

Date: June 8, 2010

English Roundtable Web Chat on **“Never Work Harder Than Your Students”**

Abstract:

The ultimate goal of teaching is to help our students to master learning skills. The knowledge the students acquire in schools can become soon obsolete in this fast-changing world, but the skills of learning can be valuable for a lifetime. And one of the skills of learning is to motivate oneself to be a life-long learner. If the students are reluctant to learn, if they haven't achieved what they are potentially able to achieve, then even if they have scored high in tests, they are still incompetent in carrying out real-life tasks or meet future challenges that are unimaginable at present.

Inspired by Dr. Robyn R. Jackson's book of the same title (released by ASCD in 2009), we welcome you to join us to take a look at teachers' work and students' work and discuss:

- What works are we currently doing that really belong to the students?
- What works are we asking our students to do that really belong to us?
- What are the consequences?
- What do you want your students to learn? What do your students need to learn?
- What does it mean to hold students accountable for doing their own job?

We hope through this discussion, we as teachers may discover a new meaning in teaching. We hope that teaching will place an emphasis on increasing the students' independence and a strong sense of responsibility for themselves. This is a prerequisite for becoming a life-long learner. We hope that through this discussion, we will also learn from each other how the meaning of good teaching may be changed by working less hard than our students.

Transcript

Damon Anderson: Welcome. Please feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments.

Damon Anderson: Welcome to today's web chat. What do you think about our topic today? Feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments.

Wang Ping: Welcome to our chat everyone! We'll begin our chat in about half an hour. Meanwhile, please feel free to share your comments or questions about our topic today.

Damon Anderson: Everyone, I am joining you all from Washington, DC today. It is very early morning here. I am looking forward to our lively chat today. Don't be shy to share your thoughts. We don't worry about grammar and spelling because we all know that in trying to type quickly and get your thoughts up, there are bound to be mistakes.

Wang Ping: Hi everyone! Welcome to our chat! As we are waiting for people to come in, how about we start by introducing ourselves a little bit? This is Wang Ping. I'm from the RELO office at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Oh! Yes, I forgot to introduce myself. I am Ubon from Thailand TESOL in Bangkok, Thailand.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Yes, I am thrilled to see you, too. Technology is amazing. We are looking forward to welcoming you in BKK.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Nice to talk to you again, Wang Ping.

Kiki: this is Kiki from China

Kiki: Hi, everyone!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Hi KiKi!

Tuyen: Hi, I'm Tuyen from Vietnam. Nice to have a talk here!

Kiki: Hi Ubon!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: The question is interesting! I believe teachers should work harder than students, but here you made it the diverted way. So, I am eager to know reasons from around if anyone supports or not supports this query. Thanks

Damon Anderson: I am Damon and am currently in Washington, DC. I was the RELO Beijing, but am on my way to take up my new position as the RELO Bangkok.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Hi Tuyen!

Tuyen: As my understanding, that will definitely be effective in the classroom

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Why do you think so Tuyen?

Tuyen: My approach is "decrease teacher talking time to increase student talking time

Tuyen: That is 1 way to make student work harder than teacher

Wang Ping: Tuyen, that's an interesting point! Are students happier with that and more motivated in learning?

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: When I read the question, I thought of 'work' as preparation and commitment, so I still feel teachers should work harder than students.

Kiki: I think this topic is very interesting, too! In the classroom of China, the teachers are always work very hard (be busy) and the students are often unoccupied. So it's really important to think about what should the teacher do and what should the students do at class.

Julie: I totally agree with Tuyen, and another way is to guide students to find questions

Damon Anderson: Often in Asian classes, I have seen teachers spoon feeding answers to their students and doing so much of the work that students don't really need to think too much about the answers.

Wang Ping: Ubon, I agree with you. working hard is just a metaphor here. What really matters is what Kiki says, who should do what so learning occurs effectively.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I agree with you in the classroom, we teachers should give students opportunities to make an 'interactive class'.

Tuyen: Exactly, Damon. In fact, that makes our students lazier to be creative

Julie: yes, that's right, we are surely in such a dilemma, we feed students much more fixed answers and leaves no room for them to think for themselves

Tuyen: Yes, just leave some "gaps" for them to explore

Damon Anderson: If students are to become users of the language and not just knowers of vocabulary and grammar, they need to be able to take risks with the language and learn from their mistakes.

Wang Ping: Yes, if we see learning as not a linear or neat process but something messy, just as how we acquire information and solve problem in real life, we might be more comfortable seeing our students struggle in their learning.

Damon Anderson: The problem with giving students more responsibility is that it requires the teachers to have a better fluency and command of English themselves. Some teachers don't trust their own proficiency, I believe.

