

Peer Instruction to learn English

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Abstract

We report data from one year of teaching English for foreign students with Peer Instruction, a method invented and developed by Harvard Professor Eric Mazur. This interactive method partly based on collaborative work is used in various disciplines, but rarely in foreign languages. It is a student-centered approach that involves flipping the original classroom by moving information transfer out through technological support and moving application of learning into the classroom. Our observations indicate increased student mastery of both use of English and conceptual reasoning accompanied with an increase in self-esteem. We also discuss how we have improved our implementation in one year of practice. We have focused in class common language practice exercise with pre-class written responses using wikis as a support for the tasks and as a mean of communication between students and teacher. This is intended to help students learn more from pre-class homework and to increase student engagement in the discussion with their peers and also to increase further student understanding. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of peer instruction and the use of wikis to enhance collaborative pre-class work over more traditional teaching methods. Students' ratings have shown a higher level of satisfaction after one semester of peer instruction teaching method already. The method is taught with either the use of flashcards, clickers or on the Internet with an interactive website called Learning catalytics which allows teachers to make new questions or to take some from the 7000 questions existing on the data base. Students can then answer the questions using a smartphone, a tablet or a computer. The European Research Project Wikiskills has been integrated in this study.