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ADDRESSING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING NEEDS IN POLISH TERTIARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF RECIPROCAL PEER TUTORING IN REMOTE AND BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The emergency remote teaching triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected educational systems. High levels of isolation and disconnection had a direct negative impact on students' cognitive and social-emotional learning (see e.g. Browning et al., 2021; Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021; Kohls et al., 2021, Visser, 2021, Wang et al., 2023, for a review). The transition to remote learning in tertiary education has greatly impacted the educational experience, with varying outcomes. On-campus activities came to a standstill and important formative experiences both personally and academically were lost. Consequently, studies sounded the alarm about the negative effect that reinforced remote teaching had on some means of academic content delivery (see e.g. Liu et al., 2021; McAleavy & Gorgen, 2020). Traditional classroom strategies were simply transferred to the virtual learning environment with no adaptations to the new setting (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). This was due to the absence of a standardized approach to online instruction, which resulted in the application of numerous approaches to online teaching that were observed to vary considerably between universities and individual instructors. Consequently, classes were taught either synchronously or asynchronously via online, hybrid, or blended learning modes.

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In addition, not all instructional strategies proved to be easily transferable to the new setting. Tutoring, for instance, did not seem to stand the test of emergency remote teaching (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). This has been attributed to a number of factors, including challenges in establishing rapport, technical difficulties, and limited student engagement and motivation. The survey conducted at Yale College, which aimed to trace the impact of emergency transition to remote learning, pointed out that peer tutors met a significant instructional challenge. It was due to "a lack of agility with virtual learning tools (e.g., Zoom 'breakout rooms', screen sharing, recording, audio/visual, raising hands, and the digital whiteboard)" (Perets et al., 2020, p. 2445). Even though peer tutors were later equipped with digital tools to make use of the features of Zoom, incorporating these tools into their teaching during the sudden shift to remote instruction still proved to be challenging. Similarly, the research conducted by Salta et al. (2022) examined the involvement and communication of Greek college students in both traditional and online education. The surveyed students stressed that online education significantly lacks student–student interaction. It is to be observed that this type of interaction is crucial in maintaining students' emotional connection with their learning community, resulting in a more successful and productive distance learning experience. In conclusion, it was recommended that instructors actively foster interaction among students. Nevertheless, no further suggestions for appropriate educational strategies were offered. In consideration of the above, peer tutoring has the potential to act as a low-cost response to these needs.

It has not yet been estimated to what degree the use of tutoring has changed at Polish universities over the past several years and, thus, to what extent this strategy meets the social-emotional needs of Polish students. Firstly, because it was not until 2019 that the Polish Ministry of Higher Education initiated the national programme that aimed to introduce institutionalized tutoring to Polish universities. The main objective of which is to enhance the abilities of the academic staff in the implementation of tutoring (cf. Brdulak et al., 2019, pp. 3-5). Secondly, according to the report on the utilization of tutoring in Poland, this instructional strategy is primarily associated with Anglo-Saxon countries (Budzyński et al., 2009, p. 7). It has also been noted that the literature on tutoring in Polish academia is scarce due to its limited usage in this educational context. Finally, tertiary learning outcomes are observed to be primarily focused on cognitive learning, while social-emotional outcomes are not widely acknowledged.

In the light of the above data, the current study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of reciprocal peer tutoring in remote and blended learning

university courses. It explores the potential impact of reciprocal peer tutoring on the social-emotional and cognitive learning of college students. Since both tutoring sessions and evaluations are designed to be delivered online, this offers immediate insights into students' reactions. The investigation is carried out to determine the students' viewpoints regarding their satisfaction with the reciprocal peer tutoring task, their level of motivation and self-efficacy, and their gains in knowledge. Additionally, the blended learning measure is augmented with an assessment of students' preferences for integrating reciprocal peer tutoring into academic courses.

1. TUTORING

From a historical perspective, tutoring is seen as one of the oldest forms of educational practice, with roots dating back to 400 B.C. in ancient Greece (Bausell et al., 1972; Gordon & Gordon, 1990; Nelson-Royes, 2015). Tutoring is viewed as both a form of education and a means of instruction (cf. Bourdeau & Grandbastien, 2010, p. 124). Interestingly, the investigation of Polish literature shows that tutoring tends to be perceived by teachers as a *new method* (Czekierda, 2011, as cited in Karpińska-Musiał, 2012, p. 57) or a *new educational form* (Cichorzewska, 2014, p. 222). According to Tessmer (2009), the earliest known tutors were Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. The Socratic method of teaching emphasized the development of the tutees' curiosity rather than imparting factual information to them. Socrates was famous for using questioning techniques that were designed to provoke the curiosity of those he taught (Nails, 2020). The origins of university tutoring can be traced back to the 11th century, when the first European universities, such as the University of Bologna, the University of Paris, and the University of Oxford, were established. Despite tutoring being introduced at the University of Oxford in England as early as the 11th century (Moore, 1968), it was only in the 1800s that tutoring was officially recognized as a mode of teaching at the University of Oxford and subsequently at the University of Cambridge. Furthermore, the current form of tutoring acknowledged in academic circles stems from 1882 and is influenced by the Socratic teaching approach employed by Benjamin Jowett, a professor at the University of Oxford (Markham, 1967, as cited in Balwant & Doon, 2021). Since then, the "Oxford tutorial" has been a widely adopted teaching instruction in tertiary education. The model aims at fostering deep learning and follows a personalized Socratic approach in which a teacher engages in a one-on-one conversation with a small group of students

about course-related topics. However, with the massification of education, traditional forms of tutoring were unable to accommodate the growing number of students. As a result, universities began to investigate ways to offer tutoring in large group settings, such as during lectures. Additionally, universities have started to consider peer tutoring as a viable option, as it provides the benefits of one-to-one or small group instruction while still offering individual support to students.

