

Increasing motivation and enhancing language skills: Peer mentoring by English major students at UNAE, Ecuador

Abstract

The Ecuadorian National University of Education (UNAE) runs two strands of English courses. One is a course in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which is taken by the teacher trainees of all majors with an expected outcome of A2 level according to the Common European Framework by the time of graduation. Parallel to this, the university provides a degree course in English for future language teachers, whose proficiency is expected to reach C1 level by the time they graduate. This research study looks at the results of a peer mentoring program that was provided by the English degree students to teacher trainees in the EFL strand whose proficiency levels were considerably lower than those of the peer mentors chosen for the task. Both mentors and mentees were given continuous support by their teachers in the English degree and the EFL strand. The results show that the English degree students profited in many ways from the mentoring program: they were able to experience some of the real-life challenges and successes of language teachers, and they also had the opportunity to practice their methodological skills as well as improve their overall English language proficiency. The authors underline the necessity of professional support (“mentoring the mentors”), and the need to monitor and improve the quality of the program with the help of regular feedback provided by peer mentors and their mentees.

Keywords: EFL, motivation, language improvement, peer tutoring, TEFL

Introduction

The *Universidad Nacional de Educación* (UNAE) started its peer mentoring program in September 2018. The university provides both a degree program for future English teachers (*Pedagogía de Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros* – PINE) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses for teacher trainees of all other majors. On the whole, students entering the PINE program enrol with various levels of language proficiency; however, there is a minority that have high levels of English (B1 to almost C2). The English proficiency levels of the teacher trainees who will become teachers of other subjects are usually much lower, with 85% of first semester undergraduates entering the university with no knowledge of English at all.

The rationale behind the peer mentoring program was that PINE students could mentor their peers that were part of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses, creating an opportunity for learning that would be mutually beneficial. The mandatory level to be achieved by the end of the 8th semester for mentees is A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference, while PINE students are required to reach C1 by the end of their studies. The aim of the peer mentoring program is for PINE students to become more proficient both as regards their language teaching skills and their knowledge of the English language, while EFL students can get personalized, one-to-one support for the English courses provided by the university.

Below we will describe how English teaching staff, PINE peer mentors and EFL students collaborated in setting up and running a peer mentoring program and how its effectiveness was evaluated. Altogether 27 peer mentors participated in providing language improvement sessions to EFL students; the mentors were supported by their English teachers, who helped them plan the sessions as well as monitored the whole process.

The research study itself attempts to establish to what extent the peer mentoring process may have helped the language improvement of the mentors, why they had decided to take part in the project, and how it might have affected their intrinsic motivation.

The novelty of the project is twofold. On the one hand, research studies usually focus on how mentees have profited from the mentoring process, or look at its reciprocal effects. The present study focuses on the benefits peer mentors might gain. On the other hand, most studies in this field look at peer teaching, namely, students teaching their peers in a classroom setting where the teacher has a strong monitoring function. The present project intentionally aimed at setting up one-to-one sessions between peer mentors and mentees. Even though the

process was closely monitored, it still gave the paired-up students enough freedom to find the best times when they could work together as well as allowed the student mentors to take advantage of the help offered by their teachers, who provided the necessary professional support.

The research study is arranged as follows. In the first section, we will provide an overview of the recent developments in the field. This is followed by an explanation of the methodology applied and the description and analysis of the results. Our concluding remarks stress the overall benefits of a peer mentoring program of this kind, and underline the necessity to carry on with the project as well as pursue further research to establish the effects on the cohort of mentees.

Literature Review

What we call ‘peer-mentoring’ at UNAE, most authors refer to as ‘peer teaching/peer tutoring’ and ‘peer learning’. In the following section, we define the concepts of peer teaching and peer learning as well as review the theoretical background. Further, we will provide an account of recent research on ‘peer teaching’ and ‘peer learning’, both with regard to its application in general and within language instruction in particular. A lot of the mentoring programs rely on what Vygotsky termed as the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). This can be defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86).

Peer teaching

Peer teaching is also often called ‘peer tutoring’, ‘cross-age tutoring’, ‘peer education’, ‘partner learning’, ‘peer learning’, and ‘mutual instruction’ (Kalkowski as cited in Bradford-Watts, 2011, p. 31).

