
Understanding and Enhancing the Peer Support System for International Students

Min-Zih Wei
Kyoto University
Japan

Emmanuel Manalo
Kyoto University
Japan

ABSTRACT: This study explored international tutoring pairs' strategies in managing tutoring activities and responding to challenges. After a preliminary survey was conducted, individual workshops and follow-up interviews were conducted with nine tutor-tutee pairs in a peer tutoring system for international undergraduates at a Japanese university. All textual data underwent qualitative content analysis, including phases of inductive coding and deductive coding using Topping and Ehly's (2001) five-subprocess framework. The results revealed diverse interaction patterns and sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in tutoring activities. The findings suggest the importance of concrete orientation explanations and guidance tailored to diverse characteristics of tutor-tutee pairs.

KEYWORDS: Peer tutoring, international students, tutoring system, internationalization, student diversity

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International student numbers in Japan have been increasing since the late 20th Century, in part due to the "300,000 International Students Plan" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2008) to attract international students and thereby enhance international competencies in higher education. Despite experiencing a drop during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of international students has since recovered and reached a record high for the second year in 2025 (MEXT, 2025). The "tutor system," a system in which senior students are hired to provide one-on-one academic and daily life support to

newly enrolled international students at universities, plays a critical role in supporting the increasing number of international students. The tutor system was introduced way back in 1972 to support international students who came to Japan on Japanese government-sponsored scholarships and was later incorporated in supporting self-funded international students as well (Yokota & Shiratsuchi, 2004). In Western higher education, peer tutoring typically provides academic support for both international and domestic students, whereas peer mentoring or “buddy” programs are often designed to assist international students with their initial adjustment (Lassegard, 2008). These two functions are usually organized separately. In contrast, the Japanese tutor system was developed internally in Japan (i.e., independent of international versions of it) as a support system that combines academic, Japanese-language, and daily-life assistance for newly arrived international students (Kobayashi, 2007; Yokota & Shiratsuchi, 2004). It was a top-down initiative by the Ministry of Education to manage the increasing intake of international students by delegating some of their daily and academic adjustment support to more senior domestic students. Nowadays, the tutor system has become a popular support strategy adopted by most Japanese national universities and many private universities (Lassegard, 2008), and it has been reported to have facilitated personal growth like self-confidence and intercultural understanding between international students and Japanese students (e.g., Inomata & Nishimura, 2022; Sonoda, 2008).

Despite its popularity, the Japanese tutor system in higher education has also been criticized for inadequate administrative organization and poor matching strategies. Institutional guidance in clarifying tutors’ roles, supervision (Abbot et al., 2018; Wilson & Arendale, 2011), and systemic tutor training (Falchikov, 2001; Lin et al., 2025; Sadera et al., 2024) are crucial to tutoring outcomes. However, the lack of guidance in, instruction about, and follow-up of tutoring situations for the tutors and tutees is a prevalent problem in Japanese universities (Lassegard, 2005). Nakamura and Tominaga (2021) thus suggested that Japanese universities should develop their own tutor-training programs tailored to their students’ characteristics. However, challenges in the Japanese tutor system may arise before training begins, including the mismatching of tutoring pairs and an unclear definition of tutors’ duties. Inomata and Nishimura (2022) reported that matching tutors to tutees can be difficult due to differences in student numbers each year and a lack of investigation of international students’ needs beforehand. Additionally, orientation sessions provided to tutors in the Japanese tutor system tend to focus primarily on system rules and attendance, while offering insufficient guidance on tutors’ duties. Therefore, tutors often experience confusion and anxiety about the content and parameters of their duties (Kobayashi, 2007; Otsuka, 2010). Misunderstanding of tutoring goals has also been reported to lead tutors to work overtime (Taguchi et al., 2020). Along with administrative problems, difficulties in finding mutually suitable times to meet, gaps in understanding due to cultural differences, difficulties in teaching Japanese or answering questions about specialized subjects, and communication problems have also been reported (Inomata & Nishimura, 2022; Kobayashi, 2007; Otsuka, 2010; Sonoda, 2008).

The Japanese government's aim of accepting international students has gradually shifted to promoting mutual understanding between Japan and the international community, including enhancing Japanese university students' global competence (Hirano, 2020; Takeda, 2006). Meanwhile, as issues including language barriers, academic challenges, and difficulties in securing employment in local companies became apparent among international students, the need for support systems that facilitate their adjustment to Japanese society became significant (Takeda, 2006). In this sense, although unresolved issues persist, the tutor system can provide personalized support for the increasing number of international students. For example, the tutor system creates a means to provide Japanese learning support beyond the classroom (Kobayashi, 2007) and to assist with academic work involving the use of simpler Japanese (Tanaka & Shina, 2019). The tutor systems also benefit Japanese tutors by enhancing their cultural awareness and multicultural understanding (e.g., Hamada et al., 2012; Inomata & Nishimura, 2022; Sonoda, 2008), which aligns with the Japanese government's expectations that international student enrollment can promote intercultural learning among Japanese students.

Benefits and Challenges of Peer-assisted Learning

Peer support programs like the Japanese tutor system are variously called "peer tutor program", "peer mentor program", and "buddy project." Although "peer tutoring" and "peer mentoring" are forms of peer-assisted learning (PAL), peer tutoring is defined as "people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by teaching" (Topping, 1996, p. 322) and is focused on cognitive benefits, while peer mentoring focuses more on social functions and providing guidance for mentees (Byl & Topping, 2023). According to Lassegard (2005) and Yokota and Shiratsuchi (2004), the Japanese tutor system includes academic, language, and social support, without prioritizing any of them. Therefore, although the confusion between "peer tutoring" and "peer mentoring" has been noted as being problematic in previous research (Byl & Topping, 2023), the present study views the Japanese tutor system as having a wider scope that includes both peer tutoring and peer mentoring.

Peer-assisted learning can provide benefits for both tutors and tutees in various aspects. Cognitively, peer tutoring can contribute to tutees' academic achievement (Leung, 2015) and foster deeper learning for tutors through "learning by teaching" (Stapley et al., 2022; Topping, 2015), in which tutors engage in cognitive exercise by reviewing their knowledge to prepare for tutoring (Topping, 1996). Socially and emotionally, peer-assisted learning programs can enhance retention (Collings et al., 2014), facilitate transition to university, and foster a sense of belonging for newly enrolled students (Glaser et al., 2006). It can also improve mental well-being (Stapley et al., 2022), satisfaction with experiences in a foreign country (Lassegard, 2008), social adjustment (Abe et al., 1998; Westwood &

Barker, 1990), and friendship networks in the local community (Hendrickson, 2018) of international students. Host national students who are engaged can also develop deeper cultural awareness, intercultural competence, and intercultural friendship (Campbell, 2012; Hamada et al., 2012; Inomata & Nishimura, 2022; Sonoda, 2008; Wong et al., 2022; Woods et al., 2013).