Until now, tutoring in Poland has been mostly associated with BA or MA seminar classes, which feature a limited number of students and a highly personalized approach, given the specialized subject matter being covered. A promising transformation in the conceptual framework of tutoring can be seen in the newly proposed model of tutoring for Polish higher education institutions (Brdulak et al., 2022, p. 90). The new tutoring framework, which is the result of the Masters of Didactics programme initiated by the Polish Ministry of Education, promotes a comprehensive approach to education. The model emphasizes the use of personalized teaching methods such as individual tutoring, small and large group instruction, and peer tutoring. It also places a strong focus on enhancing the tutoring competencies of academic staff, including the ability to support students with diverse educational needs. The framework provides targeted institutional support to foster the skills and motivation of tutors and ensure the well-being of all participants in the didactic process. It is important to emphasize that the concept of well-being, which encompasses emotional and social aspects of a student's life, has been clearly defined for the first time in this framework.

While one-on-one Oxford tutoring remained the most widely utilized model of academic tutoring, peer tutoring was gaining traction in higher education institutions. In a review of early occurrences of the concept of peer-tutoring, Gartner et al. (1971, as cited in Hoffman, 1977) noted that John Comenius, a 19th-century educational reformer, proposed that a student seeking genuine academic advancement should arrange to provide lessons to others on a regular basis, saying "He who teaches others, teaches himself" (p. 2). In the early 1960s, Lippett and Lohman were among the first researchers to document peer tutoring projects in academic press and developed several tutoring programs aimed at addressing the academic needs of students. These early endeavours primarily involved pairing junior and senior high school students as tutors for elementary school students. Building on this foundational work, in 1976, Goldschmid and Goldschmid published the first study on reciprocal peer tutoring, as cited by Topping (1996), where they assessed the effectiveness of three different learning conditions: a teacher-led group, an independent study, and a peer tutoring group. The results of the post-test showed that the peer tutoring group performed better than the

other two groups, and the students reported a high level of enjoyment with the learning process.

Topping (1996) defines peer tutoring as a method where individuals from similar social backgrounds help each other learn through teaching. Consequently, this type of learning support is seen as interactive, purposeful, and structured. Peer tutoring can take two forms: fixed, in which the roles of tutors and tutees are defined, or reciprocal, in which the roles can alternate between peers (Topping, 2000, as cited in Miravet et al., 2014). It is to be noted that several features are typically found in peer tutoring approaches, such as specific role-taking as either a tutor or a tutee, grouping students based on either their same age or across different ages, providing tutorials for either targeted individuals or the entire class, using either a reciprocal or a one-way interactional model, grouping students based on either the same or mixed ability levels, setting objectives for either cognitive or social-emotional gains, and determining the length of the intervention (Topping, 2005). Following this categorization, Hott and Walker (2012) enumerated the following types of peer tutoring: classwide, peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS), cross-age, same-age, and reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT).

Reciprocal peer tutoring is characterized by a two-way interaction in which students of the same academic background cooperate in pairs or groups and alternate their roles as tutor and tutee during each session. The roles are not assigned, and the students have the freedom to switch them from task to task or even within a single task. It is also frequent for high-achieving students to be matched with low-achieving students. This strategy involves the use of structured educational materials and places importance on monitoring students' responses, in addition to fostering mutual assessment and support among peers (Gazula et al., 2017; Svellingen et al., 2021). Thus, peer tutoring employs a student-centered approach and encourages and enhances collaborative learning, which is reciprocal in nature. Studies on the implementation of reciprocal peer tutoring in higher education emphasize the academic improvement and personal development of participating students. This, in turn, contributes to a rise in their confidence and an enhancement of students' satisfaction with their educational experience. In conclusion, reciprocal peer tutoring promotes academic growth, boosts confidence and contentment, and thus addresses students' social-emotional learning needs.

2. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The term social-emotional learning is defined as the process by which the learner acquires and effectively applies the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable individuals to manage their emotions, establish and accomplish objectives, empathize with others, build positive relationships, and engage in considerate and accountable decision-making (cf. Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Furthermore, Weissberg et al. (2015, as cited in Mahoney et al., 2018, p. 2) differentiate between five core competences of socio-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Breaking down the five core competencies, self-awareness encompasses self-efficacy, self-confidence, accurate self-perception, and identification of emotions, while self-management involves goal setting, self-discipline, self-motivation, organization, and stress management. Additionally, social awareness refers to respect, empathy, and appreciation of diversity. Relationship skills include teamwork, communication, and relationship building. The fifth core competence, responsible decision-making, involves analyzing situations, problem solving, self-reflection, and responsibility.

