

# Group Tutoring for Foreign Languages

by Shannon Zeng, group tutor for Mandarin

At the start of the quarter, I have asked these following three questions: 1) how would you respond to tutees, "no show"? And how to persuade students to join tutoring group, not individual? 2) How do you handle the group tutoring session, which includes different language levels of tutees? And how do you answer tutees' questions that you never thought about in your whole life or you really don't know how to explain as a native speaker? Based on my what I have learned and experienced in tutoring job, I have some answers to those three questions.

Actually, those three questions just reflect the three basic aspects in tutoring job. The first question tries to find out give the answer in why the student need tutor, what it the function of tutor, and what are the forms of tutoring. The second question will answer how to improve the process of one of the most effective tutoring model – group tutoring. And last, it will answer how to handle the situation that tutor could not answer tutee's question.

Clearly explain the importance of tutoring to tutee is the first and most important step in our tutoring life. As tutor, we should let the students know that our school has the free service that could help students with their study questions. This service provides great assistance in addition to the teacher's lecture. We should let them be aware that besides waiting for teachers' appointment, tutoring service is there anytime for you. Sometimes tutor should be in the class in person, introduce what kind of services the tutoring center provide, in what way the tutoring center will provide help. In order to motivate the students coming to tutor center, we can discuss with teacher regarding giving bonus to the students who are looking for help from tutoring center.

Another critical point in tutoring, I have to admit, is how to improve the group tutoring process. Group tutoring is the most efficient way of tutoring. The goal of tutoring is to provide students with the enough confidence and skills in order to initiate their own study groups. Even if you have different level of students in the same group, that doesn't mean you have to always choose higher-level student as the group lead, we can rotate the leadership. The leader doesn't necessary to be the person who master contents of the course, the important role of leader is to bring whole group in a focused and productive discussion. As tutor, we might discuss with leader before the discussion regarding what are the topics of today's session, and how the leader will guide the session into a healthy and productive direction. Necessarily summarize after each session also will help members of group tutoring grasp what we have learned today and what we should improve next time.

Last, when we encounter the situation that we could answer tutee's question, how will we handle this situation. I think first we should be honest. We should tell tutee that I could not answer your question right now instead of fooling around with tutee, wasting tutee's time and losing tutor's reputation. We should write down tutee's question, tell tutee that it is a very good question, unfortunately I could not answer you right now, but I will be looking the answer for you. Remember give tutee the time when will you find the answer, make sure that show your honest and seriousness to tutee. Not knowing is not the embarrassing thing, on the contrary, we can only

learn and provide more valuable help to tutee by exploring the unknown questions. In a word, as a successful tutor we should have the skills on how to introduce the importance of tutoring to the students, how to improve the group tutoring process, and how to be honest and responsible when you are facing the question that you don't know.