

## ENGLISH ROUNDTABLE: MOTIVATION

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**July 8, 2008**  
**06:00 GMT**

**Webchat Moderator 2:** Welcome everyone! We'll begin the chat in just a moment.

We will post a note about motivation and then Damon Anderson will begin answering your questions.

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, welcome to another English Roundtable Webchat! Our topic today is Motivation.

You can see a note at the side that gives some basic information about the study of motivation which I got from Wikipedia.

Let me begin to answer some of the questions.

**Ana Barreto:** In our country, Uruguay, one of the most difficult tasks has been to motivate teenagers to achieve higher academic goals. What do you recommend?

**Damon Anderson:** Ana, your question is a good one. Many folks have asked about motivating teenagers. This seems to be the hardest group to motivate, doesn't it?

Maybe that is because they are often more interested in other things than being in a classroom. I think that the key word here is INTEREST. Interest is a major factor in motivation of any kind.

I think that we need to select topics and activities that will interest the young people we are teaching. So, we need to be on top of their pop culture and know what things interest them.

That does not mean we cannot or should not teach them some classical things as well. If we choose a topic that is not of high interest for them, then we need to present it in an engaging way that will interest them. That is, the engagement is interesting even though the topic may not be.

**Huang Qiuyan:** Hello! Everyone! I'm very excited to see what we're going to talk about motivation today. My question is: can motivation be taught?

**Damon Anderson:** Huang has asked a great question. I don't think it can be taught. It is something that is attached to a person at an emotional level.

However, you can teach emotional control, which could be a kind of motivational training.

**Phanisara:** How can we motivate our students when we have very little EFL learning resources to make students interested in learning?

**Damon Anderson:** Khun Nina, I think we have a tremendous amount of learning resources to work with. We have the students' minds and imaginations. We have the Internet. We have newspapers and magazines. We have songs.

**Webchat Moderator:** Welcome to our webchat! If you'd like to introduce yourself, please do. We'll post your greeting for everyone to see.

**Damon Anderson:** There is much out there for teachers to work with. But most importantly, try getting topics and information from the students. Get them to bring in the resources for us to work with in the classroom.

**Kun:** Hi, I am Kun Herrini from Indonesia.

**Phanisara:** So the teachers just have to be creative and invite students to be involved in making the learning fun and motivating.

**Damon Anderson:** In order to draw more on intrinsic motivation, I agree with you Nina. For extrinsic motivation, we need to bring in the resources we think are appropriate.

**Wang Ping:** I know some of the young people are not motivated to learn not because they're not interested, but because they've never had a sense of fulfillment/achievement in learning, which would discourage them from investing more time and interest in that subject.

**Damon Anderson:** Ping, this is why we need to teach for success in our classes. Success is motivational.

**Wang Ping:** Welcome to the webchat, everyone! This is the place you can talk about your concerns and questions regarding motivation, but also you can address others' questions and concerns, too. Oh, I'm Wang Ping from China, Damon's assistant.

**Kun:** I agree that the key point for motivating teenagers is interest. And one of the things to make them interested in something is that we come down into their world rather than taking them into our world. What do you think?

**Damon Anderson:** Kun, you are right. But we don't need to think of it as coming DOWN to them, but rather engaging them in their world of interest. We don't want them to think we feel like we are condescending to them.

**Kun:** The internet is a very rich resource, especially for teenagers.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** How can we teach emotional control then?

**Damon Anderson:** Hoang, this is a great question.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Damon, we don't "teach" motivation, but we can inspire, can we?

**Damon Anderson:** Yes, we inspire them. We give them a feeling of success. They can only feel success when they have a goal and see themselves reaching that goal. This is why it is important for students to know our goals and what it means to be successful. That is why I like to use rubrics whenever I give a task or an assignment.

**Milly:** Hi, This is Milly from Macao. Damon mentioned to have students to bring in the resources. But they believe it is the responsibility of the teachers, not them. Moreover, some students tell me there are so much info on the Internet right now that they can copy and paste when needed. With regard to speaking, since Macao is still very much a Chinese-dominated economy, many still do not sense the urgent need to have good English now - and they may rush to intensive short courses when the need arises.

**Damon Anderson:** Milly, good points. Why are they learning English? That is the key question and the right answer will be motivational to them if it is meaningful to them.

**Wang Ping:** Before we talk about how we can motivate our students, I'm also curious what might be the factors that have demotivate from learning, the learning materials, teacher's ways of delivery, or the pressure coming from workloads from different courses, and also, their own interest?