Julie: for example, chinese teachers spend a lot of time explaining the new words, i think the work should be left to students , and what's more, i

Wang Ping: Julie, go on.

Julie: what's more, the fact is that students really are tired of their teachers spending so much time just explaining the new words

Kiki: And the teachers spend a lot of time explains how to do the activities in English instead of let Ss do the activity

Damon Anderson: I think that students would be more motivated if they had more responsibility. Would you all agree with this?

Wang Ping: Julie and Kiki, you bring me back to my language class! How have you dealt with this in your class?

Tuyen: You are right. How to make them more responsible?

Julie: maybe for the syntax or something beyond the words, if the students can not understand even if they have no new words, that's part should be the teachers' job.

Tuyen: In fact, ss can learn through negotiation for meaning

Damon Anderson: That is true, Tuyen, but they need to learn these skills. These are life skills so that learning can happen outside the classroom as well.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: In Thailand, teachers tend to allow students to work harder. It depends on what kind of school, level of students, and atmosphere.

Damon Anderson: Perhaps, Julie, too many classes just focus on the introduction of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and not enough time on the use of these.

Julie: i ask my students to preview before my class, and let them know the basic meaning of the words, if they still have questions, they are allowed to discuss with their classmates, yes, negotiation, then the result is that they tend not to leave much work for me to do. The only thing i should bear in mind is be patient, i mean giving students enough time.

Wang Ping: I agree with Julie, if students see that teachers are doing their job, then they would be willing to do their job, too. Teachers' work includes making learning goals and objectives clear and concrete for students, set check points along the way for students to get to, etc.

Tuyen: That's an important point. Our ss and teachers as well need to learn how to negotiate for meaning. According to Long (1980s), in negotiation for meaning, modification checks are used (comprehension check, repetition,...), so that when they don't know a word, they may ask for clarification

Kiki: When introduce a new or complicated, T can explain the rules in the mother language and set an example for the Ss, that will save some time for SS to practice with the activity

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Damon, I agree with you sometimes teacher is lost in time constraint to finish the lesson to complete the course. I believe planning can help solve this problem. Also, collaboration among teachers is very valuable.

Damon Anderson: Tony, in your teaching critical thinking strategy, how to you shift responsibility to the students there in Jilin, China?

Julie: yes, what Damon said is the true situation in China, but as a teacher, i have tried to guide my ss in the way i mentioned above.

luo shaoqian: Hi Damon and Ping, long time no see you here. just because the busy season of oral differences and theses revision. Anyways, glad to be here. Quite an interesting topic. Never thought of this before...

Wang Ping: Julie, you are introducing some great tips on how to have our students take their responsibility. COming to class prepared, ask for help when necessary, and more.

paul: hi

Tony JLU: Hello everyone: An effective method I use to encourage student responsibility is to model learning strategies for your students so that develop the ability to use strategies when learning independently.

Tuyen: For ss' responsibility, I have used a learning contract.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I usually do groupwork or pair.

paul: well ,it is eay to say ,but difficult to do

Damon Anderson: What is in your learning contract, Tuyen? How do you enforce it?

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I agree with Paul.

Wang Ping: Hi Sheila! What a sweet surprise!

Duong Mong Ha: Tuyen, I am interested in your idea with learning contract. Pls explain it.

Damon Anderson: Hi Sheila and Paul. Great to see you both.

paul: i think it depends on what type of the ss are

Tuyen: That is ss' task in paper. I design a contract work. in which are the tasks that ss have to do. SS have to sign that contract with me.

Damon Anderson: Tony, which strategies to you focus on and is there an order to introducing them?

paul: usually let the ss become the hosts of the class is the best choice.

Julie: Yes, to be specific about what Tony said, i think it is important for ss to grasp a way of English learning during school days, help them use dictionaries, find questions, not just the new words. In fact, new words should be the easiest part for a learner as long as she or he gets a dictionary.

Kiki: Tuye, i like ur idea of a learning contract!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Tugen, what will you do if students do not follow the contract?

Duong Mong Ha: You use one contract to all ss or each student has a separate contract

paul: so they have their desires to learn

luo shaoqian: browsed through what's been talked and I see a bit now about the topic. The problem is that in Asian contexts, if teachers don't work harder, both students and parents are not "happy". I was talking with my MA students in my class about some research in this area: students would like teachers to talk more and "teach more knowledge". They don't see much value in student work including presentation, group work etc.

Damon Anderson: Tuyen, It sounds like you have a contract for each activity. Or do you have one contract per student per course?