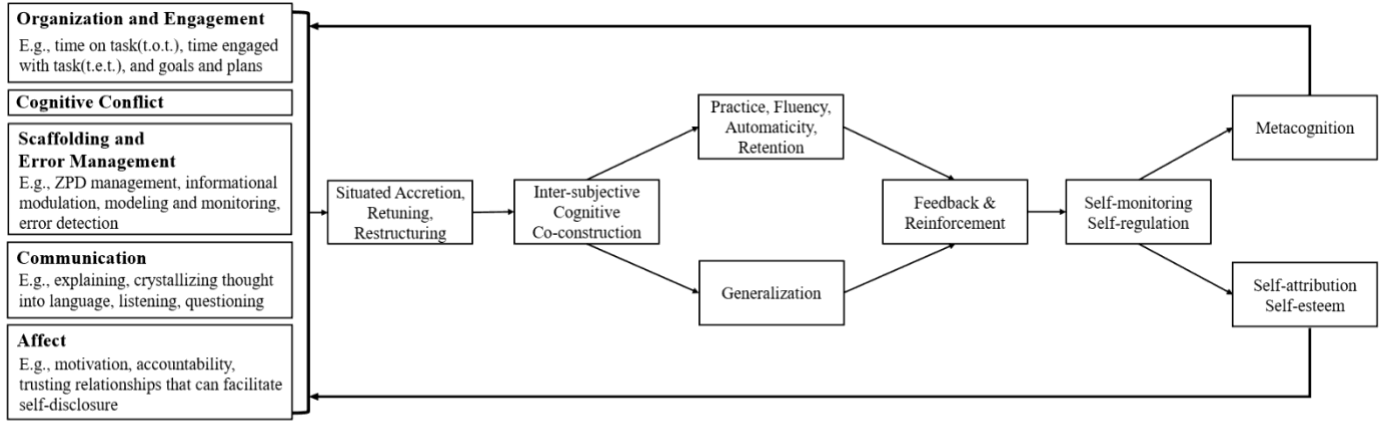
However, these benefits are only likely to be achieved with proper implementation. Conversations and interactions within peer-support activities are to some extent “forced” (Campbell, 2012), reflecting the fact that communication and the arrangement of meetings often present challenges for tutors and tutees (Hendrickson, 2018; Wong et al., 2022). Tutoring becomes more challenging when international students need to make greater adjustments to life in Japan (Inomata & Nishimura, 2022), especially if they fail to recognize their needs due to a limited understanding of the tutor system (Taguchi et al., 2020). On the other hand, since tutors’ definitions of their own roles shape their tutoring approaches and interaction styles, misconceptions, such as the belief that “good tutors” must possess absolute knowledge, may also hinder tutoring (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). While clear guidelines and careful tutor training are essential for resolving these problems, rigidly defining tutor responsibilities may end up limiting flexibility in addressing international students’ diverse needs (Lassegard, 2008; Taguchi et al., 2020).

How Does Peer-assisted Learning Work Effectively

Topping and Ehly’s (2001) framework summarized the underlying factors of PAL and identified five subprocesses influencing the effectiveness of PAL (see Figure 1). “Organization and Engagement” (p. 124) includes the structure of learning interaction, such as time on task, goal setting, and individualized learning. “Cognitive Conflict” (p. 124), which learners experience when encountering difficulties in learning, can challenge rigid thinking to allow new knowledge formation. “Scaffolding and Error Management” (p. 124) ensures learning is guided within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the range of achievable tasks with support. “Communication” (p. 124, p. 126) between learners, including verbalizing thoughts and listening, promotes understanding of learning content. Elements in “Affect” (p. 126) like fostering trust, self-disclosure, and self-confidence, enhance motivation and commitment toward PAL. Deeper learning rooted in the five subprocesses can ultimately foster metacognition of cognitive and emotional development, which reinforces the subprocesses and self-aware learning (Topping & Ehly, 2001).

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of Peer-assisted Learning (based on Topping & Ehly, 2001)



The Level of Learning Changing in Iterative Cycles: Surface → Strategic → Deep; Declarative → Procedural → Conditional

In addition to the components in the framework, the implementation of peer tutoring can also influence its effectiveness. Proper organization that addresses student needs and monitoring that ensures students are on track are crucial for the success of PAL (Topping & Ehly, 2001), rather than leaving everything to the students (Topping, 2015). However, even a well-organized program can fail without students' initiative and commitment because students may hesitate to engage due to shyness or time constraints (Topping, 2015; Wong et al., 2022). Additionally, students' understanding of tutors' roles can influence the way they conduct tutoring sessions. For instance, tutors may struggle with unclear roles as mediators between instructors and tutees, resulting in overcontrolling or inadequately engaging in tutees' learning (Abbot et al., 2018; Falchikov, 2001). Tutees for their part may perceive tutors as "fellow students" with limited ability and hesitate to seek help from them (Lassegard, 2008). Therefore, clarifying the roles of both sides to ensure the students are fully aware of how they can benefit from PAL and engage in the activities with confidence is crucial to prevent faulty expectations and ineffective tutoring interaction (Falchikov, 2001; Topping & Ehly, 1998).

The success of peer tutoring relies on mutual efforts of tutors and tutees, but research on how tutoring pairs in Japan perceive and respond to challenges across different types of support is limited. For instance, Lassegard (2005) investigated various tutoring contents in Japanese tutor systems and found gaps in understanding between tutors and tutees but did not examine tutors and tutees as pairs. Meanwhile, Sonoda (2008) identified such gaps in understanding within tutor-tutee pairs but how they addressed challenges in tutoring activities was not clarified in their paper. To address ineffective tutoring, a greater focus on the international tutoring pairs' perspective within the diverse support types is

necessary. However, relatively few studies have examined tutor-tutee pairs as the unit of analysis, nor have they investigated how pairs negotiate expectations, roles, and uncertainties in practice. This gap is especially salient in non-English-speaking contexts, where linguistic, cultural, and academic challenges intersect. For example, Sonoda (2008) identified gaps in Japanese tutors' and foreign tutees' mutual understanding of tutoring activities, misunderstandings caused by language barriers and cultural differences, and the tutors' difficulties in explaining Japanese usage and lecture content. In another study, Lee (2018) examined conversations within tutoring pairs, showing that tutors helped tutees understand the importance of using culturally appropriate Japanese in their assignments. However, how the tutor and the tutee pairs co-constructed meaningful tutoring and reacted to challenges that arose has not been clarified in these earlier studies. A pair-level qualitative approach is essential because the effectiveness of peer tutoring depends on the relational and interactional processes that unfold between tutors and tutees.

The present study therefore aimed to explore how tutor-tutee pairs navigate challenges and undefined responsibilities to create meaningful tutoring activities. It sought to provide deeper insights for improving guidance and support for international peer tutoring systems in the non-English speaking environment. To analyze interactional processes systematically, the study draws on Topping and Ehly's (2001) five-subprocesses framework of peer-assisted learning. The specific research questions it addressed were the following:

1. What support do tutors provide and tutees receive in a tutoring system, and what challenges do they encounter?
2. To what extent do tutors and tutees understand their roles and the range of their duties? How do they deal with uncertainties and ambiguities?
3. What distinguishes satisfied tutor-tutee pairs from unsatisfied ones, and how do their strategies, interactions, and ways of addressing dissonance influence their tutoring activities?

