INCORPORATING PEER TUTORING FOR READING ACTIVITY IN THE MALAYSIAN SCHOOL SETTING

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project paper is to highlight the usefulness of peer tutoring in the teaching of reading activity in Malaysian school setting and the benefits that peer tutoring will bring to the tutor, tutee and the teachers who are involved in this scheme. Suggestions are given on how to incorporate peer tutoring for reading activity in Malaysia school setting. Various peer tutoring schemes have been implemented over the years in America, United Kingdom and Australia by using children, college and university students as tutors. Some of the schemes prove to be successful. Various research findings have been put forward as an evidence that peer tutoring is a useful technique that should not be overlook. The findings of the peer tutoring schemes stated in this project paper were very encouraging. Students who are involved in peer tutoring go through changes from the behavioral perspective, attitudes towards the subject matter, increased motivation and increased fluency in reading. An example of lesson plan is provided to highlight peer tutoring as a useful technique that can be easily adapted into the teaching of reading in the classroom.
ABSTRAK

Tujuan kertas kerja ini disediakan adalah untuk meninjau faedah “bimbingan rakan sebaya” yang boleh digabungkan dalam aktiviti membaca di sekolah-sekolah di Malaysia dan manfaatnya kepada tutor, pelajar yang menerima bimbingan dan guru yang terlibat dalam projek ini. Berdasarkan penemuan yang menggalakkan dari projek bimbingan rakan sebaya yang telah dilaksanakan, cadangan telah dikesan untuk menggabungkan teknik bimbingan rakan sebaya dalam aktiviti pembacaan dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di sekolah-sekolah di Malaysia. Berbagai projek bimbingan rakan sebaya telah dilaksanakan di Amerika Syarikat, United Kingdom dan Australia selang beberapa tahun yang lalu dengan bantuan kanak-kanak, pelajar kolej dan universiti. Sebahagian dari projek yang telah dilaksanakan telah membawa kejayaan dan membukahkan hasil. Pelajar-pelajar yang terlibat dalam projek bimbingan rakan sebaya akan melalui perubahan dari perspektif tingkahlaku, sikap terhadap subjek yang mereka menerima bimbingan, peningkatan motivasi dan peningkatan dalam kelancaran membaca. Satu contoh rancangan pengajaran dan pembelajaran telah dikemukakan untuk menunjukkan bahawa bimbingan rakan sebaya merupakan salah satu teknik berguna yang boleh diubahsuai dalam pengajaran bacaan dalam bilik darjah.
CHAPTER 1
RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Peer tutoring, which is defined by Topping (1989) as "a more able child helping a less able child in a cooperative working pair carefully organized by a teacher," is gaining popularity among educators in America. Lippitt (1976) said that peer tutoring brings benefit to the tutor and tutee. She believed that the friendship that developed between the two could, for example, increase the younger child's self-esteem as well as the older child's self-confidence. Academic gains in both the tutor and tutee also said to result from peer tutoring programs (Limbrick, 1985; McNaughton & Glynn, 1983; Medcalf, 1989; Topping, 1987; cited in Goyen, 1994).

The idea of students helping students is not new. The ancient Greeks and Roman used tutors in nineteenth-century Lancastrian England, where pupil-teacher ratio was five hundred to one. Teachers had coped with large number of students by first teaching older monitors, who then worked with younger students to help them overcome their problem (Kauchek, 1993).

Considerable research indicates that many students may learn better from their peers than from adults and that many students benefit greatly from teaching other students (Johnson, 1991). Some children learn considerable better if they have the
opportunity to learn from their peers. Communication may be more effective, amount of reinforcement may increase and may be more motivating when students teach each other. Although some students may be clumsy teachers at first, the research indicates that with practice and reinforcement for effective tutoring, most children can become rather good teachers (Johnson, 1991).

