Chapter 6

An Aristotelian Perspective on Personal Tutoring

Incorporating Pathos-Centric Techniques in Listening and Response

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The term 'tutor' comes from a Latin word, *tueri*, meaning 'a guardian or a visitor.' Historically, the tutor position was conducted by a senior student in the general education context, primary and secondary schools, to help other students in their studies (O'Donoghue, 2024). In modern higher education, tutoring encompasses comprehensive support from academic advisors and tutors to oversee student development, academic matters, and their well-being (UKAT, 2023).

Personal tutoring has proven beneficial for student development and progression, as well as for the department and institution (Lochtie et al., 2018). It fosters a positive student experience where support is personalized to the needs of each student, which can help shorten the gap between the students and the institution, enhance engagement, and ultimately improve academic outcomes. In the research about personal tutoring in the transition process the foundation year students. Rick et al. (2020) found that personal tutoring can help support the transition from college to higher education by promoting core and transferrable skills. Additionally, it also boosts student confidence, facilitates social integration, and enhances relationships with staff and career awareness.

At the institutional level, personal tutoring also plays a crucial role in ensuring student retention by enhancing their overall learning experiences (Yale, 2017). Student retention has been placed among the top priorities for many universities. It has been incorporated into metrics used to assess quality of teaching, for example, in the National Student Survey (NSS), the league tables, and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Woolhouse et al., 2020). In the UK, UKAT has established a Framework for Advising and Tutoring that outlines the core competencies that personal tutors and academic advisors must possess to effectively support student success. However, it is important to note that the practice of personal tutoring varies across and within institutions.

Personal Tutoring as a Psychological Investment

Despite these differences, at its core, personal tutoring is viewed as a personalised approach that engages students, ultimately helping them become members of university learning communities. As Klenk and Cornell (2004, p. 35) suggest, it is another form of the university's "psychological investment in the process toward learning," providing additional support to academic programmes to engage students.

At any stage of their learning, all students naturally desire to be a part of their learning community, where they can be themselves, connect to their peers and community, and make sense of their personal and intellectual progress. These are fundamental psychological needs captured in Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory. Particularly, the key drive for a person's action is not merely about seeking rewards or the fear of punishment, but rather about fulfilling their intrinsic desires:

- A feeling of agency = being able to take control of the action or the pursuit
- A feeling of connectedness = feeling belonged to the broader communities and society
- A feeling of competence = being aware of intellectual, social, and personal development.

Aware of intellectual, social, and personal development, personal tutors have the challenge of accommodating all these needs within a limited timeframe, such as a couple of tutorials during term time. While the primary goal of engaging and supporting students is a collective effort involving all related academic staff and departmental and institutional intervention, the 'personal' aspect of the tutorial format opens it up to further research and discussion about its completion and measurement of success.

This article aims to share a personal tutoring practice implemented in a Health and Social Care department at a West Yorkshire campus branch of a higher education provider for adult learners in the UK. This practice integrates Aristotle's rhetoric principles (ethos, logos, and pathos) with the use of listening techniques and metaphors to emphasise the emotional connection (pathos-centricity) of students with the discussed materials. One narrative example will be provided to illustrate this approach.

Challenges in Personal Tutoring of Adult Learners

Knowles (1990), in his andragogical analysis, outlines key learning traits of adult learners, including high self-awareness, life experiences, a readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. Personal tutoring of adult learners presents unique challenges compared to tutoring of traditional students. One such challenge is the power dynamic between its tutor and the tutee. Having academic qualifications and teaching experience does not give the tutor absolute power or knowledge over the tutoring session. Tutors should be attentive to the discourse of deficit in which tutees lack in basic learning skills. Instead, focus on the discourse of abundance, highlighting the wealth of life experience each student brings to the table. By tapping into this source, a meaningful connection can be created between the student's prior knowledge and experience and the new academic material.

Educational concepts like Appadurai's (2004) 'capacity to aspire' and Freire, Macedo, and Leach (1999) 'deliberative pedagogical space' can help illustrate this connection. The capacity to aspire is the ability to envision change through imagination, allowing students to "read a map as a journey into the future" (p. 7). Appadurai (2004) suggests that the capacity to aspire is strengthened by social, cultural, and economic capital and the availability of non-equally distributed navigation information. The 'deliberative pedagogical space' is an approach for tutors and learners to create an opportunity for students to understand the connection between their past selves, their actions, and their present selves and their future goals. As such, the ongoing and immediate support of personal tutors, peers, and other services within the university will help students strengthen their capacity to aspire, in this case, aspiration for success.