Although gains in knowledge, practical skills, and social learning outcomes are acknowledged in Polish tertiary course syllabi, there is no reference made to emotional learning outcomes. In contrast to the cognitive domain of learning, whose characteristics are easily measurable, the affective domain is largely neglected in assessment due to a lack of testing instruments that would permit tracking the development of social skills. Despite the fact that selected aspects of the social-emotional domain of learning, such as reactions and motivation, are included in surveys conducted as part of the quality evaluation of educational practices at universities, they do not provide information about correlations and cause-and-effect relationships. In addition, due to the fact that the surveys are administered at the end of the semester and are anonymous, it makes it impossible to conduct in-depth analysis to trace the nomological network of reactions (cf. Sitzmann et al., 2008). According to Morgan and Casper (2000), the examination of reactions is sometimes the only form of course evaluation, and as a result, it does not provide insight into the network of reactions. Moreover, the complexity of the aforementioned nomological network of reactions, which includes, among other things, a student's character traits, a teacher's personality, and mood, makes the interpretation of the reactions and their correlations methodologically challenging. This, in turn, also raises legitimate concerns about its value in further decision-

making regarding the effectiveness of the given course or the teaching excellence of a course instructor.

In sum, intentional attention to social-emotional learning in conjunction with reciprocal peer-tutoring can lead to improved academic performance, increased empathy and understanding among members of academia, and better communication and collaboration skills. It seems crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of social-emotional learning and academic success and, thus, to prioritize both in the education system. By integrating social-emotional learning and reciprocal peer tutoring, students can develop important life skills that will benefit them both inside and outside of the classroom. At present, it is observed that student reactions are occasionally abused in the evaluation process (Hook & Bunce, 2001). Therefore, understanding the value of diagnosing students' social-emotional needs allows the findings to be used to consciously build the reputation of an academic course, increasing the number of students enrolling in the course and improving the results of academic teacher evaluation surveys (Brown, 2005). To ensure that all parties involved in the tertiary education process, including students, teachers, and administration, benefit equally from the recognition of social-emotional learning, it is essential to highlight this aspect of education. It might help students acquire important life skills such as empathy, communication, and collaboration, which can enhance their academic success and future career prospects. Additionally, teachers could improve their instructional strategies and foster a more positive classroom atmosphere. Likewise, administrators can contribute to creating a culture of academic excellence that prioritizes the holistic well-being of all members of the academic community.

3. RESEARCH AIMS AND RATIONALE

The previous studies on the negative effects of emergency remote teaching and the positive impact of peer tutoring on students' social-emotional and cognitive learning led to the primary purpose of the present investigation. Specifically, to investigate the benefits and limitations of online reciprocal peer tutoring in meeting the university students' learning needs in remote and blended-learning environments. On the return to on-campus teaching, some instructional practices that had been utilized in an emergency remote setting remained, such as the use of educational platforms and applications that facilitate learning and assessment and help to engage and motivate students. This transition opened the door to comparative studies on the effectiveness of online instructional strategies in both

remote and blended learning settings. The present study contributes to this line of research by tracking the perceptions of English department students at a Polish university on the role of reciprocal peer tutoring in addressing their social-emotional and cognitive learning needs in both remote and blended settings.

In addition, the study adds to the ongoing discussion over the significance of peer tutoring as a student-led instructional strategy in a university course. It ought to be emphasised that, as part of the government's Masters of Didactics programme, the revision and implementation of tutoring models in Polish higher education institutions has just begun (Brdulak et al., 2019). Until then, tutoring was not formally acknowledged as an instructional strategy. Interestingly, the models that are currently being implemented rely heavily on one-on-one instruction led by the teacher. Peer tutoring as a form of collaborative learning has not yet established a firm foothold in the Polish academic community. In the absence of systemic online tutoring programmes in Polish universities, the present study not only allows for the evaluation of its efficacy but also sheds light on how remote and blended learning instruction influences university students' perceptions of the impact of online reciprocal peer tutoring on their social-emotional and cognitive development.

4. METHOD

A cross-sectional study was conducted at the Department of English at a Polish middle-sized university. A convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from participants via an online questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was designed to assess the views of two cohorts of students who participated in online reciprocal peer tutoring sessions in two different settings that is in an emergency remote classroom (hereinafter referred to as the remote group) and a blended classroom (hereinafter referred to as the blended group). A 2- and 5-point Likert scales were used to collect quantitative data from the sample respondents, whereas qualitative data was collected from corresponding open-ended questions. Thus, in the remote group survey, three of the Likert scales were bipolar and one was unipolar. In the blended group survey, four of the Likert scales were bipolar and one was unipolar as it included an additional Yes/No question. To allow for the use of an interval scale, the response items collected with 5-point scales were matched to values 1 to 5.

