

PEER TUTORING WORLD-WIDE PRACTICE

According to E. Conrad from the Center for Educational Research and Development, University of Arizona, peer tutoring is an organized learning experience in which one student serves as the teacher or tutor, and one is the learner or tutee. Peer and cross-age tutoring is immensely beneficial, the three commonly cited advantages being:

- learning of academic skills (which is self-evident, for in order to be able to teach one has to learn first),
- the development of social behaviour and classroom discipline (class-wide peer tutoring practice must be well-structured, timed and monitored – that is why it requires constant attention on the part of tutors, tutees and the teacher overlooking the process),
- the enhancement of peer relations (with useful communication and help).

Peer tutoring is a very old practice known since hunter-gatherer times, when children relied not only on adults, but their siblings as well – “parents teaching their offspring how to make a fire and to hunt and adolescents instructing younger siblings about edible berries and roots) was probably the first pedagogy among primitive societies”, as Jenkins and Jenkins write.

In the XX-XXI centuries, there exist two core models of peer tutoring, so called the OLD one and the NEW one. Here they are in comparison - the OLD (widely used until approximately 1991): less proficient tutored by more proficient student, remedial help, tutee dependency, learning by receiving, emphasis on tutee improvement, limited use of student resources. The NEW (introduced in 1991): everyone is a tutor, reinforcement/enrichment, conversion of tutee to tutor, emphasis on tutor development, multiple increase of help-giving resources.

The pace at which peer tutoring gains popularity and recognition is incredibly fast. Only three years ago, there was much more less information on the subject to be found on the Internet: the American annual *Tutorpalooza* festival resource and various projects created by separate individuals or groups of teachers. Nowadays, peer tutoring has become an essential element in the educational process in colleges and universities of Europe and America.

The Texas Christian University, Department of Modern Language Studies, where peer tutoring has become a well organized and structured process, the OLD model of tutoring is used. Help is available on appointment basis for students studying German, Italian, French, Japanese, and Chinese. The program provides assistance for those who encounter difficulties with class assignments and, moreover, those who want extra practice in learning the languages.

Everyone interested may get up to 10 hours of free tutoring from intermediate to advanced learners of one or more of the languages offered in the Department of Modern Languages or Native speakers of one of these languages. Tutors are recommended to the program by faculty members in the department based on their proficiency and competence in the target language. Selected tutors must attend a

mandatory orientation and training provided by the coordinator of the Peer Tutoring program, where they learn the new one-on-one tutoring techniques and methodologies required for the course. It is emphasized that a tutor should never complete the assignment for his or her tutee, but provide assistance only. It is also forbidden to predict or guarantee grades.

Eligible students request an appointment online via completing a special form with their name, title of course, and, most importantly, the information on what kind of help they need. After receiving the confirmation, students meet their tutors in the Language Media Center, Monday through Friday.

Similar types of peer tutoring programs exist in the Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures of the University of Notre Dame, Emory College of Art and Sciences of the Emory University in the USA, Fanshawe College and Humber College in Ontario, College of DuPage in Illinois, and many more.

The NEW model of peer tutoring was successfully used in an eight-week online project connecting Spanish-speaking English-language learners in Catalonia with English-speaking Spanish-language learners at a Scottish primary school. Its authors S.B. Gelabert, D.D. Gisbert (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), A. Thurston (University of Stirling, Scotland) and K. Topping (University of Dundee, Scotland) state that 'in our modern society, it is almost indispensable to employ the use of technology for foreign language teaching, but is necessary to develop innovative methodologies in order to integrate successfully computers into the foreign languages curriculum.'

34 students from both countries were paired according to their knowledge (the best with the best ones, and the worst with the worst). Each week a student was to write a text on a theme suggested ('My Birthday', 'My Town', etc.) in his second language and send it to his colleague abroad. Simultaneously, he was to check the text sent by his partner, specifying the type of mistakes made. After receiving the corrected text, the student was to rewrite and send it again for recheck. As a result of the project, the students' grades and motivation increased dramatically.

In conclusion, the greatest benefit of peer tutoring is the possibility to learn how to work independently, control yourself and take responsibility for the other student's knowledge. Both new and old models can be applied according to the situation; moreover, modern computer technologies can facilitate and improve the process of tutoring.

Література:

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