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Students' beliefs about peer-mentors leading collaborative work in an EFL high school classroom: An action research study.

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by

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**Students' beliefs about peer-mentors leading collaborative work in an
EFL high school classroom: An action research study.**

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Abstract

One of the problems EFL high school teachers face with multi-level groups is that students with higher levels of English feel discouraged to be in the classroom. These students lose interest when their level of proficiency is higher than their classmates'. An effective plan to ease this problem was to select some students with the highest level of proficiency to become peer-mentors while leading collaborative work. The purpose of the study was twofold. First, it aimed to identify high school students' beliefs about peer mentors leading collaborative work, and second, it intended to categorize the participants' beliefs about the qualities that a good mentor needs to lead collaborative work effectively in the research site. This research provides useful advice for high school English teachers when dealing with multi-level groups. It was designed to benefit teachers since peer-mentors led teams collaboratively to achieve the class objectives. Furthermore, students with higher levels of proficiency benefited when using the English language and learning skills needed for collaborative work. A cyclical action research model was used as a result of reflective practice. The participants were 60 high school students from which 15 students were chosen as peer-mentors to lead collaborative work. Findings revealed that a planned process had to be followed in order to achieve the objectives. The participants believed that peer-mentors were a positive and useful support to facilitate effective learning in the research site. Nonetheless, they needed to develop certain skills to lead their peers successfully which are described in this research.

Keywords: high school, peer-mentors, leadership, collaborative work

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Dedications

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Working in a public high school as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher has particular characteristics. High school students are different than younger or adult learners. Using appropriate strategies to maximize the learning advantages can make the difference to succeed. Mainly, teachers have to deal with moral, physical, emotional, social and intellectual changes, to name a few. Further, students have to work collaboratively since it is one of the basic aspects to achieve when working in a public high school. Working collaboratively to do a task and to achieve shared goals is a process that is often helpful to people in achieving their objectives. Guidance is a requirement for collaboration and it is a fundamental step to accomplish common aims. Collaboration is an important factor to consider when working with other people. In education, collaboration is related to improving student learning. Even though, this research focuses on education, it can be helpful in other areas where people have to work with others, when people have to work collaboratively. Here the attention concentrates on one of numerous means on how to achieve collaborative work in an EFL high school classroom. Thus, the purpose of this research is to give solutions to a specific problem and to present guidelines for best practice through action research (AR).

My interest in this AR study emerged primarily from personal experience. I am an in-service high school EFL teacher. The first interest of this study occurred from the experience of working with multi-level groups for almost two decades where students often seemed out of context in their groups, especially those with higher levels of English. One of the solutions to avoid discouraged students in the classroom was letting them go out of the

classrooms to do any other activity. Some of the students used to participate in the class by helping their classmates with their tasks without being part of the group. I always believed that those students had to be integrated in their groups to improve their level of English since they had to develop different skills to be successful students rather than simply learning a language.

Through all the years of experience, and after trying different strategies to integrate students with higher levels of English in multi-level classrooms, I decided to explore a different methodology to improve my English classes: Peer mentors leading collaborative work. My beliefs about working collaboratively with people leading work are certainly strong. Moreover, being a teacher for me is to guide students to achieve the high school objectives. Thus, the purpose of this research is to analyze the beliefs, understood as the feeling of being certain that something is true and that it works, that students have about experiencing the methodology used during their school year, and to explore this topic further to provide designs to high school English teachers when dealing with collaborative work.

This chapter describes the importance of this study, the context of the research, the background of the researcher, the research location, the aims, the research questions, and the chapter conclusion and overview of the thesis document.

1.1 Significance

The significance of this research is not only useful in the research site. It is useful in any other situations where collaboration is needed, as well as internationally. Similarly, the aim of this research is to identify the beliefs students have when working in an EFL classroom, analyze the results and create a culture of collaboration in a community.

Additionally, the research may help establish strong relationships among teachers, to organize themselves and to create a culture of collaboration in the institution. I frankly believe that this topic has the potential to impact the style of teaching a foreign language with multilevel groups. Furthermore, it could be successfully applied to related disciplines, and real life.

There are some reasons for doing this study. One of them is that collaborative work is hard to achieve. Another reason is that the results of this research may be shared with other teachers through publications and this may encourage other teachers to use collaborative work with their students, with other colleagues and may also motivate them to publish the results of these experiences. This research might help teachers to be aware of the problems they are facing when trying to work together. Moreover, this research will give options to teachers to lead their students to work collaboratively with their peers.

1.2 The Context of the Research

Working in a public high school in central Mexico involves challenging situations due to the number of students in EFL classrooms and the different levels of English the students have which could be lessened through the awareness of the students' beliefs. This research attempts to offer solutions to those challenging situations in order to have a better understanding among people and fulfill their expectations regarding working with others. Moreover, it can contribute to develop a culture of collaboration.

The research method is reviewed in this section. Detailed information regarding this research design is presented in Chapter III. The data sources used were field notes, a teacher's log and a questionnaire where the participants expressed their opinions about this topic. An AR approach was used to collect and analyze the data.

The areas of research related to this subject are professional development, teaching strategies, beliefs about language teaching and learning, leadership, mentoring relationships, and collaborative work.

1.3 Background of the Researcher

I am an in-service EFL high school teacher. I have been working as an EFL teacher for almost two decades. My experience has been mainly with teenagers and adults. I have taught at high school and university level in public and private institutions. All my studies have been made in public institutions. Through the years I have seen problematic situations with students with higher level of proficiency. My main concern is to give a solution to those situations which have been difficult to solve due to apathy towards relationships among people, as well as indifference and lack of commitment have led to disorganization. This disorganization is what is reflected in the classrooms. Since this is our present situation and teachers are encouraged to teach strategies to work collaboratively, I find this topic a relevant theme to be researched to improve good relationships among teachers and students.

1.4 Research Location

This research was carried out at a public high school in central Mexico located in an urban area where there are more than ten teachers in the English department working with an average of 50 to 60 students. There are approximately 1,900 students in the school who attend the English courses in the three grades. The students are not placed in different levels. The groups have students from different levels which makes teaching a challenging task. The participants of this research are 60 students from a group of third grade and me as

the leading teacher.

1.5 Aims

This research aims to identify the beliefs of the participants regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in an EFL high school classroom. It also aims to identify the qualities needed (of a peer-mentor) to lead collaborative work. Furthermore, this research seeks to build a theoretical framework to provide guidance to teachers in order to facilitate collaboration in their classrooms.

1.6 Research Questions

This research is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

1.7 Conclusion and Overview of the Thesis Document

The main points in this chapter are: the introduction to the study which emphasizes the key components of the thesis, and provides an explanation of the topic, subject of the research, significance of the research, context, researcher's background, research location, aims, research questions, and conclusions.

Chapter II describes high school education in Mexico, the socio-constructivist worldview, and beliefs about language learning to have a broader idea of how teaching has to be approached at this level. It describes collaborative work and multilevel groups to

understand how to work collaboratively with multilevel groups. It also presents some studies about peer-mentoring, and concepts about leadership to have a broader view of these topics related to this research. Chapter III explains the A R approach that guides this research. The setting is established, the participants' information, the data collection instrument, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures. In Chapter IV the research process and the results of the analysis of the information collected through all the cycles are described. The procedure of the cycles and the preliminary results to the research questions of each cycle are presented. Chapter V presents the findings of the research and their significance to each of the research questions. The reflective account, theoretical implications, pedagogical implications, limitations of the research, possibilities or suggestions for further research, and final comments about the study are presented.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This literature review focuses on works that have been published related to high school education in Mexico, collaborative work, language learning, multilevel groups, peer mentoring, and leadership, which have been presented mainly in academic journals, articles and books. The literature surrounding these topics has been selected to capture the main concepts and show the relationships among them. That is, in a review the researcher explains why the gaps addressed are important and significant enough to warrant attention (Bitchener, 2010, p. 61).

The chapter is divided into three sections with two subsections each: 2.1 High school education in Mexico: socio-constructivist worldview and beliefs about language learning. 2.2. Collaborative work: suggestions to work collaboratively and multilevel groups. 2.3 Peer mentoring: Mentoring strategies and example cases of peer mentoring. These sections provide evidence of the reviewed literature to familiarize with other authors' ideas: Bell (1993) stresses accurately that researchers need to provide evidence of reading a certain amount of relevant literature and having some awareness of the current state of knowledge on the subject (p. 33). By organizing my ideas into these sections I intend to give a clear understanding of this research, as well as, information about the context of the research.

2.1 High School Education in Mexico

There are three main types of high school education in Mexico, as Binelli and Rubio-Codina (2013, p. 5) define:

Bachillerato general, which leads students on an academic track in preparation for college education; *Bachillerato tecnológico*, which teaches predominantly technical skills and prepares students for either vocational work or for higher education to become qualified technicians in specific areas; and *Profesional técnico*, which is a two-year program designed for students that wish to obtain a markedly more technical or vocational training.

Enrolment in public high schools is by administering an entrance exam to select the students. Public high schools are free of charge as they are funded through funds from federal, state, or municipal governments even if students are often encouraged to give a voluntary contribution (Binelli & Rubio-Codina, 2013, p. 5). The type of public high school stated in this study is the one described as ‘bachillerato general’. In a public high school context in Mexico, the study of EFL, which indicates the teaching of English in a non-English speaking region, is part of the school curriculum which can also be supplemented by private lessons. These speakers use English only in particular environments, and the language is not used within the community. These characteristics need to be taken into account to guide our views of the world around us.

2.1.1 Socio-constructivist worldview. The socio-constructivist worldview has to be considered to understand how to implement collaboration in our high school environment. “Collaborative learning is based on different epistemological assumptions, and it has its home in social constructivism” (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005, p.6). The socio-constructivist approach involves learners who respond to others with more expertise by collaboratively constructing their own understanding (Garcia, Pearson, Taylor, Bauer, & Stahl, 2011, p. 151). Furthermore, it has to be defined because it is the approach this public institution follows. Creswell (2009) states that this worldview is typically seen as an

approach to qualitative research. He affirms: “Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (p. 8). The social constructivists emphasize the social context for cognitive development. He claims: “The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). These same thoughts apply to this research where the participants’ beliefs are a central feature to collaborative work.

2.1.2 Beliefs about language learning. Teaching and learning beliefs influence teachers and learners. “Beliefs are a key aspect of the language learning and teaching process” (Ruiz Esparza & Castillo, 2013, p. 12). The authors also believe that researching beliefs becomes crucial to understanding teachers’ and learners’ educational processes as beliefs are influenced by social and cultural systems and they are contextual and personal in nature. They accentuate that if students come to class with a lot of beliefs about the language learning process that may obstruct their best performance or cause conflicts with the teacher’s methods or approaches. Moreover, the teacher who is not aware of their students’ beliefs may tend to blame students for aspects such as motivation and interest. The authors assert that if students are aware of their own beliefs, they may be less strict on themselves and become better language users. I find this especially remarkable since most of the time beliefs are not given the required attention. Beliefs are just as important as being aware of the learners’ learning styles when teaching a foreign language: “Through the integration of multiple intelligences into the teaching strategies, EFL teachers can adopt multiple methods to assist students in enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional abilities” (Tapia, Castillo, & Velázquez, 2013, p. 180).

Inozu (2011) examined the key beliefs trainee teachers held relating to language learning during their period of training. The author wanted to know the beliefs the trainee language teachers have about language learning, and if these beliefs showed any changes over four years studying teacher education. The participants of this study were 326 trainee teachers enrolled in a four-year education program in English language and teaching methodology at a university in Turkey. To answer their questions the trainee teachers completed a survey representing key beliefs about language learning. The results revealed that the framework of the key beliefs of the participants remained the same. This could be a significant factor when trying something new. It might be crucial to know what types of beliefs can be modified to achieve certain goals.