Suchada Nim: HI can I come in here. I am suchada from thailand.. Learning contract is good

Damon Anderson: Hi Suchada. Great to see you here.

paul: but if your students are very weak in english and are never interested in your english.they donot care about what you did.just like some of my students

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Hi Sucada!

Tuyen: That's the way for independent learning. There are 2 types of tasks in that contract: compulsory tasks and free tasks. I have a contract for about 5 activities.

Wang Ping: Hi Suchada! So good to see you!

paul: not the problem of teachers'

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Tuyen, what are the results of this strategy?

Kiki: Is the contract in English or in mother language? How can you be sure that each Ss understand ur requests ?

Tony JLU: Damon: For example in teaching reading: If you teach the students how to predict the content, how to raise relevant questions, how to clarify meaning, and how to summarize and paraphrase..etc, I have found the students begin to internalize these thought processes and by the end of the year, they will be able to show me things in the text that I had never seen or thought of.

paul: they work harder,but there is something we need to face,do you know the saying

Tuyen: Also, I have a very careful instruction in each contract, and of course the resource for each task is provided in that contract. The contract may be finished 1 day or 2 days, even for a week, depend on teacher's requirement.

Suchada Nim: Pairing them up and let them help each other?

Damon Anderson: I will go back to something I have pushed in the past chats and that is the use of rubrics to help guide students throughout activities. they can decide how hard they want to work to get the score they want.

Julie: yes , the ss in China, they are accustomed to teachers

Wang Ping: Tony, you are right. as teachers we should not work solely on students knowing the right answers: it is also about acquiring some "soft skills" that make acquiring the right answers easier. In order to do well on a test, for instance, you need to more than just the information being tested. You also need to know how to take notes, how to read the textbook, how to study effectively, how to distinguish what information is important, how to answer multiple choice questions, how to eliminate incorrect answers and make educated guesses when you do not know the answer, and how to pace yourself so that you can complete the test in the time allotted. (quote from the book Never Work Harder Than Your Students)

Damon Anderson: Julie, I don't believe you finished your statement.

luo shaoqian: having said the problematic situation in the Asian context about learning, I'll talk a little about what I'm doing to encourage autonomous learning in my extensive reading class. I've done Reading Circles for a semester now and both my students and myself love it. through reading circles, students are put into groups of six and each student has a role to play in the reading task. It's a great way to encourage students to work on their own.

paul: pre-reading , self - teaching and task-based teaching ,every thing is fine.but depends on who is the educator and who are the ss

Julie: sorry, the ss are accustomed to preaching of the teachers, but if we try, we teachers will see the surprise.

luo shaoqian: Paul, could you elaborate a bit on "depends on who is the educator and who are the ss"?

Julie: we should have a lot of different ways or games, but the real purpose is the same, we want our students to talk more, to speak more , to engage more.

Damon Anderson: Shelia if you use the same kind of question in a class that you just used with Paul, that is a start to students doing more.

Wang Ping: Damon, great example.

Damon Anderson: That is true, Julie, but we want them to have authentic communication, not just spouting or writing memorized sequences.

luo shaoqian: Julie, the surprise i see is through my reading circles: ss are responsible to choose their own stories and talk about it in class and share with other groups about the issue or the story or the culture in the reading they have chosen

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I also applied 'Lesson Study' to my teaching. Doing so, I had my students report their work to class, get the feed back from peers and share the ideas. Sharing the ideas include suggestions and comments to do better work or to keep all the good things and improve things they had problems with.

paul: my ss ,today they join the college entrance exam now, but many of them donot how to speak and how to write a composition

paul: can you use the methods which you used on the good ss

Suchada Nim: Right Framing questions, checking and elaborating answers and help students to develop their answers?

Julie: I give my ss an assignment: we are going to have a fareware performance, the ss are going to show dramas in groups, they are busy preparing, i am sure the result will turn out to be great. I mean, the ss are active to do this, this might be an example of giving our ss freedom to learn.

Tony JLU: Question: How many of you give your students the opportunities to critique and re-submit their work?

Julie: sometimes i do.

paul: help them to develop the interests

Suchada Nim: I do. peer assistance and correction

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Julie, that means give students work they are happy to do so that they will be active and will have huge spirit to do it.

paul: the good foundation is needed

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I mean 'high' spirit.

luo shaoqian: Tony, I do. my ss in my writing class can always re-submit their revised work

Julie: Yes, That's my way.

Kiki: At my oral tests, Ss can try as many times as they like till the end of the semester

paul: i do

Tuyen: hey Paul, can you explain more why good foundation is needed?

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Thanks, Julie. It really makes a dynamic atmosphere.

