

## **Developing a training process for peer-tutors of Chinese language program**

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### **I. Purpose of study**

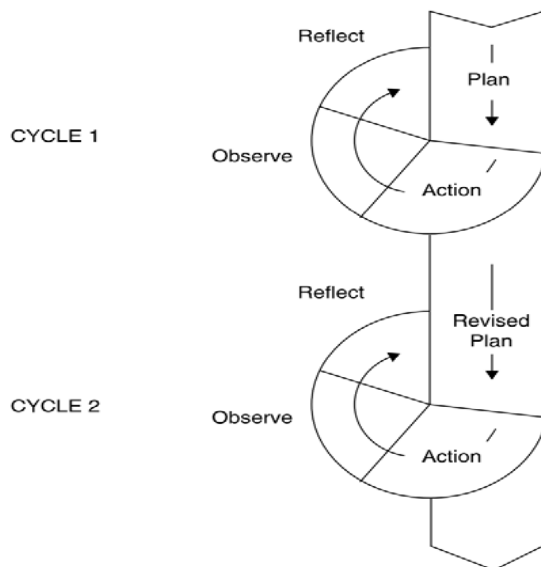
With the rapid economic development of China, interests in Chinese language and culture have been surging among college students in America. However, the increase in the number of students studying Chinese has often not been met with corresponding growth in the allocated resources. The resultant larger class sizes create the need for instructions in small groups and tutorial contacts outside the classroom setting. An effective tutoring system is one of the strategies for improving the quality of language instruction without incurring the cost of additional faculty hires. Whereas tutoring has been employed in many Chinese language programs, studies on the training of tutors for Chinese language program are scarce. Given that most of the tutors in American Chinese language programs are peer students who have little or no experience of language teaching, an effective training process is crucial to improve the efficacy of the tutoring sessions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop an effective training process for peer-tutors of Chinese language program through action research, and tries to find out the effectiveness of the proposed training components through the research process.

### **II. Context of the Study**

The study is conducted at a University in Midwest America. The Chinese program at this university offers a full range of Chinese language courses from first year to fifth year. Students at each level are required to attend at least ninth tutoring sessions each semester. The purpose of the tutoring is to help students reinforce what they have learned, to increase the time of practice, and to get more feedback. All of the tutors are the peer undergraduate students of the learners. Most of them are international students from China who speak Chinese as a native language. Some of them are senior students who have reached advanced level of proficiency in Chinese. The combination of native and non-native speakers allows the tutees to get feedback and experience from different perspectives.

### **III. Procedure**

The study adopts a cyclical model of Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) for the development of the tutoring process (see figure 1). Cycle 1 is conducted from the beginning of the semester to the week before mid-term examination. In this cycle, the initial tutor training plan is implemented. The effects of the training will be assessed through observations of tutoring sessions and a mid-term survey with students on tutors' performances. Based on the reflections of the obtained results, a revised plan is conducted in cycle 2. The effects of the revised plan will be assessed through observations of tutoring sessions in the second cycle, an end-of-semester survey on tutors' performances and interviews with tutors about their training experience.



**Figure 1. A cyclical model of Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)**

The initial training plan includes the following components:

### **1) Training workshops for foreign language peer tutoring**

Tutors will be required to attend four Training workshops held by the University foreign language center throughout the semester. These workshops will introduce foundational principles of language acquisition with a primary emphasis on models and strategies of corrective feedback through readings and discussions. The themes of these workshops include logistics & protocols for peer tutoring interactions, conceptual consideration for language learning & peer tutoring tips, and approaches to corrective feedback.

### **2) Chinese Tutoring Practicum**

At the beginning of the semester, tutors will attend a tutoring practicum held by the Chinese language program. The practicum will provide hands-on training of the tutoring process through model teaching, observation and discussion. By the end of the practicum, tutors are expected to clarify the goal of the tutoring session, to understand their role as a tutor, to get familiar with the teaching materials for tutoring sessions, and to learn some basic tutoring techniques.

### **3) Self-evaluation and individual plan for improvement**

In the fourth week of the tutoring, tutors will be asked to complete the “Tutor Self-Evaluation form” to help them identify their tutoring strengths as well as planning goals for improving tutoring skills and techniques. After self-evaluation, the tutor will work with the mentoring faculty and design an individual plan for improvements. After the mid-term evaluation, tutors will work with their mentoring faculty and revise their improvement plan based on the evaluation results.

#### 4) Reflections

Tutors will be asked to write responses before each workshop to share thoughts on the readings provided in the workshop and to discuss how they have applied or will apply what they have learned to their tutoring.

#### IV. The timeline of the study

In the fall semester of 2013

Week 2: Chinese Tutoring Practicum

Week 3: training workshop I for foreign language peer tutoring

Week 4: self-evaluation and individual plan for improvement

Week 6: training workshop II for foreign language peer tutoring

Week 7: training workshop III for foreign language peer tutoring

Week 8: students' mid-term evaluation on tutor's performance

Week 10: Revisions on individual plan for improvement

Week 11: training workshop IV for foreign language peer tutoring

Week 12-13: interviews with the tutors about their training experience

Week 14: Reporting findings at ACTFL

Week 16: End-of-semester evaluation on tutor's performance

#### V. Estimated Budget: a total of \$ 500

- Compensations for the participated tutors: 6 (number of participants) \* \$ 50 = \$ 300
- Compensations for the trainers: 3 (number of participants) \* \$ 50 = \$ 150
- Services required for photocopying training materials and evaluation forms: \$ 50

#### Selected references:

Calma, A., & Eiggins, M. (2012). Enhancing the quality of tutorials through peer-connected tutor training. *Issues in Educational Research*, 22(3), 213-227.

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Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The Action Research Planner* (3rd Ed.). Geelong, AU: Deakin University Press.

Russo, F. (2012). Peer to peer tutoring effectiveness in foreign language learning. In *the Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International conference on Education and New Learning technologies*, 348-352.