Cortés, Cárdenas, and Nieto (2013) refer to beliefs as the knowledge people have of the things, with no previous studies; it means that it is a knowledge that comes from common sense. It is vital to know what people in general believe because if teachers know what they are facing it would be easier to have influence on the other people's behavior as mentioned earlier. Regarding to collaborative work, there are frequently prejudices related to collaborative work (Jacques & Jacques, 2007) that are modified when people experience positive practices in collaborative work.

2.2 Collaborative Work

Working practices in a collaborative working environment have been present everywhere. People use a collaborative working environment to share information and exchange views in order to reach a common objective. These collaborative practices facilitate people's collective goals. Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005) use the phrase "collaborative learning" which refers to learning activities expressly designed for and

carried out through pairs or small interactive groups (p. 4).

Collaborative learning, then, is a structured learning activity that addresses major concerns related to improving student learning. It involves students actively, thereby putting into practice the predominant conclusion from a half-century of research on cognitive development. It prepares students for careers by providing them with opportunities to learn the teamwork skills valued by employers. It helps students appreciate multiple perspectives and develop skills to collaboratively address the common problems facing a diverse society. And it engages all students by valuing the perspective each student can contribute from his or her personal academic and life experience... In most cases, we see collaborative learning not as a replacement for lecture, discussion, or other traditional methods, but rather as a useful complement (Barkley et al., 2005, p.10).

According to Bruffee (1999), collaborative learning helps students to learn better than learning alone, and teaches students to work together effectively. The author maintains that with collaborative learning, students learn to construct knowledge as it is constructed in the knowledge communities they hope to join after attending colleges and universities. He goes on to say that with no loss of respect for the value of expertise, students learn to depend on one another rather than depending exclusively on the authority of experts and teachers. He argues that the most important is that in collaborative learning students learn the craft of interdependence which is a significant feature of collaboration.

Interaction with peers is an effective technique of developing strategies and skills. Vygotsky's theories are creditable examples of how to interact in a social environment. Vygotsky (1978) illustrates what social connections mean by defining what he calls "zone of proximal development" with the following thought:

"...learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in

cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement" (p. 90).

Barkley et al. (2005) support that the theory, applied to cooperative learning, enlightens that students have diverse backgrounds, but enough connection to form a common base for communication. Students exposed to concepts and understandings that are within their ability to grasp, but not yet part of their personal understanding, enables each to learn from other students those concepts that are just beyond their current level of development:

Thus, theoretically at least, academically poor students would stand to learn more from better-prepared students than vice versa. Some would claim that the better students are wasting their time, explaining things that they already know. However, ample evidence suggests that peer tutors gain a great deal from formulating and explaining their ideas to others (p.14).

Additional ideas are presented by Jacques and Jacques (2007, p. 10) who conceive collaborative work as advantageous since it stimulates and motivates when all participants are involved. They also argue that collaborative work promotes ideas arising from the personality and originality of each participant.

2.2.1 Suggestions to work collaboratively. Hammar Chiriac, Williams, and Senior (2014) in their article *Group Work as an Incentive for Learning - Students' Experiences of Group Work*, are concerned about why some group work results in positive experiences and learning, while others result in the opposite. They present a study where the participants are from six different populations in four university programs in Sweden. The participants consisted of a total of 210 students. The group composition consisted

between four to eight members which were most frequently arranged by the teacher. The university students' experiences and conceptions of group work were captured through a study-specific, semi-structured questionnaire. Their results include positive and negative variants which show that working in group facilitated learning in terms of academic knowledge and collaborative skills. They report that group work also has an important study-social function according to the students since membership in groups is an important aspect of affiliation. "Through group work, the participants also get confirmation of who they are and what their capacities are" (p. 6).

Another study about collaboration states: "Understanding intrapersonal conflicts, borders, and ideologies as threads that construct consensus and collaboration processes in teacher higher education contexts could enhance and deepen our perspectives on these processes." (Keränen & Encinas Prudencio, 2014). Their study is contextualized in higher education. They believe that the participants in their study showed something relevant for successful collaborative efforts: the trust, confidence, respect, and friendship.

Kumar (2013) provides several suggestions to work collaboratively: become a good listener, work persistently, help others to achieve their dreams, build effective connections with your team, and work in partnership with influential people are some of the key elements to work collaboratively.

Maxwell (2008/2001) shares the vital principles of team building that are necessary for success in any business, family, church, or organization. He presents 17 laws of teamwork which he believes empower people whether they are coaches or players, teachers or students, to mention some of them, with practical instructions or advices on how to do something, and attitudes for building a successful team. He stresses that teamwork is necessary, and knowing how to build effective teams will benefit every area of people's

life.

There are some factors that influence collaborative work that have to be considered to adapt to particular situations. According to Achinstein (2002), “Teachers, individually and collectively, hold values that shape their practice. The content of a teacher community’s ideology, especially as it pertains to values about education, schooling, and students does matter. These conceptions frame how school is enacted” (p. 427). Even though, there might be considerable differences among communities’ ideologies, there are common factors that society shares which make collaboration a positive feature. For Ramirez Apáez and Rocha Jaime (2013) collaborative work facilitates cooperation, solidarity, and responsibility when doing common tasks. Collaborative work is a means by which students express and confront their ideas, opinions, and doubts (p. 59). Further, collaborative work enables teaching and learning in education, particularly high school education which is the issue concerning this research, where the number of students is tough to attend. One effective strategy to work collaboratively with large groups is to make groups smaller.

Davidson and Major (2014) state that numerous publications on small-group learning have emerged during the last decades. They talk about three forms of group learning that share common elements: collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and problem based learning. They support that these approaches share so much that the terms often are used interchangeably. They present common and different aspects of these approaches. In this research, collaborative is seen as a method in which people team together to explore and create meaningful projects for working in a convenient environment. Cooperative is seen as a specific kind of collaboration where people learn to work as a team. They express the following:

The development of learning in small groups in higher education has occurred, in part, because of strong evidence indicating that students working in small groups outperform their counterparts in a number of key areas. These include knowledge development, thinking skills, social skills, and course satisfaction (p. 7).

The same situation happens in high school education. Nonetheless, teaching EFL in a high school has its own characteristics. Learning English is mandatory in high school, which makes teaching a difficult task to achieve. Large classes and multilevel groups are a real challenge which high school teachers have to face. Undeniably, collaborative work is one effective strategy for teaching these groups.

2.2.2 Multilevel groups. Public high schools in Central Mexico share similar characteristics. Large classes are a common feature at this level. Moreover, teachers face with multilevel groups which could be seen as a disadvantage at first sight. Teachers need to implement effective strategies to work at this level. An effective suggestion to work with multilevel groups is to make groups work in small groups. Some ideas to work collaboratively are enlighten in the following studies:

In her article published at the University of Rome, *The Big Challenge: Teaching Large Multi-Level Classes*, Treko (2013) intends to offer a particular guide for teachers who deal with mixed level classes. She mainly provides English as a second language multilevel activities and strategies to teachers for an appropriate classroom management. Her suggestions come from several authors that she makes reference and from her personal experience in teaching large multilevel classes. She points out that group work requires the teacher management ability for achieving good results, and that the size of the group varies considerably, depending on the task at hand and also by the number of the students in a

class. She expresses that teachers should be aware that classes that have never worked in groups may display some resistance to the idea at first but they soon get used of it. The goal is for the students to participate in a conversation, swap information, share knowledge, and argue out strategies. It makes the students interact and communicate with each other. She asserts that there are not perfect recipes in teaching multilevel classes but she thinks that knowing the advantages of it will remind the teacher that there are some pluses in this setting.

According to Hommes, Arah, De Grav, Schuwirth, Scherpbier, and Bos (2014), in their article *Medical Students Perceive Better Group Learning Processes when Large Classes are Made to Seem Small*, group learning processes can be better achieved by making large classes seem small. The aim of this study was to assess the effects of making a large class seem small on the students' collaborative learning processes. This study was undertaken at the Maastricht University in The Netherlands to make a large class seem small, without the need to reduce the number of students enrolling in the medical school program. A randomized controlled intervention was attempted. The class was divided into subsets, where two small subsets were chosen as the intervention groups. The students met frequently within formal groups, in contrast to the students from a large subset who hardly enrolled with the same students in formal activities. Hommes et al. (2014) describe their perceptions of the intervention as follows:

The students in the control group mentioned not to perceive any positive nor negative effects of the randomised controlled trial. The majority of the interviewed students from the intervention groups perceived positive influences from participating in a small intervention group... Students mentioned that they were more familiar to one another, which made collaboration easier. Students were more at ease to ask one another questions and provide feedback to one another. Also,

member familiarity made it easier to know what to expect from the other group members. Groups developed rather quickly towards an ‘effective group’. Besides these positive experiences on the process of group learning, students developed a close group of friends and felt rather at home at the university. Finally, students mentioned that they valued to be able to see the personal growth of other students as they met frequently again in tutorial groups over time (p. 6).

These studies give a comprehensive idea of to work with multilevel groups in different areas. Language learning has its own variations; nevertheless, the idea is to support and get support among peers.

2.3 Peer Mentoring

Mentoring relationships exist in diverse contexts. Zachary (2000) discusses mentoring in educational institutions, community mentoring partnerships, senior centers, as well as long-distance mentoring (p. 30).

“Learning is the fundamental process and the primary purpose of mentoring. One of the principal reasons that mentoring relationships fail is that the learning process is not tended to and the focus on learning goals is not maintained” (Zachary, 2000, p 1). She claims that motivation drives participation in a mentoring relationship:

“There are many reasons for becoming a mentor: the satisfaction of passing on knowledge, helping to build a business, expanding someone else’s knowledge base, achieving recognition, receiving reward for the effort, increasing one’s own productivity, expanding one’s personal network, getting known, repaying the debt of what others have given to one, and being in a position to exert positive influence” (p. 67-68).

The author affirms that facilitating effective learning relationships requires mentor preparation and reflection throughout the mentoring process and that learning from

experience is the key lever in facilitating learning (p. 164). Zachary (2000) sustains that there are specific things mentors can do to facilitate mentee learning. She finds particularly useful these five strategies:

- 1. Asking questions. Asking questions causes an individual to reflect and thereby encourages learning. Asking questions that require thoughtful answers is helpful in getting mentees to articulate their own thinking and identifying questions to stimulate thoughtful reflection. The questions can open up a learning conversation or shut it down. Ethical questioning is a must (staying within the bounds of role-appropriate questions). Without it, it is easy to exceed limits of appropriateness and fairness.*
- 2. Reformulating Statements. Mentors who rephrase what they have heard clarify their own understanding and encourage the mentee to hear what it is they have articulated. This offers an opportunity for further clarification.*
- 3. Summarizing. Summarizing reinforces the learning, is a reminder of what has transpired, and allows checking out assumptions in the process.*
- 4. Listening for the Silence. Silence provides an opportunity for learning. Some individuals need time to think quietly. Silence can also indicate confusion, boredom, or even physical discomfort.*
- 5. Listening Reflectively. So often we hear but do not really listen. When you listen reflectively, you hear silence, observe nonverbal responses, and hold up a mirror for the mentee (p. 26-27).*

Malderez and Bodóczyk (1999) similarly give importance of relationships in learning: “None of the mentor’s roles can be effective if the mentor lacks the ability to form appropriate helpful relationships” (p. 21). They stress that learning mentoring is a process that takes time to acquire additional knowledge and skills. Therefore, mentor courses are needed to be a good mentor. Some handbooks are provided to be well prepared for peer mentoring (Mastrogiovanni, 2013). Some others are provided for specific mentoring programs (Acevedo & Herrera, 2014).

2.3.1 Example cases of mentoring. In the following paragraphs some examples of mentoring provide evidence of how to implement, structure, engage, follow, and monitor mentoring.