**Damon Anderson:** Talking about their distant future is not necessarily a good approach with teenagers. Their focus is much shorter. That is why many focus on the tests and course grades which are more relevant to them in their time frame.

**QuanHongling:** Hi, I am Quan Hongling from Xinjiang Normal University. Nice to talk with you, Damon. My question is: is there any possibility to do the research on ethnic college students learning motivation in a longitudinal way, and what is the possible time for the investigation interval, half year or one year?

**Damon Anderson:** Hello Dr. Quan. I think your idea is a great one. It would be excellent if someone could/would research this topic.

**Kun:** Hi, Milly, I think similar a thing also happens here in Indonesia. When urgent needs arise, then they jump and find way to learn English as quickly and as intensively as possible.

**Kun:** Yes, Damon, I meant it that way, too. In some direct workshop with teenagers I tried to gear them to find resources in the internet and then with the materials of their choice we asked them to present it in a 'talkshow' style. The result was amazing.

**Milly:** Another issue here: we are always given a fixed syllabus to cover (according to the book) so there is not much variation we can do (to make sure different teachers cover the same things for the exam). What can we do under such a situation?

**Damon Anderson:** Milly, you don't have to present the textbook exactly as it is written. First, vary the way you present your lessons. Don't be so predictable. Variety and unpredictability are two things that keep students interested.

**Webchat Moderator:** If you are just joining the chat, welcome! We are taking your questions now. Damon Anderson will respond to your questions and then the Q/A will appear on this screen.

**Damon Anderson:** Just because the book says to learn the 25 vocab words by listen and repeat then do a matching exercise does not mean you have to present those 25 words that way.

You can present them in a more interesting way and then refer to the book for homework or review. That way you still use the book and you cover the materials from the book.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Could you please elaborate a little more on teaching emotional control?

**Damon Anderson:** Emotional control is like getting someone who is hungry to wait until the food is served before eating it, or getting a child to be patient and wait for his/her turn, etc. All of those desires are attached to something that drives the emotional response.

Everyone, I am sorry for any misspellings. I am trying to type quickly.

**Kun:** I understand Milly's concern. It happened a lot in Indonesia, too. We are so bound to the textbook.

**QuanHongling:** One of my postgraduates has been doing the research. But there are some people questioned her the interval time for the investigation, which she feels a little bit confused.

**Damon Anderson:** Without knowing more detail, it is hard for me to respond to her questions on her research.

**Wang Ping:** that's a great idea, Damon. But the teachers will first learn to be motivated in being more creative when designing the lessons.

**Damon Anderson:** Ping, what do you mean by the teachers will first learn to be motivated?

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** then it is not so easy to teach?

**Damon Anderson:** It is not easy to teach emotional control.

**Wang Ping:** Prof. Quan, I know all your family members are in the teaching field and you yourself have enjoyed teaching and also teacher training so much. Could you share with us what has intrigued you about the education field?

**Webchat Moderator:** We will post a full transcript of today's chat to our Ask America homepage. You can also view transcripts of past Roundtables at: [http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html#english\\_roundtable\\_2008](http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html#english_roundtable_2008)

**Itje:** Emotional control is long journey lesson.

**Damon Anderson:** Itje, welcome! Yes, it is a long journey. It is one all of us, regardless of age, are trekking.

**Wang Ping:** I mean in order for the teachers to take the time and trouble to adapt the textbooks and create more activities, the teacher needs to be devoted and loving what she's doing. That's why I ask Prof Quan the question.

**Damon Anderson:** Very good.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** I've experienced the situations that when students turned emotional, their learning would not be effective or they even refuse to learn. When you mention teaching emotional control, I found this as the key to motivation. But how to do it is a concern. Is there any literature on this?

**Damon Anderson:** Yes, Hoang, there is literature on this. Unfortunately I do not have the sources with me this moment.

**Kun:** Related to emotional response, I think teenagers also experience a strong peer pressure, especially because they are in the stage of flirting their first prince and princess of charming (do I use the right words for this?).

**Damon Anderson:** HAHAHA You are right, Kun. This is the age of self-discovery and the attempt to please others.

**Milly:** In fact, I am taking workshops on drama and related matters in order to bring energy and interest to the class. It also helps me be closer to my students.

**Damon Anderson:** Great idea, Milly.

**Phanisara:** When Ping used the phrase "teachers will first learn to be motivated," it reminds me of how contagious motivation is. When the students sense that the teacher himself or herself love what he or she is doing, this will encourage the students to also love to learn more and more.