Methodology

The present study investigated a tutoring system for international undergraduates in the Kyoto University International Undergraduate Program (Kyoto iUP). The Kyoto iUP is a program enrolling international students for full-time undergraduate study at Kyoto University. Kyoto University is one of the leading universities chosen by the Japanese government to increase competent international students and promote internationality in higher education (MEXT, n.d.). As a prestigious research-oriented university in Japan, Kyoto University's international student population has been one of the highest among all Japanese universities for the past ten years, and among public universities, second only to the University of Tokyo since 2020 (Japan Student Services Organization, n.d.). Therefore, investigating the tutor system at Kyoto University is crucial for

understanding how internationalization policies are implemented. Additionally, international undergraduates in the Kyoto iUP – irrespective of the courses they are taking – are enrolled through a common institutional admissions program office. Tutors assigned to the international students are supervised by the same program office. This homogeneity of the Kyoto iUP allows a more focused examination of how the tutor system is implemented and experienced.

While Japanese skills are not required at enrollment, Kyoto iUP students must reach advanced Japanese proficiency and complete mandatory courses in their majoring subjects alongside their Japanese peers. Since international undergraduates may require more comprehensive support beyond academics than graduate students, peer tutors are hired to provide one-on-one assistance with specialized subjects, Japanese language learning, and daily life for Kyoto iUP students during their first two years (Sasaki et al., 2023). Additionally, first- and second-year Kyoto iUP students account for approximately 40% of the international students in the same year groups at Kyoto University (Kyoto University Public Relations Division, 2023, 2024). The significant number of international undergraduate tutees in the Kyoto iUP, combined with the likelihood that challenges increase when broader support areas are required, makes its tutor system worth investigating.

In the present study, we used a qualitative multi-method design consisting of a preliminary survey, individual tutor–tutee workshops, and follow-up semi-structured interviews.

Participants and Recruitment

Nine tutor-tutee pairs in the Kyoto iUP ($N = 18$; Female: 12; Male: 6) from different academic disciplines and academic years participated in the workshop (see Table 1). Among the workshop participants, 3 tutors (P2, P5, P6) and 4 tutees (P1, P2, P4, P5) participated in subsequent follow-up interviews. The number of 5 to 10 tutor-tutee pairs was considered appropriate based on qualitative research on similar topics (e.g., Kim, 2022; Loke & Chow, 2007). Participants were initially recruited through a preliminary survey about the support provided and received in the Kyoto iUP tutor system. Some participants were recruited through the first author's connection with some Kyoto iUP tutees and the director of the tutor system.

Table 1*Demographic information of the participants*

Pair	Gender		Nationality by Region		Academic Discipline	Majoring Subject	Year	
	Tutor	Tutee	Tutor	Tutee			Tutor	Tutee
P1	F	F	Japan	Southeast Asia	Humanities/Social Sciences	Same	B4	B1
P2	M	M	East Asia	East Asia	Science	Same	M2	B2
P3	M	M	Japan	South Asia	Science	Same	B4	B1
P4	F	M	Japan	East Asia	Science	Different	B4	B2
P5	F	F	Japan	Southeast Asia	Humanities/Social Sciences	Different	B4	B2
P6	F	F	Japan	Southeast Asia	Science	Same	M2	B1
P7	M	F	Japan	Europe	Humanities/Social Sciences	Same	B3	B2
P8	F	F	Japan	East Asia	Science	Same	M2	B1
P9	F	F	Japan	East Asia	Humanities/Social Sciences	Same	B3	B2

Note: In the “Year” column, “B1–B4” refers to the first to fourth years of a bachelor’s program, and “M1–M2” refers to the first to second years of a master’s program.

The tutees were first- and second-year international students paired with senior Japanese or international tutors. According to a report about the Kyoto iUP tutor system (Sasaki et al., 2023), all tutees arrive in Japan at least 6 months before enrolling at the university to receive preparatory education about the Japanese language and basic subjects. One-on-one tutoring was mandatory in the first year but optional in the second year, with new tutors sometimes assigned when the original tutors graduated. Each tutoring session in the program was usually 1~1.5 hours long. The pairs could freely decide on the length, frequency, and content of the meeting but were required to meet at least three times per semester. A one-hour orientation was implemented at the beginning of each academic year to introduce tutors and tutees to their tutoring partners and provide explanation about the Kyoto iUP curriculum and the tutoring system (Sasaki et al., 2023).

Researcher Positionality

The first author, who was responsible for the participant recruitment and data collection, used to be a tutee in the Kyoto iUP and was not a university faculty member. Due to the researcher’s personal background and familiarity with the Kyoto iUP tutor system, the participants might have been more willing to share their true feelings and experiences about tutoring activities in the research. Additionally, the first author is well acquainted with the tutor system director, Dr. Yuki Sasaki, who was the first author of the Sasaki et al. (2023) report. Because

of the connection with the tutor system director, the researchers were able to thoroughly confirm the organization of the Kyoto iUP tutor system before collecting data, which helped to facilitate their understanding and interpretation of the participants' responses regarding the organization of the tutor system.

Data Collection

An anonymous preliminary survey was first conducted to understand the target students' tutoring activities and recruit participants for the workshop serving as the main data collection. The survey consisted of three sections based on the three types of support in the Kyoto iUP tutor system reported by Sasaki et al. (2023): "specialized subjects," "Japanese language learning," and "daily life support." Each section included a checklist of support content in each of the categories, a 5-point Likert scale (1: Not satisfied at all; 5: Very satisfied) of satisfaction with the category of support they were responding to, and a short-answer question about the reason for the satisfaction level. An optional short-answer section about the respondents' general comments on the Kyoto iUP tutor system and a recruitment form for the workshop were added to the end of the survey.

Individual workshops were conducted for each pair to simultaneously investigate the tutor's and the tutee's views of the tutor system and their interaction in tutoring sessions. Initially, a workshop involving multiple pairs of tutors and tutees was planned. However, due to scheduling conflicts among the participants, the workshop was conducted individually with each pair, and this approach proved successful in collecting the necessary in-depth data from the participants. Each workshop lasted for approximately one hour, with the researcher giving a six-minute presentation in English about important tips for peer tutoring and facilitating a discussion between the tutor and the tutee. In the discussion, participants were asked to reflect on the presentation and share their expectations, understanding, feelings, and feedback on their tutoring sessions and the tutor system. Appendix A shows the instruction and discussion components of the slides used in the workshop.

After the workshops, one-hour semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted individually with volunteer participants. The interviews aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of participants' personal opinions that might have been difficult to express with their tutoring partners present. The interview questions can be categorized as follows: Changes in thoughts about the Kyoto iUP tutor system and tutor-tutee interaction after the workshop, concrete suggestions for improving the Kyoto iUP tutor system, personal growth related to the tutoring activities, moments they felt motivated and unmotivated, and perceptions about the tutor-tutee relationship.

In workshops and follow-up interviews, participants were encouraged to express themselves in their preferred language, either Japanese or English.

Mandarin (Chinese), which was not a common shared language within the pairs, was also an option in follow-up interviews. The workshops and follow-up interviews were conducted in person or on Zoom, depending on the participants' availability, and were audio recorded. Participants received a 1,000-yen Amazon gift card after each participation. The research plan was approved by the Faculty of Education's human participants' ethics committee (#CPE650).

Analysis

We conducted a qualitative content analysis of all textual data (survey open responses, workshop discussions, interviews). This approach enabled systematic categorization and interpretation of participants' descriptions of tutoring practices (Schreier, 2012). Analysis proceeded in two phases. First, we conducted inductive coding to identify recurring issues, strategies, and perceptions across the datasets. Second, we applied deductive coding using Topping and Ehly's (2001) five-subprocess framework to examine interactional processes within tutoring pairs.