4.1 Participants

The research sample comprised 43 students, out of whom 27 constituted a remote group and 16 formed a blended group. The students were in the first year of a two-year master's programme in English with a concentration in either TESOL or Translation studies. The research was conducted during the winter semester of 2021, in the midst of remote instruction, and in 2023, when on-campus teaching was resumed. At the time of data collection, the remote group students were wrapping up their winter semester after learning online for a year due to the compulsory closure of the campus from the COVID-19 pandemic, while their counterparts in the blended group were finishing the corresponding on-campus winter semester. Noteworthy is the fact that certain on-campus courses were offered in a blended learning format. This format was utilised in a 30-hour Academic Skills course in which a peer tutoring assignment was incorporated by the instructor. The students were informed that both the peer tutoring session and the follow-up survey comprised a research project; therefore, by completing and submitting the survey, they expressed their consent. The response rates for the surveys were as follows: 27 out of 35 students in the online group and all 16 students in the blended group, indicating a complete return rate of 43 out of 51 (84.31%) for both groups.

4.2 Instruments

As a research instrument, this study utilised online self-assessment questionnaires. The questionnaires used by the remote and blended groups differed in one additional question in the blended group. The questionnaire sought to examine students' perceptions of the following four variables: *Reactions*, *Motivation*, *Self-efficacy*, and *Gains in knowledge*. The *Reactions* measure assessed the level of student satisfaction with this reciprocal peer tutoring assignment. The *Motivation* measure evaluated the students' level of motivation during the activity, while the *Self-efficacy* measure rated their confidence in completing the task successfully. The final common measure, *Gains in knowledge*, determined the extent to which the task assisted students in mastering content knowledge.

In total, the research tool consisted of four (remote group) and five (blended group) closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions. The additional question used in the blended group was a yes/no question asking whether the student would want reciprocal peer tutoring activities added to the course syllabus for the following semester. The closed-ended questions measured attitudes and

opinions using a 2- and 5-point Likert scales, while the open-ended questions inquired about the positive and negative aspects of reciprocal peer tutoring on their social-emotional, and cognitive learning needs.

4.3 Study design and procedure

The design of the study is an approximate replication of an earlier study conducted by the same authors (Łodej & Łodej, 2021). Both studies investigate the extent to which online reciprocal peer tutoring addresses university students' social-emotional and cognitive learning needs. Nonetheless, the current study seeks comparative evidence as to whether the efficacy of online reciprocal peer tutoring depends on the mode of instruction. In other words, it seeks to determine whether students in the remote and blended groups experience the impact and value of reciprocal peer tutoring in meeting their social-emotional and cognitive needs similarly or differently.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent does reciprocal peer tutoring address the social-emotional and cognitive learning needs of university students in remote and blended learning environments?
2. What are the positive and negative outcomes associated with the implementation of reciprocal peer tutoring in remote and blended classes with respect to social-emotional and cognitive learning?
3. What is the preference of university students in Poland regarding the integration of reciprocal peer tutoring in a blended academic course?

The students engaged in reciprocal peer tutoring through an online platform that facilitated synchronous face-to-face communication. Despite the fact that MS Teams was recommended as the course's learning platform, students were free to use the platform that best suited their needs. Before the session, the students were provided with an overview of the study's objectives and instructed to form mixed-ability groups of five. In addition, they were instructed to provide feedback on each other's written assignments in order to improve their quality prior to final submission for grading. The assignment was to write a summary of a research article that would include all of the citation types covered in class. As the sessions were scheduled at an additional time, the duration of the meeting was determined by the students. After submitting individual assignments for grading, students were emailed the self-evaluation survey for completion.

4.4 RESULTS

A descriptive statistics, Spearman's rho correlation, and the Mann–Whitney *U* test were used in this study to determine if there were observable differences between the measures, that is, *Reactions*, *Motivation*, *Self-efficacy* and *Gains in knowledge* within each group and between groups. The descriptive statistics was carried out to calculate the means, standard deviations, and ranges for all four variables (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum of the Remote (*n *= 27) and Blended (*n *= 16) Groups on Reactions, Motivation, Self-efficacy and Gains in knowledge*

	Social-emotional learning needs						Cognitive learning needs	
	Reactions		Motivation		Self-efficacy		Gains in knowledge	
	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended
M	3.89	4.19	4.07	3.69	3.52	3.38	4.22	3.75
SD	0.58	0.75	0.55	0.48	0.70	0.50	0.64	0.93
Minimum	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2
Maximum	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5