**Damon Anderson:** Yes, the teacher's attitude is reflected in the students' response.

**Kun:** I absolutely agree with Wang Ping. No matter bubbling our workshops are, if the teachers are not devoted and loving what they are doing, then the workshop will end as workshop only and never comes into the classroom.

**Damon Anderson:** That is why we need to design workshops that will "motivate" the teachers to at least try what has been presented in the classroom. We need them to start thinking in the workshops about how they will incorporate the ideas in their classes.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** I sense that we all seem to send "energy" to the talk (kind of motivation here).

**Damon Anderson:** I think the energy comes from our INTEREST in the topic. We all have something to say about it.

**Damon Anderson:** I hope I am able to move fast enough in responding to and posting your thoughts so your interest is not lost.

**Kun:** Now, some teachers are hiding behind the reason of too much work so that they do not the energy left for creativity. Can anyone help?

**Wang Ping:** Thank you both Nina and Kun, I'm motivated to talk more :)

**Damon Anderson:** Kun, you are right in that they are only giving excuses. They have somehow lost their motivation. As trainers we need to help them get it back.

Many teachers are facing burnout and so lose their motivation. They don't know how to recover from burnout. Maybe that would be a good topic for another chat.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Kun, from my experience, constant learning and creativity bring energy and refresh teachers.

**Phanisara:** The interest for this webchat also derives from knowing that we are communicating and sharing ideas from many countries represented here. It is truly an exciting and innovative forum.

**QuanHongling:** Hi, Ping, I quite agree with you that if the teacher wants his/her students to be motivated, he/she should first be self-motivated. My point is if you all the time think on behalf of the learners you are facing, you will be motivated to design interest activities to meet the needs of the learners.

**Phanisara:** Networking among teachers is pertinent. So the teachers won't feel isolated.

**Damon Anderson:** Nina, I think you have made an excellent point. Many teachers work in an isolated fashion. As Ms. Quan and Kun and Ping have said or implied, there is energy in numbers and friends and cooperation.

**Wang Ping:** Kun, I see your point why teachers "are hiding behind" and do not try to be creative. Do you think it may change the situation for better if they see their creative work pays off? For instance, in the long run, students appreciate their efforts, and get more interested in learning and better grades.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** I'd love to share this I got from my teacher's lecture "After 7 years of experience, a good teacher has had 7 years' worth of experience while a poor teacher just has one year's experience seven times." So they get burnt out because they repeat themselves.

**Kun:** Thanks, Hoang and Damon. However, I also notice the lack of competence to adapt things in them. So, increasing their competence is also important, right?

**Damon Anderson:** Kun, you are absolutely right!!

**Itje:** and yes Phanisara, the network is the place to 'gain' more and more motivation and emotional training.

**Damon Anderson:** Kun has made a good comment regarding a teacher's proficiency or competence in English. The more proficient and competent they are, the more motivated they will be. Again, this is tied to success. Success is motivational.

**Wang Ping:** Prof Quan, do you mean to put yourself in the learners' shoes? That makes perfect sense! Students struggle. Which bring us back to Kun's point, engage ourselves with learners' needs and interests.

**Itje:** Do you think professional development and developed network will be the gear for motivation?

**Damon Anderson:** Itje, yes I do.

**Kun:** Yes, Hoang. I am familiar with that term, too, and love to use it in the prolog before giving workshops.

**Phanisara:** There needs to be some venue where teachers can share their educational and pedagogical concerns...as well as sharing their "creative" lesson plans.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Yes, Kun, competence, motivation, refreshment, creativity, learning, and then competence again and again. They form a virtuous circle. However, no one can be competence right after graduation. It comes with time

**Kun:** Please note that in many parts in Indonesia, some teachers do not have the chance to any enrichment training, so what they do now is the same things with what they started with. Itje knows this well, I believe.

**Milly:** One word on burnout: we need to understand that teachers also have their other "duties" apart from being a teacher. Lack of resources (such as workshops on how to improve teaching), support from the gov't, school, parents and even students sometimes demotivate them to do something different and creative.

**Damon Anderson:** Everyone, it is now 3pm. Do you want to continue for a little longer?

**Wang Ping:** I like Nina's idea. Such a venue would empower teachers and create a community for teaching professionals to share resources and address common concerns.

**Itje:** Exactly. what Kun highlight is a situation where teachers feel so isolated and powerless.

**Damon Anderson:** Related to Nina's idea, I am creating an East Asian Virtual Community for English teachers. This, I hope, will be a forum for teachers to share, network, and express themselves.