In the analysis of the survey results, the mean satisfaction scores for the three types of support of the tutors and tutees were calculated, and the reasons for answering with the satisfaction scores were grouped into themes. The workshop and follow-up interview data were transcribed and analyzed inductively and deductively. In the inductive analysis, categories such as encountered problems, tutoring content, and suggestions were extracted from the workshop data. The frequency of common themes, such as students' confusion about the tutor system, was calculated.

As noted above, deductive analysis was conducted using the five subprocesses in Topping and Ehly's (2001) framework: "Organization and Engagement," "Cognitive Conflict," "Scaffolding and Error Management," "Communication," and "Affect." In this framework, the emphasis on each subprocess varies depending on PAL program objectives, and this framework can serve as a useful template for monitoring PAL interactions (Topping & Ehly, 2001). Therefore, this framework was used to understand tutor-tutee interaction in the Kyoto iUP tutor system, where clear guidelines on tutors' duties are lacking (Sasaki et al, 2023). Data coded into the five subprocesses were further categorized into subcategories mentioned in the framework (see Figure 1). Frequently emerging themes within each subprocess were grouped.

To identify key trends, the frequencies of popular themes in the survey data and the workshop-interview data were calculated. Interrater reliability of the frequently occurring themes was checked and confirmed. The first author and a rater, who had no vested interest in the outcomes of this research, independently categorized the data into the themes, using the rubrics developed after the themes had been identified (see Appendix B). The grouping results between the researcher and the rater were 79% in agreement. Although the 79% agreement was slightly below the commonly suggested 80% threshold (O'Connor & Joffe,

2020), it was deemed satisfactory for the exploratory purposes of the present study.

Results

The results of the preliminary survey, workshops, and follow-up interviews are presented in the following sections. The preliminary survey results illustrate tutors' and tutees' satisfaction levels with different types of support provided during tutoring activities, as well as factors contributing to their satisfaction. The workshop and follow-up interview results reveal tutoring pairs' perceptions of their tutoring activities, the strategies they used to engage in tutoring, and their responses to challenges that emerged in the tutoring activities.

Survey

The survey received responses from 14% of the tutors (i.e., 6 tutors) and 21% of the tutees (i.e., 9 tutees) in the Kyoto iUP tutor system. Despite the low response rate, the results offer insights into students' engagement in tutoring activities and issues requiring further investigation. The contents of support provided by the tutors and received by the tutees, together with the number of tutors and tutees who mentioned them, are shown in Appendix C.

The mean satisfaction scores reported by the tutors are 3.83 for "specialized subjects," 3.67 for "Japanese learning," and 2.67 for "daily life support." In comparison, the mean satisfaction scores reported by the tutees are 4.78 for "specialized subjects," 4.67 for "Japanese learning," and 4.22 for "daily life support." While there is no clear difference in tutees' satisfaction with the three types of support, the tutors seem to be less satisfied with providing "daily life support" than the other types. The reasons for the satisfaction score (see Appendix D) regarding "daily life support" revealed clues about differences in perception between tutors and tutees. For instance, some tutors expressed a lack of confidence regarding daily life support. For example, a tutor wrote, "I do not think that I could contribute to the quality of tutee's school life." On the other hand, 67% of the tutees (i.e., 6 of the 9 tutees) were satisfied with the sufficient support provided by their tutors in this area.

Themes related to helpfulness were mentioned the most across all support types, by 80% of respondents (i.e., 12 of the 15 respondents, including 3 of the 6 tutors and all of the 9 tutees) as influential to their satisfaction. The tutors tended to express feelings of being helpful, like "I could be of some help" or "I think I contributed to his study," as their reasons for satisfaction. However, tutors appeared less satisfied when they doubted the impact of their support, as one tutor indicated, "I don't know how much help is appropriate." Tutees tended to be satisfied when tutors could provide information and constructive advice that could

facilitate their studying. Some tutees reported that their tutors could “help me to prepare for presentations in Japanese, correct me when I am wrong,” or “give constructive feedback about my report.” Experience sharing from a tutor who shares the same majoring subjects was also considered beneficial, like a tutee said, “My tutor shares a lot of advice that they wish someone told them before.” However, tutees may feel content even if the tutors did not deliberately offer guidance in “Japanese language learning.” Forty-four percent (i.e., 4 of the 9 tutees) of the tutees were satisfied simply because they could speak in Japanese and “learn through the conversation” without systematic learning.

Answers to the optional short-answer section revealed issues regarding tutees’ Japanese competence and a gap in the year of study (e.g., a three-year gap between a first-year tutee and a fourth-year tutor) between the tutor and tutee. For example, one tutee pointed out that studying specialized subjects is one of the main challenges faced by the Kyoto iUP students, so “a tutor that is closer in age or still remembers 1st-year/2nd-year lessons would be more helpful.” Additionally, a tutor whose tutee was highly competent in Japanese mentioned, “The goal of the activity wasn’t clear, and it’s difficult to provide appropriate support.” While language barriers hindered some tutees’ communication with their tutors, tutees’ high Japanese competence could lead to tutors’ confusion in interacting with them due to their lesser need for language support.

Workshop and Follow-up Interview

The participants could be classified into three groups according to their comments on their tutoring in the workshops. There were five “satisfied pairs” (P1, P2, P6, P7, P8) in which the tutor and tutee met regularly and expressed little dissatisfaction with their tutoring. Three pairs (P4, P5, P9) were classified as “less satisfied pairs”: they were those who acknowledged some benefits from the tutoring, while at the same time referring to problems which were difficult to resolve, like mismatches of available support and needs. There was one “unsatisfied pair” (P3) who were not motivated for a meeting. Conducting analysis based on Topping and Ehly’s (2001) framework, we found that the five subprocesses of effectiveness were applied differently in each group. Before describing our findings from the workshop comments and the follow-up interviews, however, we should note that because the workshop briefly covered key issues about peer tutoring – including daily life, Japanese language, and study support – it is possible that at least some of the tutor and tutee responses were in part influenced or guided by those issues covered in the workshop (see Appendix A for a copy of the slides we used).

Satisfied Pairs: Differences in Focusing on Academic Support

Satisfied pairs displayed different tendencies of the five subprocesses according to their tutoring content. Pairs focusing on academic support (P1, P2, P7) were clear with “Organization and Engagement,” used diverse “Scaffolding and Error Management” strategies, and adopted more “explaining” and “embodying and crystallizing thought into language” in “Communication.” Regarding “Organization and Engagement,” these three pairs created a clear structure and “goals and plans” for their meetings by aligning their expectations and tutoring objectives: “The support each person wants is different, so we first discussed how we should proceed and what kind of support they would like” (P7 tutor). The tutees tended to take the initiative in deciding tutoring content, and the tutors were responsive in understanding and fulfilling their needs: “I think I should plan for the sessions more because the tutor would usually just [say], ‘OK, we can do this together’” (P1 tutee). A variety of strategies in “Scaffolding and Error Management” were adopted by tutors to provide academic support, like monitoring the tutees’ performance, identifying their problems, and offering learning tips. For example, P2 tutor monitored and guided his tutee’s learning carefully to foster the tutee’s deeper understanding, which was approved by his tutee as effective: “He understands very much about my weaknesses and my academic interests and taught me according to my pace” (P2 tutee).

