to Vivian during one-on-one sessions. Slowly, those whispers became full sentences. At that time, Kevin was one of the most vocal participants in her class. "He realized his voice had value," Vivian said softly. "And the language was just the vehicle to prove it."



As the sun began to set, casting long, golden shadows across the colorful posters on the wall, Vivian began to pack up her materials. Her energy, however, remained undiminished. While the demands of the private education sector were high, filled with late nights of grading and the constant pressure to reinvent lessons, Vivian found her fuel in the small, quiet victories.

"There were mornings where I was on my third cup of coffee before 10 AM," she admitted with a wink. "But then a student told me they finally understood a cartoon they watched in English, or they used a word we learned the previous week in a creative way, and the exhaustion vanished. You couldn't stay tired when you were surrounded by that much potential."

Looking ahead, Vivian hoped to expand her reach by developing a curriculum that incorporated more drama and creative arts into language learning. She was also a firm believer in the power of digital storytelling and often used interactive media to engage her tech-savvy students.

The story of Vivian Chen was a testament to the fact that education was not about filling a bucket but lighting a fire. Through her humor, her resilience, and her unwavering belief in her students, she did more than just teach English; she helped her students navigate the world with confidence. As young Leo put it: "When I grew up, I wanted to speak English just like Vivian. Not just the words, but the heart."



A Freshman's Taste of a Part-time Job at Starbucks



Jim Cham

For many people, wearing the Starbucks green apron may look chill and elegant. It seems like a part-time job filled with coffee aroma, soft music, and friendly conversations. But for Vincent Chen, a freshman who started working there three months ago, it has been a deep look into how an international company works.

Initially, he he just wanted to try working in a cafe. After an interview last year, he began his first part-time job at Starbucks, the largest coffee brand in the world with over 38,000 stores globally. To him, the job seemed like a chance to experience a different environment from school.

One of Vincent's earliest memories from his first 90 days did not happen while he was making coffee, but at a company event. Only one month after he started, he attended the company's Spring Banquet. Starbucks Taiwan holds annual banquets that can bring together 300 to 500 employees from different stores in the same region, and he was shocked by the scale of the event.

"I was surprised by the scale of the event," Vincent said. "It was the first time I felt like, wow, I'm actually working for a huge international company." This moment made him realize that he was not just working at a local shop, but was part of a large brand chain.

Yet as the initial excitement settled in, some of the imagination he brought to the job gradually died down. Before he started, Vincent imagined a cafe as a comfortable environment, but the reality was tougher than he expected. During high school, he worked at his family's company on a factory assembly line and did office work. In comparison, Starbucks gave him a different kind of tiredness."

In the factory, it was all about machines and paperwork," he said. "But here, a huge part of the shift is just cleaning and scrubbing everything. It's really tiring, and the pace is fast."

For Vincent, the biggest difference was that the work rarely paused. "Even when there were no customers in line, there were still cups to wash, counters to clean, ingredients to refill, food to heat, and equipment to organize," he noted. This made him realize that cafe work was not only about making drinks, but also about keeping the store running.

During peak hours, the pressure became clearer. Orders kept coming in while drinks still needed to be prepared and cleaning tasks continued in the background. "Sometimes it feels like everything is happening at the same time," Vincent recalled. "You just try to keep up and not make mistakes."



A worker may have to face 60 to 80 customers per hour during peak times, and closing cleanup at a Starbucks store takes 30 to 60 minutes each night. Workers also have to keep their smile while taking orders, no matter how tired they are.

This experience changed the way Vincent saw service workers. Before, he did not think much about what happened behind the counter after a customer placed an order. He came to understand that each drink was connected to a series of small tasks, and a delay in one step could slow down the next person.

On the practical side of the job, Vincent was honest about the pay and benefits. While perks like getting two free drinks per shift and discounts on merchandise existed, the hourly wage of NT\$196 left him and his friends feeling uncertain.

"Everyone I know was surprised by the pay," Vincent said. "For such a big brand, you expect a little bit more."

A five-hour shift would bring him NT\$980 before deductions. If he worked three shifts a week, that was about NT\$2,940 per week, or around NT\$11,760 per month. "If you're only working to solve a financial problem, this might not be the best job, because the work is really intense for that level of salary," he noted.

Despite the workload and base salary, Vincent still found value in the experience. "You can still give it a try if you want to experience how a large company operates, build your network, and learn how to communicate with different kinds of people," he explained.