In their article, *The Impact of Peer Mentoring on Mentee Academic Performance: Is any Mentoring Style Better than no Mentoring at all?* Leidenfrost and Strassnig, Schütz, Carbon, and Schabmann (2014) examine the effects of different mentoring styles on mentee academic performance of psychology students at the University of Vienna. 417 students participated in the peer mentoring program, 328 students were supported by 48 peer mentors (advanced students) in small groups. This mentoring program lasted for 3 months. There were online mentoring activities and face-to-face meetings. The mentoring groups were classified according to one of three mentoring styles: a) motivating master mentoring, b) informatory standard mentoring, and c) negative minimalist mentoring. These mentoring styles describe, in general terms, how motivating and informative these relationships were. To examine the effects of the different mentoring styles on academic performance they compared the mentees and non-mentees, and the three mentoring styles. Their data submits that the participants in the mentoring program performed better in their studies than those who did not participate in terms of average grade and number of courses passed. They found no specific impact of the different mentoring styles on mentee academic performance. Their data suggested that any mentoring (style) was better than no mentoring at all which was the answer to their title of the article. This finding raises implications for the training and supervision of student peer mentors for ensuring a certain quality level for being a mentor (Leidenfrost et al., 2014, p. 108).

Magyar, McAvoy and Forstner (2011) discuss the evaluation of an academic writing development module for Masters' students in the school for International Development at

the University of East Anglia, in the UK. They wanted to know what the students and tutors feel were the strengths and weaknesses of the module and what recommendations they had to improve it, in what ways the students felt that the module enhanced their learning experience at their university, and in what ways the students felt the module increased their confidence in writing and their understanding of the discipline.

For the development of the program, postgraduate research students (PGRs) were identified as mentors for students with the lowest IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scores. This academic writing mentor module was attended by students on the taught master's program in an academic year. The program was monitored and evaluated with online surveys, semi-structured interviews, mentors' reports, students' comments, observations, informal conversations, and peer supervision. Several benefits are highlighted along the article, such as: "Problems and solutions could be shared. In fact, helping to solve other people's problems built confidence" (p. 7), and "a significant and indirect benefit of the programme was that because the Masters students saw the PGR mentors as peers, students raised issues they felt unable to voice directly to faculty members and the mentors in turn were able to liaise with lecturers, thus providing an invaluable feedback loop for the latter" (p.14).

2.3.2 Leadership. "Through collaborative and reflective discussions, mentors expand their understanding of leadership" (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 9). "Leadership satisfies a basic function for the group or organization: It mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organizational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants" (Donaldson, 2001, p. 5). "When a school has one or two bad teachers, this is usually a problem with the individual teacher. When it has many bad

teachers, it is a problem of leadership” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 87). These are strong illustrations of what leadership means in this context. The assumption here is that leadership is the key element to work collaboratively.

Cook (2014, p. 2) presents a research study to examine how teachers perceive the need for sustainable school leadership and what elements teachers perceived as essential to the development of sustainable school leadership. He stresses the teachers’ perceptions and the importance of leadership: “The leader who communicates and advances a widely understood school vision, fosters and facilitates a positive school culture, encourages collaboration and shared-decision-making, and promotes and encourages faculty leadership capacity is promoting leadership sustainability within the learning community.”

Huber (2009) expresses that public schools has an interest in learning from the private sector the leadership seen as one of the key elements to be effective in the public education: “In several countries government leaders have stressed the importance of school leadership.” This leadership is a foundation for the school improvement (p. 60).

Maxwell (2007a) describes 21 laws of leadership. He states that by learning these laws, people can be better leaders. He defines these laws as the foundation of leadership which can be developed by learning and practicing them. Maxwell (2007b) emphasizes that personal integrity and self-discipline are the basis of positive change in everyone’s life. He believes that leadership is influence, which is the ability to get followers. Moreover, he thinks that success or failure depends on the leader. Leadership for him is something that can be learnt. He mainly focus on how to learn to be a leader.

Perreault, Zellner, and National Council of Professors of Educational (2012) present a yearbook collection which intends to create awareness of the situation of education in public schools. This National Council of Professors of Educational Administration

(NCPEA) is a collaborative, friendly scholar-practitioner organization committed to the practice and study of educational administration in the United States of America. It has a strong commitment to serve the interests and needs of professors of educational administration and practicing school leaders in such areas as equity, inclusion, innovation, and excellence. This book animates calls for social justice in educational leadership in the 21st. century, and confirms how successful leadership establishes conditions of high student achievement.

Sugerman, Scullard, and Wilhelm (2014) identify eight dimensions of leadership: pioneering, energizing, affirming, inclusive, humble, deliberate, resolute, and commanding. They suggest a comprehensive perspective on all of the behaviors needed to be an effective leader. “The primary goal of mentoring should be to develop dynamic school leaders who cultivate a learning community for other leaders, teachers, staff members, parents, and students” (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 7). Crow and Matthews list a number of pitfalls and benefits of mentoring to describe how a mentor strengthens the leader throughout their book. They wrote their book for mentoring in general, for those who are mentors, those who want to be mentors, and those who are involved in developing mentor programs. Finally, Bush and Coleman (2000, p. 23) claim that leadership is situational. They illustrate leadership by saying that leaders may exhibit different styles and aspects of leadership depending on the specific context within they are operating. They call this type of leadership ‘transformational’ which is linked with the notion of improvement. They go on to say that transformational leadership is idealized influence, where leaders are seen as role model for others, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These last illustrations give a clear example of how to lead collaborative work. Leadership has several leading styles such as: servant, boss, supervisor, manager,

coach or visionary. The leading style that this research follows is the one linked to improvement where mentors act as leaders who motivate and support mentees.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter there was a review of the literature about works that have been published related to high school education in Mexico, the socio constructivist worldview, beliefs about language learning, collaborative work, multilevel groups, peer mentoring, and leadership. Some specific aspects were considered to support this research. First of all, the type of education in Mexico and its characteristics, the socio-constructivist worldview was described to understand how to implement collaboration in a high school environment, and how beliefs might influence learners in their performance. Then, collaborative work was described, their useful strategies and skills, suggestions and factors that influence collaborative work. Moreover, some studies were presented about multilevel groups working in small groups. In the last part, peer-mentoring was explained and exemplified to facilitate learning relationships through mentoring, and the importance of leadership when working collaboratively was defined. All the information was gathered from academic journals, articles and books. After doing this selection of literature review there was a clearer understanding of the topic. I presented the point of views of several authors, described some cases of the topics and collected literature to answer my research questions.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction and Overview

This chapter describes the Action Research (AR) approach used in this study. The research participants section describes the participants, the context of the research and the participants' background. The research methodology section presents the action research approach and the instruments used to answer the research questions. The three instruments: field notes, a teacher's log and a questionnaire are described, as well as the data collection procedure, and the data analysis for each instrument. In the last part, a conclusion of the chapter is stated.

3.1 The Research Participants

This section describes the participants, the context of the research, and the participants' background of the study. The participants involved in this research were 60 high school students of an EFL class in a public high school in central Mexico. Even though, the participants were in a public school, they had a different background; their previous studies were made in public and private institutions. The difference is that students who studied in private institutions had more contact with the English language in their schools or had private English courses. Students who attended public schools usually had contact with the English language as a mandatory subject in middle school.

The participants of this research were in third year. Each school year was divided into four periods of two months and a half. The graduation profile expected from the students was A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The participants' ages ranged between 16 and 18 years old at the

beginning of the study. There were 22 female participants and 38 male participants in the classroom. The participants' language levels varied from A1 to C1 according to the CEFR. Their previous language experience ranged from 5 to 18 years. At the beginning of the school year the participants with the highest level of English were chosen to be peer mentors in the English class to facilitate collaborative learning in the classroom since the characteristics of the class were challenging, as described in the following paragraph.

The seating arrangement in the classroom made walking around the classroom complicated. The classroom had approximately an area of 74 m², which means that every student covered 1 m², including their schoolbags. There were a few teaching aids in the classroom, such as a television, a projector, and a smart board. Other teaching resources such as a computer, speakers, and/or a CD player were not available, I had to carry my own devices. This description is intended to give a broad idea about the participants' environment. Also, the attitude of the participants is an important factor for the facilitating learning. I must say that the participants showed a cooperative attitude towards learning and towards this research.

3.2 Research Methodology

This section describes the methods used in this research. It presents a description of the instruments used to answer the research questions:

RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The approach used in this research was Action Research (AR). It is related to the ideas of 'reflective practice' and 'the teacher as researcher'. It involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring teachers' own teaching contexts (Burns, 2010, p. 2). She claims that the main idea of action research is to intervene in a given situation to make changes and improvements in practice. McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 15) express that action research means researching one's learning. It involves people thinking carefully about what they are doing, so it can also be called a kind of self-reflective practice.

Kemmis and McTaggart present the following model of AR (as cited in Burns, 2010, p. 8) to describe the steps in action research which is described in the following paragraphs:

1. *Planning*

In this phase you identify a problem or issue and develop a plan of action in order to bring about improvements in a specific area of the research context. This is a forward-looking phase where you consider: i) what kind of investigation is possible within the realities and constraints of your teaching situation; and ii) what potential improvements you think are possible.

2. *Action*

The plan is a carefully considered one which involves some deliberate interventions in your teaching situation that you put into action over an agreed period of time. The interventions are 'critically informed' as you question your assumptions about the current situation and plan new and alternative ways of doing things.

3. *Observation*

This phase involves you in observing systematically the effects of the action and documenting the context, actions and opinions of those involved. It is a data collection phase where you use 'open-eyed' and 'open-minded' tools to collect information about what is happening.

4. Reflection

At this point, you reflect on, evaluate and describe the effects of the action in order to make sense of what has happened and to understand the issue you have explored more clearly. You may decide to do further cycles of AR to improve the situation even more, or to share the 'story' of your research with others as part of your ongoing professional development.

During the school year there were four cycles which involved four phases each: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Figure 1). Each cycle was given a name to have a general idea of the whole process. The first cycle was the piloting cycle of this research. It was called piloting the study. The second cycle was named choosing the peer-mentors. The third one was called working with friends, and the fourth one was called becoming independent. These cycles are described in more detail in Chapter IV.

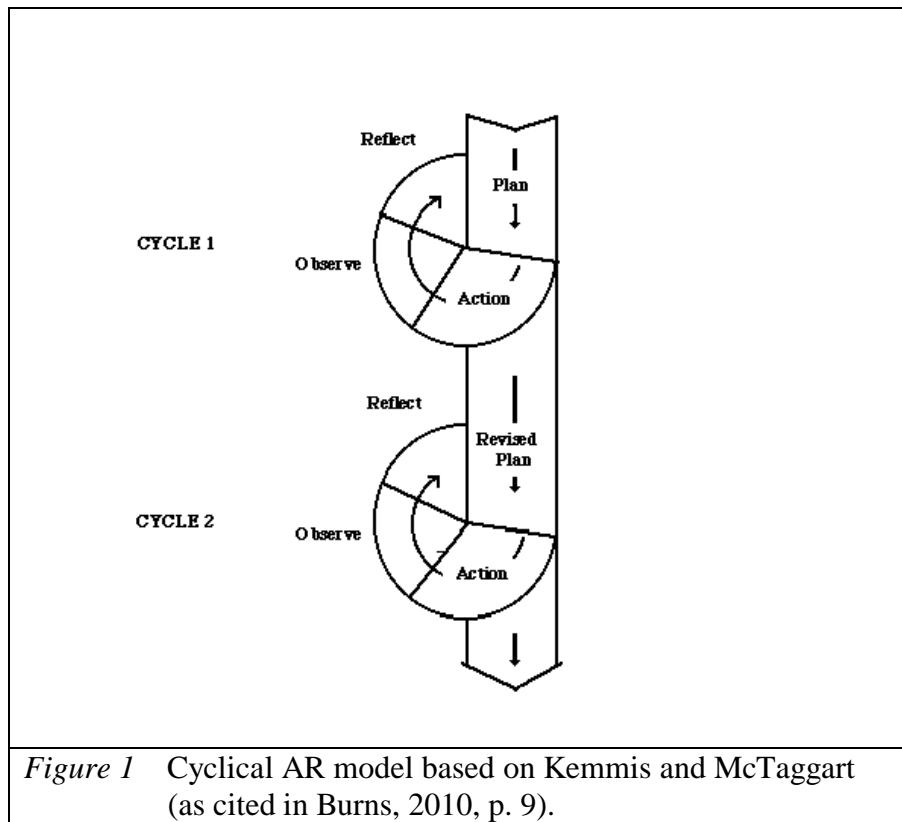


Figure 1 Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (as cited in Burns, 2010, p. 9).