With these scaffolding strategies, some tutors also ensured the learning content was within tutees’ zone of proximal development (ZPD), a level challenging but reachable for learners if supported by someone with more knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Tutors’ strategies with this approach were classified into the subcategory of “ZPD management (managing the activities within the ZPD).” For instance, P7 tutor prepared the tutoring materials according to the tutee’s understanding level and clarified complex concepts based on his observation about the tutee’s learning struggles: “When I think she might find something difficult, I try to prepare, for example, graphs or illustrations before the tutoring session. Because just reading text might not make things clear.”

This statement also indicated the importance of the subcategories of “explaining” and “embodying and crystallizing thought into language” in “Communication,” which was supported by P2 tutor as crucial in academic tutoring. He explained his view about tutoring in the follow-up interview, “If you can’t explain something clearly to a beginner, it means you haven’t fully understood it yourself.” Meanwhile, explaining could be challenging for Japanese tutors to provide Japanese language support, as P1 tutor said in response to possible improvement of her tutoring, “It would be better if I had learned some Japanese grammar to explain the language more logically.” Because the tutoring sessions were conducted in Japanese (Sasaki et al., 2023), verbalization of thought was especially challenging for tutees with limited Japanese abilities, reflecting the survey results about language barriers. P1 tutee, who majored in social sciences, mentioned the challenges of receiving academic support: “Sometimes because of

the language barrier, we can't go deep into subjects, for example, explaining a really difficult concept."

The other satisfied pairs' (P6, P8) tutoring sessions focused less on academic support but varied from academic assistance and university life guidance to Japanese conversation practice, with objectives emphasizing more emotional and social benefits related to "Affect." P8 tutor commented about her satisfactory experiences in tutoring activities, "I could gain energy, and knowing the cultural differences is interesting." Hearing this, P8 tutee responded, "I also got energy and motivation." Similarly, after reflecting on the efforts they made in engaging in tutoring activities, P6 tutee mentioned, "I have a list of things I want to ask or talk about in my head.... It was very relaxing for me to ask a lot without a structure." Although "goals and plans" in "Organization and Engagement" were less structured, some pairs appreciated the flexibility due to the tutees' clear understanding of their needs.

Less Satisfied Pairs: Finding Meaning in Tutoring and Accepting the Differences

Among less satisfied pairs (P4, P5, P9), the lack of "plans and goals" about "Organization and Engagement" was a common problem, which primarily arose from mismatches in study majors and course choices between the tutors and the tutees. The tutoring pairs experienced dissatisfaction with unstructured tutoring sessions and mismatches in expectations. In response to this circumstance, tutees might adjust their expectations to achieve some levels of satisfaction:

There is no direction in our conversation.... I had a little bit too high of an expectation on what the tutor was supposed to do.... Now I'm pretty fine with how the tutor session goes. (P5 tutee, follow-up)

It doesn't bother me that much. Of course, it would have been better if it's someone with similar interests in job hunting or specialized subjects. (P9 tutee)

Despite these difficulties, the pairs were able to find some meaning in and ways to manage the tutoring activities. For example, reflecting on the benefits of tutoring despite majoring in a subject that was different from his tutor's major, P4 tutee said, "I enjoyed exchanging ideas about what we were studying in our respective faculties." P4 tutor responded, "Same here. Being able to connect with someone from a different faculty and hear about different topics was really great." Although differences in majoring subjects presented challenges, they also created mutual learning opportunities.

Unsatisfied Pair: Limited Interaction and Confusion with Existing Support Network

P3 expressed little about their satisfaction with the tutoring sessions. The relationship of this pair appeared the most distant: While most participants contacted their tutoring partners for workshop participation, P3 tutee asked the researcher to ask the tutor on his behalf. The five subprocesses were mostly absent in the discussion about their tutoring interactions. Regarding “Organization and Engagement,” the pair showed little motivation for tutoring sessions. When asked to reflect on experiences and feelings in tutoring activities, the tutee said, “We just didn’t have anything to do.”

Confusion and gaps of understanding regarding tutors’ and tutees’ roles and tutees’ needs appeared. Since the university simultaneously assigned another tutor to provide group tutoring for the Kyoto iUP students in P3 tutee’s major, P3 tutor defined his duty as providing daily life support, “I’ll leave the academic matters to that tutor, and I’m not particularly great at studying.” However, one-on-one assistance focusing on daily life support was unnecessary for P3 tutee, who had high proficiency in Japanese and a strong social support network among the Kyoto iUP peers. Therefore, he said in the discussion about needs and objectives in tutoring activities, “If someone does not need that much help, then what are they supposed to do with the tutor? ... It was kind of a waste of time.” This comment reflects challenges regarding working with international tutees with little need for support. In combination with similar issues raised in the survey results, it seemed that both tutors and tutees experience uncertainties in such situations.

Academic Mismatches and Affective Aspects Influencing Satisfactory Tutoring Interactions

Satisfaction with peer tutoring partnerships was linked to mutual familiarity with academic content and interpersonal relationship building. Bottom-up analysis revealed that information about majoring subjects and course management was the most commonly provided/sought content (7 of the 9 pairs). Consistent with survey results on the importance of academic guidance and support for specialized subjects, tutoring pairs encountered notable challenges when addressing major-specific content, particularly when tutors were paired with tutees from different disciplines (e.g., P4, P5), as tutors lacked specialized knowledge to answer subject-specific questions. Furthermore, 33% of tutors (i.e., 3 of the 9 tutors) identified “difference in year of study” as a challenge in tutoring due to changes in instructors and course content over time. Despite these limitations, tutees could still benefit, as evidenced by P6 tutee’s comment: “But I was able to get an idea.”

Additionally, affective factors, like the subcategory “trusting relationship” in “Affect,” were mentioned by 67% of pairs (i.e., 6 of the 9 pairs) as key to satisfactory tutoring interactions. Positive emotions about “being helpful to the

tutee” and “having a helpful tutor,” although not included in Topping and Ehly’s (2001) framework, were recognized by 44% of tutors (i.e., 4 of the 9 tutors) and 33% of tutees (i.e., 3 of the 9 tutees) as essential for their motivation to engage. “Affect” appeared especially crucial for pairs experiencing mismatches between support and needs, as shown by P5 tutor’s feeling about her duty: “Being able to support someone emotionally has been a valuable experience.” P5 tutee, although dissatisfied with the unstructured tutoring sessions, also said, “I feel like she has become more of a friend, and I enjoy it a lot.”

The importance of “listening” in “Communication” was also emphasized by pairs with a trusting relationship: “[The tutor] is really good at listening so I felt relaxed” (P8 tutee). P6 tutee, who overcame the language barrier when communicating in Japanese, also said, “She [the tutor] was very patient. So, I just repeated what I said multiple times until we understood each other.” Conversely, passive tutors with poor listening skills hindered relationships. P1 tutee reported her Kyoto iUP peer’s experience: “Whenever she asked a question, the tutor said, ‘Oh this looks so hard, I don’t know how to answer that.’ ... She dreads doing tutor sessions because her tutor wasn’t helpful and it was wasting their time” (P1 tutee, follow-up).

