

ENGLISH ROUNDTABLE: Emotions in Learning

September 9, 2008

06: 00 GMT

Damon Anderson: Everyone, please feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments before the session begins.

Damon Anderson: There are some good questions already submitted. We will get to them shortly. Please feel free to ask any questions or make any comments. We will start in about 5 minutes.

Damon Anderson: Let me start with a short story by Patricia Vail:

She heard a noise in her house and went to her basement. Once she admitted that she thought there were people in her basement coming her way she went into full gear fear! She says, "I put down the book I was reading hands trembling, mouth dry, and tiptoed to the telephone area. I got out the directory, listening to the increasingly loud sounds, and tried to find the listing for the Town Police. But I was so scared, I couldn't find the number. The noises got louder. Nearer too! I couldn't remember the alphabet. I couldn't make the telephone book work! So, I called 911."

She said that the fear had put a barrier between her and her own knowledge and information. She hadn't even been able to use the alphabet.

Damon Anderson: Welcome everyone!! Let's begin. Don't let fear of responding or sending a comment keep you from participating!!

JJ: Can't we say that emotion is another word for immaturity? And more emotional students = more immature and thus more of a challenge to teach?

Damon Anderson: Let me answer JJ's question by saying that based on the story I just told, emotion is not another word for immaturity.

Jeff: I hope to hear about fear (of failure) and embarrassment (over-monitoring) in language learning at one point because these are my 2 big problems learning Chinese. I wonder about those learning English.

Damon Anderson: Jeff, the story I just told is an example of the fear you mentioned.

JJ: Also, how do you view use of medicine to control emotions in children? It would seem to be a modern phenomenon of treating strong emotions as a disease to be controlled. I'm sorry I cannot stay with you but I will be back later perhaps.

Damon Anderson: Fear can block the brain from functioning fully as we would like it to.

LC Karachi: As you had provided an excellent example how emotion detract knowledge & information. These emotions always plays a vital role even in a profession? So do we have to get rid of these or to divert these to be more creative?

Damon Anderson: Yes, JJ. We need to get rid of the emotions that block brain function. This is why Krashen put an emphasis on the affective domain.

Jeff: As you had provided an excellent example how emotion detract knowledge & information. These emotions always plays a vital role even in a profession? So do we have to get rid of these or to divert these to be more creative?

Damon Anderson: Yes, JJ. We need to get rid of the emotions that block brain function. This is why Krashen put an emphasis on the affective domain.

Jeff: Does anyone have a tip how they overcome fear to just start speaking in a second language?

Damon Anderson: This is a great question, Jeff.

Webchat Moderator: Hi everyone, Damon is taking your questions now. You may notice that sometimes our chat tool will post yur question under the wrong screen name. We apologize for this and will look into fixing this glitch.

kun herrini: I have read that the emotion of fear in humans causes the human brain to want to flee as if from a physixal threat. So hi emotions in studdents may also cause this reaction and just like this example u mention..the mind cannot function and certainly not to learn!

Damon Anderson: Helping a student to build confidence is something teachers should do in their classes. When you always criticize students, you aren't helping them to build the necessary confidence.

LC Karachi: How emotions could be used in Learning Process

Damon Anderson: LC, we need to reduce the emotions that impede learning and practice.

Ping: I feel more confident when I discovered that many, if not everyone, will have fear when they speak in a second language. So it happens to everyone, and that I'm not alone--to answer Jeff's question about feeling comfortable speaking in a foreign language. What about others?

Damon Anderson: Interesting point, Ping.

kun herrini: Overcome fear? From What I learn so far, people always say: Know what you are talking is the key

Damon Anderson: Yes, knowing about the subject is important, so is knowing how to express your ideas.

Jeff: How about on the street, in real life situations. How do people overcome fear of speaking?

