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STUDENTS TEACH STUDENTS. IMPLEMENTATION OF PEER TEACHING STRATEGY IN EFL CLASSES

The article aims to investigate the effectiveness of implementation of peer teaching strategy in EFL classes. Attention is focused on describing the use of peer teaching to positively enhance student's learning experience, their motivation towards mastering a foreign language, and confidence in using it as a means of communication.

Key words: peer teaching, students' interaction, learning process, EFL.

I**ntroduction.** The integration of Ukraine into the international community and the establishment of closer economic, political and cultural partnership has led to a significant increase of the need to have a good command of at least one foreign language. However, this necessity is based not only on economic factors, but also on the growing role of cross cultural communication in both cultural and political aspects. In this regard, it is quite clear that teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) at higher schools is becoming increasingly important. Ukrainian higher educational institutions are actively involved in the process of European integration of higher education, shifting priority directions to the inclusion of English in to the curriculum at all stages of specialists' education. Hence, the necessity of application of modern and effective teaching approaches and techniques in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes in order to produce the best possible results of students' foreign language acquisition is of paramount importance.

The analysis of recent research and publications. The peer teaching approach, also known as learning through teaching, can be defined as an instructional strategy in which one student (the tutor) teaches another (the tutee) under the guidance of the teacher and at the same time both the tutor and the tutee benefit from it. The strategy involves organization of student's group or pair work in order to improve their academic achievements, social skills, and motivation in learning process. Sometimes this teaching approach is also called: peer mediated instruction, peer-assisted learning strategies (PEALS), class-wide peer tutoring, buddying programs, paired reading and peer support.

There is a strong research evidence supporting effectiveness of peer teaching as a learning strategy in EFL teaching. The scientific literature on the issues of tutoring is full of examples of successful peer teaching application in higher education. Studies and reviews of achievements and progress in the development of all types of language skills indicate that average students tend to evaluate positively the learning experience with peers.

First of all, peer teaching is shown to increase student's learning experience and their academic achievements [5; 9]. Secondly, peer teaching has a number of benefits for a teacher, since it creates learning conditions for students to work at their own specific level of needs, even if there is only one professional teacher in the classroom [3; 4]. It also strongly contributes to the development of student's self-esteem [7]. Finally, peer teaching can be beneficial not only for "underachievers", but for the advanced students as well [2; 9].

The purpose of the study was to investigate the peculiarities and effectiveness of implementation of class-wide peer teaching strategy in the EFL classroom, and the positive outcomes of peer teaching activities both for tutors (peer-teachers) and tutees (peer-taught students).

Presenting research material. The peer teaching approach is certainly not a new idea. For example, at the end of the eighteenth century, Joseph Lancaster used it at his school in Southwark, England, when he alone had to teach about 350 children. Most of the children were from poor families who could not pay for their education, so Lancaster introduced the system of “elders”. He trained a group of older students, “elders”, who, in their turn, taught the rest [1]. At the end of the eighteenth century, Andrew Bell developed this system. His idea was that one half of the students in class teaches the other half, and teachers and assistants ensure that the system really works.

Peer teaching originates from cognitive psychology and is built on constructivist learning theory the main idea of which is based on the notion that knowledge cannot be transferred to the learner, and one can only create pedagogical conditions for self-construction of learner’s own picture of the world through active interaction. According to the theory of constructivism, each of us constructs their own understanding of the world around us and has their own convictions and vision of it [8].

The peer-teaching method is applied in various forms, depending on the age and the level of abilities of students. Usually, a more capable student teaches a less capable one of about the same age as he/she is. A variation of this form is cross-age peer teaching, when the tutor is older than the tutee. Another option is class-wide peer teaching (CWPT), when all the students in a class are divided into pairs or small groups and act as tutors and tutees. There are also some differences in the use of the method, which are determined by the degree of structuring of peer teaching. The fundamental idea of peer teaching is students’ learning from each other since most of human activities are built on relationships in which we give and receive.

Peer teaching is mainly implemented in the form of group work. Working in a small groups or in pairs, students actively cooperate with one another and that helps them not only to practice and improve their communication skills but in such an interaction they have mutual impact on each other’s knowledge and skills by learning from one another.

During peer teaching-based EFL classes students act much more independently than during traditional one. The impact of the teacher on the learning process is reduced. All the responsibility for obtaining knowledge and skills is borne by the students. However, in the course of the peer teaching-based activities a tutor may lack pedagogical knowledge and skills (e.g., tutors’ inability to explain particular material to the tutee). Hence, the main aim of the regular teacher during a peer teaching-based class is not to force a student to handle the role of tutor but make him/her interested in its implementation and show or explain how to comply with task rules, and how to make it better and more efficiently.

Peer teaching helps students to be directly involved in the learning process. During regular classes students can be distracted from the task or stop listening to the lecturer; however, in peer teaching-based classes a student (within a group or in a pair) is faced with the task and has to cope with it. Therefore, students listen to their classmates much more attentively, taking an active part in discussions and solution of the task and understanding their responsibility for it.

Another strong point in favor of the peer teaching approach, is that, since students spend more time with each other than with the teacher, they are aware of personal characteristics (strengths and weakness, positive and negative sides, temper, attitude, etc.) of their classmates. It helps them to find an effective individual approach to one another much easier in their academic activities while the teacher, mostly, does not possess enough relevant information.

During peer teaching-based EFL classes students find themselves in supportive environment that significantly contributes to reduction of foreign language use anxiety. The willingness to speak a foreign language increases and students feel more confident using it with their peers.