A concise definition says that “peer teaching involves one or more students teaching other students in a particular subject area” (TeachThought, 2017, para. 4). It is based on the idea which echoes the 18th century French essayist, Joseph Joubert’s belief, namely, that ‘to teach is to learn twice’. Bradford-Watts (2011) provides a more detailed description when she says:

Peer teaching is a suite of practices in which peers instruct each other in a purpose-driven, meaningful interaction. Many programs feature older, more experienced peers,

or those with greater mastery in a subject area teaching younger, less experienced peers or those who are yet to master the skills and content of the subject area. (p. 31).

Cortright, Collins and DiCarlo (2005) emphasize the deep learning aspect of the practice when they state that “to use peer teaching is to help students be able to interpret, relate and incorporate new information with existing knowledge and apply the new information to solve novel problems” (p. 107).

Peer learning – advantages and disadvantages

According to Boud (2001), peer learning is closely related to peer teaching, and can be broadly defined as any situation when students are learning from and with each other, and this arrangement involves both formal and informal ways (p. 4). However, studies on peer learning tend to focus on the emotional support that learners provide for each other and, thereby, look beyond the learning task.

Educational psychologists have long demonstrated the effectiveness of ‘learning-by-teaching’. A number of studies have found that “students who spend time teaching what they’ve learned go on to show better understanding and knowledge retention than students who simply spend the same time re-studying” (Jarrett, 2018, para 1.) Farivar and Webb emphasize that the advantages of peer teaching are reciprocal:

Help from peers increases learning both for the students being helped as well as for those giving the help. For the students being helped, the assistance from their peers enables them to move away from dependence on teachers and gain more opportunities to enhance their learning. For the students giving the help, the cooperative learning groups serve as opportunities to increase their own performance. They have the chance to experience and learn that ‘teaching is the best teacher’.

(as cited in TeachThought, 2017, para. 6)

There are a number of reported benefits of peer teaching. Saga Briggs (2013) provides a fairly exhaustive list:

- Students receive more time for individualized learning.
- Direct interaction between students promotes active learning.

- Peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others.
- Students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer.
- Peers and students share a similar discourse, allowing for greater understanding.

(para. 4)

The author stresses that there are further benefits that apply to the ‘tutor’ and the ‘tutee’ alike:

- Team building spirit and more supportive relationships
- Greater psychological well-being
- Social competence, communication skills and self-esteem
- Higher achievement and enhanced learning outcomes

(para. 5)

Beyond the undeniable advantages, there are certain criticisms regarding peer teaching, and some of the considerations may be relevant to students tutoring others in language learning. Some students might feel that the set-up creates a superiority-inferiority situation, and the students who perceive themselves to be in the inferior position may not pull their weight and, in a language teaching situation, may withdraw and go silent. Confidentiality, parental concerns and timetabling difficulties have all been mentioned, however, with careful ‘tutoring of the tutors’ these problems can be eliminated (see Briggs, 2013, below).

Recent theoretical research

Peer teaching and peer learning have their own dynamics. When students / learners work together, they often provide corrective feedback for each other, with the more knowledgeable interlocutor giving what we call ‘peer corrective feedback’ or ‘PCF’. Sato (2017) points out that this type of feedback functions in the same way as corrective feedback coming from teachers and L1 speakers, and can speed up language acquisition, because it helps the learner notice a gap in their interlanguage. However, Sato states that peer interaction has its own characteristics since “socioculturally oriented research ... has revealed social relationships that are specific to interaction between learners” (p. 19).

The fact that the corrective feedback provider notices an error in the input might affect their own language development. Sato’s overview of the literature shows that whilst many studies have found that PCF may have a beneficial effect, others noted that “its impact may be minimal ... or even detrimental to learning” (p. 19). The author emphasizes that

learners need a positive, collaborative mindset for PCF to function well. He attaches a great deal of importance to the need for the teacher to create a “collaborative classroom environment” (p. 20), and provide due scaffolding and instructional guidance since language development cannot take place “when, for example, learners distrust each other’s linguistic abilities” (p. 20). Sato adds that there is evidence suggesting that PCF could have a negative effect, but he surmises that it might have to do with social and affective factors (p. 29).