Damon Anderson: Jeff, students need to develop a shield against fear of not being perfect and fear of making mistakes.

kun herrini: Continuing Ping's point, I think 'practice' is always best, and also, of course, experience

Damon Anderson: Yes, practice is great. But most classes are large and teachers don't give students enough time to practice.

Webchat Moderator: Hi everyone, since we seem to be having some glitches with the chat software, please include your screen name along with your question. That way Damon Anderson will know exactly who is asking the question. We apologize if your question appears under the wrong screen name.

kun herrini: TO help my talk, I always prepare pointers/notes

Damon Anderson: Kun, that is good when preparing a presentation, but how about Jeff's question regarding just speaking on the street?

Jeff: Yes. Yes. Yes. I must do as I teach and read about in language teaching books/journals. Jeff

Damon Anderson: Jeff, sometimes I think language teachers make the worst language students. It's like doctors make the worst patients. We expect too much of ourselves.

Ping: I've discovered that it helps to build up confidence in young kids by being generous about encouraging words. Somehow I think that applies to adult learners, too. Even the recognition of a tiny progress can motivate people to learn more and try harder.

Damon Anderson: Yes, Ping. Positive feedback is very important.

LC Karachi: well role plays could be use as good to eliminate the fears of learning ESL

Damon Anderson: Role plays are great, but only to an extent. After a while, the students in a class become very comfortable with each other, regardless of the roles.

kun herrini: Ping, I absolutely agree with you.

Phanisara: We have to let the students aware of some techniques to be calm when practicing their English. And to concentrate on getting the meaning and thoughts across, instead of focusing too much on perfecting their grammar.

Damon Anderson: Excellent point Nina.

LC Karachi: In South Asia, there is a trend of teaching students with a predefined majors, this does not involve the students, resulting in a lack of confidence in children, how to deal with this kind of elder who suffered with this

Damon Anderson: LC, can you explain this more? I am not sure I understand exactly.

kun herrini: Real talking to real strangers is hard. However I sometimes have to let the students experience directly and we observe from afar, only to find out that they are more confident than we thought. But if they know we are around, they will rely on us.

Damon Anderson: Kun, I find that as a language learner I too rely on someone I think is better with the language than I am. When you weren't around, my Bahasa Indonesia was fairly adequate. When you were around, I couldn't function in it.

LC Karachi: hi, its good to have you with us today

Damon Anderson: Was that due to fear of not wanting to look bad in front of you, or was it just laziness on my part?

Ping: Jeff, I have different experience. I have no problem talking to strangers. But I would hesitate, and may decide not to talk at all before someone I know. I guess that's because I set goals for the would-be communication, and I'm not sure that I can make it

Damon Anderson: Interesting differences Ping.

LC Karachi: does point to point correction to kids in their speaking sessions put a negative impact on their learning? or is it good for them?

Damon Anderson: LC, correction is good if it is constructive and done in a positive manner.

Ping: Kun, could you share with us how you helped students or teacher-trainees overcome their fear of speaking and teaching in English?

Jeff: Yes, that's definitely my #1 problem, but I'm still too reticent to speak. Thanks for clarifying Ping. From: Jeff

Damon Anderson: I feel the same way as Ping, actually. I will use my terrible Mandarin in front of strangers, but tend not to use with Ping and others I know.

Phanisara: I agree. Constructive criticism is useful. Not just to criticize without also providing along suggested solutions.

Jeff: Yes! (Jeff)

kun herrini: For example, if I go out of town with foreigners, and we were in a class, I gave them time to talk to the F, they were hesitated. But if I leave them (excusing myself to the restroom for example), when I returned, they were in animated communication already.

Damon Anderson: Yes, Kun. Because you are the knower and the assessor and the teacher.

Damon Anderson: Sometimes relationships play a role. It depends on the comfort level the students have with the teacher and how that translates to out of the class as well.

LC Karachi: I meant when you correct someone or criticize somebody, it put an impact on his emotional behavior & it stops responding at the level it was before?