There are some basic rules for implementation of the peer teaching model:

1. The teacher must provide information or indicate sources, as he/she is responsible for the quality and reliability of the educational material;

2. The teacher should check the results of the task prepared by students, but at the same time give students an opportunity of presenting the topic from their own point of view;

3. After the tutor has completed the task, the teacher should give feedback, as well as ask other students to comment on the lesson.

It is a known fact that a person remembers and understands more when he or she explains the information to another person. This is a strong argument in favor of using the peer teaching approach. The method can be used in both large and small groups. The task of preparing an academic activity can be individual or intended for a small group. Peer teaching can involve a whole class in the course of which students are given the opportunity of acting as teachers. It is also possible to include short assignments during regular classes. In general, the organization of the peer teaching-based EFL classes is as follows. During regular classes one student (it can be more than one peer teacher, provided that the class is divided into several large groups or students have not yet acquired the necessary skills and experience for monitoring the work of all pairs or groups) who acts as a peer teacher receives from the regular one a task that requires the organization and conduction of several learning activities (that are usually based on the coursebook) that may involve speaking tasks (comparison of interrelated pictures, their description, answering relevant questions, etc.), vocabulary exercises, explanation of the grammar material, and others.

Peer-assessment is one of the significant elements of implementation of peer teaching approach. After the task is complete, the teacher asks the tutor to assess the tutees' results according to general criteria. There is no doubt that students tend to evaluate each other's results more loyally than the teacher does, but such a loyalty also strongly contributes to students' confidence and motivation as long as they do not perceive the evaluation of the learning task and comments on it as punishment but useful feedback that helps to indicate learners' weak spots in foreign language acquisition and eliminate them. Hence, students are better able to understand their mistakes, their own strengths and weaknesses. According to Hal Malehorn [6, p. 323], peer-assessment gives students an opportunity of working together for "common intellectual welfare" that helps to create a "cooperative atmosphere" for students instead of the one where learners compete for grades.

With proper application, peer teaching is beneficial for:

1. Tutees, who are given more individual attention; in their case, all tasks correspond to their abilities, and additional time is allocated for tasks performance; educational material is repeated, immediate feedback and support from peers are provided;

4. Tutors, who expand and develop their own knowledge and skills; their self-confidence grows and sensitivity to others is formed.

One of the possible variations of the peer teaching approach application in EFL classes can be such an activity as, for example, workshop. Workshops allow students to prepare an academic activity on a given (chosen) topic and present it during regular classes in the course of which all students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process and discussions. The idea of giving students an opportunity of preparing a learning activity on their own can positively improve learning atmosphere in the classroom, make students more involved and motivated in the learning process and, in general, make this process more interesting for learners, since they have a better understanding of their peers' interests, and are able to take this information into consideration while preparing a workshop.

Another strong point in favor of application of workshop activities in EFL classes is that it helps to cultivate learner's intrinsic motivation towards mastering the foreign language, since it is a known fact that person enjoys discussing the issues and engaging in activities they like and interested in.

Such an activity is beneficial not only for students who participate in it, but also for those who prepare it. During the preparation of a workshop, students collect and summarize information that is necessary, using specific literature or electronic sources. Since this search is carried out using different sources in English, it positively affects student's foreign language acquisition.

Peer teaching activities can be the best solution of the problem of teaching in English classes of mixed ability. Extensive research on effectiveness of peer teaching, published in the

last two decades, has provided conclusive evidence that the use of pair or group work based on peer-to-peer learning has helped to improve the skills of average students while enhancing the skills of advanced students who proudly played the role of a “mentor” [2, p. 323]. Implementing this kind of teaching strategy which implies involving peers in English classes of mixed-ability, the teacher takes responsibility for dividing students into pairs or small groups, ensuring that advanced students are combined with “underachievers”. The right choice of pairs for realization of peer-teaching strategy leads to a major increase in the motivation and achievements of all students.

The benefits of peer teaching both for the tutor and the tutee can be summarized as follows:

1. Active learning is promoted in the process of students’ interaction;
2. During the peer teaching-based classes students’ social competence, motivation, confidence, and self-esteem are developed;
3. Tutors enhance their own knowledge and skills by instructing tutees;
4. Tutees feel much more open and comfortable in interaction with a peer than with a regular teacher;
5. The greater understanding is fostered in the process of discussion between a peer teacher and tutees;
6. The approach encourages the development of students’ communication skills;
7. Peer teaching helps to increase students’ team spirit;
8. It promotes students’ greater productivity and higher achievements.

Conclusion and prospects for further research. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that peer teaching can help not only in improving the educational process, but also in promoting supportive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom.

Nevertheless, teachers must constantly monitor the psychological atmosphere prevalent among students in the classes of mixed ability, since the chances of developing superiority complexes (advanced students may be prone to this), and the feeling of incompetence (that can be peculiar to weaker students) are quite high in such groups.

The prospects for further research lie in developing practical ways of implementing peer teaching in the language study process at higher schools.

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню ефективності впровадження стратегії «рівний-рівному» при навчанні англійської мови як іноземної. Увага зосереджена на описі використання навчання за принципом «рівний-рівному» для того, щоб поліпшити навчальний досвід студентів, їх мотивацію до оволодіння іноземною мовою і впевненість у її використанні як засобу комунікації.

Ключові слова: навчання за принципом «рівний-рівному», взаємодія студентів, процес навчання, англійська мова як іноземна.

Статья посвящена исследованию эффективности внедрения стратегии «равный-равному» при обучении английскому языку как иностранному. Внимание сосредоточено на описании использования обучения по принципу «равный-равному» для того, чтобы улучшить учебный опыт студентов, их мотивацию к овладению иностранным языком и уверенность в использовании его в качестве средства коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: обучение по принципу «равный-равному», взаимодействие студентов, процесс обучения, английский язык как иностранный.

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