Following this model, three instruments were used for this study: Field notes, a teacher's log and a questionnaire. These data-collection techniques fall into the category of paper and pen technique (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p. 94). These instruments are described in the following sections. They were analyzed in the order they are presented: field notes, teacher's log and questionnaire.

3.2.1 Field notes. Notes of the situation in the classroom were kept throughout the course. Participation, incidents, evaluations, behavior, attendance, homework, attitudes, and reactions were noted down (Appendix A). Everything that was considered important. These field notes were mainly observations done by myself in the classroom. These observations were specific since there was a purpose behind them. Burns (2010, p. 57) defines AR observations as different from the routine kind of looking/seeing that teachers do every day. She claims that it is much more self-conscious because it is:

- * Focused: you are seeking specific information about something, rather than looking in a general way;
- * Objective: you are aiming to see things as they really are and not just through a personal, subjective or intuitive lens;
- * Reflective: you are observing in order to see things from a position of inquiry and analysis;
- * Documented: you deliberately make notes or records of the information;
- * Evaluated and re-evaluated: you check out your own interpretations again later by yourself or collaboratively with others.

These observations were recorded in a log describing the context, actions and opinions of the participants.

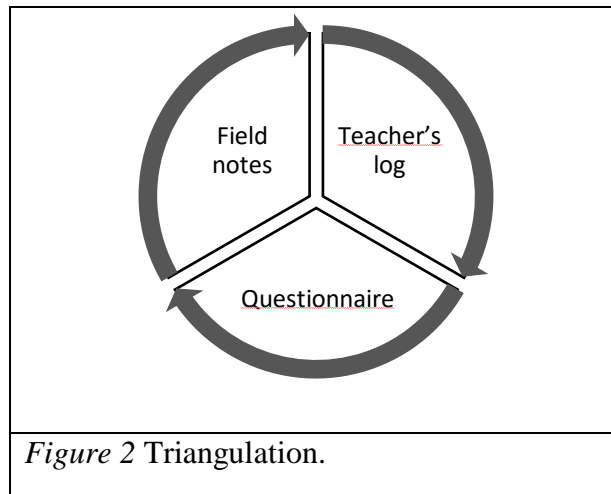
3.2.2 Teacher's log. A teacher's log is a resource to keep record of

demonstrations of teaching, similar to a diary but following a format. It was used to record the events after the tasks given to the students, mainly to help myself to make decisions for the next cycle. This idea of the teacher's log was implemented from the idea of McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 94). They suggest dividing the log into two columns headed 'What I did' and 'What I learned' to describe what happened. This idea was used (as shown in Appendix B) to write my reflections usually at night. The number of logs varied in every cycle since the tasks were different and took different amount of time.

3.2.3 Questionnaire. A questionnaire was used to withdraw data from students to be more confident that the information I had from my field notes and my reflections from my teacher's log were supported by the data from the students. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions. There were 15 open-ended questions and 5 closed-ended questions. It was meant to be answered in 20 minutes; however some students needed more time to answer it. This questionnaire was especially designed for this research, mainly to look for specific information. The language used in the questionnaire was the mother tongue (Spanish) to avoid misunderstandings and to let students express their ideas properly. The questionnaire (Appendix C) was piloted in a group with similar characteristics. It was a very valuable experience since I had to change, rewrite and add some of the questions to refine my ideas.

I do believe three instruments helped me have a broader view of the studied situation. I could compare, contrast and cross-check to see whether what I found through one source was backed up by other evidence, as Burns (2010, p. 96) explains. Even though, I used more than one instrument through all the process, not only three as the term 'triangulation' suggests. I chose these three instruments (Figure 2) which contain all the information needed for this research. Besides, by triangulating these instruments I was able

to confirm the participants' ideas. The design of the questionnaire was a decision I took because I felt I had to see the results tangibly. I already knew how everything was working during the process, and I had kept some of the observations from the participants.



The field notes captured the relevant situations to be considered in the teacher's log. The teacher's log recorded the events and the reflective perspective to improve the development of the cycles. To close, the questionnaire was designed to confirm my perceptions, and to keep evidence of the participants' beliefs.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection took place in the students' location during their English classes. This data collection was part of the school syllabus. There was nothing different at the beginning of the process. Nonetheless, I had in mind that I had to note down specific information to plan the following steps. The data collection through all the school year was similar to previous courses. I had always written my field notes to record the achievements of the students. The teacher's log was something different I had to record since I had to reflect on what I had to do next. The questionnaire was designed at the end of the third

cycle to confirm my findings. In this case, consent forms were prepared and distributed to the participants. In some cases, permission from their parents had to be obtained to involve the participants in the research because some of the participants were not adults yet. In the consent form, their parents' permission was asked for the participants to take part in the research. The type of research I was conducting was explained, and what I was doing. It was assured that the information collected from them was going to be confidential. A white letter size envelope was used which contained the questionnaire and the consent form. Some of the participants had to take the envelope to their homes in order to get the permission from their parents. The 18 year-old participants answered the questionnaire and returned it after signing the consent form. These ethical concerns were explained to avoid misunderstandings through the process of data collection. In the following sections, there is an explanation of how the data was collected of each of the instruments. The data collection took place from August 2014-May 2015. The participants attended classes 4 hours a week in the classroom and 1 hour in the English laboratory which gives an average of 30 hours per cycle.

3.3.1 Field notes. The field notes were made during the course. It was a process that was followed in most of the classes. I tried to seek information about how the participants were working, what they did to work collaboratively and what characteristics good peer-mentors had when organizing the rest of the team. I tried to see if the objectives were accomplished. Every time the participants had to present their activities I used to take notes to give them a grade as well as to write down significant aspects. I made notes in my lesson plan, in my attendance sheet, and in pieces of paper where I had the members' names of each team. After taking notes I had to reflect on what I had done and thought to

record the most relevant aspects in my teacher's log.

3.3.2 Teacher's log. My reflections were kept in a teacher's log usually after finishing each activity. The log was divided into two columns headed 'What I did' and 'What I learned' to describe what happened, and the date of the log. My reflections were written usually at night, however, if there was something important, it was written right away. There were several types of activities during the course; some of them, given the number of students in the class had to be done in two or three sessions in order to make everybody participate. Overall, the teacher's log guided my thoughts to design the questionnaire.

3.3.3 Questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to the students in a white letter size envelope along with the consent form. They were asked to answer it during the class to assure that there were no misinterpretations; even though, it was already piloted. Most of the participants filled the questionnaire, signed the consent form, and handed them in. The students who needed permission from their parents or tutors filled the questionnaire in the classroom, put it back in the envelope and took it to their houses. They returned the envelope the following class.

3.4 Data Analysis

Burns (2010, p. 103) explains that AR is a recursive spiral or cycle of action and reflection, and that means that the data is examined and analyzed in a dynamic way right from the very beginning as shown in Figure 1.

After collecting all the information, there was a series of steps to analyze the data.

There were several elements that were considered to follow a pattern in all the cycles which are described in the cycles.

3.4.1 Field notes. The field notes were analyzed collecting all the data to draw evidence as McNiff and Whitehead (2002, p. 100) state: “Evidence is not data; it is drawn from the data. Data transforms into evidence when actions show that the criteria we have set ourselves are realized”. To transform my field notes into evidence I had to read my notes and decide on the most important aspects I wanted to know. My field notes were notes made in the classroom. Attendance lists were used to record what every student submitted. The students’ participations were recorded in class, as well as projects and activities they presented with their teams. Moreover, notes on the attitudes of the students were taken. These notes, along with some notes the students were asked to write about their team’s work were the data drawn from this instrument. Finally, the sheets were marked with a highlighter to identify the main categories.

3.4.2 Teacher’s log. The teacher’s log was analyzed without using software programs because it was written in a notebook. The same process as in the field notes was followed. I read, looked for the main categories and used a highlighter to identify them. These categories were thought to answer the research questions.

3.4.3 Questionnaire. The questionnaire was analyzed following the same process followed with the previous instruments: reading, highlighting the main concepts, and grouping the main ideas to answer the research questions. Questions 1 and 2 provide gender and age of the participants. 3, 4 and 5 explain the learning experience the participants had at

the time of the study. 6 and 7 describe general concepts about the study. 8, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16 define perceptions about mentoring. 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20 refer to beliefs and preferences of the participants.

3.5 Conclusion

This research methodology described the participants' information, the context of the research, and the participants' background. The research methodology section presented the AR approach, the description of the instruments used to answer the research questions, as well as the three instruments: field notes, the teacher's log and the questionnaire. The data collection of these instruments was described. These instruments were triangulated to confirm the findings through the cycles. In the next chapter, the research process and results are provided. The four cycles with their phases are presented, and the results are presented by coding and cross-checking the data.

Chapter IV: Research Process and Results

4.0 Introduction and Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the information collected. At the beginning, a description of the setting is provided to illustrate the research cycles. The procedure of the cycles and the preliminary results to the research questions of each cycle are presented in progressive order. The four cycles are presented with their four phases: Plan, action, observation and reflection. At the end of each cycle, the preliminary results to the research question 1 about the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work are described. Then, the preliminary results of the analysis of the research question 2 about the qualities of a good peer-mentor leading collaborative work in the research site are examined in each cycle. After the description of the research process, the results are presented by coding and cross-checking the data. Finally, an overall framework of the results of the research questions is provided.

4.1 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this research are:

RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

4.2 Procedure of the Cycles and Preliminary Results to Research Questions

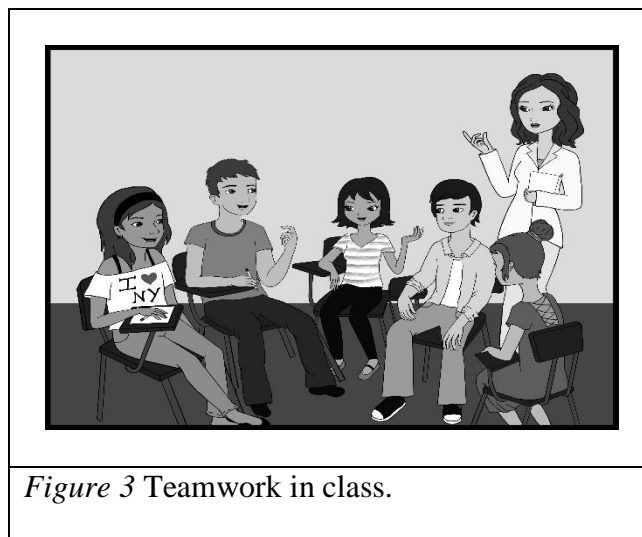
This study was conducted in four cycles which are described in advanced order.

Each cycle provides a detailed description of the procedure of the four phases of each cycle. These phases are the same in the four cycles. Phase 1: plan, phase 2: action, phase 3: observation, and phase 4: reflection. The first phase describes the aspects considered to plan the cycle, the action phase describes the participants' performance during the cycle, the observation phase describes the achievement of the objectives, and the reflection phase describes the serious and careful thoughts of the situations given during the cycle. Each cycle is presented with the preliminary results to the research questions. These results are contrasted with the results of the questionnaire in section 4.3. That section provides detailed information of the cycles focusing on collaboration and the qualities of the peer-mentors. It offers an overall framework of the results to the research questions where the results are organized to code and cross-check the data.