Damon Anderson: Yes.

Ping 2: Jeff, last time you said your students are so wonderful and they are your motivation for working hard. What are the characteristics that set them apart from other less motivated students?

Phanisara: Good point LC Karachi.

kun herrini: what?? smile... I also found out that my daughter would chat with people when we were in the US last time, when I was not around her. And Damon you know very well that she is so quiet.

Damon Anderson: I think that the emotion of relationships is a key factor in our ability to communicate.

Jeff: I admire their Diligence in preparation/self-study. Also, they seek out opportunities to speak English with native and nonnative English speakers even if shy. That's impressive (Jeff)

Phanisara: As teachers, we need to really know our students strength in their approach to learning English. Students themselves might not even be aware of their own strength. This will encourage them to use what they have and build upon their own learning tasks.

Damon Anderson: We also need to be more aware of how students respond to being called on, put in front of the class, or react to tests.

Damon Anderson: Someone asked me once if it would be a good idea to give our students the Myers-Briggs test to see what their personalities are.

Damon Anderson: Then we could figure out to some extent what things might stress our students out.

Jeff: Yes! Teachers often forget this (Jeff)

Jeff: I learned to remember this in language study this summer when I was the student. (Jeff)

Ping: Agree to both Nina and Jeff.

kun herrini: I agree. As you said, because teachers are the knower and the assessor and the teacher, then maybe when in class we have to be aware when to be the knower, the assessor, etc. So, students will not be stressed out and willing to practice more.

Jeff: I will survey my students with anonymous periodic written surveys this year to get student feedback on their feeling emotions of my teaching style. I can push too hard (Jeff)

kun herrini: Yes, I did try to bring that to the classroom, but for teachers to be. It worked well, and brought us to a new understanding.

Damon Anderson: So, I think that we all agree that fear is an emotional factor that can impede language learning.

Damon Anderson: But so are anger, mistrust, and apprehension.

Damon Anderson: I heard once that if someone had a bad experience with a person from a country in which the language that person is learning is spoken, it can affect the attitude and therefore affect the learning of the language.

Damon Anderson: So, emotion is a factor in learning.

Damon Anderson: I have learned that if I am comfortable with laughing at myself and my mistakes while learning a foreign language, I do much better than

when I am so uptight about making mistakes and looking foolish. Have any of you had this same experience?

Ping: what about more positive emotions such as pride, excitement, curiosity, self-dignity etc.?

kun herrini: Yes, Damon. I experience that once. Associating the negative experience with the language

kun herrini: A few days ago I read a quotation saying: We teachers are busy thinking affective teaching, but less on affective learning. I smiled when I read it. I tried to find it just now, just to make sure I quoted correctly, but could not find it yet.

Damon Anderson: Ping, the positive emotions are the ones we want to encourage in our students!

kun herrini: Positive emotions are as powerful as the negative ones, I believe, Only, of course, the impact is to the opposite directions.

Jeff: Yes, hard to do when required to grade and only certain amount of grades can be given. I will now provide at least on positive holistic comment per essay this year. I tiell have noting to do with grades, only improvement or excellence I see.

Jeff: That is a certain amount of top grades (jeff)

kun herrini: When giving comments on a writing assignment I sometimes wrote: This is a very interesting story. May I know what happened next?"

kun herrini: Instead of only giving grades

Damon Anderson: So, how can we encourage our students? How do we keep them from being afraid to use what they know?

kun herrini : It sometimes worked wonders. The students talked and continued the story when we met.

Damon Anderson: Sometimes I think we build too good a cocoon for them and they can't or don't want to break out of it.

Jeff: Great Idea!

kun herrini: Praising and 'fishing' by expressing curiosiry rather than commenting their English?

Damon Anderson: Well, our time is almost up for today.

Jeff: Yes, the "fishing" will be a great way to provide positive feedback, even if a grade must be assigned, which is my case.