Echoing Vygotsky’s conceptual framework (1978), Choi and Iwashita (2016) stress the importance of the concept of ‘collaborative dialogue’ introduced by Swain (2000); it is understood as “a discourse where language learners are engaged in knowledge building and problem-solving” (p. 114). By combining low proficiency learners in groups where other members were either at the same or at a higher level, the researchers observed the occurrences of ‘language related episodes’ referring to “any part of a dialogue in which learners talk about the language they are producing or question their language use” (Swain and Lapkin, 1998, p. 326). They found that low-proficiency learners interacted more when their group included high-proficiency learners. At the same time, the number of grammar-related language episodes was higher when high-proficiency learners were interacting with each other, especially in the writing stage. Overall, Choi and Iwashita emphasize that “the effective mediation of each other’s learning is somewhat related to a level of sensitivity when providing developmentally appropriate help” (p. 129), which underlines the importance of how peer teaching requires specific but teachable skills.

Briggs (2013) lists 10 (non-ELT related) tips that can make peer teaching successful. Among others, she emphasizes that peer tutors need to be trained and committed; it is advisable to set up some kind of an award system for good student tutors; and the learning task as well as the methodology of accomplishing that task needs to be chosen carefully. As for the tutors’ training, there are several aspects that are considered important, such as confidentiality, positive reinforcement and allowing adequate time for the mentees to respond when working with their mentors.

Finally, according to Harmer (as cited in Xiao, 2013 p. 257) motivation is one of the most important factors in succeeding in learning a language. Without intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, the task of improving in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) becomes very challenging. Most of the research studies that have been carried out so far confirmed the beneficial effects of peer teaching and peer tutoring on motivation and language skills. Since one of the aims of the present study is to establish the potential changes in intrinsic

motivation with regard to student mentors, in the section that follows we will be looking at some of these studies in more detail.

Primary research studies

Before looking at several studies that specifically focus on improving English language proficiency, let us look at a project that aimed at providing peer mentoring support in a teacher education program. Vaughan, Clampitt and Park (2016) describe how two students (Clampitt and Park) approached one of the faculty members (Vaughan) to design a mentoring support program, whereby second-year students would provide support for their first-year peers. The student authors used the teacher education course's learning management system to facilitate fortnightly online discussions to focus on first-year students' experiences and the challenges they faced. The mentoring program was followed up by pre- and post-study online surveys meant to gauge the perceptions of the participants regarding the peer mentoring support.

Similarly to our approach, the authors applied a mixed research design and gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. As for the qualitative results of the project, participants emphasized that as a result of the mentoring process, they were able to get new perspectives and expand their ideas. They felt they could both pose and answer probing questions, which led to deeper thinking. Student mentors appreciated how the program helped them establish professional relationships and made the point that the process improved their leadership skills. Altogether, even though the mentoring programme at the Canadian Mount Royal University was not specifically about improving English language skills, the experience of the teacher trainees (both as mentors and mentees) is one that beginning teachers can utilize irrespective of the subject matter they are teaching.

Leading on to language-specific mentoring programs, Viáfara (2014) describes how a group of EFL student teachers attended a study and research group "to learn the theory and practice of tutoring and research" (p. 201). These collaborative study groups have proved to be effective because they created a safe environment for reflective practices as well as offered opportunities to share and discuss the most important aspects of the students' teaching practices. The research project involved 15 student teachers (in the 6th to 9th semester of their studies). Alongside developing their research skills, the student teachers were providing tutoring to their first semester peers.

The results of the study demonstrated that the student teachers developed their skills in several areas: their proficiency in English improved, they enhanced their pedagogical

practices and became affiliated to their professional groups as well as familiarized themselves with introductory research activities. One of the students described his/her experience by saying:

Es una gran oportunidad para usar lenguaje, mejorar la proficiencia practicando y aprender nuevos usos. Además se fortalece la confianza en uno mismo para hablar y en general usar mejor el lenguaje previamente adquirido cada vez. (p. 207)

Translation:

It is a great opportunity to use the language, improve my proficiency practicing and to learn new ways to use the language. Furthermore, one's confidence to speak is strengthened and in general the language previously acquired can be used better. (p. 207-208)

In conclusion, Viáfara stresses that the study group format allowed participants to create "genuine settings for language use" (p. 210). The student teachers were able to use language purposefully and confidently, and they thought that these factors were "directly connected to the improvement of their language competence" (p. 210). From among the challenges that the study groups faced, Viáfara mentions the lack of time for meetings and the undeniable fact that the whole project brought with it an extra workload for all those involved.