Julie: The fact is there are ss who volunteer to have more performance or to be the host of the party.

paul: but how to deal with the ss who donot want to open their mouths

paul: and also we need to finish the textbook. we have no rights to change the teaching pace

Kiki: Paul, use group work or pair work, give these Ss some strong partners

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I remember once Suchada suggested teachers who wanted to make students talk should act as if they were dentists! Suchada, could you share your strategy?

Suchada Nim: I agree. Pair work and peer assistance are the key.

paul: from senior one , you need give them a solid words power

Damon Anderson: Paul, the magic is in how you use the textbook as a teaching/learning tool. Just going through it is generally not so interesting to students and doesn't really give them the chance to learn to use the language.

Suchada Nim: I sometime allow them to jot down what they want to say in note form and speak them out.

paul: and basic grammar knowledge

Kiki 2: Suchada, tell us about the dentists tragedy!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I believe the textbooks are just a guide. We teachers have to consider our context to use them wisely.

Julie: Pau:, if you are asking me , the answers if we give ss assignments, and let them make groups by themselves, the active ss have ways to help the quiet ss to open their mouth; as to the syllabus, or the textbook we have to cover, my answer is that English is not something as maths, it is not so important to follow the textbook, and the ss can still make progress.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Yes, Suchada. i was impressed by that way.

Kiki 2: Yes, teach the textbook, not to be a slave of it!

paul: i agree the taxt is a tool

Suchada Nim: I told my students that my job is like that of a dentist. I open their mouth so that they speak English. I allow them to put the words in note form. I allow friends to provide subtitle. Like when you watch a movie and there are always good students who can help friends.

paul: julie , i see your meanings

Kiki 2: And a good way is to score Ss in a group instead of single one, so each of the group will work hard for the score

Damon Anderson: I like the game Jeopardy because it teaches students how to ask good questions. Sometimes we need to teach that rather than just have them answer questions. Our approach is often too linear.

Julie: I usually find something to share with my ss, for example, a poem from internet, or an article for newspaper, the ss are eager to participate. Of course, in this way, i have less time to explain the textbook , but it works really..

maihanh: iam doing a research named "using authentic materials to improve reading skill", but I had difficulty in designing questionnaire for the student after the course, Can all of you here suggest me something?

Kiki 2: Haa, Suchaha, i like ur dentist game!

paul: but if you donot finish the text book ,the ss may tell the school leader ,you make a mistake

maihanh: do you have any related materials or name some websites which are useful for me?

paul: i agree with kiki

Damon Anderson: Your dentist activity is very intriguing, Ubon.

Julie 2: You might first check some existed theory about reading skills, and design questionnaires according to your research methods.

Wang Ping: When we teach, do we also take into account of students

Wang Ping: learning styles? subcultures that they may bring to class?

Damon Anderson: Paul, you can use the textbook as a review tool, an extra practice tool, and an introduction tool. You do not have to go over every page and word in class to have used the book effectively.

paul: you know ,i can feel the great difference between the American teachers and Chinese teachers

Julie 2: Yes, Ping, we should.

Tuyen: What kind of questionnaire are u talking about? for reading task or for evaluating after the course?

Suchada Nim: true. Book as a tool or a resource.

luo shaoqian: maihanh: the questionnaire is designed according to your course and your research needs and related to your research question

lucy: There is a long way to go. After all , it is no easy to change the traditional teaching pattern. But it is very exciting and challenging to have students participate in our teaching.

paul: Chinese teachers are lack of teaching inspirations and no more methods

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: All your ideas (behind the scene) prove you work harder than students!

paul: they just simply copy the ways that some did

Wang Ping: HAHAAHA Ubon, but we make students do their work and learn!

Julie 2: Yes, Paul, i have to partially agree with you. The fact is that we need to improve.

Suchada Nim: I think it is the Asian culture as well. We need to change the thinking. Teaching is not telling. it is encouraging students and checking if their have learnt what we teach.

paul: yeah ,now i did it as you mentioned mr anderson

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Shall we look back to our school days? Which teacher(s) work less than us?

luo shaoqian: paul, you are to pessimistic. i think Chinese teachers are very creative in many ways, it's just the exam system. if the assessment is reformed, hundreds of method flowers would bloom

lucy: I agree with Luo

paul: but i feel that to a new teacher they cannot do it ,but if you have 5 years' teaching career , you can do it

Julie 2: let's go back our topic, let ss be the host of the class.

Suchada Nim: Let's the ss try teaching us.

