

Go GoChinese!

An interview with Managing Director of Gowell Software, Linda Wu

高威软件有限公司董事总经理吴天丽专访

I COULD LITERALLY TAKE A CHINESE MAGAZINE ARTICLE, PASTE IT INTO GOWELL'S GOCHINESE SOFTWARE AND HAVE A CHINESE LESSON AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

GoChinese has linguistic engines that automatically generate the voice, Pinyin and English definitions for any Chinese text. To ensure accurate definitions, GoChinese also detects where words begin and end. This online platform provides formatting and layout tools, adding graphics and video links. Teachers and publishers benefit from being able to easily create multimedia-rich learning courses; and students gain from having access to a much wider range of online learning resources.

A UNIVERSITY STUDY REPORTS THAT STUDENTS USING GOCHINESE ACHIEVED HIGHER TEST SCORES. WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM DO YOU THINK HELPED ACCOMPLISH THIS?

Students have told us that they find GoChinese easy to use—they can simply click, highlight and point to activate learning functions anywhere in a lesson. Students also often credit the wide range of details provided by GoChinese. The platform

doesn't second-guess what a student knows or doesn't know.

WHAT OTHER FUNCTIONS OF THE PROGRAM ARE POPULAR?

When we first launched, we thought that the voice features would be the most popular ones. However, upon polling students, we found that both the definition displays and online exercises are equally popular. Students tell us they always want chances to practice, and they like our instant scoring and online competition/ranking features.

DO YOU THINK TECHNOLOGY CAN REPLACE REAL FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION WHEN IT COMES TO LEARNING A LANGUAGE?

I think that technology does not serve to replace the teacher as language is often irregular and nuanced. Every student is different and every class is different. It's important for teachers to recognize the needs of their students and also inspire and lead them. Technology is here to support the learning process as it lets students learn faster. The current limitations with video conferencing still make face-to-face communications the

PIONEER PROFILE

Linda Wu

Profession: Managing Director, Gowell Software
Nationality: Chinese

Linda Wu founded Gowell together with her father, Apollo Wu, on a mission to develop world-class language and education technologies. But she wasn't always in the education business. Wu started her career as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley in New York and Hong Kong in the early 1990s, and thereafter held senior positions at several leading corporations, working most recently as CFO of Sun Hung Kai Properties' technology arm, iAdvantage/SUNeVision.



predominant format of language classes. However, as Internet performance improves, online classes will increase in popularity.

WHAT DO YOU THINK CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE CHINESE TEACHING IN GENERAL?

Cultural understanding is always important to language learning. I think it's very important to also allow students to view culture with a modern and updated mindset. I remember going to a language conference in which the Chinese team performed a simple, traditional folk dance and the Spanish team featured a catchy, Spanish hip-hop song—the latter was far more popular.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR PEOPLE LEARNING AND TEACHING CHINESE?

While I am from a Cantonese-speaking family, I'm fortunate that my parents had the foresight to provide Putonghua lessons for me. I'm also grateful that I have a solid foundation in Hanyu Pinyin, which I believe is key for teaching and learning Chinese. My command of Pinyin allows me to not only to speak more accurately, but also rapidly increase my vocabulary. Many times, I remember the pronunciation of a word through Pinyin. I can take rapid notes in Pinyin, and figure out the Chinese characters later. My Chinese is also quite fluent on SMS (Short Messaging Service), with Pinyin serving as my input method—an important skill today!

- NICHOLAS RICHARDS (芮尼克)