The Role of Peer Tutoring in Enhancing Collaborative Skills amongst Learners

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Abstract: The issue of "collaborating to learn" is tackled by analyzing a peer-tutoring situation aimed at providing help to students with learning difficulties. The tutor and the tutee interactively construct the asymmetry and complementarity of their roles. As a consequence, what seemed at first sight to be the tutor's discursive and guidance abilities appears, upon closer examination, to be the result of the students' interactional work. The benefits of collaboration help to achieve results in the tutor taking charge of the major part of the cognitive work. However, we argue that the mode of collaboration which is accomplished by the learners is also a sign of the representations the tutor and the tutee have a teaching-learning situation as a body of knowledge to be taught and learned. The learning of certain strategies of collaboration which might be expected to enhance learning through peer tutoring should thus be contextualized in social and institutional practices. Developing collaborative skills is a necessary part of training to promote good academic and social performance amongst learners. This paper explains the value of peer tutoring in enhancing collaborative skills among learners majoring in system of education.

Keywords: Collaborative Skills, Peer Tutoring, Learning.

Introduction

Developing skills amongst learners has been recognized as a fundamental element for achieving good academic and employment performance (Lacunza, 2012). However, according to several authors, most research has focused only on the evaluation and construction of instruments for characterizing collaborative skills (Mendo, et al 2016; Pedraza, et al 2014 & Pujolàs, 2009). In other words, there is a need to investigate educational processes that develop learner’s skills. In this regard, Hernández (2013) proposes that skills development be considered one of the principal training needs in education institutions, since they require competent social conduct that fits the profile of the different areas of academic training (Caira & Sánchez, 2012). According to Gismero (2000), in the early stage of academic training more importance is given to technical competencies, rather than interpersonal relations, even in professions that require the development of relational and interaction components. Thus, there is a need to implement strategies aimed at strengthening skills through peer tutoring in professional education.

It has also been demonstrated that systematic and planned application of peer tutoring produces a substantial improvement in social skills, accompanied by a high level of satisfaction in regard to learning (Duran & Flores, 2015; González et al, 2015). It is, therefore, a method focused on the
student, where the student takes on a central and regulatory role in their own process through interaction with a peer who will also achieve these qualities through a satisfactory interaction. This set of interactions influences the development of empathic, communicative, and collaborative behaviors, positively affecting self-esteem and leadership through self-knowledge and knowledge of others (De Backer et al., 2012; Duran & Flores, 2015; East et al., 2012). As a result, peer tutoring not only provides academic benefits, but also contributes to the formation of cross-cutting skills.

Various studies have defined peer tutoring as a factor that builds behaviours and emotions that effectively benefit relationships and coexistence with others (León, 2009 & Monjas, 2007). Limited development of these skills in learners could have adverse consequences such as low self-esteem, difficulty socializing, and abandonment of studies (Bueno et al., 2013; Caballo et al., 2014). Developing skills represents a key factor in the academic life of learners of elementary education. Likewise, various skills have been identified and described that make it possible to effectively interact with other people (López et al., 2014; Mendoza & Rodríguez, 2013).

Peer Tutoring

A learner is a person who is trying to gain knowledge or skill in something by studying, practicing, or being taught. There must be presence of a learners to have peer tutors. Peers are people who share a similar status or ability. In the classroom, a student's peers are other students. At this point, it is important to clarify the concept of peer tutoring. Peer tutoring is a general name for a strategy in which students support other students in the learning process. While the act of initial instruction in any skill or topic should be done by the teacher, learners can be successful in providing support, reinforcement, or modeling for a variety of academic topics. Tutors and tutees can have expectations about each other’s roles (Falchikov, 2001). A student in a tutor role may conform to tutees’ expectations (Hogg & Vaughan 2005), and adopt their own perceived characteristics of the role (Bierman and Furman 1981). The role change involved may support their learning (Allen & Feldman 1972; Falchikov, 2001).

Peer-tutoring is “the recruitment of one student to provide one-on-one instruction for another student, accompanied by explicit assignment of participants to ‘tutor’ and ‘tutee’ roles” (Roscoe & Chi 2007). Peer-tutoring can facilitate tutees’ learning. Peer tutoring comprises an alternative approach in offering individualized instruction and a classroom environment of trust and social acceptance (Carter et al. 2015). Teachers’ involvement in peer tutoring programmes can be considered as a learning process that will help them include all students in learning (Keer and Vanderlinde 2013).