The idea behind peer-mentors leading collaborative work aimed to integrate students with high level of English in a multi-level group. In my experience, in previous courses, most of the students with high level of English lacked of motivation to stay in the classroom. Ideas such as helping and monitoring other classmates or helping their teacher was not considered feasible or interesting for them. Students are not meant to simply help other people. It is a matter of influence. They need to discern that being in the classroom practicing the language is for their own benefit. For all these reasons, planning how to incorporate high performance students and how to motivate them was done carefully. Previous experience of the English language was very useful and allowed participants to be integrated in this type of interaction.

In all the cycles, the participants were asked to work in teams, present their projects in teams, and keep evidence of the tasks. The team members sat together to encourage face-to-face communication, and strengthen team spirit (as shown in Figure 3). This picture is a

clear image of teamwork in class.



Working in teams made easier to have control of the tasks since there was always someone in charge of the tasks. At the beginning of the process there was a little misperception about the role of the peer-mentors of the team. Everything had to be explained clearly to create a truthful atmosphere. At the beginning of the school year, the participants expressed that they were not used to work in teams. They conveyed that most of the time they were asked to work in teams, they used to let one of the members of the team do the assignment. For this reason, teamwork had to be organized in the classroom. The teacher had to be the leader of the peer-mentors to achieve the collaborative objectives. Successful teamwork fosters creativity and learning, builds trust, and teaches conflict resolution skills, among many other characteristics.

However, teamwork is tough. It can be overwhelming if you have the whole picture of the classroom setting (Figure 4). Nonetheless, it lessens the anxiety of being in a crowded classroom. I noticed that students felt more confident when they had this seating arrangement. Even though, I had to apply some strategies to maintain the discipline in the classroom, especially when I wanted to have their attention.

Teaching in a crowded classroom was complicated. Students usually were impatient to go out of the classroom. When the weather was hot, the classroom felt unpleasant. From time to time, they were allowed to go out of the classroom to relax. However, it was problematic since they did not come back to the classroom in a few minutes. It usually took more time to have their attention.



Figure 4 Classroom setting.

Regarding to the tasks they had to accomplish, they were asked to either take a picture of the material or take a picture of them presenting the task. Moreover, they had to write essays, reports or descriptions of the projects to include them in a final portfolio, which was a collection of all their work through the school year. All these projects are described in the high school syllabus. Concerning to the language used, at the beginning of the course everything was explained in the mother tongue (Spanish) to have a clear idea of how they were going to work. The participants were encouraged to use the English language during the class mainly and around the school, with the exception of extraordinary circumstances, especially for avoiding misunderstandings and for making the students feel confident about what they had to achieve.

The cycles covered an average of 30 hours each. Table 1 illustrates the research cycles, the time periods, the main projects and whether it was collaborative or individual work.

Table 1
Research Cycles, Time Periods, Collaborative and Individual Projects

Cycle	Time Period	Collaborative Projects	Individual Projects
Cycle 1	Aug. 4 – Oct.10, 2014.	Interview Collage Timeline	Brochure
Cycle 2	Oct. 13 – Dec. 9, 2014.	Poster Video Radio spot Game activity	Comic strip
Cycle 3	Dec. 10, 2014 – Feb. 27, 2015.	Video	Blog Power point presentation
Cycle 4	Mar. 2, - May 12, 2015.		Oral presentation Portfolio

These cycles were organized to work collaboratively and then individually because the idea was to give a sense of support to the mentees to become independent. This idea can be seen in the last cycle where the peer-mentors had no longer to work in teams. Nonetheless, peer-mentors were chosen to organize the group to support mentees in other objectives (Those objectives are described in Cycle 4). There were a total of 15 peer-mentors chosen through all the academic year. Some of them had to be removed for specific reasons described in the cycles. The number of peer-mentors ranged from 10 to 12 in each cycle. The following descriptions focus mainly to give an answer to the research questions stated in this research.

4.2.1 Cycle 1: Piloting the study. This cycle was called ‘piloting the study’

because it was the first attempt to implement this type of collaborative work.

4.2.1.1 Cycle 1 (Phase 1): Plan. The first step to select the participants with higher level of the English language was to administer a test. The test determined the participants' level of proficiency. It tested listening, reading, grammar and vocabulary, and communication skills. In addition, there was an oral examination to make a final decision. In this cycle 12 peer-mentors were chosen. A bonus system was implemented to encourage the participants to work collaboratively and feel confident about having a good score. The role of the peer-mentors was explained to them. They had to guide them and organize their projects. They were not supposed to do the work for the others but they had to revise that the mentees were following the rubrics or checklists I gave them to do the tasks. There was an explanation of the responsibilities of the peer-mentors to organize their teams. A peer-mentor's observations sheet (Appendix D) was designed to support peer-mentors. They were asked to write comments about the work their mentees had done and whether everyone was working. I encouraged them to highlight the best qualities of their mentees instead of focusing on the negative aspects. For these tasks I asked the peer-mentors just to present their team. The teams had to present the projects as follows:

a) Interview: The participants got together to organize a job interview, and decided what roles they were going to play. The participants acted out a job interview in the classroom. They dressed up with different outfits. The classroom was the scenery to characterize the interview.

b) Collage: The participants collected and pasted pieces of different materials about entertainment to a cardboard (51 x 64 cm). They talked in front of the class about the collage.

c) *Timeline*: The participants were asked to make a timeline about clothes, and present it in class.

4.2.1.2 Cycle 1 (Phase 2): Action. There were several sessions to prepare the assignment. I organized the tasks giving them enough time to agree on the preparation. They usually sat in teams to agree on the organization. Peer-mentors were asked to speak in English most of the time. Besides, they were asked to make notes on the peer-mentor's sheet after each of these projects. For these tasks the peer-mentors presented their team to the group. The mentees were the ones who presented the projects to the whole group.

4.2.1.3 Cycle 1 (Phase 3): Observation. When the participants got in teams they seemed very quiet at the beginning because they were not able to communicate themselves. The peer-mentors tried to speak in English. It was difficult to start using the language because the learning of a foreign language in high school has its own characteristics. It is different from learning a language in an English course or any other level due to the requirements of the high school. In high school, learning a language is attending a subject which in some cases they dislike. For this reason, the participants were not normally used to speak in English. Moreover, some of the students barely understood the language. When I walked around the classroom to see how they were working I realized that it was going to be tough to make them speak. Nevertheless, I realized that peer-mentors seemed glad to use the language. When I approached the teams they started to say phrases in English. Even though, they agreed on the organization in the mother tongue.

When they presented the projects in the classroom the mentees were so nervous to speak in front of the class in another language. Most of the peer-mentors were closed to

them trying to give them support. There were some significant events during this cycle, for instance there were some participants that approached to me when I was in the parking lot near the entrance of the school to ask me some information in the English language in several occasions. Another clear event was when a participant approached to me to say something without being able to express her ideas. She went away. I thought it was too hard for her. However, what happened surprised me delightedly. She came back with one of the peer-mentors. She wanted the peer mentor to explain what she wanted. My answer was negative again. I wanted her to try using the English language. So, she started to explain with the help of the peer-mentor. It was a big achievement for them and I felt so proud to make them use the language. Although, there were misunderstandings, sometimes I observed that peer-mentors were used as data source, as walking dictionaries, which I think was not useful at all. There were also some complaints from some peer-mentors about doing most of the work.

4.2.1.4 Cycle 1 (Phase 4): Reflection. My teacher's log was used to write this part of the cycle. Writing in my teacher's log and making decisions was essential to the development of the following cycles. The participants had worked before with other methodologies. Implementing this kind of methodology was innovative in a sense because key aspects must be considered to make it work. The bonus system was positive because they felt confident as I mentioned before. There was something that I realized from the beginning, the participants preferred to work individually. I had to work harder to achieve the objectives. The peer-mentor's observation sheet was designed to support and to give a little power to peer-mentors. It worked adequately. The participants expressed that it was useful because they were required to use the language. The participants felt forced to use

the language because there was a close observer who was going to give a report. I could see that it was the way it had to be done to encourage them to use the language. Moreover, the peer-mentors worried about doing a good job rather than getting bored.

It was a big success for the participants to present in front of the class. Gladly, I found that the peer-mentors were committed more than I thought. It was like if that was their achievement when the mentees did something successfully. On one hand, I believed the peer-mentors gave the mentees the strength to improve their language skills, mainly the ones that could be observed like the oral presentations. The writing skills, for instance, could not be assured it was their work. On the other hand, some mentors acted as a data source rather than as a mentor. There had to be established ground rules for working together. I had to clarify the role of the peer-mentors and their specific responsibilities. The participants were asked to brainstorm some ideas to make some rules for working collaboratively. Mainly, my idea was to protect the peer-mentors from being overwhelmed by their mentees. Moreover, it was important to clarify the role of the peer-mentors when supporting their mentees.

4.2.1.5 Cycle 1: Preliminary results to RQ1. RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants believed it was important to work collaboratively. Though, they were not aware that there was a process to follow to organize their work. I thought the importance of success was to follow a procedure where everybody had to have a role to achieve the objectives. From the peer-mentor's observation sheets I could confirm previous thoughts that it was difficult for them because they were not used to working in teams. Even so, they had positive and negative attitude towards the accomplishment of the

activities as described in Table 2.

Table 2

Main beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in Cycle 1

Positive	Negative
Foster collaborative work	Organization was not needed
Accomplishment of tasks	Mentors seen as data source
Use of English language	Mentors had to do most of the work

4.2.1.6 Cycle 1: Preliminary results to RQ2. RQ2: According to the study data what qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The qualities a good peer-mentor needs to lead collaborative work were: interest, role model, intelligence, leadership skills, respect, responsibility, creativity, commitment, punctuality, attention, empathy, patience and trust (Table 3).

Table 3

Qualities of a good peer-mentor identified in Cycle 1

Top 5 qualities
Interest
Role model
Intelligence
Respect
Responsibility

4.2.2 Cycle 2: Choosing peer-mentors. This cycle was called ‘choosing peer-mentors’ because the participants were asked to propose classmates to be their peer-mentors.

4.2.2.1 Cycle 2 (Phase 1): Plan. The participants were asked to propose peer-mentors. I wrote a list on the board and asked the participants to decide if they wanted to be peer-mentors. There were two peer-mentors who were not chosen by any of the mentees, and one who was not willing to be a peer-mentor due to personality reasons. Then, the participants numbered on a piece of paper the names of the mentors they preferred to work with. They had to be numbered from 1 to 13 where 1 was their favorite peer-mentor. I collected the pieces of paper and made the matches according to the needs and the type of character of the participants. In this cycle, there were 11 peer-mentors chosen. Two of them were going to be peer-mentors for the first time. I made the matches according to the level of English they had. I made the matches thinking of having one participant with the lowest level of English in each team. The teams had to present the projects as follows:

a) *Poster.* For this activity they had to develop a project about a topic. They had to take a picture of themselves wearing special outfits for the requirement of the activity. Then, they had to present the poster and talk about it in front of the class.

b) *Video.* For this activity the participants had to act out a news program including specific sections. It was a 3 to 5-minute video.

c) *Radio spot.* The participants had to work in teams to make a radio spot. They had to use an application to record the radio spot, look for information to speak, and record it.

d) *Game activity.* The participants had to organize themselves and think of something they enjoyed doing using the target language in the class.