Sunggingwati (2018) describes the results of peer teaching in a teacher education program involving 24 English student teachers, who applied the methodology of cooperative learning, namely, worked together actively to accomplish a specific task. The 6th semester course aimed at providing teaching practice in the form of microteaching in order to prepare the trainees for their secondary school practicum in the following semester. Student teachers first taught in groups of four, then eight and finally did peer teaching in front of the whole class. The students' subsequent self-reports revealed that working in ever larger groups helped them prepare better, allowed more interaction with their peers and enhanced their self-confidence (p. 152).

Karim and Mohammed (2018) examined teachers' and students' perspectives on peer teaching as a student-centered instructional method. The authors mention that in the region's universities teachers lecture to large classes and peer teaching can help overcome this difficulty if students decide to undertake to teach another student or even several others. Two groups of randomly chosen participants, five teachers and five students (all Kurdish native speakers) were given open-ended questionnaires to gauge their attitudes to peer teaching.

Three out of five teachers claimed that they often used this method and said that they found it “practical and fruitful” (p. 9), as well as pointed out that peer teaching created an atmosphere that was “cooperative and collaborative rather than being competitive” (p. 10). However, the teachers mentioned that there were some drawbacks: students lack the sufficient language and methodology skills and are often not interested in peer teaching. One of the teachers (T4) mentioned how the instructors themselves may prevent the effective use of peer teaching because “most of them see themselves as the authority in the classroom and they are not willing to lose their power” (p. 12).

Mynard and Almarzouqi (2006) conducted a piece of qualitative research at a women’s university in the United Arab Emirates. The peer tutoring program started in 2001 and aimed at assisting foundation students in achieving the required proficiency levels in English. Students that were deemed to be high achievers could apply to become peer tutors. They were carefully vetted and given a two-hour training session. The tutoring itself took place on a one-on-one basis or in small group sessions. Twelve peer tutors and 24 tutees were asked about their experience by administering a survey questionnaire to them.

The main benefit that the tutors mentioned was that they felt they learnt from teaching, namely, their own language ability as well as their awareness of the learning process had increased. They also emphasized that they felt they did something useful and valuable. This is worth mentioning since, as the authors point out “The majority of young Emirati women do not have the opportunity to work for a number of reasons” (p. 17). Interestingly, the tutees were unable to specify the benefits in such a well-reasoned manner. While they were aware that they needed to improve their skills in English, they “tended to have low metacognitive awareness, i.e. awareness of the learning process, and little knowledge of learning strategies, which contributed to the academic difficulties they were experiencing” (p. 18). Since one of the conclusions of the present paper is that a successful peer mentoring program needs to involve “mentoring the mentors”, namely, providing support for the student mentors, there is a particularly relevant part of Mynard and Almarzouqi’s study. The researchers interviewed two instructors, who suggested that teachers should get more involved with the peer mentoring program and provide additional material for the tutoring sessions so that classroom work could be further supported.

Sharif et al. (2012) offer an account of a peer-tutoring program called Friends of English at a Malaysian university. The main aim was to provide an opportunity for students to practice their English in a non-threatening environment driven by social interaction. The authors emphasize that, in general, peer tutors do not need to be experts in the area that they

are teaching, but they need to “possess better proficiency than their tutees” (p. 442). They also stress that the fact that the tutors and the tutees were close in age increased the participants’ willingness to use the language in the small groups that were set up. The findings, based on field notes and interview responses, demonstrated that during the group sessions, which included a number of games, the tutees used the language “optimally and freely” (p. 444), wishing to win in the games rather than focusing on form. The authors stress that the tutees felt comfortable with their tutors and were eager to share their language problems with them because they assumed that the tutors themselves may have undergone similar experiences. As a result of the Friends of English program, the tutees’ language production improved: they needed less time to think before they spoke and appeared less hesitant. “Classroom contexts normally prevent learners from practicing the language” (p. 446) is the authors’ conclusion, who underline that the peer tutoring program provided a “dynamic process of experiencing the language” (p. 446) for tertiary level ESL students in the Malaysian context.

Taking these previous experiences of peer teaching and peer tutoring into account, our own peer-mentoring project aimed at ensuring a beneficial experience for both mentor and mentee. It is interesting to note, however, that more has been written on peer teaching and peer learning in a classroom setting, (where students teach their classmates in their usual classroom and during class time) than peer tutoring. The latter is understood as students teaching each other using a one-to-one approach, outside of and in addition to lesson time, which is what we are doing at UNAE with the peer mentoring project described below.