Damon Anderson: It has been an hour already. I think this has been an interesting discussion.

kun herrini: Thank you for organising this, Damon.

Phanisara: Language is intrinsic to who we are and how we would like the world to see us. And we do judge people by the way they communicate or miscommunicate to us. That's why the role of English teachers is so significant in cultural understanding. So it helps when teachers can impart appropriate emotional control techniques for their EFL students.

kun herrini: Nice talking to you Ping, Nina, Jeff and LC Karachi.

kun herrini: It was an interesting discussion

Ping: I'd try to encourage students to learn to take responsibilities for themselves, trying to reflect on their performance and find ways to improve, rather than being used to relying on teachers to give the feedback. That way, they may feel more confident in the long run?

Phanisara: Thank you very much Khun Damon for hosting this. It's really wonderful networking event.

kun herrini: indeed.

Damon Anderson: This topic came from one of you during the last discussion. Do any of you have a suggestion for our next topic for October?

Jeff: Yes. I'm working rubrics to help with "guided self-learning" v. teacher-based learning.

Jeff: Yes. Great talk.

Ping: So nice talking to you too, Kun, Nina, Jeff and Damon, of course. I was so impressed and proud of all that you've shared here on English learning.

kun herrini: See you in the coming webchat.

Ping: any suggestion for next topic?

Damon Anderson: Well, we already talked about fear today, so I guess that leaves out a discussion of Halloween. HAHAHAA

Damon Anderson: How about talking about superstitions?

Damon Anderson: Susi, we didn't hear from you today. What would you like to talk about?

Susi: Is it late to join this chat?

Kun Herrini: Can create an icon on this webchat? to show our own mask?

Jeff: Booo!

Kun Herrini: Teachers and the Masks They Wear...

LC Karachi: It sound great

Jeff: I'd like to hear Chinese students opinions on essay writing. What the want, like, dislike, and believe is important. What frustrates them?

Damon Anderson: Can be a great topic, Jeff.

Damon Anderson: Ping, let me know a few days in advance, OK?

LC Karachi: followed by a party , I guess

Ping: Sure, Jeff!

Kun Herrini: Hi, Mbak Susi, I did not know you are in.

Damon Anderson: Kun, we did a roundtable on that in Jakarta once.

Susi: I am. Sorry for not getting involved a lot

Damon Anderson: It is nothing to worry about, Susi. I just wanted to give you the chance to say something if you wanted too.

Damon Anderson: Let's take about 5 more minutes for any last comments.

Kun Herrini: Let's talk about the other side, then. The superstition of it.

Damon Anderson: Can you all help to bring more people into our chats? It would be great to have more folks.

Jeff: Yes, need the exact date with about one week notice.

Kun Herrini: I brought Susi and actually Pak Dwi from Yogya also sms-ed he would like to join.

Susi: I'd like the idea of essay writing. I want to know how to motivate students?

Kun Herrini: Let us know a bit in advanced so we can space out our work?

LC Karachi: well LC Karachi will try to engage SPELT PAKISTAN into it, its Society for English Language Teachers Pakistan

Damon Anderson: Thank you everyone. So, we will see you all on October 14th at the same time (2pm Beijing time).

LC Karachi: But need an advance schedule

Susi: Thanks Bu Kun for taking me into this great conversation

Damon Anderson: Please let everyone know. Send me an email of your suggested topics by September 26th. Thank you!!

Susi: Yes I agree with LC and we need to know what we're going to talk about

Ping: I'll send to everyone the announcement one week in advance! Hope to see you in next chat!

Kun Herrini: See you all on the 14 of October, then. Bye.

Jeff: Thanks Damon and Ping for all the work to put this together. See you next time

Ping: LC, could you let me know your email address so that I may send you the information about next chat? Thanks!

Susi: Count me in for the next meeting. Nice talking to you. Bye

Damon Anderson: OK everyone who is left. Time to go. See you October 14th. Cheers!!