Peer tutoring has also been used successfully in many areas of grammar and punctuation and in reading, where tutors listen to partners read orally, read stories aloud themselves, play word recognition games, work with sequencing cards, assist with projects such as picture dictionaries or help workbook pages. In these areas, peers can give the personalized attention and feedback, which is difficult if not impossible to provide in large group instruction (Kauchak, 1989). Rekrut (1992, cited in Kalkowski, 1997) stated that researchers have also noted significant beneficial effects on the language arts achievement of tutors and especially tutees. Language arts areas examined include story grammar, comprehension, identification of sight words, acquisition of vocabulary, and general reading skill. Most of the research involved elementary students (some were middle-schoolers), and positive results were found for both short and long-term tutoring. Peer tutoring programs have been carried out successfully in most of the elementary, secondary and higher learning institution in America and Australia. Positive outcomes have been recorded based on the peer tutoring programs organized in these states. Such programs can be applied in the teaching of English Language in Malaysia to promote higher academic achievement for the tutors and tutees.
1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Until now, tutoring has been seen primarily as therapy - as a means of helping school-children who are troublesome or who are backward in their studies. Tutoring has been thought of as something extra, something special, something unusual. However, the urge to tell people things, to explain, and to instruct is universal; and as Comenius observed, 'qui docet, discit' - 'he who teaches, learns' (Goodlad, 1989). Learning by teaching, can be part of everyone's experience in education and helping professional teachers can be an enjoyable and rewarding activity for people of any age from infancy to retirement inclusive.

Decades of research have established that well-planned peer tutoring programs can improve student achievement and self-esteem as well as overall school climate (Gaustad, 1993). Peer tutoring can be incorporated in the teaching of reading activity in the Malaysian school setting based on the many positive outcomes of the wide variety of programs implemented in the foreign countries.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Basically, the purpose of this paper is to investigate how peer tutoring could be incorporated in the teaching of reading in the Malaysian school setting. The study specifically attempts to answer the following research questions:
i. How this method could be incorporated in the teaching of reading in the Malaysian school setting based on findings of research conducted in the use of peer tutoring?

ii. What benefits can be gained by the tutors, tutees and teachers from this program?

The outcome of this study will determine whether this method can be incorporated for reading activities in the Malaysian school setting.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to determine how peer tutoring could be incorporated in the Teaching of English As A Second Language, especially for reading activity in the Malaysian school setting and the benefits that peer tutoring will bring to the tutor, tutee and teachers who are involve in this scheme.

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

The nature of this study is purely based on library research. The findings from this study are from various researches done on peer tutoring. This study focus on the benefits gained by the tutors, tutees, teachers and how this method could be incorporated in the teaching of reading in the Malaysian school setting. The suggestions
of activities given in this study have yet to be tested on samples of students in the schools.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Peer tutoring

Borich 1990 refers peer tutoring as “more able students assigned to help less able students who have not yet acquired task-relevant prior knowledge”.

According to Snowman (1993), “Peer tutoring involves the teaching of one student by another. The students may be similar in age or separated by one or more years.”

Louisell and Descamps (1989) refers peer tutoring as “when two students of similar age but differing abilities are paired. One student is the tutor and the other is the tutee.”

Peer and cross-age tutoring also go by the names of “peer teaching,” “peer learning”, “child-teach-child,” and “learning through teaching” (Britz, Dixon and McLaughlin, 1989: cited in Kalkowski, 1997). In other words, peer tutoring is a process that involves teaching by a more able child with higher cognitive ability to children who are unable to grasp the subject matter.
Cross-Age Tutoring

According to Louisell and Descamps (1989), "Cross-age tutoring occurs when older students work with younger students." Cross-age tutoring also means students (tutors) who are a year or two older than the students (tutees) whom they instruct.

Tutor

According to Lefrançois (1994), "Tutor is a teacher rather than a mentor; but unlike the regular classroom teacher, the tutor teaches only one student at a time." Tutor also refer to students who tutor one or two students at a time and helps the tutees to overcome learning problems.

Tutee

Tutee is the student whom the tutor instructs, yet to acquire the knowledge of the subject matter, basically has learning difficulties and who need tutor's attention in helping them individually.

Monitor

"Monitor" as cited in Goodlad (1989) refers to a more proficient student who is selected to handle the class and makes sure that the students in his class or division taught each other. The monitor does not correct the mistake made by students but get another student in the class to correct that particular mistake. The monitor monitors and
facilitates learning during the tutoring session. The role of monitor can be associated with the role of a facilitator.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Peer tutoring was used by Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster in the eighteen century who used children to tutor children with a view to educating both the tutors and the tutees (Goodlad, 1989). In recent years, many schemes have adopted and adapted the tutoring schemes for the teaching of various subjects such as mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and health (Kalkowski, 1997). Various peer and cross-age tutoring schemes have been implemented in United States, United Kingdom, Australia and in Israel. Some of the schemes were successful and some schemes met with failures. Over the years the failures in the peer tutoring schemes were studied and improved. These schemes when used prove to be a success. This chapter discusses and give some background on how peer tutoring was used successfully by Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster to help the underachieving teenagers in the eighteen century where it all began.