Confusion Due to Insufficient Instruction and Monitoring

Although some satisfied pairs were successful in “Organization and Engagement” with clear “goals and plans” and regular meetings, indirect and insufficient instruction was perceived as a critical problem. In the bottom-up analysis, all 9 pairs were aware of issues with unclear instructions in the tutor system or reported confusion. Five of the 9 pairs (who were “satisfied pairs” without focusing on academic support and “less satisfied pairs”) wished for concrete instructions and examples about previous tutoring activities.

Tutees reported confusion regarding the tutoring content and the tutor’s role. For example, in the follow-up interview, P1 tutee mentioned, “She [the tutor] said, what you want to do? [But] I thought, you’re the one who’s going to share your experience.” The lack of guidance and monitoring was inferred to be another reason for tutors’ and tutees’ confusion:

You leave it to the tutors and the tutees to decide how to help, but sometimes they might need external help to decide what to do. (P3 tutee)

Even if I haven’t done something, nothing is said. But I’m not sure if I am doing it right. (P5 tutor)

The orientation appeared to provide insufficient instruction and information about the tutor system. P4 tutor, who paired with a second-year tutee reported gaps in expectation for daily life support after the orientation, “I thought I would help students who had just arrived, struggling with procedures and writing reports or speaking in Japanese.... But it wasn’t like how I imagined.” Facing the challenges, students asked their peers in the Kyoto iUP (e.g., P3 tutee, P6 tutee) and mentors

(e.g., P8 tutor, P4 tutee) in their faculty for further explanation of the tutor system. However, gaps in understanding between the professors, the faculties, and the Kyoto iUP sometimes left the confusion unresolved: “My faculty mentor thinks the iUP tutor helps only with my Japanese and daily life.... There seems to be a gap in the understanding of tutors’ roles between iUP, the faculty, and other parties (P4 tutee, follow-up).

Discussion

Results that reveal both the challenges and the diversity of tutoring activities suggest the need for tailored guidance for tutoring pairs and appropriate tutor training based on tutors’ and tutees’ needs in the Japanese tutor system. Additionally, most participants reported confusion and perceived the instructions provided as insufficient. Therefore, how universities can support tutoring pairs in navigating the challenges associated with the broad scope of tutors’ duties is also discussed.

Tailoring Instructions and Support for Different Needs and Tutoring Objectives

Pairs with different objectives were found to focus on different subprocesses. This is congruent with Topping and Ehly’s (2001) explanation that the importance of each subprocess varies across different PALs, demonstrating the diverse tutoring patterns and flexibility in the Kyoto iUP tutor system. Meanwhile, the role of tutor varied, ranging from academic tutors (P1, P2, P7), general advisors (e.g., P5, P6), and social companions (e.g., P8). Given the diversity of activity patterns in the Kyoto iUP tutor system, guidance and instruction should be decided based on the pairs’ needs. Essential guidance components include matching tutors’ and tutees’ expectations, clarifying their needs and shared objectives, defining the parameters of tutors’ roles, and building trusting relationships through active listening, which are especially crucial for those without clear tutoring objectives and with mismatches in majoring subjects or year of study.

The results also suggest that feelings of helpfulness can boost motivation, and building trust with careful listening helps tutees express themselves. This aligns with previous findings that helping newly arrived international students, engagement, and positive relationship-building connect to students’ motivation and satisfaction (Campbell, 2012; Geelhoed et al., 2003). On the other hand, tutors struggling to meet tutees’ needs may experience anxiety and less confidence. Although tutors can benefit from the tutoring process (Stapley et al., 2022; Topping, 2015), they often mistakenly assume they must be knowledgeable about everything (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). Universities should therefore provide tailored support while preventing incompatible pairings, monitoring tutoring activities to

identify problems, and reminding tutors that they do not have to be experts in the support content.

Additionally, pairs with clear objectives of academic support may require additional support in refining tutoring strategies. Satisfied pairs focusing on academic support used a variety of strategies in “Scaffolding and Error Management” with “explaining” and “embodying and crystallizing thought into language” in “Communication,” corresponding with Vygotsky’s (1986) idea that articulating thoughts is indispensable for a deeper understanding of a concept. This also explains why mismatched language abilities caused difficulties for P1’s language and academic support. It is also important to note that tutors often rely on “knowledge-telling” strategies (Berghmans et al., 2013); thus, providing information and knowledge without explanations can lead to ineffective peer tutoring (Falchikov, 2001). This suggests that guidance on effective tutoring strategies may be particularly essential for tutors focusing on academic support.

Our findings extend Topping and Ehly’s (2001) framework in several ways. First, while the framework emphasizes interactional subprocesses within peer-assisted learning, the present study’s findings suggest that role clarity and expectation alignment are important pre-conditions that influence whether those subprocesses can function effectively. Pairs who developed a shared understanding of tutoring objectives were better able to engage in goal setting, communication, scaffolding, and relationship building, whereas ambiguity regarding tutors’ responsibilities often undermined these processes. Second, our findings indicate that affective elements such as feelings of helpfulness, trust, and active listening may play a particularly important role in multicultural peer-support contexts where tutoring objectives are not always primarily academic. Finally, by examining tutor-tutee pairs as interactional units rather than individual participants, the present study highlights how peer-assisted learning outcomes are co-constructed through the ongoing negotiation of roles, expectations, and support needs. These findings suggest that existing peer-assisted learning frameworks may benefit from placing more attention on contextual and relational conditions that can enable greater productivity in tutoring interactions.

The Necessity of Addressing Confusion through Clear and Consistent Explanations

While tutors are expected to provide a wide range of support according to tutees’ needs, all participants mentioned unclear guidance and instructions. This echoes a longstanding issue of insufficient guidance on tutors’ job content (Kobayashi, 2007; Sasaki et al., 2023; Taguchi et al., 2020) and a lack of structured tutor training (Lassegard, 2005; Nakamura & Tominaga, 2021) in the Japanese tutor system. Although some pairs successfully created satisfying tutoring experiences, which involved diverse scaffolding strategies and building relationships with trust and “listening” in “Communication” (Topping & Ehly, 2001), tutoring pairs reported experiencing varying degrees of confusion. Satisfying

tutoring sessions appeared to rely heavily on students' self-regulatory initiatives, including clarifying their needs, preparing for sessions, setting goals with tutoring partners, and identifying how to benefit from the system. This is consistent with Wong et al.'s (2022) conclusion that active engagement is indispensable in such tutoring contexts.

The participants perceived the orientation as inadequate in informing tutors and tutees about their duties and, in some cases, failed to address tutees' needs. Tutors reported finding that the explanations tended to overemphasize daily life support while, in fact, the tutees' need for it varied depending on their year in university. Students who have stayed longer in the host country tend to adjust more easily (Abe et al., 1998). Therefore, since tutees arrive in Japan six months before meeting their tutors and have a support network involving the Kyoto iUP peers and teachers, their needs for life support might be low or may decrease in the second year. While the survey results show that daily life support is essential for tutees, variations in tutees' needs might be necessary to include in the explanation during the orientation, especially for tutors paired with second-year tutees.

