

Peer Tutorial: What, Why, and How
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I have coordinated peer tutorial among students who study Japanese at all levels at the University of Colorado for several years. Each year, as students have experienced it personally, and as they hear about it, the demand increases. Now it is a regular fare every semester, including summer sessions.

Since the 70s, studies in learner autonomy in language learning have constantly affirmed that the more students take responsibility in their own learning, the better learners they become. Peer tutorial, when properly administered and supported, is a very powerful tool for achieving learner independence.

How to organize peer tutorial – Step by Step

The following format requires an assistant who is able to dedicate about 50 hours per semester.

- ① The assistant records all activities s/he does that are related to this project.
- ② At the beginning of the semester, , we (the assistant and myself) will ask the instructors of all Japanese language classes to explain and distribute the application forms, both for tutors and tutees. This will be done in the first 2 weeks.
- ③ Once we collect all the application forms, we will do our best to make the matches. This step takes several hours.
- ④ The assistant sends out e-mail to each pair with instructions.
- ⑤ The assistant sends out e-mail to the participants once every 2 weeks to see if things are going OK.
- ⑥ In the first 5-6 weeks, the program has to be stabilized. Any schedule conflicts and mismatches have to be dealt with during this period. (It usually takes 6 weeks for students to establish their routine.)
- ⑦ The assistant continues to monitor individual pairs throughout the semester, and reminds the tutors to turn in the log.

- ⑧ The assistant constantly looks out for potential tutors.
- ⑨ The assistant stays in close touch with the instructors of both the tutor and tutee and monitor student progress.
- ⑩ The assistant stays informed of the tutee's course requirements and schedule, and reminds the tutor of them from time to time.
- ⑪ Toward the end of the semester, the assistant asks all participants to fill out a survey asking about their experience.
- ⑫ The assistant, upon analyzing the survey results and upon reflecting on her/his experience, writes a report and recommendations.
- ⑬ A new cycle begins in the next semester.

2. Benefits to students and program

Students' feedback suggests that the benefits for the tutors include intentional and self-motivated review of things they might have learned wrong, or could have learned better the first time, and the confidence they gain from being able to explain and clarify things to others who they consider their "ko-hai," junior classmen.

Benefits for tutees include individualized supplementary instruction in a non-threatening setting.

Tapping into one of the biggest yet not well-explored and exploited resources, namely students themselves, boosts our program tremendously.

Teachers are already overworked with the routine business of preparing day-to-day lesson plans, supervision of teaching assistants, and administrative duties. The instructor is only one person with fairly set ways of thinking and handling things. In our program students "teach each other" in classroom as well, but not enough.

Forms

1. Peer Tutorial Application: Tutor Information

Please write legibly.

Name _____ Course/Section _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Times you are available throughout the semester:

Your major(s)/minor _____

Where and how long have you studied Japanese?

Your reason for taking Japanese (in English)

Why do you wish to have a peer tutor for the semester? (in English)

Brief self introduction in Japanese

Sensei's comments and recommendation

2. Peer Tutorial Application: Tutee Information

Please write legibly.

Name _____ Course/Section _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Times you are available throughout the semester:

Your major(s)/minor _____

Where and how long have you studied Japanese?

Your reason for taking Japanese (in English)

Why do you wish be tutored for the semester? (in English)

Brief self introduction in English or Japanese

Sensei's comments and recommendation

3. Peer Tutorial Session Log

Tutor	Tutee	Date/Time _____th meeting	Next Meeting
Lesson plan			
Actual session content/procedure			
Things of particular interest, concern, insight, revelation, inspiration,...			
Plan for the next session			

