

USING THE METHOD OF PEER-TEACHING AT THE LESSONS OF ENGLISH IN MEDICINE

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Abstract

Peer teaching is not a new concept. It can be traced back to Aristotle's use of "archons", or student leaders, and to the letters of Seneca the Younger. It was firstly organized as a theory by Scotsman Andrew Bell in 1795, and later implemented into French and English schools in the 19th century. Over the past 30-40 years, peer teaching has become increasingly popular in conjunction with mixed ability grouping in K-12 public schools and an interest in more financially efficient methods of teaching .

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Introduction

Relevance of the topic. Not to be confused with peer instruction-a relatively new concept designed by Harvard professor Eric Mazur in the early 1990s-peer teaching is a method by which one student instructs another student in material on which the first is an expert and the second is a novice.

Goodland and Hurst (1989) and Topping (1998) note that academic peer tutoring at the college level takes many different forms. Surrogate teaching, common at larger universities, involves giving older students, often graduates or advanced undergraduates, some or all of the teaching responsibility for undergraduate courses. Proctoring programs involve one-on-one tutoring by students who are slightly ahead of other students, or who have successfully demonstrated proficiency with the material in the recent past. Cooperative learning divides classmates into small groups, with each person in the group responsible for teaching others, and each contributing a unique piece to the group performance on a task. Reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT), a more specific version of cooperative learning, group classmates into pairs to tutor each other [4]. The main benefits of peer teaching include, but are not limited to, the following: Students receive more time for individualized learning. Direct interaction between students promotes active learning. Peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others. Students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer. Peers and students share a similar discourse, allowing for greater understanding. Peer teaching is a financially efficient alternative to hiring more staff members. Teachers receive more time to focus on the next lesson [1].

Various peer-teaching programs have cropped up at universities around the world in the past few decades, promoting the notion of peer-assisted learning. Nearly every institute of higher education in the world provides peer-tutoring opportunities for struggling students and teaching assistant positions for advanced students. Students in the Advanced Chinese Studies program, Intensive Chinese Language program, and Summer Intensive Chinese Language program at Peking University (PKU) in Beijing are required to meet for a minimum of three hours per week for one-on-one sessions with their Chinese language tutor. The Peer Language Tutor program at PKU is a unique hallmark of these programs that help ensure its students' linguistic and cultural fluency progresses throughout the program.

These tutorials provide students extra conversation practice in Mandarin and guidance with homework assignments, while giving students an opportunity to befriend and be a part of the lives of their Chinese peers. Past students have stated that their peer tutors were one of the favorite aspects of the program [2].

The Peer Tutoring Program at Duke University in North Carolina offers up to twelve hours of free tutoring each semester to Duke undergraduates who are enrolled in select introductory-level courses. Students meet with a tutor weekly in a convenient public location on campus such as an empty classroom, the library, or a dorm common area. All peer tutors receive on-going training both in best current tutoring practices and on tutoring strategies relevant to their tutoring discipline [2].

A reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT) program at California State University, Fullerton has been evaluated extensively. The program requires students in a large introductory psychology course to meet with student partners periodically throughout the course to quiz each other and discuss the main ideas for each unit of the course. Largely a commuter college, the program seeks to increase academic success, as well as to increase the social integration of the students. The program has been highly successful in both respects: when compared to control students who participated in other supplementary activities, RPT participants showed higher academic achievement on unit tests, rated themselves as more satisfied with the class, were better adjusted psychosocially, and frequently used their RPT partner as a supportive resource in the course [5].

In addition, it was noted that 20 of the 25 undergraduate students entered graduate programs in psychology within one year of graduation. (However, the study lacked a control group of comparable students without exposure to surrogate teaching and it is therefore possible that those who entered graduate school were already graduate school bound.)

In early learning institutions, the effectiveness-if not the widespread use- of peer teaching is equally apparent. In one study conducted in an Ohio school in 2011, four sixth grade students of the same reading level engaged in reading passages from the Quality Reading Inventory (QRI). The QRI is an informal assessment instrument

containing graded word lists and numerous passages designed to assess a student's oral reading, silent reading, and comprehension abilities (Leslie & Caldwell, 2006) [5]. One pair of students engaged in a peer tutoring activity as they read a passage together, actively discussing and talking about the passage as they read. The students then individually gave a retelling of the story to the investigator. The second pair of students read the same passage separately and individually gave a retelling of the story to the investigator. Each pair of students engaged in this procedure twice a week, resulting in a total of eight times, over the course of four weeks.

The students who had engaged in peer learning scored significantly higher on the QRI (Quality Reading Inventory) test than the students who had not, indicating the effectiveness peer tutoring can have on academic achievement. The accuracy of the retellings was examined using the QRI retelling scoring procedure to determine whether there is a relationship between peer tutoring and higher retelling accuracy. The retelling data was scored using the QRI retelling scoring sheet, and retellings were assigned a numeral score.

The scores over the four-week's period were graphed and examined to determine whether there is any relationship between the pair of students engaged in peer tutoring and individually-working students. The students who had engaged in peer learning scored significantly higher on the QRI test than the students who had not, indicating the effectiveness peer tutoring can have on academic achievement. This is just one example; to name them all here would take far more time than you or I have to spare [6].

Despite its popularity, peer teaching has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years, especially in the K-12 community, One blogger writes, "This practice has significant downsides for both parties" and goes on to describe the story of frustrated teachers in Manhattan who created a buddy program, enlisting older students to help teach struggling readers. She cites lack of evidence as a primary concern, mentioning a 2008 National Mathematics Advisory Panel which reviewed instances of instruction in which students were primarily doing the teaching. The panel found only a handful of studies that met its standards for quality. "I'm imagining a scenario where one student is helping another in drilling math facts," the blogger writes. "I can buy that. Otherwise, peer teaching seems to be a waste of precious classroom time." Her primary issue with peer teaching, though, is the return on her investment. "I want expert teachers, not other students, teaching my kids." She says, referring to the expenses associated with quality schooling, Another blog cites "student hesitancy" as a potential issue. Some students may feel that being tutored by another makes them inferior to that student, setting up an adversarial relationship from the start. If a student develops this feeling of inferiority, he may be less than eager to work with his assigned peer and, as a result, not put his full effort into the tutoring program. The blog also mentions

lack of confidentiality, parental concerns, time and scheduling conflicts, and improper tutor selection as possible problems [1].

During "English in Medicine" lessons in ASMI, we use this method in any stage of the class. It is reasonable to carry out such a method on the stage of new theme's acquirement as well as on pre-lesson stage with the aim of controlling studied material. It helps to intensify the educational process and elicit medical students to go ahead in their learning medical English. As Jeff Atwood said: "Teaching peers is one of the best way to develop mastery". I think this method will be developed further in language teaching practice and it is worth to be the point of future scientific research.

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