The positive side of the job came from learning new skills. Vincent enjoyed understanding how seasonal promotions were designed, how products were introduced to customers, and how efficiency improved over time.

When a new drink or seasonal product was launched, employees had to understand what it was, how it was made, and how to explain it to customers. These details helped him understand how a structured company operated.

This focus on communication and collaboration contrasted with his personality. Vincent described himself as an introvert who needed alone time to recharge after being around people. However, he found that he was good at handling customers because he was patient and easygoing. Taking orders also forced him to speak more than he normally would, so the job became a communication practice.

Surprisingly, his biggest source of stress did not come from customers, but from the fear of not contributing enough to the team.

"I don't really feel much pressure from the customers," Vincent admitted. "My biggest fear is dragging the team down, always worried if I'm too slow or make a mistake."

Since cafe work depended heavily on timing and coordination, even a small delay could affect the entire

workflow. This sense of responsibility kept him focused, especially when he had to rush straight from his final class to start his 5:30 PM shift



This reliability also appeared in his campus life. According to Vincent's classmate Vicky Chen, who worked with him on FLAL Night as part of the artistic design department. "Although Vincent is quiet in a group setting, he still manages to finish all the tasks that he is assigned without complaint," said Vicky. His actions in school matched the same steady pattern he showed at work.

Another classmate, Jimmy Huang, said, "Sometimes he is a bit careless, but his learning speed is fast." These observations suggested that Vincent adapted quickly and took responsibility seriously, both at work and in school.

Looking ahead, Vincent did not plan to stay in the food and beverage industry. He saw Starbucks as a way to gain social experience and understand how large companies operated. His next goal was to try tutoring or working in education.

"I'm using this job to see how the real world works," he explained. "But in the future, I want to try teaching. Everything I haven't tried feels fresh and new," he explained.

Although Starbucks might not directly match his future career plan, the experience gave him skills that could be used elsewhere. Patience, communication, time management, and the ability to work under pressure are not limited to cafe work.

Vincent may not stay behind the counter forever, but the pace, pressure, and interactions he experienced each shift shaped how he approached work and responsibility. The coffee may be part of the job, but the experience extended far beyond it.





High School Printing Gig Turned into an Adroit Designer



Hanni Liu

Nowadays, being a slasher is common even for college students. For most students, being in charge of club posters means a lot of extra work. But for Sylvie Huang, it accidentally became a portfolio that landed her a job.

Since she is not a design major, she had to build her skills from scratch by helping out with school guitar clubs. This journey turned a campus hobby into a real job, which was her way of proving what she could do while still being a student.

Back in high school, Sylvie was the design and PR officer for the student guitar club of Zhongli Senior High School. One of the guitar club members, Karen Wu, noted, “She has an ability to make things pretty.”

When events approached, promotion became a top priority. As a dedicated member of the guitar club, Karen often focused on the musical performances, where sets of ten songs were common. She understood that student club officers received no salary, so she was thankful for Sylvie’s year-long dedication as a sophomore.



Whenever Sylvie and Karen’s club needed flyers or banners printed for events, they worked with the owner of a local shop, Simple Production, a company specializing in custom merchandise, marketing print materials, and event lighting and sound systems. This was how she first met the owner, Yuan Yu.

Yuan didn’t just like her designs; he liked how she handled the work. “Sometimes I even think that her work is much better than any other employees in my company,” he said.

After entering NTPU, Sylvie continued demonstrating her ability of designing in the guitar club. Yuan saw her getting better and better. As a result, they had a constant need to showcase photos of their finished products and event highlights on social media to attract collaborations with schools and organizations.



This was where Sylvie’s role became crucial—managing these visuals to help the company build its professional presence. As Sylvie moved on to university, they kept going back to the same shop for college club events and competition materials.

By early 2025, Yuan had seen enough to know he wanted to work with Sylvie. He decided to skip the formal interviews and gave her a call to offer her a steady job: he wanted her to take over the layout design for his company’s social media accounts on a long-term basis.

Sometimes, getting hired wasn’t about submitting the perfect resume. It was simply about consistently doing good work and making sure the right people saw it.

"This job is an incredibly valuable opportunity for me to gain experience," noted Sylvie. "I don't have a major in a related field and lacked freelance experience, I felt like a product on a shelf with no brand or information. I see this job as the starting point for my career, and I hope to use this experience to expand my clientele and the scope of my design projects."