Research question

To what extent can peer mentoring increase motivation and improve language skills in English major students at UNAE, Ecuador?

Method

Population

The research study focused primarily on the 27 mentors from the PINE major who participated in the program during the last two semesters in UNAE (October 2018 till July 2019). These students all scored high on the initial diagnostic exam taken during the first week of class, and were invited to participate based on those results. There were 12

participants from the third semester, 9 students from the second semester and 6 students from the first semester of the PINE major.

Description of Program

The mentees signed up voluntarily from regular EFL classes offered to the entire student body. The mentees were approached by their English teachers and offered the peer mentoring program because they needed extra help to improve their English language skills. The mentors volunteered to participate so they could be challenged to improve their English and teaching skills, while tutoring lower level students in the English area.

Implementation of program

The program has now been implemented for two semesters; each participating teacher (referred to as professor / guide below) oversees two or three PINE mentors, who are enrolled in semester one, two or three. These teachers help with the organization of the overall program, the creation of a proper learning environment and check the weekly lesson plans of the mentors. In preparation for the peer mentoring sessions, the PINE teacher and the English area teacher are paired together and meet with the prospective mentors and mentees to conduct initial interviews, hand out lesson plan templates, introduce the students to each other, make a weekly meeting plan and explain the overall structure of the mentoring program. The mentors are each paired up with one EFL mentee who needs extra support in their English classes. These student pairs are expected to meet up once a week for one hour over a ten-week period throughout the semester. The mentors prepare weekly lesson plans based on the needs of the mentees. Each week the mentor sends the lesson plan and an image as evidence after the meeting with the mentee to their corresponding professor. At the end of the 10 weeks, the teacher and the students meet to complete a post interview and discuss the outcomes of the program.

The research method used was a mixed methods approach and focused on the content analysis of various research tools. The diagnostic exam results achieved at the beginning of the first semester were compared to the mock KET exam results obtained at the end of the second semester. The varying scores of the participants were compared and analysed to see if the program aided the peer mentors in improving their English language skills. Next, the content of the initial interview responses was analysed to find out the reasons why students were participating in this program, what their expectations were and how they planned to

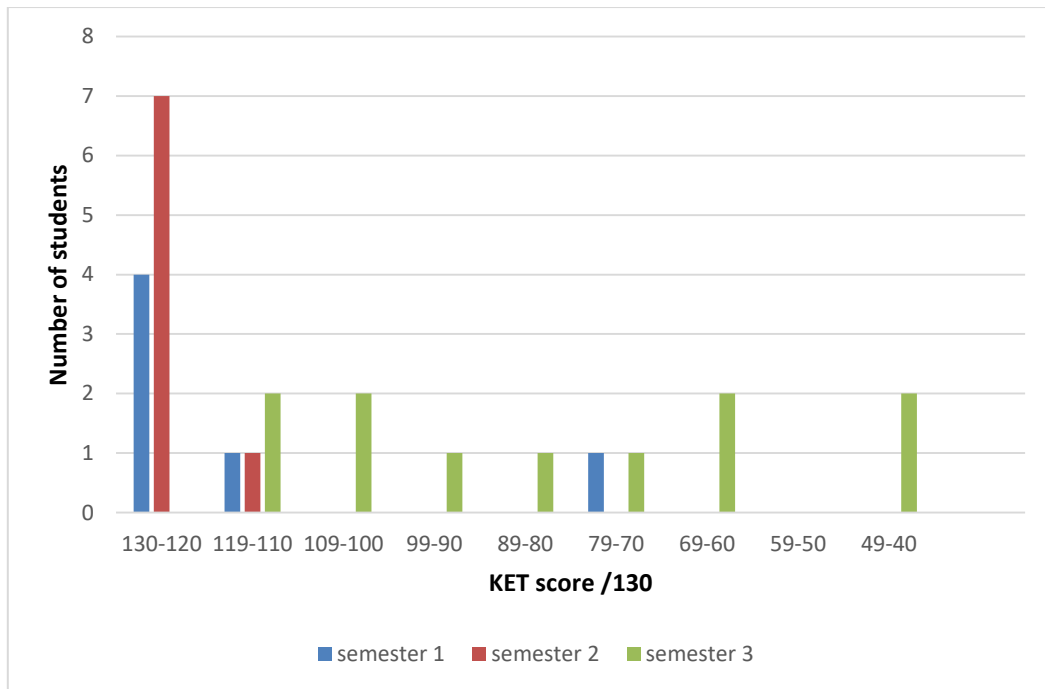
organize themselves while being mentors. The last piece of information analysed was the exit interview content. Each professor/guide interviewed their mentors and asked them the specific questions listed below. This content was then used to show how students were intrinsically motivated to improve their knowledge of EFL and to improve as mentors, and that this benefited their scores in the mock KET exam administered at the end of the year.