Similar to Calma and Eggins' (2012) finding about the importance of learning from experienced tutors in the tutor training, some participants suggested that sharing experiences and information from other tutors and tutees, along with more concrete orientation explanations, are crucial to address in efforts at facilitating improvements:

Explaining more details like how to make the most of an hour and what kinds of things had been done would help us make plans for future sessions. (P1 tutor)

It would be helpful if there was a way to share activity reports, like on Slack or something similar to let us know things like how often others are meeting. (P5 tutor)

Hearing from experienced tutors would be very helpful. (P9 tutor)

Apart from the orientation, tutors may receive further instructions from their supervisors (Sasaki et al., 2023), and our participants also sought additional guidance from their faculty mentors. However, gaps in understanding about the tutor system seemed to exist between different parties involved in the tutor system. Since tutor recruitment is assigned to each faculty (Sasaki et al., 2023), these gaps in understanding may have contributed to students' mismatched expectations from the start of tutor selection. Therefore, ensuring a consistent understanding of the tutor system between all parties is also crucial when enhancing instructions for tutors and tutees. Although our findings are situated in the Japanese context, the dynamics that are portrayed are consistent with challenges documented in international peer-support programs (e.g., Campbell, 2012; Roscoe & Chi, 2007; Wong et al., 2022), suggesting implications for multicultural higher education settings more broadly.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study clarifies elements influencing effective and ineffective international tutoring interactions. However, tutoring pairs' approaches to managing cultural differences remain unclear. For example, issues like communication problems, difficulties in understanding international students' needs (Geelhoed et al., 2003), and misunderstandings between tutors and tutees (Okunishi & Tanaka, 2008; Sasaki et al., 2023) were not brought up in the present study but can be critical in international tutoring interactions. Investigations into international peer tutoring across diverse institutional contexts may be necessary to uncover additional underlying issues. Additionally, the deductive analysis employed in this study only used the five subprocesses in Topping and Ehly's (2001) framework. This is because the research purpose was to understand tutor-tutee pairs' interactions under unclear parameters of their duties. The remaining parts of the framework related to deeper learning processes and the effectiveness of PAL were not utilized. Future research can further evaluate the learning process and the effectiveness of international peer tutoring.

Participants' responses may have been influenced by the researcher's identity and the workshop design. The first author was an international student enrolled in the same iUP program and had been a tutee two years before this research was conducted. Although her tutoring activities had ended and she had become a fourth-year undergraduate student by the time of the study, she was acquainted with some of the participants, which could have affected to some extent some of the participants' willingness to share their personal experiences and opinions. Unintended biases on the part of the researcher could have influenced the interpretation of some of the findings. Furthermore, while the workshops were initially designed to facilitate comfortable discussion among multiple pairs regarding their tutoring interactions, they were ultimately conducted with individual pairs and included an instructional component: The input from and slightly more intense interaction with the researcher could therefore have had some bearing on the contents of what participants shared. Finally, although the sample included tutor-tutee pairs with diverse interaction patterns, some participants were recruited through the researcher's existing connection with the program. Therefore, the sample may not be fully representative of the broader tutor and tutee population.

Conclusion

The present study revealed significant challenges in tutor-tutee interactions and tutoring pairs' self-initiated efforts to create meaningful sessions despite uncertainties about the tutoring system. Differing expectations among the program stakeholders can result in ineffective tutor-tutee pairing and further confusion when students need additional guidance. The challenges in peer tutoring pairs may intensify when tutors and tutees major in different subjects or are in different years

of study, as tutees often require academic information that tutors may not be equipped to provide. However, current systems may be insufficient to support tutoring pairs according to their characteristics and to address the diverse needs of international undergraduates, which vary by year of study and length of stay.

To address these interconnected challenges, universities should first clarify the objectives of a tutoring program and the parameters of tutors' duties. Based on that, program organizers should ensure all parties involved share a consistent understanding of the tutoring system, provide tailored support that considers the variations in tutees' needs, strategically match tutoring pairs, and offer specialized training for tutors in areas requiring expertise. Effective international tutoring programs should not overly rely on students' initiatives. Instead, they must establish comprehensive guidelines and systematic support that take cultural differences into account to foster confident and satisfying tutoring experiences.

In sum, this study contributes an interaction-level understanding of international peer tutoring and identifies structural, relational, and affective dimensions that institutions must address when designing multicultural peer-support programs. The findings further suggest that peer-assisted learning frameworks should consider role clarity, expectation alignment, and institutional support as enabling conditions that shape the effectiveness of tutoring interactions in multicultural settings.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Slides Used in the Workshop

What are important for peer tutoring

<For the tutor>

- (+)Be friendly, approachable, caring
- (-)Be directive, become an authority and impose Japanese values or your own values
- If you can not provide help, refer it to the other professionals.
- Explain and guide/help the tutees to find the right answer/information themselves

1

Insights from the survey

- I. Daily life support
- II. Japanese support
- III. Support for specialized/major subjects

3

What are important for peer tutoring

<For the tutee>

- Attitude: Don't put too many expectations on your tutor (miracle seeking)
- Clarifying & clearly speaking out your needs

<For the tutor and tutee>

- If you encounter any inconvenience, ask the office or professors for help
- Respect individual/cultural differences, be open to listening without judging
- Be active to make appointment and show up on time

2

I. Daily life support 生活のサポート

Tutees' needs:

- Information about the new environment makes the tutee's life easier
- The tutor can be helpful when the tutee need to talk to people in Japanese

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II. Japanese support 日本語のサポート

Can be helpful:

- Tutors constantly change the strategies and supports according to the tutees' needs

Tutees' needs:

- Practicing Japanese skills that will be used in major classes in Japanese
- Grammar and writing check & correcting mistakes
- Tutor's suggestion based on their experiences

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III. Support for specialized subjects or other subjects

専門科目や他の科目に関するサポート

Can be helpful:

- Experience sharing: information that the tutor wished to know earlier
- Regular tutoring sessions
- Utilizing translation tools when there is a language barrier

Tutees' needs:

- Advice for major class taking, test preparation resources, lecture materials
- Support for major subjects taken in Japanese

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What do you think?

- From the presentation, what tips/insights worked or did not work in your tutoring sessions?
- What are the things that you are satisfied with your tutoring sessions?
- What is your expectations/aims for the tutoring?
 - Were your aims/objectives met?
 - <Tutee> What kind of support you need?
 - <Tutor> What kind of support you can or cannot provide?

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How to improve or make your tutoring even better?

- e.g. goal /relationship/communication/the system
- What can I do?
 - What can my tutor/tutee do?
 - What else can the university or the office do?
 - What kind of tools or support from others we might need?
-
- If there is no problem, or you can not think of anything to improve, why not?

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Appendix B. Rubrics for Grouping Data into Popular Themes

Rubrics for Themes in the Reason for Satisfaction Scores in the Survey	
Themes	Rubrics
Helpfulness	- Tutees mentioned their tutors being helpful or not helpful. - Tutors mentioned themselves as being helpful or not helpful to the tutees. “Being helpful” can be any concrete statement about how the tutors contributed to the tutee’s problem-solving or make the tutee feel more positive or sure about their tasks.
Practice	Statements about practicing Japanese or having a Japanese conversation in real life

Rubrics for Themes in the Inductive Analysis	
Themes	Rubrics
Wishes for More Concrete Instructions or Examples	The tutors or tutees hope that the university or other people can provide concrete advice/guidance/experience sharing, or examples of others’ tutoring sessions to let them understand clearly how to engage in tutoring activities.
About Information Provided in Tutoring Sessions	
Life support	Information about daily life, campus life, etc.
Specialized subjects	Information about major subjects or their study
Japanese support	Information about Japanese language learning
Issue of difference in year of study	The tutors found it difficult to provide support and information for major subjects, because of the difference in year of study between them and the tutees: the instructors/syllabus/questions from past exams were different.

