

Vocabulary Revision with Peer Tutoring

Hattie – theoretical background peer tutoring

(John Hattie *Visible Learning*, 2009)

Peer tutoring is the use of peers as co-teachers with the aim of improving students' self-regulation and control over their learning methods. They move from "being students to being teachers of themselves" (Hattie 2009: 186). Peer tutoring has a desirable effect on the students' learning outcome ($d = 0.55$). Both groups of students – those who become teachers ($d = 0.58$) and those who are being taught ($d = 0.63$) – can profit by this strategy whereby cross-age tutors ($d = 0.79$) have a greater effect than same-age peers ($d = 0.52$). The fact that in peer tutoring students take over responsibility from the teacher and become self-managers of their learning or the learning of others improves self-regulation and may have a beneficial effect on students' motivation. Students should experience freedom, control, and autonomy concerning the peer tutoring method (Hattie 2009: 187). In the following, focusing on vocabulary as a key-element of language teaching and learning, we will suggest ways for EFL-students to become peer tutors in the classroom.

Preparations for short peer tutoring sessions begin at the end of the previous lesson. All students copy the new vocabulary items they encountered in the course of the lesson. Pairs of students carry out the following preparations for peer tutoring as a homework assignment: They pair up, and the partners agree as to who is in charge of which part of the vocabulary to make sure their work is complementary (one student is in charge of the first half and will be teaching it to his/her partner; the other student covers the second half.).





At home, each partner has to copy half of the items into the vocabulary table/grid (see appendix). The form of the table provides a useful structure for vocabulary practice and revision, leaving students with different options. According to their personal preferences, they can choose to either work with the Scenic Learning approach (see second column) or draw a picture as a mnemonic device to help them remember new words and phrases etc.

Vocabulary can be learned very effectively with the Scenic Learning approach. With this multisensory, student-activating approach, vocabulary items are memorized through the combination of speech and movement (cf. Sambanis 2013: 97). Studies (Hille et al. 2010) have shown that if language is combined with meaningful movements or gestures, phonetic correctness, fluency, and retention rate increase. Scenic Learning aims at multimodal processing of new vocabulary items or other content. The combination of movements, visual representations, and links between words based on collocations and synonyms/ antonyms makes it easier for students to build up strong connections between new words in their mental lexicon. A network of strong connections between different brain regions directly or indirectly involved in language processing is established (cf. Sambanis 2013: 105).

The following day, students bring their tables/grids to class, each containing half of the target vocabulary. In the beginning of the lesson, they have about ten minutes for the peer tutoring activity in teams of two (or three, if a tandem is incomplete): One student teaches the other the new words and phrases he/she was in charge of using mnemonic devices, language links, visualisation or movements. Then, they switch roles, and the other partner becomes the tutor. As every student is responsible for their partner's learning outcomes, meaningful interaction is triggered, vocabulary learning is no longer seen as a tedious, unnecessary activity uniquely based on additional individual studying after school. Peer tutoring might be more motivating for students as vocabulary learning becomes a shared effort. Thus, students are responsible for their own and their partner's learning processes. Also, tutors take on the role of experts, which can be highly motivating and encouraging.

Due to the shared effort and regular times for revision, the preparation of vocabulary tests and exams might become less stressful, as a certain structure for learning new words is ritualized. This means that all students, including those who may be struggling, are not left alone with the pressure to learn a huge amount of new words, which is the case if they start preparing only shortly before the set date for a test or exam. Moreover, the vocabulary table/grid can be used as a basis for a game of vocabulary memory, which could be played at the end of a unit to refresh students' memory in an enjoyable way.

Vocabulary Table

new word/ phrase 	new word in your handwriting	movement/ picture 	word web - synonyms, antonyms 	example sentence/ definition 	optional/ German translation
example					
quirky		Draw something quirky!	far-out, offbeat, odd ⇔ conventional	He has a very quirky sense of humor.	skurril, eigenartig

Bibliography

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