

Quarter 1 2019 Peer Teaching

Reasons for choosing Peer Teaching

In the first quarter I had a challenging class with half quiet and half noisy students. I decided to divide them into quiet/ noisy groups and had one group go to a nearby classroom. This seemed to work well as the quiet ones did not have the disruption of the others and the noisy ones did not have the 'audience' they needed to showcase their challenging behavior.

Also, the benefits of peer teaching touch on a variety of issues relating to the classroom environment: namely, students respond differently to peers and do not need to use English as the medium of interaction.

More importantly, it highlights the issue of confidence that a lot of students lack when it comes to participating freely and productively in class. The smaller group would also have a confidence-raising effect and for the students in the role of peer teacher, they are allowed a measure of responsibility in directing the activity.

There were interpersonal issues that could not really be addressed within the class. For example, the confident students were the only ones who volunteered to be the peer teachers and maybe if they continued to play that role, then students would not have the chance to experience other students as teachers. I felt that this had to be on a volunteer basis, given the nature of the role.

There may also be other factors such as a peer teacher may be confident but unpopular in the class.

Procedure

2 classes of Level 4 students – Sections 834 and 850 did a series of 30-minute activities with the classes divided in half and a peer teacher or pair of peer teachers conducting the activity. The kinds of activities were the following –

- 1) readings with multiple choice questions
- 2) cloze paragraphs with vocab preparation
- 3) cloze with grammar/linking words multiple choice.

Before each peer activity, I modelled the way that I wanted the practice to be done. I told the peer teachers that they should make sure that phones were not used, that they could decide if the students worked in pairs or groups and that

For the reading this involved using a text from the iBook, students were asked to highlight parts of the question stem, highlight the part of the text where they found the answer and choosing one of the multiple choice answers.

In the feedback phase from the students all of these stages needed to be elicited by the peer teacher/s and a photo taken to show their path to the answers. Students were given a paper copy of the reading and questions so that they could do more highlighting or notations, which the iBook did not allow. I also showed them the value of getting students to offer their answers and these written on the whiteboard, then it would be decided which answer was correct according to the highlighted section of the text.

Students were not allowed to search for vocab meanings from the text.

The cloze vocab reading activity involved sorting the vocabulary into part of speech categories on a pre-prepared sheet. The cloze text was then given to them and for each gap they had to go through the steps of deciding on the part of speech, then look for clues in the sentence to help them get the correct word from the vocab box.

The vocab sorting and gap fill was given paper so that students were encouraged to highlight, underline or draw arrows etc, to show how they worked out the answers.

All of the steps had to be shown when getting the feedback/answers from the students.

The grammar sentence cloze activity on linking words was also on paper and had 3 options for each gap. Students were told they needed to go through the following steps: try to understand the type of linking word – adding/contrasting/giving examples/showing result etc. Then they were told to circle any punctuation and notice the sentence structure ie was it S + V + O or S + noun (phrase). S + V + O

Students were encouraged to discuss why some of the wrong answers were wrong by checking on the steps they used.

A survey was given after the reading activity and the cloze vocab activity. Although the numbers of students responding to the survey dropped greatly from the first to the second survey (26 respondents / 6 respondents). Overall the students seemed to like the peer teaching lessons. They generally said that they felt more confident and comfortable with a peer teacher. However, no much information could be gleaned from the open response where it was supposed to invite comments from students who responded negatively to the questions.