2.2 EARLY USES OF PEER TUTORING

In tutoring schemes using children to teach children, underachieving teenagers have helped elementary-school children from disadvantaged neighborhoods; secondary-school pupils have tutored in homework helper centers; an entire school has been
organized so that each child acted as a tutor for part of each day and many schools have
started Paired Reading projects (Goodlad, 1989).

According to Goodlad (1989), the first systematic use of tutoring was by
Andrew Bell. In 1789, Bell was appointed superintendent of the Military Male Asylum
at Egmore and minister of St. Mary's Church at Madras. The asylum was a semi-
official charity school for the orphaned boys of soldiers.

Andrew Bell’s scheme was remarkably systematic. According to Goodlad
(1989), every individual in the school had a specific role with specific tasks to perform.
Each class was paired off into tutors and pupils. An assistant teacher was assigned to
supervise and instruct tutors in each class. The assistant teacher reported to the teacher
who was charge of the class and was responsible for order, behavior, diligence and the
general improvement of the class. The head of the peer tutoring scheme and his
assistant were appointed to inspect the school, watch over the whole scheme, and give
their instructions and assistance wherever wanted. The head of the peer tutoring scheme
and his assistant were the ‘agents and ministers’ of the schoolmaster whose duty was to
direct, conduct the system properly and make sure the whole peer tutoring scheme was
running smoothly.

Joseph Lancaster was another teacher who implemented peer tutoring in the
school where he was teaching. Lancaster acknowledged his debt to Andrew Bell, whom
he met in 1804 in England and he adapted Andrew Bell’s idea of peer tutoring.
According to Goodlad (1989), Lancaster readily accepted the idea of having boys who knew a little to teach boys who knew less. Lancaster's whole school was arranged into classes with a monitor appointed to each class. If the class was small, one monitor could teach it; if it was large, assistant monitors were appointed who, under the direction of the principal monitor, taught the class that was divided into small groups. Lancaster emphasizes it was the monitor's work to supervise the learning of the students in his class and the smooth function of peer tutoring in the class itself. For example, if a boy in his class made a mistake in pronouncing a letter of the alphabet, it is the monitor duty to facilitate learning by getting another student to correct the mistake. Lancaster used his monitors to teach reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic.

Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster's ideas of peer tutoring were taken up in America ever since 1986 and had been widely used there and in England until professional teachers were train to take over the aspects of teaching and learning (Goodlad, 1989).

2.3 EDUCATIONAL THEORIES UNDERLYING THE USE OF PEER TUTORING

There are few educational theories associated with peer tutoring. They are the role-model theory, behaviorist theory, socio-linguistic theory and Gestalt theory. Allen (1976; cited in Goodlad, 1989) used role model theory framework for the analysis of tutoring. Allen who was a social psychologist, "observes that social role is a set of
expectations that are associated with a particular position in the social structure, such as father or mother, teacher or student. According to role model theory, individuals inhabiting specific roles will feel themselves constrained by the expectations of other people to behave in particular ways.” For example, if a child is temporarily given the role of a teacher, and put into interaction with younger children, the older child’s behavior will be constrained by the expectations of the younger children. The older child will, thereby, come to understand the role of teacher and perhaps develop a deeper respect for learning (ibid.).

According to Slavin (1981; cited in Goodlad, 1989), role-model theory suggests that pupils will learn better from tutors who are their peers, or who are similar in general culture and background, than from teachers who may not understand the pupils. There are indications that small-group interactions free from the teacher’s presence can produce beneficial results.

In the behaviorist theory, the learning will be efficient if every correct response to a question by a pupil is rewarded. The reward acts as a stimulus to the pupil to make another step in learning. The emphasis of tutoring schemes based on this theory is on highly-structured systems of instruction through which the tutee is guided by a tutor who has to present materials in suitable order (Goodlad, 1989).

According to Goodlad (1989), “Gestalt theories of psychology stated that learning will occur when the learner can ‘locate’ an item in an intellectual structure or
field. Either party to a tutoring arrangement, tutor or tutee, can learn by perceiving the way an individual idea relates to a context.” In the peer tutoring scheme of Youth Tutoring Youth, children who teach other children have to struggle to make the material meaningful to the learners and thereby have the opportunity of reflecting upon their own learning process. This opportunity may increase the tutors’ awareness of the patterns of learning and consequently help them to develop their skill in seeing problems in new and different ways.

The educational theories above suggest different priorities and different types of activity in peer tutoring, favoring either the tutor or the tutee. It is therefore useful to identify some of the benefits which different types of tutoring are designed to produce.