4.2.2.2 Cycle 2 (Phase 2): Action. The participants were asked to work in teams to make a list of rules they had to follow to work efficiently. The lists were compared to decide on the most appropriate ones to be followed. Then, the peer-mentors got together to

summarize the rules and to make one list. The result was a list of rules to be followed in the classroom. For the projects they had to achieve at that, time the procedure was the same as in the first cycle: they had to organize themselves to decide on the organization and the information needed, practice, make the task and present it in class.

4.2.2.3 Cycle 2 (Phase 3): Observation. They seemed to be more organized than before. Nevertheless, there were some difficulties to make the poster due to the lack of responsibility and the tasks they had in other subjects. I had to give them more time to do it. The video was difficult to record because for some participants it was the first time they had even done something like this. Likewise, they asked for more time to achieve the objective. Some difficult situations I observed was for instance when there was a misunderstanding in a team, where I had to mediate to fix things. The videos were presented in class. The radio spot was supposed to be easy. Nevertheless, there were some problems with the recording because the participants wanted to use another type of technology and I wanted them to use the application I asked them to use.

Despite these few issues, the result in most of the teams was amazing. I was glad with the things they could achieve. Furthermore, the game activity was even better because they had the freedom to choose the activity in the classroom. There are many things I usually avoid doing in the classroom because the students get too excited that they can scream or even hurt themselves with the furniture. In this case, they planned something fun. I had to stop the activity once because something could be broken. They had fun in the classroom. They organized very well. They did things that they enjoyed doing.

4.2.2.4 Cycle 2 (Phase 4): Reflection. I think that it is crucial to let them do the

things that they like, because they know in many cases the things they are able to achieve in front of the others. It is important to give them freedom because they actually know what they like doing. They liked the idea of being in a poster. They seemed to enjoy doing it. I was surprised by what they were able to do. I liked giving them freedom to be imaginative. They amazed me with unexpected things. There were several things that as a student I was never asked and probably I would never do. That is the reason why it is important to let the students be free most of the time. I believe that our personality should not intervene in the students' development.

4.2.2.5 Cycle 2: Preliminary results to RQ1. RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants showed interest, creativity and collaboration to make the tasks. They knew who was in charge of leading the team and respected it most of the time. In this cycle, they followed the rules they had written, with the exception of one team where I had to intervene and in minor occasions where I had to remind them their role in the team (Table 4).

Table 4

Main beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in Cycle 2

Positive	Negative
Participants had to follow rules	Misunderstandings in the team
Achievement of objectives	Activities out of control
Activities were more enjoyable	Teacher intervention

4.2.2.6 Cycle 2: Preliminary results to RQ2. RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The qualities a good peer-mentor needs to lead collaborative work were: interest, role model, intelligence, respect, responsibility, creativity, commitment, leadership skills, punctuality, attention, empathy, patience, trust, good manners and good sense of humor (Table 5).

Table 5
Qualities of a good peer-mentor identified in Cycle 2

Top 5 qualities
Good sense of humor
Good manners
Leadership skills
Patience
Empathy

4.2.3 Cycle 3: Working with friends. This cycle was called ‘working with friends’ because most of the time students enjoy working with friends, and this was a suitable opportunity to make them feel comfortable.

4.2.3.1 Cycle 3 (Phase 1): Plan. The selection of the peer-mentors was thinking on the projects they had to achieve. In this case they had to work together in somebody’s house because of the projects. The teams needed to be made with friends. To select the peer-mentors they were asked to complete a mentor’s motivation sheet (Appendix E). In this cycle, there were 11 peer-mentors chosen. One of the peer-mentors had personal problems during several days. Somebody else was chosen as a peer-mentor by their friends.

Then, the peer mentors had to get together with their closest friends to decide how many classmates were going to be needed. There was a limit for the number of participants in each team. They decided on the activity and selected the participants that were going to work with them. In this cycle, they had to make a video as the previous one but this time they had to act out scenes from the chosen material.

4.2.3.2 Cycle 3 (Phase 2): Action. The participants organized themselves to decide on the material they were going to use. In class they discussed and agreed on the things they needed. Though, their work was reflected in the video. They presented the video in class. Everybody watched the videos on the big screen. Participants were asked to talk about the video.

4.2.3.3 Cycle 3 (Phase 3): Observation. The participants were enthusiastic to watch everybody's videos. They loved this activity since they reported to have fun. Working with friends this time was essential because of the time they spent doing this activity. The organization was incredible in most of the videos. The use of technology was a key component to complete the task. I could see a fantastic result of their work. I also observed that when some of the members of the team were asked to talk about their work, it was the peer-mentor the one who, in case that nobody else from the team wanted to speak, felt responsible to speak.

4.2.3.4 Cycle 3 (Phase 4): Reflection. This activity was one of the best activities for them because they had fun and they were inspired to use the language. I was fascinated with the results of their work and the use of technology. Their organization showed that the

previous experience working collaboratively had given them the tools to achieve an objective. I could see that peer-mentors had taken the role of leaders because they were the ones who stood up for their teams. I believed that they felt responsible for their teams, and the mentees felt supported by their mentors.

4.2.3.5 Cycle 3: Preliminary results to RQ1. RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants showed enjoyment towards this activity. They agreed on the importance of having someone to lead their work. They expressed that a leader is not only a person who organizes a team but a person who let the others organize and make decisions together (Table 6).

Table 6

Main beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in Cycle 3

Positive	Negative
Communication among peers	None
Share knowledge about technology	
Mentees felt supported	

4.2.3.6 Cycle 3: Preliminary results to RQ2. RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The qualities a good peer-mentor needs to lead collaborative work were: leadership skills, interest, role model, intelligence, respect, responsibility, creativity, commitment, punctuality, attention, empathy, trust, good manners, good sense of humor and patience (Table 7).

Table 7
Qualities of a good peer-mentor identified in Cycle 3

Top 5 qualities
Patience
Leadership skills
Commitment
Empathy
Trust

4.2.4 Cycle 4: Becoming independent. This cycle was called ‘becoming independent’ because these cycles are a process that main objective is to improve learning.

4.2.4.1 Cycle 4 (Phase 1): Plan. In this cycle, the selection of mentors was thought to organize the participants in case they needed some support for the final written test. They organized the teams with the people they felt more confident. It was less important to be in a specific team. Although, it was essential to organize them to avoid overwork to some preferred peer-mentors. In this cycle there were 10 peer-mentors chosen. One peer-mentor was involved in a tricky situation in the class and had to be removed. A certificate for peer-mentors was prepared to recognize the peer-mentors’ work through the school year. An oral presentation was planned to make the participants show their improvement and independent work.

4.2.4.2 Cycle 4 (Phase 2): Action. Everyone presented a written reflection of their portfolio which contained all their work through the academic year. Everyone had to present it in front of the class. Although, some of the participants were not able to present

in front of the class due to several reasons.

4.2.4.3 Cycle 4 (Phase 3): Observation. The first participants felt nervous about presenting by themselves. I believed they were used to working in teams. Presenting in teams gave them the strength to be in front of the class. I found out that being independent was harder to do since most of them felt insecure when they had to present by themselves. Furthermore, some were reluctant to do it in their turn. Due to time reasons, they had no chance to present it in front of the class.

4.2.4.4 Cycle 4 (Phase 4): Reflection. The main idea was to make them speak and use the language communicatively. Being independent was much harder than I thought. I could see that they had no problem when they had to present with their teams because they felt supported. It was something positive for collaborative work but negative for individual work.

4.2.4.5 Cycle 4: Preliminary results to RQ1. RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants showed nervousness to do presentations by themselves. In their presentations they had positive comments about their peer-mentors. They felt supported by them and expressed their feelings in front of the class. They expressed that it was fundamental to have someone to guide them. The participants who were not able to present in front of the class were too shy to present by themselves. I realized how useful it had been to work in teams because they felt more confident when they had to present in teams. (Table 8).

Table 8

Main beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in Cycle 4

Positive	Negative
Mentors were clearly identified	Mentees felt insecure about individual
Mentors showed support	work
Mentors were a guide	

4.2.4.6 Cycle 4: Preliminary results to RQ2. RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The qualities a good peer-mentor needs to lead collaborative work were: interest, respect, commitment, attention, empathy, leadership skills, trust, and patience (Table 9).

Table 9

Qualities of a good peer-mentor identified in Cycle 4.

Top 5 qualities
Respect
Trust
Attention
Commitment
Empathy

4.3 Overall Framework of the Results to Research Questions

The process to analyze the findings is presented by analyzing the preliminary results from the cycles, taking information from the instruments used through the cycles and from the questionnaire. To analyze the findings from the questionnaire, the answers from the

participants who were peer-mentors were separated from the whole group to compare their answers. A number was assigned to each participant to classify the participants' feelings and keep their anonymity. Since all the participants were identified by their names I could compare and contrast all the information. This process is described in the following paragraphs.

In each cycle the data was scanned several times to see the categories that emerged from the data. In AR this process is known as inductive coding. It means that the data is looked at from the perspectives of people closely involved in the research context and their opinions and views are analyzed exactly as they are found (Burns, 2010, p. 107). In this section the results are organized to code and cross-check the data. The preliminary results of each cycle are compared and contrasted to produce a sense of balance of the instruments used (Table 10).

Table 10

Main beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work in Cycles 1, 2, 3 and 4

Positive	Negative
Foster collaborative work	Organization was not needed
Accomplishment of tasks	Mentors seen as data source
Use of English language	Mentors had to do most of the work
Participants had to follow rules	Misunderstandings in the team
Achievement of objectives	Activities out of control
Activities were more enjoyable	Teacher intervention
Communication among peers	None
Share knowledge about technology	
Mentees felt supported	
Mentors were clearly identified	Mentees felt insecure about individual work
Mentors showed support	
Mentors were a guide	

The following table (Table11) shows the top 5 qualities of the four cycles. This contrast was intended to show what I found in the four cycles. The main idea to identify the qualities of a good peer-mentor was to be aware of the participants’ needs. Even though, their personalities varied from one to another, they shared some characteristics that were similar. It was significant to identify some qualities because I could give suggestions to work better in a collaborative environment.

Table 11

Qualities of a good peer-mentor identified in Cycles 1, 2, 3 and 4

Top 5 qualities
Leadership skills
Empathy
Commitment
Respect
Patience

4.3.1 Coding the data. Based on the data developed in each of the cycles, some categories were found. These categories were organized to make the questionnaire. It was meant to confirm the findings through the cycles. The questionnaire was organized as follows: Questions 1 and 2 provide gender and age of the participants. 3, 4 and 5 explain the learning experience. 6 and 7 describe general concepts about the study. 8, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16 define perceptions about mentoring. 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20 refer to beliefs and preferences of the participants. Some codes were assigned to the instruments and other codes were assigned to the participants (Table 12). These codes are meant to facilitate the analysis of the information found.

Table 12

Code Description

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>
a) FN	Field Notes
b) T'sL	Teacher's Log
c) Q	Questionnaire
d) P-M	Peer-mentor
e) M	Mentees

4.3.2 Cross-checking the data. In this section a comparison of the categories across the different sets of data is presented to see whether the information is the same or if there are contradictions to highlight. Some tables and charts are developed to display the data from the three instruments. Since the questionnaire was elicited from the data of the field notes and the teacher's log, in the following paragraphs the data is presented following the questions.

For this research there were 22 female participants and 38 male participants (Q 1). The importance to know the gender of the participants is that, in my experience, it is more difficult to control male students. In this case, it was not the exception. It was hard to achieve the objectives. The age of the participants at the end of the academic year ranged from 17 to 19 years old (Q 2). The participants had been studying English from 5-6 years (48.33%), 7-9 years (16.66%), 11-12 years (16.66%), and 13 or more years (18.33%) (Q 3). The time the participants had been studying English was a key element for being good peer-mentors. The experience was not considered to be a mentor. Nevertheless, it could be another factor to consider for future studies because it was observed (T'sL) that the most

supportive peer-mentors were the ones who had more experience in learning the language. There were 5 peer-mentors who had been studying from 5-9 years, and 10 peer-mentors from 10 to 13 or more years.

