

Web-Chat Date: November 8, 2011

Topic: Maximizing EFL Students' Voices through Effective Students/Teachers Collaboration

Abstract:

How do EFL academics define the roles of students' voices and participations in the English classrooms? Why would learning with the students be more effective pedagogical practice than teachers' controlled classrooms learning directives? What are the pros and cons of students centered classrooms? Should teachers only carry out the students centered classes and avoid the use of teachers directed learning activities? Or if there needs to be a balance; how and when the teachers should plan to organize the students and teachers directed learning activities? Why encouraging students' voices and active classroom participation critical for today language development practice? What kind of didactic mindsets do teachers have to possess in order not to be intimidated by learning along with his or her students? How do Asian teachers overcome cultural hierarchical pragmatic attitude to allow full and complete display of students' voices? How to access the degree of students' learning achievements when most of the works and learning activities are initiated by each of the individual students?

Transcript:

Damon Anderson: Welcome to our monthly web chat. Please feel free to submit any pre-questions or comments related to our topic.

phuong: hi all

maria yosephin: I am interested in this topic related to how to make our students speak, specially foe "silent" students.

ketsa: Hi phong

ketsa: Hi Maria

Le Tran Loan Phuong: Hi all

Phanisara Logsdon: So we can begin this chat on the exciting topic of students voices !!

Thao: hi everyone

Phanisara Logsdon: RELO Damon Anderson is in Vientiane, Laos today. So he might or might not be joining us today.

Phanisara Logsdon: Thank you for joining us today.

Phanisara Logsdon: How teachers should define students' voices in the classrooms?

Phanisara Logsdon: How could an EFL teacher recognize the fact that we are allowing student's voices to display in our classrooms?

Chollada BKK: Hello everyone

Chollada BKK: Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling

Phanisara Logsdon: I agree with Aj. Chollada. Young people have unique learning perspective; we can invite students to enjoy different learning activities in class.

Phanisara Logsdon: Le Tran Loan Phuong, you would like to say something?

ketsa: yeah, listen to them, we can get ne

ketsa: and learn m

Phanisara Logsdon: For the adult students, we should have plenty of opportunities to allow students to brainstorming about their own previous and background learning. We can ask students opinion, suggestion, participation in the lesson planning. stages-or project based learning approaches.

ketsa: new idea

Chollada BKK: Thank you khun Nina, I sometimes let my students to design the classroom topic or planning of the students' project

Phanisara Logsdon: Exactly, Aj. Chollada. Let the students design the classroom topic. Allow students to show their opinions and make decisions. Very important to make the learning authentic. Students can take ownership in their own learning. Will find it more useful and meaningful.

ketsa: Not many join in the web chat today, huh!

Phanisara Logsdon: People here especially in Thailand are troubled with the flooding problems and issues. There are about 10 people signing in now.

Le Tran Loan Phuong: i'm sorry, it's my mistake; i turn this button on with the hope that i can listen to all of you.

Le Tran Loan Phuong: i'm so sorry again.

ketsa: OK

Le Tran Loan Phuong: oh, so sorry to hear that.

Phanisara Logsdon: I'm glad that you can join us and share with us your perspective from different countries within the region. This of course will be recorded and transcribed for further reading and review.

Phanisara Logsdon: At the recent language teachers training by the Thai AUA language center and ministry of education, the focus of Asean and students initiative for today success. The program is on students project based learning.

ketsa: Have you been affected by the flood. K Nina ?

Phanisara Logsdon: Several of our Embassy staff do. We are OK for now. But the environmental issues will certainly be one of the English for specific purposes in this region.

Le Tran Loan Phuong: people in Hue, Vietnam are also in flooding.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Chollada, I think that it is a good point. If we want to hear students voices we need to give them the chance to talk but also need to define the topics themselves and to be in control of the discussion.

Chollada BKK: But all of us try to do this time by running away from the flood . and now I ask my students to study by themselves and use the website , study vocabs ,sentences the news and when school open we will learn together , I think this kind of the student's centered

ketsa: Let students decide what they want to learn, very interesting

Le Tran Loan Phuong: Oh, "student project based learning" is what i am interested in. Its a very good idea.

