

ENGLISH ROUNDTABLE: STRATEGIES AND STYLES

June 3, 2008
06:00 GMT

Webchat Moderator: Welcome to another English Language Roundtable!
amphan chareonroop: Where do you have this English Language Roundtable?

Webchat Moderator: Hello Amphan! The English Language Roundtable is an online chat on the topic of English language teaching. The chat will take place right here on this page starting at 06:00 GMT on June 4. Please join us then.

Mayeli Peralta: How you can share your culture in a different language????

Damon Anderson: Mayei Peralta, this is an interesting question. You can tell people about things, activities, events, social customs, institutions, etc. It would help to compare these things with ones that the students know. If you had pictures or samples of items or food to share with your students, that would also help. Language and culture are closely related, so you might share some vocabulary items, especially if the other language did not have a word to adequately describe something in your culture. You could demonstrate an action, a dance, or sing a song. There are many things you can do to share your culture.

Damon Anderson: Everyone, there are some good pre-questions that were submitted early, so I may begin to answer some of them while we wait for the beginning of the chat. Thank you for sending the pre-questions.

IRC Antananarivo: From William, Military instructor: From Colonel William, Military instructor. Q= Could you give me the different learning styles which have been used up to now? From Angelo ERIC. Student at Air Force Base.

Q=Could you send us some English teaching websites to be visited?

Damon Anderson: William, we will address your good question about styles shortly. Regarding web sites, you can go to my web site and see some links to follow: <http://beijing.usembassy.gov/relo.html>.

IRC Antananarivo: From Lida Jo, 1. Why use strategies in a lesson? 2. How do students behave when they are being strategic? 3. What are the steps for using a strategy in a lesson? 4. What strategy should we use for a kid who doesn't like counting or using figures?

Damon Anderson: Lida Jo, you are thinking of strategy in the military sense, I believe. A strategy is a way of accessing information or working with the information to develop understanding and to remember it. All of us employ a strategy or system or way of learning, but we don't all use the same strategy. We will see shortly how people differ and why they may use different strategies. sumeth: Thank you.

IRC Antananarivo: 1. From Armel, student at Air Force Base. Comment: I think there should be more Americans to teach English in foreign countries because it is very important to know how to speak fluently like them.

Q= I would like to know whether there are any ways to learn English on the web. If yes, would you mind giving me some websites which can help me? According to me, listening is an important factor in learning any language, so it must be stressed, mainly in the foreign countries

Damon Anderson: Armel, there are many Americans overseas teaching English now. But you don't need to have an American teaching you to learn English well. You just need a good teacher and your strong motivation. Fluency can be developed through lots of good practice and does not need a native speaker's input. You don't need to have a native speaker accent to speak fluently or well. There are ways to learn English on the web. There are programs like Centaur that offer private tutors for you who will meet with you online. There are many other types of programs, some interactive and some not interactive. It all depends on what you want to learn and what your level is. Go to my web site (already listed) and you may find some links.

Pauline: From Pauline, English Teacher, AC Mahajanga -- It's hard for teachers now to find time to meet but we need to organize time. We lack solidarity, exchanging, sharing. Could you please help us to give ideas on how to attract teachers to work together, to solve teaching problems together, to care understanding

Damon Anderson: Pauline, I agree with you 100%. One thing you can do is to organize a regular roundtable discussion at a good public meeting place. Try not to have more than 25 people so you can have a good discussion. Meet for 2 hours on a regular basis and each time have a specific topic you want to address. If you do this regularly when it is convenient for most people, you will find that after about 3 times, people will begin to come regularly. Good luck.

IRC Madagascar: Can first language acquisition strategies be used in foreign language learning? -- Hery: director of CNELA Centre National d'Enseignement de la Langue Anglaise

Damon Anderson: Hery, yes, first language acquisition strategies can be very useful in 2nd language learning. Most people apply them automatically because they don't really know what they are. But as you get older and have more learning experience in your life, you tend to adapt the newer strategies that have been successful for you in other subjects.

Damon Anderson: Everyone, I want to scroll through the PowerPoint presentation at the left and make some comments along the way. Some of your questions will be answered as we go through the PowerPoint. After, you can go through the PowerPoint on your own.

Damon Anderson: The first thing we need to focus on is the students' learning and not our teaching.

- We should emphasize here that you were not just told about it and that you had lots of practice with time to make errors, get corrected and eventually to do self correction.

- Often times teachers impose their own learning style and strategy on their students saying this is how I learned, so this is the best way for you to learn. That may not be true.

- Gardner looked at intelligence as something that can be developed and is not necessarily fixed.

