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Peer tutoring: Out-of-class speaking opportunities

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Abstract

Out-of-class learning will become a large component of all English courses in the new curriculum at HKU. However, experience shows it is particularly difficult to provide out-of-class speaking opportunities. This paper reports on a collaborative project by the Centre for Applied English Studies and the Centre of Development and Resources for Students (both at HKU) which recruits students who are native- or expert-speakers of English to volunteer their time to provide face-to-face speaking opportunities for other students of the university. This form of peer-tutoring has its origins both in tandem learning (Voller & Pickard 1996 through to Schwienhorst 2009) and in the development of Learning Commons (see for example, learningcommons.sfu.ca and Demeter 2011). The HKU programme has become popular with students at all levels of proficiency because it has sufficient flexibility to offer: confidence raising for anxious speakers, *ad hoc* tutoring for those needing improvement, natural language interaction for higher level speakers and an opportunity for highly local knowledge exchange between the tutors and tutees (the development of Knowledge Exchange is a theme that is currently being strongly promoted by the UGC). Using data collected through questionnaires and focus groups this presentation reports on the perceived benefits of the scheme both for tutors and tutees, and suggests ways to facilitate such a scheme in other institutions.