The participants practiced the English language differently: the range went from 2 hours to 35 hours a week (in addition to the hour classes) (Q 4). The difference was mainly because some of the participants explained they had extra English courses, they watched movies or listened to music in English. The participants had contact with the English language from 1-2 hours a week (38.33%), 3-4 (21.66%), 5-6 (16.66%), 8-12 (10%), and 16-35 (13.33%).

The participants expressed that the course was different from the previous courses because of the teamwork, the peer-mentors and the practice of the language (Q 5). For instance:

M(8): In this course I worked in several teams. In the previous courses I used to work individually without any help from my classmates with higher level. In this course we got help from classmates with higher level of English.

M(30): There was more teamwork. The English class was more dynamic.

M(23): The teacher used the English language and wanted us to use the language.

P-M(8): I could work and practice my English. The previous courses I was exempted from the class and I did nothing.

From my point of view, this is the first time I worked with peer-mentors, and I had never heard before of a high school teacher in my institution that followed a process similar to this one.

The participants understood collaborative learning as (Q 6):

M(29): The way to learn helping other people in their academic learning.

P-M(2): Learn from the others, from their knowledge, to complement yours.

P-M(5): Work equitably in a team to acquire new knowledge in an organized way.

The participants defined leadership as (Q 7):

P-M(15): Support the team and not to say what to do.

P-M(10): Guide people without being authoritarian. Being a leader is being part of the team.

P-M(7): Someone who has the knowledge or experience to guide somebody else or a group.

The participants seemed to have a general idea of what collaborative learning was and what leadership meant. However, the results from their projects (FN) showed that even if they knew the theory, in practice they found difficult to work collaboratively. There were several times where I had to intervene and show them how they had to organize their work.

The participants' thoughts (Q 8) about having a peer-mentor were:

P-M(11): Contributes to encourage teamwork and creates a sense of responsibility.

M(38): To learn how to work in teams and being responsible to work. Also, learn from classmates who have more knowledge, and ask them in case you need help.

I observed (T'sL) that there were many students who were shy. They used to ask more questions to their peer-mentors rather than talking to the teacher. In those occasions, I explained to the peer-mentors that they should show them where to find the information rather than telling them just the answer. In that way, mistakes could be avoided.

From being a peer-mentor, the participants (Q 9 & 10) learned in general that they had to be responsible, organized, and patient. They learned that they had to support each other; they had to learn how to lead a team; and how to give feedback to their mentees. Furthermore, they learned that it was not an easy task. Here are some examples:

P-M(10): I learned that I had to be an example for my mentees, and I had to guide

my friends towards a good teamwork.

P-M(14): There is a large percent of students that do not have the basic level of English. It's not because of the secondary school system. It's because the students' lack of interest towards the English language.

There were negative opinions from the peer-mentors. Mostly, these negative opinions were from peer-mentors who were removed. From my point of view, these peer-mentors needed to develop skills to work collaboratively. However, due to personal reasons they were reluctant to make an effort to participate in this kind of work. These participants were not forced to take part of this strategy. It does not mean that they avoided working with others because they had to be integrated in teams to work with their classmates in the different activities.

P-M(7): I learned nothing from peer-mentors. They did not know what to do or how to explain. It was the teacher's job.

P-M(5): I learned that somebody cannot make people work if they do not want to work. It has to be their motivation. Many peer-mentors wanted to be a mentor to work less than the others.

The mentees' general opinions were positive (Q 14-16). They felt supported by someone close to them. I saw (T'sL) peer-mentors working with their mentees many times. It was remarkable how the peer-mentors made such an effort to make the mentees understand with several examples and patience. Even though, they were not asked to support their mentees in some situations, I believed that they were engaged in that role. I was glad to see that most of them behaved like real leaders, the kind of leaders that enjoy giving support.

Peer-mentors and mentees believed that the qualities of a good peer-mentor were the following presented in Figure 5.

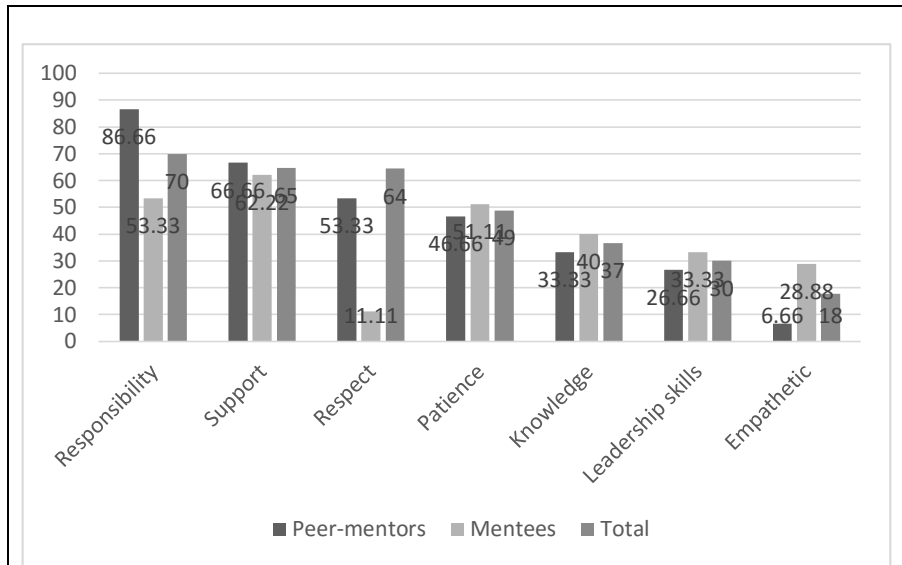


Figure 5: *Qualities of a good peer-mentor according to peer-mentors and mentees.*

As we can see above, the qualities mentioned are not the qualities mentioned by the number of participants but by the number of times they mentioned the qualities (Q 11-13 & 17-20). That is why the total number is not the number of the participants. The table shows that peer-mentors and mentees have the similar feelings towards the qualities of support, patience, knowledge, and leadership skills. Nevertheless, they differ when it comes to the feelings of responsibility, respect, and empathy. From my point of view, I consider this information reliable because the participants mentioned the qualities according to their point of view. As a result, I would say that the most important qualities of a good mentor are support and patience. The participants mentioned (Q 12) the qualities to lead a team. It was found that these qualities were similar qualities mentioned before for the qualities a good peer-mentor must have. Although, they mentioned: positive attitude, fair, and modest.

All the participants had similar preferences (Q 13) to work with others. Peer-mentors and mentors mentioned responsible people as the most preferred to work in teams. Then, committed, hardworking, and friends were the most mentioned. There was a

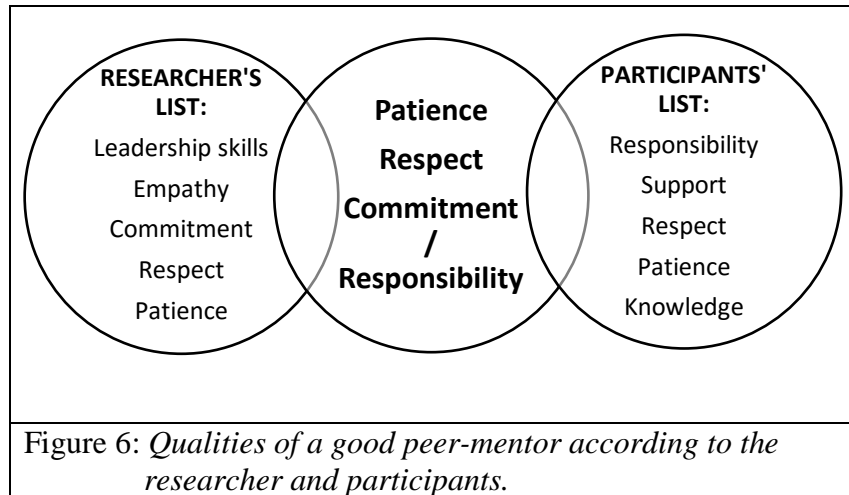
difference in the top five preferences; peer-mentors mentioned being supportive, while mentees mentioned that they preferred not working with friends.

According to peer-mentors (Q 14), the most enjoyable experience working in teams was to spend time together, share knowledge, share work, and have a good time. The mentees mentioned that the nicest experience of teamwork was that it was fun and easy. They mentioned that they had good peer-mentors. Besides, they stressed that they liked working with their classmates to shared ideas to work better. They also expressed that they felt supported by people who could explain the way they understood much better since they were the same age. They claimed that the experience was satisfactory. They worked with friends, interacted with people, and had good organization.

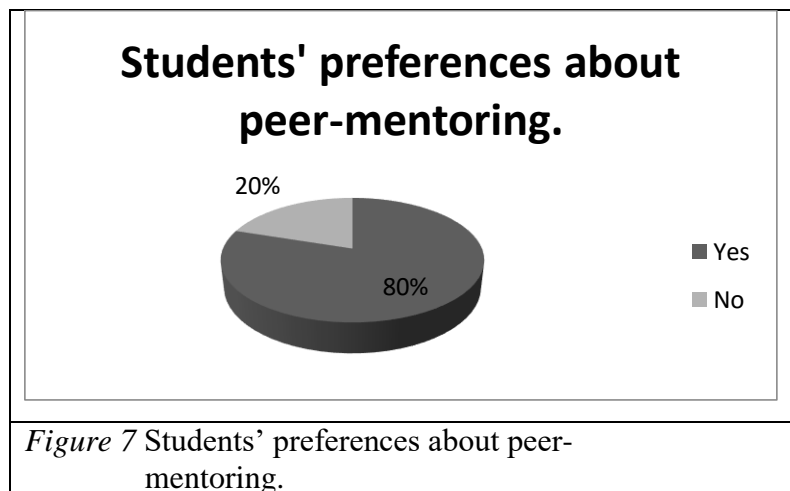
The most problematic situations (Q 15) for peer-mentors were when irresponsibility was involved. Mentees mentioned procrastination as the most problematic situation. Then, lack of commitment, bad organization, absence of agreement, time availability, and irresponsibility.

Peer-mentors thought (Q 16) that collaborative work could be improved by agreement, commitment, communication, rules, more time to work, organization, giving more power to mentors, and competitions to be a leader. The mentees thought that collaborative work could be improved by commitment, being stricter, helping and motivating classmates, punishments for people who do not work, supervising peer-mentors, being responsible, and teaching how to work in teams.

The following Venn lineal diagram (Figure 6) compares the most important qualities that good peer-mentors needed to lead collaborative work. It shows that patience, respect and commitment/responsibility (similar meaning) are the common qualities found in this research.



It was helpful to identify these qualities because in the following courses the peer-mentors could be given some useful suggestions to develop them. This research shows the most important qualities for the participants (Appendix F) to give a general idea of the most common qualities at this level and the participants' opinions about being a peer-mentor. The participants' opinion (Q 17) about being a mentor was the one shown in the pie graph (Figure 7).



This figure shows the preferences of the participants. The results were that 80% of the peer-mentors answered "Yes". They expressed that it was fun, good, pleasant, and

satisfactory. They liked helping others, and liked teaching. The 20% answered “No”, because they were not patient, and they did not like organizing people.

Likewise, 80% of the mentees answered “Yes”. They answered that they would like to be a mentor because they would like to help others to feel well, to share knowledge, and to organize others. The 20% of the mentees who answer “No” replied that they did not have the qualities and skills, they were not patient, they did not like English, they were not good at leading, and they wanted to avoid having problems.

By analyzing the phrases (Q 18 & 19) they were asked to write about mentors and collaborative work, it can be inferred that a peer-mentor was positive in their lives. All the phrases were constructive but one, whose answer was:

P-M(15): It's like your dad, ending up doing your responsibilities.