Phanisara Logsdon: When we allow students collaboration and decision making processes, students will be trained to be more of the effective leaders in the organization.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: If students are too shy to tell us what they want to talk about, we can help them. We can give them a sheet of paper to write down topics that they are interested in and also have them first talk with just 1 or 2 other students for 5-10 minutes. then after that, they can write down some ideas.

Chollada BKK: yes, and we can connect by the social network or via e-mail, the school was closed, but the idea isn't .

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Phuong, I also like the idea of using learning based on student projects. Do you have ideas on how to do this?

ketsa: I use "blog" to let the students submit their homework in this time of flooding and school need to be closed

Le Tran Loan Phuong: i'm teaching Top Notch, and at the end of each unit, there is so called "Top Notch Project". However, getting students involved is not a simple task.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Chollada, one way to use the floods to help students learn English would be to ask them to connect their grammar-vocab-writing (or other) classes with the floods and to write and talk about that. If

in grammar, they are studying modals, they could write a paragraph about the floods and be sure to use a lot of different kinds modals to express their ideas.

Chollada BKK: and the students love this kind of studying too. But we should have the objective that what the students are going to study. I use the blog of "iearn.org" which is the place that all of the teacher and the students around the world can meet together.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Ketsa, have you been able to get students to read each others' blog and to comment on them?

Phanisara Logsdon: Blogging is a really great idea. We can introduce the concept of the activity to the whole class in the beginning (teachers directed) in the beginning---then students pair and group work later.

Thao 2: blog or PBL is a good idea, but it's hard for students in nonspeaking English countries and not major in English

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Collada, I had never heard of iearn.org. I just looked at it now. It looks very good. I know many teachers also used moodle.com

Thao 2: especially not all my ss can access to internet often

ketsa: yeah, William Wolf, now on the process.

Le Tran Loan Phuong: for instance, there is a "project" like this "choose an invention appearing during your own lifetime that has changed your life. Make a presentation to the class about the invention". Usually, ss do not get enough "flame" to do it.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Phanisara, I had trouble using blogs the first time. Students didn't know what to do. I gave them homework and many students did nothing. I found some solutions to this problem, but I wonder if other teachers also had problems with blogs at first. And, if so, what did they do to try to solve these problems.

Chollada BKK: I ask them to write their idea on the Flood news , the Tzunami in Japan , the big storm to share the comment to their friend. sometimes I use the bear to dictate their idea in the group of 4 or 5 students .

Chollada BKK: I agree with William.

Le Tran Loan Phuong: using blog, oh, again it's a new and interesting idea.

Phanisara Logsdon: We really have to go along with the "new" ideas because that's how the world operates out there. So the students will be better prepared.

ketsa: in my siyuation is diferent, William. I can get more homework from Blog than on paper homework

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Thao, that can be a big problem. In Cambodia the Internet is too expensive for many students to use very often. It costs about 50 US cents per hour, but many teachers make only US\$ 2 per day, so even one hour a week seems very expensive for the students (and for many teachers in poorer schools)

ketsa: situation . sorry

Chollada BKK: So if you let the students to show their writing on the blog. they will try to do because they want to show their own work. if they didn't do it, they will not have any work to present to their friends.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Are there ways to use old fashioned technology to get students to share their voices in classes?

Phanisara Logsdon: Definitely I believe so William. Use what we have available. That's how they are going to present and engage their knowledge out there once finishing the school.

sok makara: yes

Chollada BKK: Oh In Thailand we have the wireless internet around ,and around Islamic College of Thailand too. So we can use the blog and the students love to do it, the comment go in and out all the time. It's fun and let them study English while they don't know they did already.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: When I had trouble with getting students to use blogs, I broke it down into a multiclass project. The first class they had to get an email account and open a blog. Students who did not know how to do this were paired with students who did. These latter students helped the first group. The next assignment was to write and post just one paragraph. Again I paired students (the knowers and the not knowers). Their assignment was that they had to add a link to some other sight. The fourth assignment was that they had to ask another student a question on their blog and then answer a question that a student asked them.