Results and discussion

The results are based on the analysis of the tests and the content of the interview answers of the participants. These data are displayed in three graphs and two tables. Graph 1 shows the diagnostic exam for the last three cohorts of PINE students who have participated as mentors in the mentoring program for the last year, between October 2018 and July 2019. Graph 2 shows the results of the mock KET test for students currently in their second and third semesters, who took this exam at the end of their second semester. The grades of the first semester students who participated in the program are marked as unknown since they will only take this exam at the end of their second semester. Graph 3 compares the initial diagnostic exam scores taken at the beginning of the semester with the KET exam scores taken at the end of the second semester. This graph also includes the first semester students who have not taken the KET exam as unknown. Table 1 contains the questions, answers and numbers of students who responded with similar answers in the initial interview before the beginning of the program. Table 2 presents the questions, answers and numbers of students who responded with similar answers to the reflection questions at the end of the program. The answers included were from the first cohort and second cohort of mentors who participated in this program over the course of the last year.

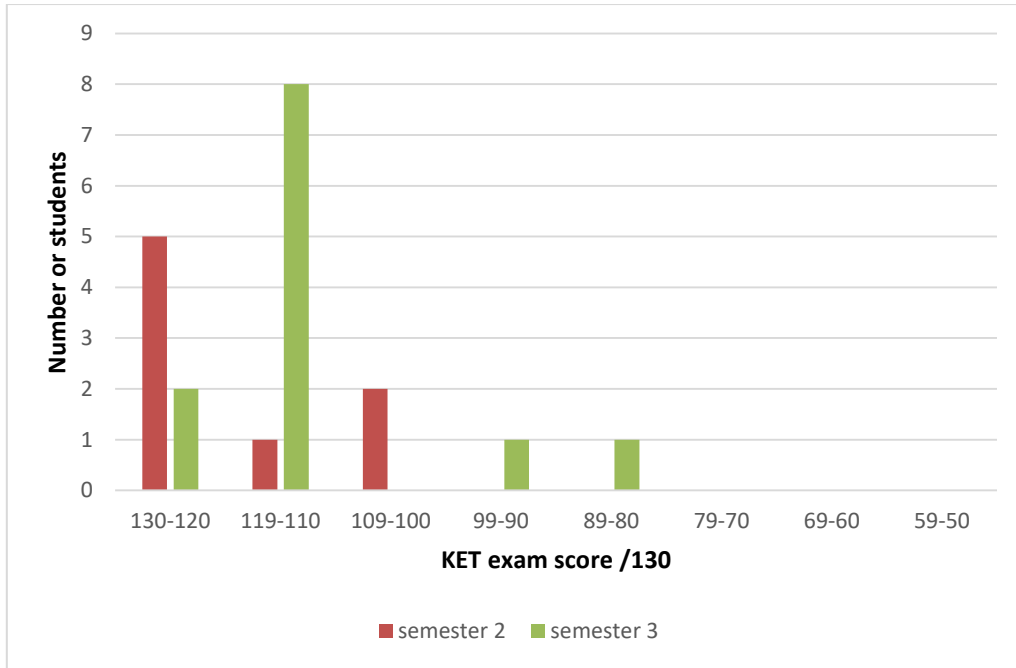
It can be seen from graph 1 and 2 that many of the students who participated in the program started with a fairly high level of English and over the course of the two semesters were able to further improve those skills as the diagnostic and mock KET exam results demonstrate. This is not to say that these students improved only because of their participation in the program, but it may have been a motivating factor for them to improve even more. The student mentors of the first semester have not taken the KET exam yet; they will take this exam at the end of their second semester.

Graph 1: Mentor's initial diagnostic exam results



The results of the diagnostic exam are important because they show the level of English language knowledge at the beginning of the mentors' studies. These results allowed the professors to choose students who have higher levels of English and needed extra motivation to improve their EFL since they would still have to take the mandatory A1 English language classes in their first semester and A2 English language classes in their second semester.