In addition, Peer tutoring involves students helping each other to learn. It places teaching and learning commitments and responsibilities on students. Considerable evidence supports the positive effects of peer tutoring, including cognitive gains, improved communication, self-confidence, and social support among students. Peer tutors are also said to better understand the learning problems of fellow peer learners than teachers do. Peer-tutoring is capable of encouraging positive attitudes toward school (Allen & Feldman cited in Galbraith & Winterbottom, 2011) helping tutors to understand the complexities of teaching, empathize with their teachers, appreciate how poor behaviour affects teaching and learning, and understand the social and intellectual goals of education. Learners who participates in the peer tutoring are likely shows significant increase in their skills. Peer tutoring clearly constitutes a pertinent strategy for developing skills among pedagogy students.

Successful implementation should include previous training in the roles and monitoring by a professor who has good command of this method. The tutor should have significant experience in the content to be taught and prepare the topics to be addressed in order to satisfactorily handle any difficulties that their tutee may have (Duran & Flores, 2015; Falchikov, 2001). Carter et al. (2015) recommended peer tutoring as a means for schools to develop and foster their inclusive ethos because students with diverse needs receive individualized and timely feedback. In a class-wide peer tutoring format, any risk of discrimination or stigmatization of children with Special
Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is lowered (Scruggs et al, 2012).

**Collaborative Skills**

Collaboration skills are what enable you to work well with others. Most work environments require collaboration, so these skills are essential. These skills include understanding a variety of perspectives, managing priorities from everyone in the group, and meeting expectations as a reliable member of a team. Alternate names are Teamwork skills or team building skills.

Collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that results to a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem. Synchronous is face-to-face collaboration. Synchronous communication happens in real-time (i.e. video conferencing or a phone call). Asynchronous communication has two phases: message delivery and message reception (i.e. email or text messaging). To achieve Collaborative skills, it involves the following:

1. Keeping communication open and never withholding information necessary to carry out tasks.
2. Reaching a consensus about goals and methods for completing projects or tasks.
3. Offering recognition of the contributions of others on your team, giving credit where credit is due.
4. Identifying obstacles and addressing problems cooperatively as they occur.
5. Placing group goals above personal satisfaction and/or recognition, especially if you are the leader.
6. Apologizing for missteps and forgiving others for mistakes.

**Examples of collaborative learning groups**

- Study groups
- Project groups
- Problem-solving or puzzle groups
- Writing groups
- Discussion groups
- Debate or Socratic circle groups
- Peer editing groups
- Role-playing groups

**The need for Collaborative Skills**

Collaboration skills enable you to successfully work toward a common goal with others. Some of the reasons why it should be encouraged include:

i. It helps us solve problems during learning.
ii. Collaboration brings people (and organizations) closer together.
iii. It makes you an active Listener
iv. It opens up new channels for communication. This means it gives room to work with new people in different areas.
v. Collaboration boost morale
vi. It leads to higher retention rates.
vii. Collaboration makes us more efficient workers.
Strategies for Enhancing Collaborative Skills in Learners using Peer Tutoring

a. **Role-play**: Allow the tutors and tutees to act what they are about to teach. After the tutor reading a passage aloud, they should act out a scene that focuses on the topic to be treated. And also giving and receiving praise and feedback

b. **Create a Reward System**: Appreciate Learners performance. For example, each time a tutor provides proper feedback, applaud him or her. You can give tutees gifts or good remarks every time they successfully implement feedback.

c. **Teach Tutoring Skills**: The instructor should coach the tutor how to be conversant with the topic and also avoid any provoking questions from the tutees. There are running exercises to teach students namely:
   - **Directive tutoring**: The tutor fills the tutee’s knowledge gaps, explaining and exemplifying how to reach a specific solution.
   - **Non-Directive Tutoring**: The tutor asks open-ended questions, guiding the tutee to form his or her own conclusions about a given topic.

d. **Explain How to Give Feedback**: there are two types of feedback during peer teaching activities: i. Positive Feedback (praise each other on good performance) and ii. Corrective feedback (correct each other mistakes).

e. **Provide written prompts**: due to nerves, especially for young learners who haven’t tutored before. You can usually avoid this issue by providing a list of prompts, which include:
   - Praise for when a tutee makes progress
   - Feedback for when a tutee makes a mistake
   - Guiding questions for when a tutee is close to reaching an answer
   - Probing questions for when a tutee is trying to explain his or her thoughts

f. **Fill Knowledge Gaps**: tutors should monitor their classes and fill knowledge gaps when required.