However, since Sylvie was not an independent freelancer, her projects were assigned through Simple Production, which sometimes limited her creative control. She also faced the reality of a relatively low hourly wage when considering the intensive time spent on each project.

On the technical side, Sylvie often encountered raw material challenges—such as poor-quality event photos that were difficult to transform into aesthetically pleasing social media posts.

Furthermore, the lack of clear communication from clients often led to endless revisions, and in some cases, her final designs were either discarded or modified into versions that clashed with her own artistic standards.



"I have to accept it when my work is changed into something I don't like," she admitted. "After all, the client paid for it, and I should do my best to make sure they get a product they are satisfied with."

She noted that when the number of revisions kept growing and the working hours extended, it became unfair to her. "If I want to become a fully independent freelancer, I must establish clear contracts first," she explained.

For her, it was about protecting her own rights and ensuring that her creativity didn't burn out in a cycle of endless, unpaid changes. Despite these ongoing hurdles, these experiences provided Sylvie with a level of professional maturity.

Sylvie has worked in this role for over a year. The company assigned about one project per week, totaling four per month, while her personal freelance work ranged from four to six projects monthly. Although this might seem modest, it was quite demanding for a full-time student. Every week, Sylvie had to go through about 500 photos from events, and honestly, a lot of them were not of great quality.

A single project typically involved three social media posts, each containing 16 internal pages. She had to pick out the best 70 to 100 pictures and figure out how to make them look professional on social media. Each post took her about four hours to finish. Sylvie noted that including her personal commissions, she worked approximately four days a week, which was comparable to the hours of a standard part-time job.



Regarding compensation, the company paid approximately NT\$750 per post. Based on an average labor time of 3.5 hours, this resulted in an hourly rate of about NT\$214. In contrast, Sylvie estimated her personal freelance work at an hourly rate of NT\$350. She evaluated each project based on complexity and volume, accounting for consultation, ideation, and production to provide clients with a fixed quote. Once a client agreed and the project began, she adhered to the original price. If the work exceeded the estimated time due to her own process, she did not charge any additional fees.

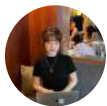
Starting as a beginner, this lower pay allowed her to build a portfolio while learning to handle massive amounts of data under pressure. The jump from NT\$214 to NT\$350 reflected her self-valuation. Leading to better contracts and clearer boundaries, she moved from the classroom toward the professional market.

Looking back, Sylvie learned a lot about her own worth. She used to feel like an unlabeled product on a shelf, just hoping someone would pick her. Although the hourly wage from corporate projects was not high for her, she always viewed the opportunity given to her by Yuan as a gift. She believed that the experience gained through this work provided a level of professional growth that far outweighed any salary measurement. She learned how to handle difficult clients and how to protect herself with better contracts.

For Sylvie, this part-time work was more than just a way to make a living; instead, it was a real-world experiment. Moving from the NT\$214 hourly rate of corporate assignments to the NT\$350 autonomous rate of her freelance work, she was gradually transitioning from a student to a professional designer capable of facing market challenges. Working four days a week created a demanding schedule; however, every night she spent working late was another brick added to the clear and solid foundation of her future professional identity.



Untold Stories Behind the Green Apron with Coffee Aroma



Tiffany Yang

Working in a coffee shop appears to be a glamorous occupation for college students. However, behind every green apron, there are countless untold stories of adaptation and endurance.

Evelyn Kao is a junior at FLAL. Like many college students, she wanted to make the most of her spare time, so she decided to take a part-time job as a partner at a Starbucks near the campus. Her motivation extended beyond earning a basic income; Evelyn also hoped to gain practical social experience, learn how to operate within a professional team environment, and personally explore the coffee industry she had always been interested in.

Her work involves high foot traffic and continuous physical labor. Based on internal store statistics and Evelyn's observations, the specific branch she serves handles an average of over 300 customer groups daily.

This means that during peak hours, baristas must complete order taking, beverage preparation, and store cleaning within a highly compressed timeframe. The beverage preparation process itself demands technical precision. A barista must pull espresso shots within a specific time window, steam milk to exact temperatures, and pump specific amounts of flavored syrups, all while maintaining a clean workspace.

"The hourly wage feels disproportionate to the actual workload," said Evelyn. At Starbucks, Evelyn's daily checklist includes memorizing the formulas and ratios of dozens of items, executing complex in-store hygiene procedures, and operating the POS system.

Every minute of labor is highly concentrated, making this psychological gap an objective reality faced by many student part-timers.