Rubrics for Themes in the Deductive Analysis	
Themes	Rubrics
In “Organization and Engagement”: “time on task (t.o.t.) and time engaged with task(t.e.t.)”	
Regular meeting	The participants mentioned they met regularly or frequently.
Few meeting	They only met around 3 times (the minimum required by the office).
Confusion about frequency	They were confused about how often they should meet.
In “Organization and Engagement”: “goals and plans”	
No goals and plans	They did not have plans or goals for their tutoring
Unclear structure, confused	The participants expressed their confusion caused by the lack of structure of their tutoring
Unclear structure, but satisfied	The participants thought the lack of structure in their tutoring was better for them
Mismatch of expectations	The tutee mentioned that their needs were not fully satisfied
No needs or unclear needs	The tutee mentioned that they had no need for what the tutor could provide, or they were unclear about what they needed
Tutee’s initiative	The tutee was responsible for deciding what to do or prepare for the tutor sessions
In “Affect”	
Being helpful	The tutor thought he/she was being helpful to the tutee.
The tutor was helpful	The tutee mentioned that his/her tutor's support and tutoring, or their relationship was helpful.
Uncertainty or anxiety	The tutor/tutee expressed uncertainty or anxiety about their tutoring or the tutor system.
Relaxing and trusting relationship	The tutor and the tutee felt relaxed when interacting with each other and had a trusting relationship or friendship.

Appendix C. Support Provided by the Tutors and Received by the Tutees with the Number of Respondents Who Mentioned Various Forms of Support

Support Type	Content	Tutor	Tutee	Total
Specialized subjects	Exam preparation strategies	5	6	11
	Feedback on assignments/tasks	5	4	9
	Study techniques/time management	4	1	5
	Writing essays/reports	2	3	5
	Academic resources (e.g., books, journals)	2	2	4
	"Explaining major subjects"	0	1	1
	None	0	1	1
	Total			36
Japanese learning	Speaking	4	8	12
	Cultural nuances/idiomatic expressions	5	3	8
	Writing	3	4	7
	Reading	2	2	4
	Listening	2	2	4
	Total			34
Daily life support	Media recommendations (movies/books)	2	1	3
	Campus resources (library, gym, etc.)	1	6	7
	Club/circle activities advice	4	1	8
	Housing and accommodation	1	4	5
	Procedures (e.g., at ward office/post office)	0	2	2
	Healthcare services	0	1	1
	None	2	0	2
	Total			25

Appendix D. Reasons for the Satisfaction Score in Each Support Type

Daily Life		
No.	Satisfaction Score	Reasons for the Score
Tutor		
T1	4	I hesitated on purpose, thinking the office and teachers in the iUP knew more than I did.
T2	2	I think it would have been better if I could have been more proactive in providing support not only in academic matters but also in daily life.
T3	2	It is because what I can as a tutor is restricted. I do not think that I could contribute to the quality of tutee's school life.
T4	3	None
T5	3	I haven't received many consultations related to daily life. From what I've heard, it seems like things are going well without needing advice.
T6	2	I didn't particularly provide support of this category, but I could have provided more information if it was necessary.
Tutee		
T7	5	Moving out was not as hard as I thought with the help of my tutor
T8	5	My tutor has been very helpful with things especially in my major.
T9	4	I think sometimes they wouldn't ask or provide advice unless I ask
T10	5	My tutor helped me learn how to use the Education Faculty Library and taught me how to go to a clinic when I was sick, and gave recommendations for nearby clinics.
T11	5	He was very helpful when we have to talk to people at the real estate since he is Japanese.
T12	2	The helps are not sufficiently useful
T13	4	I already have most things set up before I met my tutor, so I don't really use it that much but if I ask, they are quite helpful
T14	5	She's very nice and informative
T15	3	I mostly ask for life support from international friends and iUP teachers

Japanese Learning		
No.	Satisfaction Score	Reasons for the Score
Tutor		
T1	5	I tailor the teaching content to match the goals or requests of the international students.
T2	3	I think I provided the Japanese support necessary for studying specialized subjects to a certain extent.
T3	3	It is because I do not think my services do not fully contribute to the progress of my tutee's learning. But, I do not disturb his study.
T4	4	Because was able to let (the tutee) understand.
T5	4	In the first meeting, there were many requests for advice on idiomatic expressions, but recently, the person's Japanese language skills have improved significantly, and there is no longer a need for advice.
T6	3	I provided the support that was needed, but did nothing beyond that.
Tutee		
T7	5	We mainly focused on Japanese practice for my major classes last year. Now in my 2nd year, I am able to manage taking classes in Japanese.
T8	4	We did not have a systematic study of Japanese. It was more like learn through conversation
T9	4	We talk in Japanese so I am satisfied but it isn't specifically to improve my language
T10	5	My tutor helped me with checking my grammar in written Japanese assignments.
T11	5	We got to speak Japanese a lot.
T12	4	As someone who has lived in Japan for a longer time, the suggestions are quite convincing
T13	5	They help me to prepare for presentations in Japanese, and correct me when I am wrong so it is very helpful
T14	5	She's very responsive and she gives constructive feedback
T15	5	We just spoke in Japanese the whole session

Specialized Subjects		
No.	Satisfaction Score	Reasons for the Score
Tutor		
T1	4	About reports, I don't know how much help is appropriate.
T2	4	Because I was able to hold regular tutor sessions.
T3	4	It is because I taught him how to use the libraries and find books, which I think I contributed to his study. But I have not been able to advise seeing the handouts he got, which I think is significant.
T4	4	I could be of some help.
T5	4	I responded to questions about assignments for specialized lectures.
T6	3	I provided the information that was needed, but did nothing beyond that.
Tutee		
T7	5	Because we come from similar backgrounds, my tutor and I understand each other and because of that, my tutor shares a lot of advice that they say that they wish they knew before or wish someone told them before.
T8	5	My tutor shared a lot of information about classes and professors
T9	5	They tell me what to study and whether I am over preparing
T10	5	It was helpful to have advice from a senpai in education for major classes.
T11	5	He provided me with an entire folder of past papers which was very useful.
T12	3	Haven't really felt like I need help on this
T13	5	They helped me with Japanese grammar so I can fix it. Also, while my Japanese is not that good yet, I have to take some senmon [major subjects] since 1st year so having someone to guide me through the materials was very helpful
T14	5	She gives constructive feedback about my report, making my report better
T15	5	My most struggle is with learning senmon [major subjects] classes in Japanese, so I usually ask the tutor help with explaining concepts to me in easy terms.

AI Use Statement

The first author used ChatGPT-4o to check the grammatical correctness and improve the language of some of the sentences she was writing during the drafting stage of this paper.

Author Contact

Min-Zih Wei, evanazihwei@gmail.com, is a master's student of the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at National Taiwan Normal University; she is also a Bachelor of Educational Studies graduate from Kyoto University.

Emmanuel Manalo, manalo.emmanuel.3z@kyoto-u.ac.jp, is Professor of Educational Psychology at the Graduate School of Education of Kyoto University in Japan, and the current Co-Editor in Chief of the journal, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*.