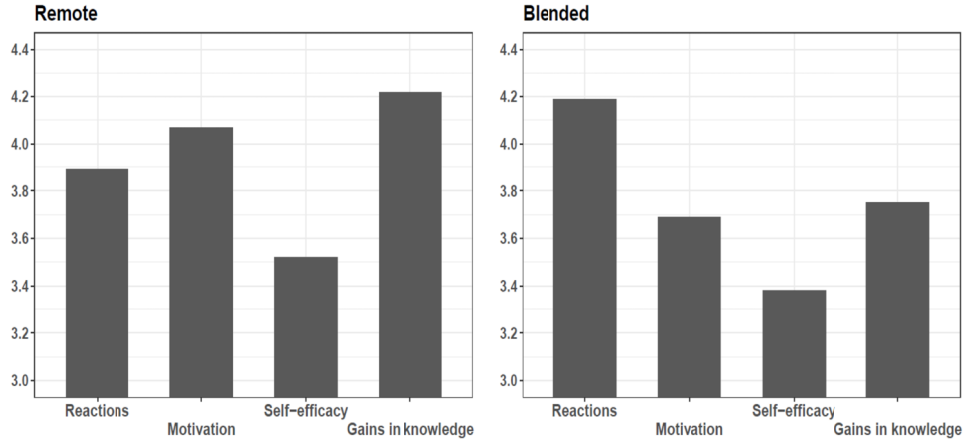
The descriptive statistics data showed that in the remote group, the mean score for *Gains in knowledge* (4.22) was the highest, while for *Self-efficacy* (3.52) was the lowest for the combined category of social-emotional and cognitive learning needs. For variables listed under the category of social-emotional learning, *Motivation* depicted the highest mean score (4.07), followed by *Reactions* (3.89), and the lowest was *Self-efficacy* (3.52), with standard deviations being 0.58 for *Reactions*, 0.55 for *Motivation*, 0.70 for *Self-efficacy*, and 0.67 for *Gains in knowledge*.

As opposed to the remote group, in the blended group it was the mean score for *Reactions* (4.19) that was the highest. *Self-efficacy* (3.38), likewise, was ranked as the lowest of the five tested variables. Interestingly, the mean score for *Gains in knowledge* reached a value of 3.75 which was higher than the remaining two variables from the social-emotional category that is: *Motivation* (3.69) and *Self-efficacy* (3.38). At the same time, the standard deviation value for *Reactions*

was 0.75, for *Motivation* 0.48, for *Self-efficacy* 0.50 and for *Gains in knowledge* 0.93. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of mean scores in the sample, providing insight into the general profile of each group of students.

Figure 1

Mean Scores of Reactions, Motivation, Self-Efficacy, and Gains in Knowledge in the Remote and Blended Groups



Next, Spearman's rank correlation was computed to assess the relationship between the pairs of variables and the strength of this association in each of the groups. Table 2 reports the scores with reference to r_s value of the sample.

Table 2

R_s Values for Reactions, Motivation, Self-efficacy, *and* Gains in Knowledge *in the Remote and the Blended Group*

	Reactions		Motivation		Self-efficacy		Gains in knowledge	
	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended	Remote	Blended
Reactions	1.000	1.000	0.371	0.346	–0.334	0.317	0.174	0.471
Motivation	0.371	0.346	1.000	1.000	–0.073	0.522	0.261	0.307
Self-efficacy	–0.334	0.317	–0.073	0.522	1.000	1.000	0.181	0.265
Gains in knowledge	0.174	0.471	0.261	0.307	0.181	0.265	1.000	1.000

After Hopkins et al. (2009), the strength of positive and negative correlation is very weak for r = .00–0.09, weak for r = .10–0.29, moderate for r = .30–0.49, strong for r = .50–0.69, very strong for r = .70–0.89, and perfect for r = .90–1.00. The data gathered from the remote group indicated that correlations between the variables ranged from very weak to moderate and were either positive or negative. There was a moderate correlation between the following sets of variables: a positive correlation between *Reactions* and *Motivation* (n = 27, r = .371, p = .056) with a p-value close to the level of statistical significance, and a negative correlation between *Reactions* and *Self-efficacy* (n = 27, r = –.334, p = .087). While a weak positive correlation was observed between: *Reaction* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 27, r = .174, p = .384), *Motivation* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 27, r = .261, p = .187), and *Self-efficacy* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 27, r =. 181, p = 0.365). A very weak negative correlation was found between one pair of variables, i.e., *Motivation* and *Self-efficacy* (n = 27, r = –.073, p = .714).

In contrast, the data collected from the blended group showed that correlations between variables ranged from weak to strong and were all positive. There was a strong correlation between *Motivation* and *Self-efficacy* (n = 16, r = .522, p = .038) that reached the level of statistical significance. Interestingly, this correlation was very weak in the remote group. The following four pairs depicted a moderate correlation: *Reactions* and *Motivation* (n = 16, r = .346, p = .188), *Reactions* and *Self-efficacy* (n = 16, r = .317, p = .231), *Reaction* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 16, r = .471, p = .065), and *Motivation* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 16, r = .307, p = .246). A weak correlation was observed between one pair of variables, i.e., *Self-efficacy* and *Gains in knowledge* (n = 16, r = .265, p = .321) which aligns with the result obtained from the remote group.