Looking back at her three-month probationary period, the primary obstacle stemmed from information overload and personality adaptation. Identifying as an introvert, she had to learn how to proactively converse with unfamiliar customers and accurately process system settings in a very short period.

Early in her employment, while still unfamiliar with the POS interface, she made a mistake processing a middle-aged female customer's order, resulting in an incorrect billing amount. The customer showed extreme impatience in the queue, rolling her eyes directly at Evelyn and continuously complaining about her lack of professionalism and the inefficiency of the refund process.

"That was the first time facing a customer's negative emotions," Evelyn recalled. That experience induced anxiety toward counter operations and even made her question whether she possessed the personality traits required for the service industry. This incident reflects the process of developing psychological resilience in an environment completely devoid of a buffer period.



However, continuous action brought about change. Toby Chen, the store's shift manager, observed her improvement during high-pressure periods. "Initially, Evelyn struggled with the rapid pace of the POS system and the complexity of customized drinks. However, she has now developed a systematic workflow," Ms. Chen noted.

"Last Friday during peak hours, when the main espresso machine suddenly malfunctioned, she didn't panic. Instead, she redirected the queue to the second register and offered alternative beverages. Watching her handle the crisis with composure proved she has adapted to the high-intensity environment," said Ms. Chen

Time management is another challenge. Evelyn averages 20 scheduled work hours per week, while her academic workload is far from light. Maintaining a fixed 20 working hours weekly poses a massive challenge to her physical stamina and time management. "Balancing academic requirements with service industry shifts is harder than I expected," Evelyn explained.

Prolonged high-frequency standing and managing a large customer volume often leave her exhausted after work, and her remaining rest time is frequently insufficient to handle heavy academic reviews.

Yet, she has not let her studies slip. Aggie Chung, her classmate at FLAL, witnessed her discipline firsthand. "Evelyn is one of the most disciplined people I know," Aggie said. "Even though Evelyn goes straight to work after class, she never used fatigue as an excuse to delay our group projects. She utilizes her break times between classes to finish her share of the work."

Aggie recalled instances where Evelyn would pull out her laptop during a mere ten-minute break, drafting reports and researching reference materials on a keyboard that still carried a faint aroma of roasted coffee beans.



She noted that because this is her first job, her parents were initially quite worried about how she would manage to balance the demanding hours with her studies. "My dad told me recently that seeing me grow from a quiet student who usually avoided conflict into a resilient professional who can patiently handle customer complaints has been highly gratifying," Evelyn relayed.

Through her father's eyes, she clearly demonstrated the intrinsic value of earned income and a true understanding of financial independence. "He mentioned that what makes him proud is seeing me apply the problem-solving skills I've learned at the store to my daily life," she added, reflecting on her family's continued support.

As her working hours accumulated, Evelyn's transformation manifested in the trust she earned from her colleagues. During busy afternoons, senior coworkers no longer constantly supervised her. Instead, they directly handed over crucial stations, asking, "Evelyn, can you handle this position?" This simple inquiry marked her transition from an observer to a collaborator.



Beyond technical operations, Evelyn's communication patterns also evolved. She began to proactively observe customer needs. For example, recommending suitable coffee beans based on their preferences, and started building connections during brief interactions. She noted that when customers provided satisfied feedback due to her professional recommendations, that immediate positive feedback loop became one of the driving forces sustaining her work in a high-pressure environment.

The four months at Starbucks impacted Evelyn far beyond what is taught at school. She learned how to maintain composure through deep breathing and seek viable solutions when facing sudden crises. This caliber of crisis management capability is difficult for a traditional classroom environment to provide.

Summarizing this experience, she believes that working at Starbucks is not merely a process of making beverages, but a practical lesson in interpersonal interaction. Despite facing the squeeze of academics and work, she still views this as a vital window for self-improvement.

Now, Evelyn can handle peak-hour foot traffic and various unexpected emergencies. Evelyn has grown into a reliable partner who understands that every cup of coffee is an opportunity to connect with others. Her experience proved that a part-time job is not just a way to fill free time, but a crucial stage for personal growth.

Ultimately, the green apron she ties tightly around her waist before every shift represents much more than a corporate uniform, it has become a profound symbol of her ongoing journey toward professionalism and confidence. As she looks toward her remaining university years and her eventual career, she carries these hard-earned lessons with her. She knows that the resilience, patience, and empathy forged behind the busy espresso machine will continue to guide her long after she hangs up her apron.



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