I found this phrase to be enquiring because, even though, I told them since the first cycle the rules they had to follow, some of them might find easier to do somebody else's homework rather than making an effort. I believe this is the main reason (T'sL) why they should have individual work as explained in the fourth cycle.

4.4 Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter presented the results of the collected information. First, the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work were described and analyzed. Then, the qualities of a good peer-mentor to lead collaborative work in the research site were examined along with the progressive cycles. The results were presented by describing the cycles and the results found in every category. A description of the setting was given to illustrate the research cycles. The four cycles were presented with their four phases: plan, action, observation and reflection. After each cycle the preliminary results to

the research questions were provided. After the description of the research process, the results were presented by coding and cross-checking the data. In Chapter V, the conclusions of the research are presented. An explanation of the significance of this research, the possible contributions, recommendations, limitations, the possibilities for further research and a reflective account of the research process is provided.

Chapter V: Conclusions

5.0 Introduction and Overview

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study. It explains the findings and their significance, whether the research aims were accomplished, the study contributions, the theoretical and pedagogical implications, limitations of the research, possibilities or suggestions for further research and final comments about the research.

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

The research questions that guided this research are:

RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work was encouraging and inspiring. It was demanding for them because they were not used to working in teams. Nevertheless, they had a positive attitude towards the accomplishment of the activities. They knew who was in charge of leading the team and respected them most of the time. They expressed that a leader is not only a person who organizes a team but a person who lets the others organize and make decisions together. It was fundamental to have someone to guide them.

RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The most common qualities a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site according to the participants are the ones listed at the end of the cycles. A complete list of all the qualities mentioned are in Appendix F at the end of this research.

Although, the qualities mentioned as the most important according to the participants are the following: responsibility, support, respect, patience, knowledge, leadership skills, and empathy. As I mentioned in chapter IV, support and patience were the main qualities a peer-mentor should have.

5.2 Findings and their Significance

RQ1: What are the participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work?

The participants' beliefs regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work was encouraging. They expressed their beliefs through the cycles and in the questionnaire previously described in chapter IV. They believed that peer-mentors were a rich support for them. Nevertheless, they thought that peer-mentors have to be well supervised to avoid irresponsibility and the recruitment of the peer-mentors had to be strict to have better results. They liked working collaboratively and they felt that people must learn to work collaboratively. This is their opinion. Furthermore, as an experienced high school teacher I realized that this is the best path to follow. I could see a huge improvement in several aspects rather than just learning a language. It was so fascinating to see how much people care about other people and how much we can do for our society. I strongly believe that our community has too much to offer. It is delightful to appreciate the effort to make things work in this setting. I visualize greater performances in our society if we had leaders who care about their people.

RQ2: What qualities does a good peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in the research site?

The qualities a good peer-mentor needs to lead collaborative work in the research

site were mainly responsibility, support, respect, patience, knowledge, leadership skills, and empathy among others described previously. Those qualities, in my opinion, are qualities that everyone has, though they have to be practiced in different contexts. I believe that our work as teachers is to give them the leadership position to make them develop strategies to work collaboratively. It is a challenging task to achieve but comforting and encouraging.

5.3 Research Aims

This research aimed to identify the beliefs of the participants regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work and the qualities that a peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work in an EFL high school classroom. This research also sought to build a theoretical framework to provide guidance to teachers in order to facilitate collaboration in their classrooms.

5.3.1 Were the research aims accomplished? The research aims were accomplished. The beliefs of the participants were identified during the cycles, with the field notes and the teacher's log, and with the questionnaire administered to the participants. Several aspects were considered to define the beliefs of the participants regarding peer-mentors leading collaborative work and the qualities that a peer-mentor need to lead collaborative work. Based on the results, this research provides guidance to teachers to facilitate collaboration in their classrooms. Furthermore, the findings were more meaningful than the expected results.

5.4 Reflective Account

In this section I share my experiences of my research project. There have been

personal changes that have made me aware of how much can be done for society in general. It all started as a simple solution to a problem and became to form part of a culture of collaboration which can be improved with the participation of students, teachers and administrators. I am willing to continue this methodology because I have perceived real changes in my students' attitudes. I am so satisfied with what the participants achieved and how considerate they can be with others. It has been extremely important to keep record of all the process. Trusting our memory is not enough. My field notes and my teacher's log were a key factor in making decisions since inferring information can be tricky. In addition, the qualitative information from the questionnaire showed a broader and objective view of the students' beliefs.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

The implications of this research increase the awareness of the importance of having mentors leading collaborative work in a multilevel group. The participants in this study interacted and learned how to work in collaboration with their peers. This study might contribute to develop collaborative strategies not only in an EFL classroom but in other classrooms with any other subject where students with higher level of knowledge of the subject can act as mentors of their peers. The type of process followed in this study may motivate other students to share their knowledge collaboratively. I observed this interaction with the participants, they helped each other with other subjects.

5.6 Pedagogical Implications

This study has positive pedagogical implications since working collaboratively has improved the relationships among the students. After doing this study, I saw the awareness

of the participants towards collaborative work and the process that needed to be followed to learn a foreign language. Some participants suggested following the same organizations in other subjects. That was a strong achievement since this type of methodology could be useful for many types of problems the students face at this age. To mention some: bullying, cyber bullying, drugs, teen pregnancy, alcohol abuse, vandalism, and poor academic performance.

The possible contributions of this study are, from my point of view, practical. There is nothing new about this study. Nonetheless, there must be a process to follow in order to obtain favorable results. By following a process, I mean developing a plan according to the needs presented in each situation. I do not mean to follow exactly what was presented, but to consider all the elements required to achieve an objective.

Some recommendations are made based on the findings of this research. Planning is the key to success. Consider all the aspects needed to control the process. There are some steps that need to be followed to accomplish the aims. Nonetheless, every teacher has their own teaching style that has to be considered before planning. Teachers attempting this type of process must reflect on what they want to achieve, the time, the participants, their style, and most important to believe in what they are doing. No one can persuade others without truly believing in what they are doing.

5.7 Limitations of the Research

The limitations of this research were the amount of time (I wish I could have more time to guide my peer-mentors and have more academic improvement) and, of course, the number of participants in the small classroom. I believe this methodology could be easier with fewer students. Furthermore, it would be a better idea to have a teacher assistant to

lead the peer-mentors and control some of the activities around the classroom.

5.8 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research can be conducted during more time to see the effects of the treatment over a longer period; it could also be conducted in other contexts with high school students: within Mexico, in Latin America or in any other country. There might be more research of how to select peer-mentors since I realized it was an important factor when sharing knowledge among peers. Moreover, further research can be conducted with participants from first grade to implement a culture of mentoring.

5.9 Final Considerations

This research study has been a starting point of change and awareness. It has been the most rewarding course I have ever had. Starting with the culture of using the target language in the institution (this means any language that is being taught), students from other classrooms who go to the English cube get motivated to use the foreign language. Students were eager to learn more than what teachers might think. Moreover, I saw the kindness of the peer-mentors while trying to support their mentees. The participants' creativity always surprised me, not to mention the fun they had with their classmates. After finishing the course, I continued with the same culture of using the language in the school, even with some teachers who are willing to practice the English language. I consider myself a shy person who interacts very little with the students outside the classroom. I believe if sociable teachers spoke the target language around the school it would be more motivating for the students. This motivation would lead them to look for peer-mentors to support them and consequently learn the language. These generations of students have all

the technology to practice. Nonetheless, students still need teachers to guide them. They have access to massive information that becomes overwhelming without a guide. In addition, there are some other reasons why teaching a foreign language is tough, for instance, some students have problems with learning English because they are afraid of losing their identity. Teachers need to be aware of the beliefs students have in order to look for strategies to solve these kinds of situations. I believe that teachers have to persuade and inform students about the benefits of learning a language.

This project has had a meaningful impact in my teaching and in my personal life since I could understand the significance of working collaboratively to succeed in any kind of environment. I cannot avoid mentioning being a manager of a baseball team which I feel is an example of how to work collaboratively. This project has given me the satisfaction of achieving what I consider the most successful strategy to teach English and the personal satisfaction of being a part of a little baseball league. Both events happened at the same time and both are so similar. I was aware of the process and the reasons why people can succeed or fail. Collaborative work can be implemented in different environments and different situations. Mentors leading collaborative work has the potential to improve teaching English as a foreign language at any level.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Field notes

Evaluación parcial por asignatura Ciclo escolar: 2014-2015				
Grupo: _____				
Profesor(a): _____ Evaluación: _____				
No.	Nombre	Conocimientos	Procesos y productos	Actitudinal
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Appendix B: Teacher's log

Task:	Date:
‘What I did’	‘What I learned’

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Cuestionario sobre mentores como líderes de trabajo colaborativo en la clase de inglés.

INSTRUCCIONES: Lee cuidadosamente, escoge las opciones y contesta todo lo que se requiera. (Tiempo aproximado: 20 minutos)

Marca con una (X) la opción que te corresponda.

1. Género Femenino Masculino
2. Edad 17 años 18 años Otra _____
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando inglés?
 5-6 años 7-9 años 10-12 años 13 o más años
4. En promedio a la semana, aparte de las horas de clase. ¿Cuántas horas tienes contacto con el lenguaje inglés?
5. ¿Qué tan diferente fue este curso de los otros cursos de inglés que has tenido?
Descríbelo.
6. ¿Qué es el aprendizaje colaborativo para ti?
7. ¿Qué significa liderazgo para ti?
8. ¿Cuál crees que fue el beneficio de tener mentores en clase?
9. ¿Fuiste mentor(a)?
 Si No
10. ¿Qué aprendiste al ser mentor(a) o al tener un mentor(a)?
11. ¿Cuáles son las cualidades de un buen mentor(a)? Nombra 3 por lo menos.

12. ¿Cuáles son las cualidades que se necesitan para dirigir un equipo de trabajo? Nombra 3 por lo menos.

13. ¿Con qué tipo de compañeros prefieres trabajar en equipo?

14. ¿Cuál fue la experiencia más agradable de trabajar en equipo? Descríbela.

15. ¿Cuál fue la experiencia más problemática de trabajar en equipo?

16. ¿Cómo se podría mejorar el trabajo colaborativo desde tu punto de vista?

17. ¿Si tuvieras un alto nivel de inglés, te gustaría ser mentor(a)? (___) Si (___) No
¿Porqué?

Completa con una metáfora, símil o frase.

18. Un mentor(a)...

19. El trabajo en equipo...

20. ¿Otros comentarios o sugerencias?

¡GRACIAS POR TU COLABORACIÓN!



Appendix D: Peer-mentor's observation sheet.

Teacher's name:	Group:	Date:
Peer-mentor's name:		
OBSERVATIONS:		

Appendix E: Peer-mentor's motivation sheet

Identifying Mentor Motivation
<p>Instructions: Complete each of the following sentences. Although you may be tempted to stop after you have identified the first reason, continue to work your way down the page. Consider motivations that might underlie each reason you have identified. When you run out of steam, push yourself a little further or wait until another time and come back and complete this exercise.</p> <p>My motivation for mentoring is...</p> <p>Reason 1</p> <p>Reason 2</p> <p>Reason 3</p> <p>My primary motivation for mentoring is...</p>

(Taken from Zachary 2000, p. 17)

Appendix F: Qualities list

1. accessibility
2. ambition
3. assertiveness
4. attention
5. availability
6. commitment
7. competent
8. competitive
9. creativity
10. discipline
11. empathy
12. fellowship
13. good manners
14. good sense of humor
15. helpfulness
16. honesty
17. intelligence
18. interest
19. justice
20. kindness
21. leadership skills
22. patience
23. perseverance
24. perspective
25. politeness
26. punctuality
27. reflection
28. respect
29. responsibility
30. role model
31. skilled
32. solidarity
33. tolerance
34. trust
35. vision