Phanisara Logsdon: Excellent students to student's collaboration. Practicing English and engaging in authentic learning activities with teachers' guidance. Great example, William :)

Phanisara Logsdon: Allowing students voices to display in classrooms---teachers have to design and plan the lesson in advance to maximize students demonstration and time for them to practice in class.

Chollada BKK: It's sound Good.

Chollada BKK: The knower can help another one.

buntheun: hello

Phanisara Logsdon: The "knowers" like Aj. Chollada mentioned represent those students who have stronger proficiency that they can help other students when doing the pair or group work.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: What about in class? How can we get students to share their ideas? How can we move away from classes in which teachers do most of the talking (language production)?

Chollada BKK: Yes, In Thai we use "Friends help friends" kha

Phanisara Logsdon: Teachers can avoid taking too much time talking; if they plan in advance the class segments appropriate amount of time spending introducing activities and student's practices.

ketsa: Yeah, welcome buntheun about 10 here

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Several things I liked about pairing knowers and not knowers: it saved class time, it actually helped students talk more (use their voices) outside class, it gave some students good leadership roles, it encouraged students to make friends in English (these were mixed-language classes and I made sure the groups had students with different L1s)

Phanisara Logsdon: William, Totally agree about providing students leadership roles. Our EFL classes will need to go along with today demands for students to be proficient in speaking and having initiative thoughts and ideas to solve problems.

Chollada BKK: I always use the group of three. because they will help together. if someone don't know the two students will help to describe their friend.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: That's true Phanisara. I think it helps if teachers try not to explain too much in class. It's better to try to explain on paper and give these directions to students before class. It's also often better to show, rather than to explain, and to show with another student.. then the teachers can let the students do these things. It's hard, though, for us teachers to break the habit of always wanting to explain. But when we're explaining English, our students are NOT producing English.

Phanisara Logsdon: I love your explanation William. Exactly. Sometimes it's hard for teachers not to be "traditional" talker and presenter in the classroom. Because that's how we were taught! But it is really time to work WITH and collaborating with the students when carrying out our ELF teaching activities.

Chollada BKK: We can use only 7-10 mins, Nina to talk , teachers shouldn't talk too much , I introduce some new idea and I let them learn by themselves to solve the problem or try to find the answer from the passage.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Chollada, I think 3 and 2 are good numbers. Sometimes teachers use really big groups (5 or 10 or more) but that doesn't work. with groups that big, it isn't possible for students to work together and the groups end up breaking down into smaller ones.

Phanisara Logsdon: How about the order of the teaching method? When should we use teacher's center classroom method and when it is appropriate to let the students to work together with teachers watching with minimal guidance?

Chollada BKK: Yes, the big group make some lazy students away from the lesson.

Chollada BKK: But the group of 2 or 3 will work well because they have to do and help together to finish their exercise or work.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: That's right Phanisara. I think that sometimes in student-centered classes, teachers are afraid they aren't doing anything. It helps if we change our thinking from "how can I explain this" to "how can I help students use and perform language better in class". There's still a lot for us to do but it involves "scaffolding" more than "explaining"

Phanisara Logsdon: Totally agree William! Teachers Self Reflection on their own teaching---examining and investigating what students might be needed most for their next step of learning is very very important.

buntheun: 2 or 3 ppl in group same groups student is lazy to if u dont mantain them :D

Chollada BKK: There is a compromise, I think I will mix between student-centered and teacher-directed learning because sometimes it should be used teacher describing at the first time 10 mins or 10 mins in the end of the class, after that the students will learn by themsleves , present their work to the class.

Phanisara Logsdon: Teachers will need to be sensitive to students learning development; so he or she can plan better the next class period whether which method would be best to focus on and how.

buntheun: i c

Matia Wilson: It is also important to realize that in many places student-centered learning is going to be a new concept for students. It will take some time for them to get used to it if they haven't encountered it before.