Following that, the Mann–Whitney U test was performed to evaluate whether students' responses on each of the tested measures differed by group and also to test for significance. The data revealed that the differences were not statistically significant at $p < .05$ though they ranged between p = . 076 and p = .357. To allow for a clear and concise understanding of the data, the results are presented in descending order. The level of motivation that assisted students during the reciprocal peer tutoring task reached the value of (z = 1.771, p = .076) which was the closest to the point of statistical significance though not reaching it. Similarly, the perceived gains in knowledge through engagement in the task did not differ significantly between the remote and blended groups (z = 1.608, p = .107). The differentiating effect was also not statistically significant when students' reactions to participation in the reciprocal peer tutoring task were compared (z = –1.268, p = .204). Similarly, the perceived level of self-efficacy, in other words, students'

confidence that they would be able to perform well on the task, did not differ significantly between the remote and blended students ($z = 0.917$, $p = .357$).

Additionally, the percentage of students in the blended group ($n = 16$) who wished to have online reciprocal peer tutoring added to the course syllabus for the following semester was calculated. The data revealed that 94 percent of students ($n = 15$) are looking forward to incorporating reciprocal peer tutoring in the next semester of their Academic Skills course, indicating a particularly high level of approval of this instructional strategy.

Finally, the quantitative data analysis was followed by a qualitative assessment of the positive and negative aspects of online reciprocal peer tutoring in relation to the students' social-emotional learning needs. The students' responses were grouped according to the main variable and its type. This resulted in the emergence of six categories: *Reactions (positive)*, *Reactions (negative)*, *Motivation (positive)*, *Motivation (negative)*, *Self-efficacy (positive)* and *Self-efficacy (negative)*. The responses were counted and arranged, beginning with the responses that were shared by students from both groups and followed by the responses that were group-specific. To enable an accurate comparison between the groups, the numerical value was expressed in percentages. Table 3 reports on the positive and negative aspects of reciprocal peer tutoring with reference to the affective domain of learning.

Table 3

Breakdown of Positive and Negative Aspects of Reciprocal Peer Tutoring by Category Type, Reference Type, Number of Occurrences, and Group

Category type	Reference type	Number of occurrences	
		Remote	Blended
Reactions (positive)	Collaborative work	8 (30%)	2 (13%)
	Learning by sharing	8 (30%)	6 (38%)
	Opportunity to help each other	2 (7%)	1 (6%)
	Additional revision of the course material	2 (7%)	1 (6%)
	Stress free activity	4 (15%)	–
	Simplicity of the task	4 (15%)	–
	Enhancement of self-discipline	1 (4%)	–
	Practical and useful	–	6 (38%)
Reactions	None	11(41%)	4 (25%)

(negative)	Difficulty in managing an online task	5 (19%)	2 (13%)
	Uncertainty of the accuracy of one's performance	4 (15%)	3 (19%)
	Time consuming	2 (7%)	1 (6%)
	Lack of authority	2 (7%)	1 (6%)
	Lack of engagement	–	2 (13%)
	Lack of comfort	–	1 (6%)
Motivation (positive)	Gains in knowledge	12 (44%)	6 (38%)
	Motivation received from peers/group	12 (44%)	4 (25%)
	Sense of responsibility	5 (19%)	6 (38%)
	Curiosity	–	2 (13%)
	Competition	–	1 (6%)
Motivation (negative)	None	10 (37%)	2 (13%)
	Difficulty in managing the task	8 (30%)	2 (13%)
	Uncertainty of the accuracy of one's performance	6 (22%)	1 (6%)
	Time consuming	2 (7%)	1 (6%)
	Complexity of the final assignment		4 (25%)
	Lack of intrinsic motivation	–	1 (6%)
	Peers	–	4 (25%)
Self-efficacy (positive)	Support from peers	9 (33%)	7 (44%)
	Recorded progress in content knowledge	8 (30%)	7 (44%)
	Relevant course materials for reference	5 (19%)	3 (19%)
	None	3 (11%)	1 (6%)
	Friendly atmosphere	1 (4%)	–
	High self-confidence	–	1 (6%)
Self-efficacy (negative)	Self-realization of the lack of content knowledge	11 (41%)	6 (38%)
	None	6 (22%)	4 (25%)
	Difficulty in managing group task	5 (19%)	2 (13%)
	Sense of uncertainty	3 (11%)	4 (25%)

The data showed that *positive Reactions* were caused by eight features, of which four were shared by students from both remote (R) and blended (B) groups. These were: collaborative work (30% R, 13% B), learning by sharing (30% R, 38% B), opportunity to help each other (7% R, 6% B), additional revision of the course material (7% R, 6% B). The remaining four were group-specific and included stress-free activity (15% R), simplicity of the task (15% R), enhancement of self-discipline (4% R), and practical and useful (38 B). In the category of *negative Reactions*, there were a total of seven responses, five of which were shared by both groups: none (41% R, 25% B), difficulty in managing an online task (19% R, 13% B), uncertainty of the accuracy of one's performance (15% R, 19% B), time consuming (7% R, 6% B), lack of authority (7% R, 6% B). The remaining two features i.e., lack of engagement (13% B) and lack of comfort (6% B) were reported only by the blended group.