An Aristotelian Approach in Personal Tutoring

To address these challenges, this article integrates Aristotle's rhetoric into personal tutoring for adult learners, particularly establishing pathos-centricity as the foundation of every personal tutoring session, including techniques of listening and responding to students (particularly, the use of metaphors). This approach stems from my own experience as a study skills lecturer at the West Yorkshire campus of a private university in the UK.

Aristotle's rhetoric philosophy encompasses three key principles in effective communication and persuasion, which are often referred to as the 'golden triangle' encompassing logic, ethics, and emotions or *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. Each of these elements is explained as follows:

- *Ethos*: This principle emphasises the credibility and sympathy of the speaker. It involves establishing trust and rapport with the audience.
- *Logos*: This principle focuses on the content and logic of the speech. It involves presenting arguments, reasoning, and evidence to support the main message.
- *Pathos*: This principle involves appealing to the emotions of the audience. It aims to evoke feelings, create a connection, and influence the audience's thoughts and feelings.

These elements are integral to all aspects of life, as people rely on trust (ethos), emotion (pathos), and truth (logos) equally. Furthermore, Aristotle's principle of *kairos* emphasises the importance of timing and context. It involves identifying the opportune moment to emphasise ethos, logos, or pathos effectively.

Applying Aristotle's rhetorical principles in teaching and learning can be a powerful tool for classroom management. By aligning other actions with one's own, it empowers students with the skills to effectively persuade and influence others through their communication (Phlapa, 2021, p. 42). For educators, rhetoric can guide students in critical thinking, argumentation, and deepening their understanding of complex matters (Murphy, Katula and Hoppman, 2013). It can also be a valuable tool for providing written feedback (Kieu, 2023).

However, these principles are not a one-size-fits-all formula for teaching and tutoring. In many situations, covering all three angles might not fully maximise their benefits. Therefore, it is important to know where to prioritise which element is the most crucial.

Pathos-Centric Listening Techniques

Pathos-centric listening techniques focus on understanding and empathising with the emotions expressed by the speaker or student. It is not just about being present; it is about actively listening and responding in a way that resonates with their feelings. Barr (2008) categorises listening into four levels: cosmetic listening (pretending to listen), conversational listening (responding to the speaker), active listening (engaging in meaningful dialogue), and transformational listening (going beyond surface-level conversations to explore deeper emotions and insights).

In a personal tutorial setting, it is challenging to maintain active listening from start to finish, especially when focusing on students and their narratives. However, by combining conversational listening and active listening, we can create a pathos-centric approach to tutoring.

Here are two techniques to achieve this:

1. Be intentional in verbal and non-verbal encouragement: Use verbal cues like 'I see,' 'ah, 'uh, nodding, and encouraging facial expressions to show that you are engaged and understanding (Revell, Doncette and Verhelst, 2014). You can also repeat the speaker's emotions and create a judgement-free atmosphere.
2. Support the conversation, not shift it (Murphy, 2020): Avoid interrupting or changing the topic abruptly. Instead, use verbal and non-verbal cues to support the speaker and encourage them to continue. You can also ask open-ended questions or fill-in-the-blank questions to elicit more information and deepen the conversation.

On the other hand, be cautious not to inadvertently shift the topic by expressing your opinions during listening. Avoid asking questions that end with 'right?' or 'don't you think...' as they may come across as dismissive or judgemental. Instead, focus on actively listening and responding in a way that shows genuine interest and understanding.

Additionally, the topic might be shifted by:

- Providing an immediate solution (e.g., asking questions that contain self-promoting information, such as "I have a background in... so I'm wondering... if you agree that...")
- Indicating the causes of certain problems (e.g., speculating the causes and stating them to the students, "I think A is the cause... right?")
- Downplaying the concerns of the speaker (e.g., reassuring students without knowing the full context of a situation, "Don't worry. All will be well.")

Pathos-Centric Responding: Using Metaphors

In addition to the listening techniques, pathos-centric responding involves adjustment to immediate narratives to make students close to the message delivered. This article focuses on the use of metaphors to evoke emotions and create meaningful connections. The word 'metaphor' originates from the Greek phrase 'metaphora,' meaning 'to carry over' something. Metaphor is defined as *describing one thing in terms of another* (Ashmore et al., 2014, p. 122). By using metaphors, we can simplify complex and abstract concepts and make them more accessible in a universal language. In teaching and learning, metaphors facilitate comprehension for students by conveying similarities through comparisons.