Webchat Moderator: Hello everyone. You will be able to go through the slide show at your own pace just as soon as Damon is finished reviewing the slides.

Damon Anderson: Gardner said that there are 8 intelligences. Think about it. Was Mozart intelligent? Yes, but in music and maybe not in math or geography.

- Some people are good with words, or good at spatial associations, or with music or with the environment, or with a combination, but not with all.

- So, we should vary activities to include the conditions for students to access different intelligences.

- These four combined in a matrix form what most people think of as the learning styles.

Webchat Moderator: I just made the slide show larger everyone.

Damon Anderson: You can structure activities that use the different quadrants of this matrix to address the different learning styles of your students.

- So we can vary our lessons giving students choices or different ways to learn.

- This answers the question about adults vs children. They do employ different strategies for a couple of reasons. One young learners may not be able to think abstractly, but adult learners can. Also, adult learners have more life experience to draw on for their learning.

- Go to the web site listed to learn more about that.

- This slide gives you more of a definition of strategies vs styles.

Webchat Moderator: If you just joined us, welcome! Follow along with the slides as Damon Anderson narrates. After he is finished commenting on the slides, you will be able to scroll through the slide show at your own pace.

Damon Anderson: This is a kind of test you or your students can take to see what your best or favorite strategies are.

- If a person knows their strategies, they can employ them better. Some people are not sure of their strategies. But what is important is that teachers are aware that there are different strategies and they need to allow students to employ the strategies they know and help students to develop other or new strategies that may be more efficient and effective for them.

- So this answers the questions about whether or not strategies can be learned/taught. YES.

- This cone of learning is important. If you look at the left you see the % of what we remember and learn. Teachers who just talk about language in the classroom, well, their students will probably only remember 10% of what the teacher says. So we want to move our classes down the pyramid into the 90% range.

- This is the wisdom of Ben Franklin. There are 3 levels here. Many teachers are at this level where they just tell their students about the language.

- Most teachers are at this level where they at least get their students to remember. But we want our students to do more than just remember language, we want them to use it too.

- So, we need to have lessons that engage them and let them practice with the language. just as you practiced with what it is that you do best (what ever that is, from the earlier slide)

- Brom Stoker in his novel Dracula stated another important concept for us to remember!

- This is my favorite slide. The young boy says he taught his dog to whistle. The other boys leans over but cannot hear the dog whistle. The first boy said that he taught his dog, he didn't say the dog learned it. This is what many teachers say about their classes and students. Don't be this way. Focus on learning not teaching.

Webchat Moderator: Hi everyone, Damon will now be taking your questions. The slide show will be open for you to view at your own pace.

IRC Antananarivo: From Michael, Ingeneer -- would you consider giving advices to students on new ways -- that makes learning fun and enjoyable. Nowadays, kids hate thinking about learning their lessons, so teachers need to be creative and hints on how to tackle the issue will be welcome.

Damon Anderson: Michael, yes. Learning should be fun!!! Make it fun. frejuuss nzi: What do you call four intelligences?

Damon Anderson: There are 8 intelligences. Look at the PowerPoint slide that has them listed.

IRC Antananarivo: From Tsabao Georgette (English teacher at Lycée Mixte Antsiranana) : - Human beings' life style are not the same so what is the easiest way to adapt a new life style when living abroad ? -What are the good strategies we should take to make our job in progress ?

Damon Anderson: Tsabao this would be a great topic for another chat.

Webchat Moderator: To scroll through the slides...just use the left/right arrows next to each slide.

IRC Antananarivo: How to learn English quicly? From ernest

Damon Anderson: Study and practice!! Practice!! Practice!! don't just memorize!!

IRC Madagascar: Children and adults do not use the same styles and strategies in learning a foreign language. True or false -- Hery: director of CNELA Centre National d'Enseignement de la Langue Anglaise

Damon Anderson: Hery, you are very right.

Webchat Moderator: If you would like to introduce yourself to the group, please tell us who you are, where you are joining us from, and how you come to be interested in learning/teaching English.

IRC Madagascar: Gabriel: Military language instructor--Is there any specific strategy to deal with students who overestimate themselves and take for granted their peers?

Damon Anderson: Gabriel, this is a classroom management question. Yes, do group work and put them in groups where they will be challenged and not always dominating some of the more quiet students.

IRC Madagascar: Berthine: High school teacher: Speaking practice is considered to be the best way to improve fluency, but if there are not enough opportunities for speaking practice can reading skills replace that speaking practice?

Damon Anderson: Reading is one of the best ways for developing fluency. Why? Because you can get a sense of the language and in reading much you

begin to see and recognize patterns such as collocations and will be able to use them more readily and easily.