Damon Anderson: Actually, I think that some of the newer teachers have the advantage because they are not locked into habit. Many of them have some brilliant ideas.

paul: my amrican teachers are best

Damon Anderson: I agree with that Julie. Let them do some teaching as well.

luo shaoqian: let ss be the host of the class with teachers' trust, appropriate guide and facilitation

Kiki 2: I think a good teacher works hard before the class and let Ss work hard at class!

paul: hehe

paul: no luo, i am very very optimistic.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: In Thailand, we call new generation of teachers 'New species'!

Julie 2: Yes, i agree with you, Damon, newer teachers have wonderful ideas about how to teach, as well as how to communicate with ss.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I like Kiki's point.

Suchada Nim: who love to do all the games which is good for fun but won't help ss with the exam.

paul: i am realistic

paul: who is the final speaker? the educational department

Damon Anderson: Actually, the final "speaker" is the result the student achieves. If they have the high assessment scores and good ability in English, then the stakeholders may applaud your methods and techniques.

paul: i think the best class is (lazy teachers and hard working students).

Wang Ping: Suchada, I think if the games are fun but could not help ss achieve the learning goal, then we might have to give it up for more effective games. If students acquire the skills then they wouldn't fail the exam.

paul: i need smart teachers and not slave teachers

Kiki: Paul , i think there is a way between leaning & having fun and passing the exam

lucy: to know more about the students'need before the course is very important for your further teaching

Suchada Nim: Well we start with good ideas. learning contract, introducing stages and rubrics for assessing learning. SS will show their work and realise they have achieved sth. if they know that they achieve sth, it will be a good motivation.

paul: nice doing anderson

lucy: I agree with wang

Kiki: if our Ss learned not only the knowledge but also the competence, how can they fail the exam/

Julie 2: We can not decide who is the final speaker, but there are teachers who can male sure the ss have fun as well as pass the exam. Maybe we still have a long way to walk.

Julie 2: i mean make sure

Suchada Nim: Planning and selecting activities. Monitoring the ss and give them creative feedback are the key words.

paul: at the beginning of my career, i taught everything ,but now i will evaluate my ss first and onlt teach what they may think is difficult

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: We have a lot of ideas here: learning contract, group and pair work, dentist's strategy, application of textbook, students' preference, learning goals, and more. i enjoy this session!

paul: something if they can solve be themselves ,just let they do it

Damon Anderson: This has been an amazing chat. Thank you, Ping. We need to decide what topic you want to chat about next. Do you want to take a break or still chat in July?

Julie 2: Yes, let them do it by themselves. I need to give more ss more chances.

Suchada Nim: yes Paul. experiencing and doing the learning.

paul: i think creative teaching is Chinese teacher needed most

Wang Ping: We're coming to the end of this chat! I've learned so much in this session. Wow, Thank you all! We do work harder than many of our students. But it pays off, doesn't it?

Kiki 2: This is really a nice chat, i get a lot , thanks everyone!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I want to share with you Chinese wise man's word:

Wang Ping: Any idea for our next chat in July?

Suchada Nim: Nice chat. I look forward to doing more when Damon is here.

Tony JLU: Thanks everyone...Damon, we miss you!

Julie 2: Never work harder than your ss in class.

paul: soon i will see what my ss did

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: An average teacher teaches. A good teacher shows. An excellent teacher inspires!

paul: hehe

Julie 2: Good! Ubon.

Suchada Nim: We can play around with the issue related to this one because we need the most.

paul: i want to exchange ideas with wise western teachers

Wang Ping (privately): Julie, would you leave me your email address? Do I know you already/ Thank you for your great contribution today!

luo shaoqian: great talking with you all. have a good time in the US, Damon.

Damon Anderson: Thank you all.

Suchada Nim: what 's wrong with the wise Asian teachers, paul?

Julie 2: We might further explore this topic, how to make our ss work harder.

Suchada Nim: Tks

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Thanks:)

Damon Anderson: Should we do a chat in July, or wait until September for the next one?

paul: right , be a lazy and wise teacher

Julie 2: See you, Ping and everybody!

Kiki 2: Last tip: As a young learner teacher , i often let my Ss do "my work", such as make the new word cards for me, etc.

Damon Anderson: Bravo, Kiki!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Shall we do one in July?

paul: no wrong at all, just think openly

Wang Ping: What's the topic?

Suchada Nim: And they learn. July is fine.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Sawaddee, Kha

Wang Ping: What's the topic?

Kiki 2: Thank Damon, hope C U soon!

Suchada Nim: Just joking paul :)))

Tony JLU: I vote for July...

Kiki 2: July...

paul: i want to be the master of Kong fu pander

Suchada Nim: July fine.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Paul, send me your email address. I have a nice kang fu story to share with you.