g. Allow Students to Take Turns Teaching

h. Tutor should Partner with another class

i. Select Students Who Want to, and Can, Tutor

j. **Focus on active learning**: Exercises should always be allowed amongst themselves for active learning. Some popular options are:
   - Role plays
   - Case studies
   - Reading buddy sessions

k. **Run Class wide Peer Editing Sessions**: you give them work to: Compliment, make suggestions, and correction.

l. **Use Think-Pair-Share Activities**: it involves giving topic for them to discuss results and findings.

m. **Modify Jigsaw Activities**: it is when subtopics are being shared amongst students to teach, making them experts in the subtopics.

n. **Stress Confidentiality**: As you explain a given peer teaching activity, clarify why confidentiality is important. To share problems amongst themselves.
o. **Identify Learning Objectives**: Providing clear goals for tutors and tutees usually keeps activities on track.

**Benefits of Collaborative Skills amongst Learners**

Collaborative learning has been shown to not only develop higher-level thinking skills in students, but boost their confidence and self-esteem as well. Group projects can maximize educational experience by demonstrating the material, while improving social and interpersonal skills. The benefits are as follows:

a. Improves problem-solving skills
b. Encourages Social interaction
c. Promotes diversity meaning it brings together people of different background.
d. Improves communication skills (learners communicate and shares ideas).
e. Inspires creativity
f. Creates trust
g. Improves confidence
h. Encourages engagement
i. Allows people to have fun
j. Develops critical-thinking skills
k. Builds relationships

**Some Challenges in Applying Peer Tutoring Strategies**

a. **Learner's Inexperience** -- Although you can share teaching tips and guidelines with learners, they won’t become expert educators. There’s always a chance the tutor won’t properly support the tutee, giving ineffective feedback or unneeded criticism. Many peer teaching activities fail due to this but with good support and supervision from their instructors there will be better outcomes.

b. **Learner Hesitancy** -- Pairing learners together can backfire, as some may feel inferior being taught by certain peers. On the other hand, some tutees won’t put effort into the exercise, as they won’t be keen on it from the get-go. This can lead to tense relationships. In this case the instructor should hold tutorials in order to boost their confidence.

c. **Poor Applicability** -- Many detractors of peer teaching say it is more effective in post-secondary settings than elementary and high schools. All adults should be capable of helping each other and effectively collaborating without teacher prompts and supervision.

d. **Lack of Confidentiality** -- In many types of peer teaching scenarios, other learners can clearly see who the tutor is and who the tutee is. This means there may be too much transparency with regards to whose excelling and who’s struggling. There are exceptions from every learn, for that reason learners should take turns teaching.

e. **Parent Pushback** -- You may not be the only one who identifies the above-mentioned problems. If parents learn about peer teaching from their kids, they may see it in a negative light. To avoid such incident like complains, instructors should send an explanatory letter to their homes.

**Conclusion**

Both tutors and tutees can benefit from peer-tutoring process. Various writers indicate that peer tutoring builds behaviours and emotions that effectively benefit relationships and coexistence with others. Thus, it can be concluded that systematic and planned application of peer tutoring produces a substantial improvement in social skills, accompanied by a high level of satisfaction.
in regard to learning. It is viewed as a method focused on the student, where the student takes on a central and regulatory role in their own process through interaction with a peer who will also achieve these qualities through a satisfactory interaction. This set of interactions influences the development of empathic, communicative, and collaborative behaviours, positively affecting self-esteem and leadership through selfknowledge and knowledge of others. Collaborative form of learning develops higher-level thinking skills in learners and boosts their confidence and self-esteem as well. Group projects can maximize educational experience by demonstrating the material, while improving social and interpersonal skills.

Implementation of peer tutoring should address the frustrations and difficulties encountered by the learners to facilitate better outcomes. Learners had both positive and negative experiences from the peer tutoring, but that positive experiences predominated. Positive aspects included enhancement of learning skills/intellectual gains and personal growth. Negative experiences stemmed mainly from frustrations in dealing with mismatched learning styles between tutors and tutees, and the required time commitment.

Suggestions

As a follow-up on this paper, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Tutors should make room for role-play to enable students act on what to be taught.
2. Tutors should create a reward system for tutees that are applauded based on proper performance.
3. Instructors should teach tutoring skills to tutors.
4. Teachers should learn to give autonomy to learners to handle their topics for better performance and achievement to get the expected end.

References