When tutors use metaphors in their responses to tutees, they can create meaningful connections that allow students to see themselves in the metaphors. If used correctly, metaphors can also help distance the audience from unpleasant subjects. This is particularly true for conceptual metaphors, which carry structures that influence our thinking, actions, interactions, and overall lives (Lakoff and Johnson, 2008). Metaphors are therefore used to give meaning to everyday experiences and situations.

To create pathos-centric responses, consider the following elements:

- *Ethos*: The student's age, job, cultural background, and sense of humour.
- *Logos*: The clarity and universality of the content to be metaphorised.
- *Pathos*: The ability of the chosen metaphor to allow students to relate to it. Use your knowledge of student traits and self-descriptions to enhance the emotional impact.
- *Kairos*: The appropriate time to insert a metaphor. Avoid crossing metaphors to maintain a balanced and effective response.

A Narrative Example and Analysis

Drawing from my tutorials with adult learners at a West Yorkshire campus, this narrative example embedded both techniques in listening and responding.

Adult Students at the West Yorkshire Campus

Adult students at the West Yorkshire campus begin at the foundation level, which is equivalent to level 3 (where progression to Year 1, 2, and 3. Many of these students have been out of education for extended periods. Some may not have used a laptop for years or even struggle with basic keyboard skills. They often have care responsibilities and complex work and family commitments. Additionally, the majority of students at this campus face linguistic challenges, as English is their additional language or second language. At the foundation level, they are at the early stage of forming their academic identity. Therefore, it is essential to provide additional support during this stage when students are trying to grasp a comprehensive understanding of their study programme, their new community, and their academic identity.

Context of the Narrative

Below is an example of a tutorial that integrates pathos-centric techniques in listening and the use of metaphors. In this academic tutorial, a student struggles to understand the assignment question and how to write it. This is a reflective writing assignment that requires students to apply Schon's (1991) reflective model, which includes reflection-in-action (thinking while doing) and reflection-on-action (thinking after doing), to reflect on a set of actions they completed in class.

TUTOR:	So, you mentioned that you needed help with your assignment. How I am.
Tutee:	I'm completely confused about everything.
Tutor:	OK, tell me more about it? [technique to elicit more information]
Tutee:	Like the Schon's model with in-action and on-action. I kind of half understand the meaning, but I don't know where to start. I feel all over the place.
Tutor:	Well, "half understanding" is better than "not understanding at all" [verbal encouragement, repeating the word used by tutee]
Tutee:	That's exactly what I thought but I'm feeling quite stressed about it [sign that tutee was listened to].

[To explain the meaning of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action using the cooking process and the evaluation taste]

Tutor:	What is your favourite food? [Food metaphor is used to bring it home to the student]
Tutee:	Fish masala.
Tutor:	Imagine that you're about to teach one of your children or your student chef how to make fish masala. You'd explain each step from beginning to end. Can you do that? [Placing tutee in the place of power, being a teacher; and doing something that is familiar to the student – teaching his/her child how to cook]
Tutee:	Absolutely
Tutor:	Go ahead
Tutee:	Well, first get the fish ready and shallow fry it. Then,...after that,... Finally, serve it [using something tutee knows well and enjoy talking about it as a conceptual metaphor to explain two reflection models.]
Tutor:	When you're done, your student chef will enjoy your fish masala. But for you, after tasting it, you might think the fish is too dry or too soft.
Tutee:	My fish masala is never a disaster [This shows that tutee is engaged in the conversation by their confidence].
Tutor:	I hope so
Tutee:	It is!
Tutor:	The cooking instructions you give your student chef and the feedback you provide after tasting the fish – these are the reflections we're trying to understand: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

Conclusion

This chapter has delved into a creative approach to tutoring that leverages the tutor's knowledge of the student through empathetic listening and the use of metaphors. It illustrates this method with a brief narrative example, demonstrating how tutors can modify their language when asking questions, such as using open-ended questions, mirroring the student's emotions, and employing conceptual metaphors.

In a personal tutorial, the tutor shares problems, demonstrates interest, and provides a response, solution, or pending request. Both the tutor and the student must come to a decision about an action (whether it is an immediate response or a fluid decision) within a short timeframe. Moreover, the connection between the tutor and the student continues beyond the session, and the emerging issues that not solely stem from the student's situation. Therefore, establishing meaningful tutoring sessions where students feel comfortable being themselves, connected, and confident in their learning is essential. Personal tutoring goes beyond following a rigid framework from a departmental, university, or any professional organisation.

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