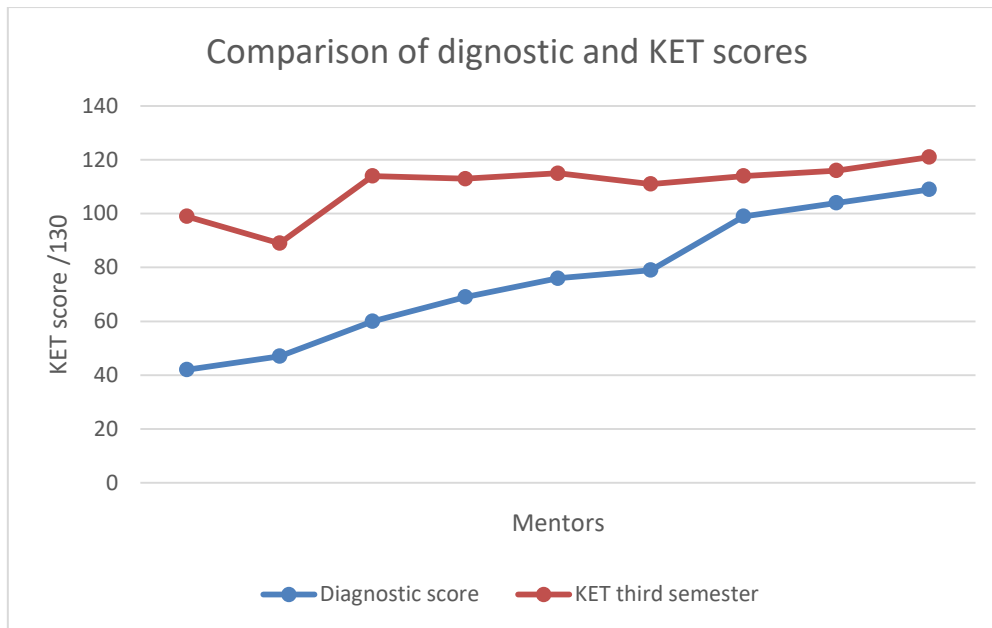
Graph 2: Mock KET results for semester 2 and 3 mentors



Graph 2 shows the results of a mock KET exam all students take to show their English language development from the entrance of the PINE program up to the end of their first year of study. These results are significant because they show how students who entered with a high level and participated in the mentoring program were able to improve, while taking low-level mandatory English language classes.

Graph 3 below compares the diagnostic exam and the KET scores of the third semester mentors. It shows how the scores of all of the third semester mentors increased considerably from the beginning of the first semester until the end of the second semester.

Graph 3: Comparison of diagnostic and KET scores of third semester mentors



Graph 3 results are important because they show the mentors' improvement from entrance to the major until the end of the first year. This graph demonstrates how with the help of the mentoring program students were able to improve their English language skills.

Table 1 contains the questions, answers and numbers of students who responded with similar answers in the initial interview before the beginning of the program. The answers included were from the first cohort and second cohort of mentors who participated in this program over the course of the last year (October 2018 to July 2019).

Table 1: Initial interviews with mentors

Questions	Student answers	No of students with these answers
Why are you participating in the program?	To learn more grammar rules, EFL skills and how to teach them	10
	To gain experience and practice teaching English	9
	Help others improve in English	3
	To have a direct opportunity to teach	2
In your opinion, what are the benefits of being a mentor?	To become a better teacher in the future and gain methods and strategies to teach EFL	9
	Gain experience in teaching	6
	Get better in English	3
	Lose my fear of teaching someone else	2

	Create lesson plans	1
	Be guided on how to teach by a teacher	1
What aspects of this program are you worried about?	That I don't know the mentee and they won't understand me	5
	I might make some mistakes	4
	There might be areas I won't have answers for and not prepared to explain	4
	Nothing	3
What type of support do you think is necessary from your professor or guide during this program?	Explanation of rules or areas in EFL I don't understand to be able to teach it to my mentee	3
	Help with activity planning and strategies	2
	Creating lesson plans	1
	Help me be a better teacher	1
	Help me to be a more dynamic teacher	1
What are the best times and place to meet weekly with your mentee?	Be flexible with the time and place, whatever works for the mentee	4
	Mornings or afternoons at the library	4
	Mornings in the resource room	2
	A calm and quiet space is important	1

Based on the responses contained in the initial interview with the students who participated in the mentoring program, it can be seen that their primary aim was to gain teaching experience and improve their English language skills. They believed that they would gain skills that they could apply to teaching English using new methodology and strategies while practicing their language skills. Some of the students were worried they might make mistakes or have to explain topics and grammar points that were unknown to them, but they expected their professors/guides to be able to help them with these aspects. Most of them felt they needed to be flexible with the time and place if they were going to find available time slots to meet their mentees. It is important to note that not all of the students responded to each question in the initial interviews.