2.4 RELATED LITERATURE

Schneider and Barone (1997), conducted a cross-age tutoring program at the Clark County School District, Las Vegas. Rebecca Barone Schneider is a teacher at that school whereas Diane Barone is an Associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Nevada, Reno. Schneider’s class consist of twenty-seven children (seventeen boys, ten girls) range in age from eight to eleven years old. The students were accustomed to a traditional classroom environment in which they were expected to work quietly and alone. When Schneider started teaching in this school, she found the children were unable to work cooperatively. She changed the curriculum and classroom environment, making the students work together on projects
that resulted chaos initially. Schneider then prepared the cross-age tutoring project with small groups of students over three weeks to model reading techniques they would use with younger children and demonstrated how to encourage predictions of the plot development before and during reading. She also helped them understand what fluent reading sounded like and showed them some picture books, known to be children’s favorites, that they could read easily. Then Schneider showed her students the lesson plans (refer to Appendix 1) she developed for the class as a way to emphasize how important it is to plan before tutoring.

The primary students (first and second graders) came to Schneider’s class once a week for forty-five minutes because the school is organized into ‘families’ (primary classrooms and intermediate classrooms were clustered together). The younger students were scheduled for tutoring each Wednesday. This schedule afforded Schneider’s students two days of practice before the actual tutoring occurred. Students were matched according to their fluency in reading and proficiency in writing. Fluent readers and writers in the intermediate class were matched with most proficient readers and writers in the primary class. Interesting discoveries were made based on this mode of peer tutoring. They were:

i. lesson plans became more student-centered

ii. the tutors became responsible for the children they were tutoring

iii. attitudes changed about tutoring (for the tutors)

iv. their vision of teaching (students pick appropriate and interesting books for their tutees)
Schneider (1997) found that cross-age tutoring project helped her students reach the goals she had set for them. Students became aware that they were teachers and could help each other. They valued this new perspective about teaching. They appreciated reading books that were interesting to them and recognized that each student responded to a book in a different way and each response is valid and interesting. Most important, they appreciated the peer talk that occurred as they read or wrote. As their awareness grew, they moved from being passive learners to becoming active learners. They began trusting each other and valuing each other's opinion. Schneider observed that her students often initiated their own learning and cross-age tutoring changed her students' level of responsibility. Schneider was very happy with this development and during her lesson where peer tutoring takes places, she facilitates while the reading lesson progresses.

Woods (1996), a public school teacher at Thomas Jefferson High school in South Central Los Angeles, put in a proposal to the principal suggesting that a peer tutoring program be piloted. His proposal was accepted and began around the beginning of 1995. The peer tutoring that is to be conducted during school hours was entirely a new concept for the principal as well as other teachers at the school. Woods was given fourteen students, fourteen to fifteen years old to train as tutors. He trained the tutors using the Study Skills for Life book and the Basic Study Manual. The program ran during school hours for one semester - one hour per day, five days per week. It took five weeks to train the student tutors. Once the students were trained as tutors, other teachers were invited to send students from their classes to get tutoring on specific topics.
in which they were experiencing difficulty. When a student arrived for tutoring, Woods went over his or her problem and wrote out an instruction sheet. This was handed to the tutor, who worked with the student to get the instruction sheet done. The tutor helps the student to the point that the student's difficulty was successfully resolved. The student was then sent back to class. Woods supervised the tutoring to ensure that the tutors were completing their instructions. Around thirty students were tutored during the semester with excellent results.

Rhodes (1993), argues that “peer tutoring at lost with paired reading is one rare innovation that can lead to greater independence and active learning in pupils, yet does not lead to unacceptable strains upon the energy and stress levels of the teacher.” Besides this Rhodes (ibid.) found that most pupils and staff enjoy and enthusiastic for peer tutoring paired reading. This kind of project is practical: that is, it can fit into the working patterns and routines of a mainstream school without excessive extra effort and time. Peer tutoring seemed to be effective in paired reading activities.

Gaustad (1993) stated that, “One-to-one tutoring has long been recognized as superior to group instruction, especially for students with special needs.” Tutoring can adapt instruction to the learner's pace, learning style, and level of understanding. Feedback and correction are immediate. Basic misunderstandings can be quickly identified and corrected, practice provided, and more difficult material introduced when the student is ready. Gaustad (ibid.) also stated that tutoring has emotional as well as cognitive benefits. Students can achieve at their own pace without being compared with