IRC Madagascar: Feno: primary school teacher Normally, children should start to learn English from childhood, but in Madagascar most of them begin to learn English at 11 years old, so what do you think are the best strategies to use for them?

Damon Anderson: Feno, are you asking what are the best strategies for teaching 11-yr old students or younger ones?

IRC Madagascar: Do learning strategies change over time? Are they interdependent? --RAJAONARIVO LALA Tsiry: University of Antananarivo English Department Teacher

Damon Anderson: Rajaonarivo Lala Tsiry, yes strategies change over time as we gain new experiences and have new successes with learning different things in different ways. We have more ways to associate things and create cognitive hooks to hang things on for remembering.

IRC Madagascar: Niry: Teacher's Resource Center -- How to help students in a French speaking country to speak English fluently

Damon Anderson: Niry, reading, listening and lots of speaking practice. Listen to radio (VOA for example), songs, movies. Read novels and short stories. Practice with anyone you can.

IRC Madagascar: Niry: Teacher's Resource Center Tamatave1 - How to meet peoples' different learning styles in a large class?

Damon Anderson: Niry, try using a lot of group work, and vary the activities. Teach one or two things, but vary the activities you use to teach those things. Have some visual aids, some oral/aural activities, and have some experiential activities where students can try and use the new items.

Bienvenu Akodigna: This is a request. I would like the moderator, if possible, to give me some good and free online resources for English teaching

Damon Anderson: Go to the RELO Beijing website and you will find some links: <http://beijing.usembassy.gov/relo.html>.

Bienvenu Akodigna: As teachers, we have the obligation to comply with the curriculum, but in the same time, we would like to have our learners get a good command of the language. What kind of advices do you have for a teacher to balance these concerns.

Damon Anderson: There should not be a conflict. The problem comes when the curriculum is too staked and there is not enough time to even get through the curriculum. In that case, set priorities and teach what are the highest priorities, giving students the time to explore those things.

Damon Anderson: Let me ask you all a question. What are your strongest learning strategies. How do you go about learning a foreign language? How did you learn English so well?

Damon Anderson: Hanif, what do you think? What strategies do you employ? Do you know your learning strategies?

Damon Anderson: Ping, how about you?

Antananarivo 1: FROM RABARIJAONA SARAH NIRINA THANK U FOR GIVING US AN ADVICE

Damon Anderson: You are most welcome.

Bienvenu Akodigna: Many documents are considering Internet as a tool for English teaching and learning. But wonder if this could be true in a developing country where there is no lab in schools

Damon Anderson: You don't need language labs to learn a language. But if you have a computer with speakers and a microphone, you can use it like a lab. The answer is yes.

Bienvenu Akodigna: One more question: Are there Colleges and universities that offer distance class for graduate foreign students in EFL? Many thanks for your responses.

Damon Anderson: Yes, there are some. You will need to go online to find them. Universities such as Open University and SIT in Vermont have some courses. I am not sure what courses you are looking for, but you can find them online.

Antananarivo 1: rabarijaona sarah nirina is it necessary to have a conversation with a foreigner people to improve our skill

Damon Anderson: No, it is not necessary. You can just talk with other friends and colleagues who speak English to improve your English.

Ping : Wow, I found out I learned best when more than one sense was activated. For instance, I used to repeat after the radio program, trying hard to follow it up. That way I practice listening comprehension and also fluency.

Damon Anderson: That is great Ping.

Ping : I also found I rely on reflection more often as I grow older, thinking back on what's learned and drawing facts map at the same time.

Damon Anderson: Thanks for your comments Ping. She has just demonstrated that age does make a difference, even though she is still quite young (HAHAHA).

Damon Anderson: Well, I hope that everyone has found this chat to be useful and that you have learned something about learning styles and strategies. I have enjoyed your questions and comments. Before we go, let me ask what you thought about our using a PowerPoint. Did you like it?

Ping : I think it's cool, Damon :), except that it may have reduced the time for later interaction and chat.

Damon Anderson: Thank you everyone. I have enjoyed this. Have a great day or afternoon or evening, depending on where you are. Thanks to our web masters too!!

IRC Antananarivo: Yes, this is a very good strategy in webchat -- I recommend doing it often. I plan to use a projector and a big screen for IRC Antananarivo when we could do live chat like today, this will help more people to read the chat and PPT. Thanks a lot.

Ping : Thank you so much Damon you've tried so hard to address so many questions and concerns.

Damon Anderson: Good-bye all. Cheers!!

Damon Anderson: See you for our next chat on Tuesday, July 8 at the same time.