**Kun:** An hour is never enough, Damon. Especially when we talk about motivation

**Itje:** This webchat is actually a place to nurture ideas and then we redistribute it through clusters.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Kun, with this I do think that "teaching emotional control" comes into play. (I still don't know much about it, :):) Blaming the lack of chance is not extremely unreasonable, but it's a lame excuse. Once we find the answer to "teaching emotional control", we may figure out what to do with those blames

**Jennifer Lund:** What do you do if students are overworked in other classes?

**Damon Anderson:** Jennifer, this is a good question. I think that if it is really a true situation, then you should talk with the other teachers. What do the rest of you think?

**Itje:** I am so lucky Damon that this morning before leaving for a school observation here in Bristol I can still catch this chat. Thanks, Kun, for the info.

**Kun:** HAHAHA...You are exactly right, Hoang. I think it does not concern the students only but also the teachers.

**Wang Ping:** Teachers don't have to work alone. I know at some school teachers do group lesson planning. Teachers need to coordinate among themselves, too. Jennifer Lund: Scheduling can be demotivating for students too if they only meet once per week.

**Kruawan:** I agree with Nina and Wang Ping that there should be a venue for teacher to share their works and ideas. I found here in Thailand that help the remote teachers to keep up their good lessons for student.

**Kun:** Ping, that's the main reason of us initiating the Roundtable Discussion in Jakarta back 3.5 years ago. Tomorrow we will hold our 94th session.

**QuanHongling:** I will let my students do less than I expected this time if they are overworked in other classes. Than next time they will perform better than I expect before.

**Itje:** Yes Jennifer, in my experience many students are waiting for their English lesson that is often delivered in a more fun and less tiring lesson.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** organizing 'teaching community" (our chat here is an example) can be one way of motivating teachers, sharing, refreshing. I highly appreciate the talk today, and I'm impressed with your level of professionalism.

**Damon Anderson:** Thank you Hoang. It is a great chat today with so many people from different places and backgrounds contributing. Thank you all!!!

**Wang Ping:** Kun, I'm so impressed with what you've been doing with the RTD. Hope it'll be a hit in China, too.

**Itje:** I have to leave, I am afraid. It's been a nice discussion. Will catch up in the next discussion. Have a nice day everyone.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Wow, you've been doing a great job there in Indonesia, Kun.

**Damon Anderson:** Yes, the roundtables in Jakarta are an excellent forum for teachers. There is often a waiting line to attend them.

**Phanisara:** Truly a valuable initiative to have a virtual forum. So our Asian educators and audience can be even closer and more effective in professional endeavors. Thank you all.

**Jennifer Lund:** It's a delicate balance between "having fun" and "working hard". Ideally, I think it should be both at the same time. Thank you for this chance to network.

**Wang Ping:** If students are overloaded, I think they should have the right to complain and negotiate with the teachers for better results (more workload doesn't necessarily end up in better results).

**Damon Anderson:** Well, everyone. What do you want our next topic to be for August 12th?

**Kun:** Bye Itje, looking forward to meeting you in our 95th RTD. Take care.

**Jennifer Lund:** Bye everyone!

**Damon Anderson:** Should we address burnout?

**Kun:** What if we come back to what Hoang wanted to talk deeper about, the emotional control?

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Thank you very much everyone. I got the idea of doing an online forum today and I'm strongly motivated by the fact that you're having 94th session in Indo. I got the new key word "teaching emotional control" for literature search as well.

**Kun:** Burnout is related.

**Itje:** I agree with you, Kun. Cheers everyone.

**Kun:** Haha...and I can talk a lot about it too.

**Hoang Thi Hanh:** Thank you very very much. I must leave now. It's 5 pm here. See you in the next session.

**Kun:** Looking forward to August 12, then. Will set up my alarm from now.

**Milly:** It's the first time I attend such webchat. And I hope it become more popular as a supporting tool for the local teachers!

**QuanHongling:** Yes, I agree the next topic "emotional control" and the effective ways to teach this.

**Kun:** Thanks everyone, big thanks to you Damon and Ping.

**Damon Anderson:** OK, everyone. It is time to sign off. Thank you all!!! See you August 12th.

**QuanHongling:** It's the first time for me to join the webchat, and I will let some of my students to join and shar a lot with so many professionals.

**QuanHongling:** Thank you, Damon and Ping! See you next time! A great time to us all.

**Damon Anderson:** Good bye all. I wish you all successful classes in the meantime.