Next, in the category of *positive Motivation*, the students provided the following shared motivators: gains in knowledge (44% R, 38% B), motivation received from peers/group (44% R, 25% B), and a sense of responsibility (19% R, 38% B). There were also two additional features recognized by the remote group: curiosity (13% B) and competition (6% B). While the *negative Motivation* was associated with the following set of shared features: none (37% R, 13% B), difficulty in managing the task (30% R, 13% B), uncertainty of the accuracy of one's performance (22% R, 6% B), and time consuming (7% R, 6% B). Whereas the complexity of the final assignment (25% B), lack of intrinsic motivation (6% B), and peers (25% B) were recognized as demotivating factors by students from the blended group only.

Finally, *positive Self-efficacy* was perceived as being reinforced by support from peers (33% R, 44% B), recorded progress in content knowledge (30% R, 44% B), and having access to relevant course materials for reference (19% R, 19% B). The answer none (11% R, 6% B) accounted for the last fourth feature shared by both groups. The differentiating factors were a friendly atmosphere (4% R) recorded in the remote group and high self-confidence (6% B) reported by the blended group. Contrary, *negative Self-efficacy* was related to self-realization of the lack of content knowledge (41% R, 38% B), none (22% R, 25% B), difficulty in managing group tasks (19% R, 13% B), and sense of uncertainty (11% R, 25% B).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study can be read as an extension of the research line on the effect of reciprocal peer tutoring in meeting students' social-emotional and cognitive

learning needs. In particular, the study looks at some English department students under two experimental conditions, i.e. remote and blended modes of course delivery, to compare perceptions of the impact that online reciprocal peer tutoring has on their linguistic and social-emotional learning. The study found that online reciprocal peer tutoring responds to the social-emotional and cognitive needs of both on- and off-campus university students. In addition, it has been demonstrated that institutionally supported collaborative learning provides students with meaningful online group work in real time. This, in turn, allows peer support to be recognised as a valuable motivational tool that enhances classroom dynamics, student engagement, and a sense of personal and social responsibility. Additionally, this instructional strategy is seen to positively impact the cognitive domain by promoting critical thinking, enhancing problem-solving skills, and fostering knowledge retention.

With regard to the first research question that investigates the extent to which online reciprocal peer tutoring addresses the social-emotional and cognitive learning needs of university students in remote and blended learning environments, the present study showed its positive effect on students' reactions, motivation, self-efficacy and gains in knowledge. Nevertheless, the degree of impact varied between the remote and blended groups. Namely, students from the blended group were more satisfied with their participation in the tutoring task than their counterparts in the remote group. Additionally, students from the blended group have reported learning less than those in the remote group, while the level of confidence remained comparable in both groups. Interestingly, despite reporting lower levels of motivation, confidence, and knowledge gains than their counterparts in the remote group, students in the blended group expressed higher satisfaction with their participation in a reciprocal peer tutoring task. A further insight into the correlations between reactions, motivation, self-efficacy and gains in knowledge depicted a different correlational pattern in the groups. In the remote group, motivation was strongly correlated with students' reactions, while in the blended group, motivation was significantly correlated with students' confidence. In sum, while the motivation that students had during the reciprocal peer tutoring task marked the biggest difference between the two groups, confidence differentiated them to the smallest degree.

In reference to the second research question, which investigated the positive and negative outcomes associated with the implementation of reciprocal peer tutoring in remote and blended classes with respect to social-emotional and cognitive learning, the data indicated that the number of positive learning outcomes outnumbered the negative ones in both remote and blended learning

contexts. Interestingly, both groups attributed their positive responses to the collaborative work, learning through sharing, the amount of peer support, and the opportunity for additional course content revision that the task offered. The students (S1 to S8) pointed to the need for and appreciation of social interactions by providing the following comments and stating what they liked:

(S1) *Everyone from the group could share their opinion and help out the others.*

(S2) *After comparing works we were able to correct errors that we hadn't noticed before.*

(S3) *The opportunity to consult my doubts with others, discussion, discovering mistakes.*

(S4) *We could consult our work with others and it was not considered as cheating*

(S5) *We were able to get feedback from others on our work.*

(S6) *The variety of opinions and different points of view concerning one problem.*

(S7) *The opportunity to collaborate with people with whom I had previously had little contact outside of class. In addition, I liked the opportunity to share my thoughts on some aspects of their work with them, especially when my input was appreciated.*

(S8) *The possibility to have my mistakes corrected by my peers*.

Additionally, the blended group stressed that the task was both practical and useful, which could indicate that online reciprocal peer tutoring might become a recommended alternative for revising or preparing for final assignments and tests. The students (S1 to S5) expressed their opinions, highlighting the following:

(S1) *The goal of the task is clearly aimed at the assimilation and application of the studied material. So, it is the best thing for practising skills.*

(S2) *Despite some mistakes that may occur, I am convinced that it can only help me with writing and preparing for my MA thesis*.

(S3) *I learned a lot of useful information that I will be able to use in the future.*
(S4) *Its practicality.*

(S5) *Using my knowledge in practice.*

The negative reactions in both groups referred mainly to technical aspects of an online activity, workload, and a lack of authority that caused uncertainty. The remote group also reported unsatisfactory engagement from some students who joined the task unprepared or only focused on the quality of their assignment. However, such comments were scarce.