Table 2: Exit interviews with mentors

Table 2 presents the questions, answers and numbers of students who responded with similar answers to the reflection questions at the end of the program.

Questions	Student answers	No of students
Was the time and space adequate to complete the tutorials?	In the beginning we had no problems meeting, but then it became difficult to find times. We always met outside the library	5
	We met 10 times once a week	5
	We didn't meet very many times because our schedule was conflicting	4
	Yes, it was, we were able to meet 8 times	3
	Yes, we met almost every week for 9 weeks	1
Do you want to participate in this program again? Why or why not?	Yes, because it helped me to be a better teacher and learn more strategies and improve my language skills	10
	Maybe, I need to see how much time I will have next semester	3
	No, because I would plan a class and then the mentee would not show up	3
	No, because I would like time to take other classes like French	1
How have you benefited from being a mentor?	A lot of practice teaching and learning how to teach	4
	Learned more strategies by actually doing rather than just learning the theory	3
	They got real teaching experience	3
	Better prepared them to be teachers in the future	3
	Have more patience	2
	More responsible	1
How can you describe your relationship with the mentee?	Good, with good communication	5
	At first, I was uncomfortable and shy, but as time went on we got along better	4
	Took a while to gain each other's trust and be comfortable	2
	Not very good, they did not show up when we would make plans	1
Which professional and personal competences have you developed in this program?	Teaching methods and strategies	5
	More organized	4

	New friends	3
	Explaining English better More comfortable in the role of the teacher	3
	Explaining English better	2
What difficulties have you found being a mentor?	Not being able to find the time and having conflicting schedules	4
	Finding the right way to explain grammar so the mentee understood me	3
	Finding activities and creating activities	2
	Not remembering grammar rules or other things in English	2
	No problems but it was difficult to repeat everything	1
Was the support and help you got from your professor-guide sufficient?	Yes, it was	11
	Our professors always helped us and were available when we had questions	5
	Maybe we should have met more often for more activity planning	3
	They helped contact the mentee when we have scheduling problems	1

The responses of the participants provided during the post interview described the many benefits that the mentors thought they had gained from participating in the program. These students professed that they had more patience, became more responsible, gained real teaching experience, learned teaching strategies that work and felt more confident about becoming a teacher in the future. They also realized that certain aspects of mentoring can be difficult, such as, creating activities, explaining grammar in a way that their mentee would understand, and finding compatible time slots in their busy schedules. However, the participants felt the professors/guides were there to support them when these problems occurred. Most of the pairs found time to meet on a regular basis, and the arrangements worked for both the mentor and the mentee in the given educational environment. Most of the participants would like to participate again as mentors. For those who do not want to carry on

with the project, the main problem was finding enough time in their schedules to meet regularly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research study has shown that the mentoring program has not only motivated these student mentors, but also helped them improve their English language skills: it gave them a platform to practice and learn how to be better language teachers, which will ultimately help them in their future profession. Being a mentor gave them an opportunity to learn autonomously through tutoring. It also showed them how they could become more effective teachers as well as made them realize some of the difficulties that teachers face on a regular basis. Through real life experience, they were able to overcome obstacles and increase their knowledge in a safe environment with professional English staff members available at all times to aid in the mentor-mentee process.

The mentoring program will continue in the next semester and the participants will carry on supporting student learning and teacher training. During the new cycle teachers will administer this program with a better aligned structure to make sure all of the mentors and mentees are meeting weekly and covering relevant topics that the mentees need assistance with. This will be an important area for the professors in charge to monitor on a weekly basis. The professors will also diagnose the necessary changes to improve the organization and program structure based on the feedback we receive from mentors, mentees and teacher guides in order to better help both PINE and EFL students at UNAE.

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