Phanisara Logsdon: Exactly Matia. Teachers will need to INVITE students to participate. Show that we welcome (and EXPECTED) their voices in our classrooms.

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: That's right Buntheun. I think that when we put students in small groups we should always do several things: give them some clear task, give them a clear time limit, write the time limit on the board, have them produce some visible product (usually some written answer, often very short). And it can help to make one of the students in each group the policeman (this person watches the time, keeps the students focused). At the end of the class, the teacher can quickly give students a participation grade (formative assessment()) based on the visible product (the written answer) that they've produced. This has to be easy for teachers to do, preferably in class.

* Phanisara Logsdon:

ketsa: Yeah, learn along with the students

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Maria, that's very true. Students can be totally confused at first. It can make sense for the first several classes to do several very each student-centered activities with clear simple outcomes. When they start to realize that the teacher is a believer in this method and that the teacher will use it many times, they begin to understand this new form of classroom discipline.

Phanisara Logsdon: I can only imagine the effectiveness of the Asian EFL classrooms and general education where teachers expect students to think on their own, investigate their learning tasks, and find ways to solve problems. Developing countries will be developing fast I believe.

onlyincambodia: For one, it's a practice that many Asian students are unaware of.

onlyincambodia: Secondly, they may not be used to the idea of critical thinking skills and self-reflection due to the tradition of rote memorization.

Phanisara Logsdon: That's why if we are going to become a "region" ASEAN community; we need to be able to each share our own unique knowledge and abilities to come together and solve common issues together. Rote memorization can be one that students can do on their own at home to further their learning; but when coming to class; teachers need to focus on learning COMMUNITY concept.

onlyincambodia: Phanisara, you've hit the nail on the head!

onlyincambodia: William, there needs to be clear guidance before it can be effective as you say.

Chollada BKK: Teachers needs to rethink their role as teachers. But there are times for teachers, teacher demonstrations and there are times for child centered learning and application of that learning. Don't let anyone tell you that you should be practicing just one style or the other. The balance of the two will depend on many things - the make-up of your students (you may be explicitly teaching one group while another group is doing its own learning), the time of day, the subject matter, the purpose of the learning, the learning style of the student, etc etc. There is no one god-given method, it's all instinct, common sense, sound teacher training, good PD, ignoring the lunatic fringe of "experts" and learning to be comfortable with what suits both you and your students at any given moment.

Phanisara Logsdon: Super summary Aj. Chollada!!

Phanisara Logsdon: We have our last five minutes. Any suggestion for the next chat?

Chollada BKK: *^*

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Phanisara, I like the ASEAN link! I think one very good way to get students to share their voices is to have them talk/write/read about 1) local topics AND 2) international topics. And the first step in the international topics maybe shouldn't be the US (or Europe or Japan...) but instead should be ASEAN. Many of our students here know very very

little about their neighboring countries. One way to get students to share their voices would be to have them imagine showing their city/country to a visitor from another ASEAN country or imagine going to another ASEAN country and coming up with questions they would have about life there.

Phanisara Logsdon: Excellent and authentic topic William. It will definitely become REAL and career wise applicable to all of our regional citizens in just a few years now.

Chollada BKK: Nina, I 'd like the way to make the students to be the ASEAN CITIZENS.

Phanisara Logsdon: Great topic. We'll work on some abstract for this. Thank you for your kind suggestion.

Phanisara Logsdon: Thank you very much all for your time and participation. Hope to see you next time.

Chollada BKK: This is the kind or Students centered

Phanisara Logsdon: We are at the end of our chat now. Good bye everyone. Here in Thailand.....we say "stay safe and dry" :)

William Wolf - Cambodia-Bangladesh: Thanks all.

Phanisara Logsdon: The chat is now closed. THANK YOU. See you at this same site, Tuesday, December 13th.

Chollada BKK: See you next time. Thank you to have us joining the topic.