Regarding the last research question, which aimed to determine if the students instructed in a blended mode would like to have online reciprocal peer tutoring integrated with their subsequent Academic Skills course, the results indicated that a majority of students (n = 15, 94%) expressed a strong interest in incorporating such tutoring sessions into the course syllabus. The students reached this conclusion after considering both the positive and negative aspects of reciprocal peer tutoring, which provides the rationale for considering the inclusion of peer tutoring in course syllabi at English departments.

In conclusion, in the light of the above data, the use of reciprocal peer tutoring may not only allow for the inclusion of both social and emotional learning outcomes into a university course, but also to verify them in a reliable and valid manner. In addition, this could serve as a tool for course instructors to monitor and track student satisfaction, giving them some control over the course quality and allowing them to identify areas for improvement in order to best meet students' needs and improve their learning experience. Furthermore, the use of reciprocal peer tutoring as a supplementary instructional strategy for enhancing social integration and emotional well-being in blended learning courses at Polish universities, might be considered a promising approach to improving student engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, it could be acknowledged as a complementary instructional strategy for introducing collaborative learning, peer-led instruction, and student-centred approaches in a conventional face-to-face classroom environment.

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ADDRESSING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING NEEDS IN POLISH TERTIARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF RECIPROCAL PEER TUTORING IN REMOTE AND BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

S u m m a r y

Until now, peer tutoring as an instructional strategy has not been widely endorsed at Polish universities. The relationship between peer tutoring and the affective domain of learning has received little or no attention. The period of emergency remote instruction triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic elevated the significance of social and emotional learning needs. The restoration of on-campus classes exemplified this need even stronger as students returned to classrooms being more socially and emotionally vulnerable than before. The present study contributes to the ongoing discussion over the significance of peer tutoring as a student-led instructional strategy that directly addresses students' social-emotional learning needs. By comparing the effects of online reciprocal peer tutoring on English department students' cognitive and social-emotional development under remote and blended course delivery, this study provides valuable insights into the benefits of reciprocal peer tutoring in different learning environments. The findings highlight the positive impact of online reciprocal peer tutoring on students' emotions, motivation, self-efficacy, and knowledge gains, as well as the importance of peer support and collaborative learning in improving classroom dynamics and student involvement. These results suggest that reciprocal peer tutoring can be a valuable addition to university courses, especially in the current context of increased demand for online and blended learning opportunities.

Keywords: reciprocal peer tutoring; remote learning; blended learning; social-emotional learning needs; tertiary education

SPOŁECZNO-EMOCJONALNE POTRZEBY EDUKACYJNE W POLSKIM SZKOLNICTWIE WYŻSZYM. STUDIUM PRZYPADKU WZAJEMNEGO TUTORINGU KOLEŻEŃSKIEGO W NAUCZANIU ZDALNYM I *BLENDED*

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Obecnie tutoring koleżeński, rozumiany jako strategia nauczania, nie jest szeroko rozpoznawalny na polskich uczelniach, a relacja między tutoringiem koleżeńskim a afektywną domeną uczenia się wymaga dodatkowej refleksji. Warto zauważyć, że okres nauczania zdalnego, spowodowany pandemią COVID-19, uwidocznił znaczenie społeczno-emocjonalnych potrzeb edukacyjnych studentów. Przywrócenie zajęć stacjonarnych dodatkowo je podkreśliło, studenci bowiem powrócili do sal wykładowych obarczeni doświadczeniem izolacji społecznej i emocjonalnej. Niniejsze badanie wpisuje się w dyskusję dotyczącą znaczenia tutoringu koleżeńskiego prowadzonego w formie online jako strategii, która odpowiada na społeczno-emocjonalne potrzeby

edukacyjne studentów polskich uczelni. Zaobserwowanie wpływu wzajemnego tutoringu koleżeńskiego na rozwój poznawczy i społeczno-emocjonalny dwóch grup studentów wydziału anglistyki stało się możliwe dzięki zastosowaniu elementów tutoringu koleżeńskiego w ramach nauczania w dwóch kontekstach, czyli zdalnym i *blended*. Zebrane dane dostarczają spostrzeżeń dotyczących korzyści i trudności wynikających z aplikacji tej strategii w zróżnicowanych środowiskach nauczania. Wyniki przeprowadzonego badania podkreślają nie tylko pozytywny wpływ wzajemnego tutoringu koleżeńskiego na emocje, motywację, poczucie własnej skuteczności i przyrost wiedzy. Uwidaczniają także znaczenie wsparcia rówieśniczego w poprawianiu dynamiki zajęć i podnoszeniu poziomu zaangażowania studentów w proces dydaktyczny. W podsumowaniu, wyniki badania wskazują, że wzajemny tutoring koleżeński może być wartościowym uzupełnieniem kursów uniwersyteckich zwłaszcza w obecnym kontekście zwiększonego zapotrzebowania na wprowadzanie elementów nauczania online do programu kursów akademickich.

Słowa kluczowe: wzajemny tutoring koleżeński; nauczanie zdalne; nauczanie typu *blended*; społeczno-emocjonalne potrzeby uczenia się; szkolnictwo wyższe