

**THE EFFECT OF RECIPROCAL PEER TUTORING STRATEGY IN  
DISCOVERING FIGURATIVE SPEECH TO ENHANCE STUDENTS'  
UNDERSTANDING OF POETRY**

**FELZER LUCK BUJONG**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Complete Forms</b>
RPT	Reciprocal Peer Tutoring
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysia Certificate of Education)
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (National Secondary School)
TESL	Teaching English as Second Language
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Saraawak

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of acknowledging students' learning needs in teaching and learning have urged teachers to apply strategies that can cater the students' learning needs. Previous researches have demonstrated that students can learn by tutoring other students. This study was carried out to further the theoretical and practical understanding of Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) in discovering the used of figurative speech to enhance students' understanding of poetry. RPT is a collaborative approach that embeds assessment in a formalized learning process to facilitate student involvement with course content and to improve achievement. On a more specific level, the objectives of the study were to investigate the effectiveness of RPT in enhancing students' achievement and to find out students' views toward the strategy used. A quasi-experimental study, with both treatment and control group was developed to examine the effect of RPT on students' achievement. Forty form four students from SMK Siburan were directly involved in this study. The main findings of the study was that RPT led to statistically significant improvement in performance for the treatment group as measured in post test. Apart from that, RPT was also an effective mean of creating supportive learning environment in which could reduce stress and anxiety among the students. As a whole, the findings derived from this study showed that RPT had managed to enhance students' understanding on the use of figurative speech in poem.

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## ABSTRAK

*Menyedari akan kepentingan keperluan pelajar dalam pembelajaran dan pengajaran dalam pendidikan telah mengesa para guru untuk mengaplikasikan strategi pengajaran yang dapat memenuhi keperluan pembelajaran pelajar. Kajian-kajian yang telah dijalankan sebelum ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar boleh belajar dengan cara membimbing pelajar yang lain. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk memahami dengan lebih mendalam dari segi teori dan praktikal akan penggunaan strategi tutor rakan sebaya dalam memahami penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam sajak. Tutor rakan sebaya merupakan satu pendekatan bersama yang menyelitkan unsur ujian sebagai proses pembelajaran formal. Strategi ini bertujuan untuk memudahkan penglibatan pelajar dengan kandungan pelajaran serta memperbaiki pencapaian mereka. Secara khususnya, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat akan keberkesanan strategi tutor rakan sebaya dalam meningkatkan pencapaian pelajar memahami penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam sajak serta ingin mengetahui pandangan pelajar-pelajar terlibat terhadap strategi yang digunakan. Kaedah eksperiment kuasi digunakan bagi mengesan akan keberkesanan strategi tersebut. Seramai empat puluh orang pelajar tingkatan empat dari SMK Siburan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Secara amnya, hasil utama daripada kajian ini mendapati bahawa penggunaan strategi tutor rakan sebaya ada menunjukkan peningkatan pencapaian pelajar dalam pembelajaran seperti mana yang diukur melalui ujian mereka. Strategi ini juga menghasilkan suasana pembelajaran yang menggalakan dan dapat mengurangkan rasa tertekan serta kerisauan pelajar. Secara keseluruhannya, hasil yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa strategi tutor rakan sebaya telah berjaya meningkatkan pemahaman pelajar terhadap penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam sajak.*



# **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.0 An Overview**

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, the research objectives, research questions, hypothesis, significance of the research and the definition of the key terms.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

This research is aimed to discuss and investigate the effectiveness of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy in enhancing students' understanding on the use of figurative speech in poem. The focus is on the literature component in English Second Language classroom particularly on figurative of speech used in poem. This research is also comparing between the reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and the conventional instruction to see which method is more effective in improving students' understanding learning poetry.

In Malaysian curriculum, the teaching of Literature Component is placed as part of the English Language and Bahasa Malaysia Syllabus in Secondary School. It had been introduced to Form 1 and Form 4 in March 2000 and was included in the

SPM English Language in 2001 for the first time. There are three types of genres introduced in this component, namely, short stories, novel and poem. The time allocation for teaching these genres is only 1 period out of 5 English periods in a week.

The area of language used in curriculum for teaching literature component falls under aesthetic purposes. Aesthetic reading describe the process of reading in which a reader interacts emotionally and experientially with and from a text to create meaning (Maley as cited in Saraceni, 2003). The ability to infer meaning and to make interpretation is an important skill in literature. This skill is hoped to give the opportunity for students to enjoy literary texts that suited their level on language proficiency thus, encourage them for extensive reading on their own. Through this pleasure reading, students can develop their ability to express themselves creatively and increase understanding on other cultures as well.

However, the skill could not be mastered if the teaching strategy used by teachers is not applicable to students' level. Teachers need to apply strategy that can help students to acquire the skill needed so that they can understand the lesson better. Simmons and Deluzain (1992) emphasized that teachers should use strategies that can present the literary texts in most effective ways to promote interactive response between learners and literary texts used in classroom. Therefore, a good teaching strategy is imperative in enhancing students' understanding of the lesson learned. Siti



Rohaini (1990) asserted that it is teachers' obligation to vary their teaching strategy in teaching literature to develop learners' competency in understanding literary texts.

It should be understood as well that any endeavor to develop more flexible teaching strategy must first focus on students' needs in their learning. Factors such as prior knowledge, language and cultural background, rate of learning, amount of instructional time, interests and students' attitudes should be considered in meeting the individual needs of students. According to Reid (1997) a mismatch between teaching and learning styles tend to cause learning failure, frustration and lead to demotivation. Therefore, the differences in teaching and learning needs between teachers and students could negatively affect students' grades and their performances in school (Wallace & Oxford, 1992; Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1991). This phenomenon consequently could lead to motivational problems among students.

Students' motivation in learning is much influenced by learning environment in school and it can also affect their performance if students were low motivated in learning. Chitravelu, Sithamparam, and Teh (1995) testified that low motivation in learning is considered as one of the causes that lead towards student's failure in achieving an acceptable level of competency in subject like English. Nevertheless, these motivation and achievement usually improve when students' learning style and needs accommodate to their instructor's teaching styles (Miller 2001; Stitt-Gohdes 2003). This implies that teachers need to adjust their teaching strategy should the one



that they use is less effective. It is only when students' learning styles are matched with appropriate approaches in teaching that their motivation, performances, and achievements will increase and be enhanced (Brown, 1994).

However, it should be kept in mind that matching does not guarantee effective teaching or positive learning outcomes (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). Learner's variable such as attitude, aptitude, motivation and learning styles should also need to be considered as they can also influence the learning outcome. One way to cater students' learning needs in teaching and learning process is through teaching strategies that can accommodate their needs. The selection of teaching strategies and implementation of techniques is a function of teachers' beliefs and values as educator (Heimlich & Norland, 2002). Therefore, teachers must willing to accept the fact that they have to succumb the idea of changing in their belief system in teaching and focus on the individual needs and the roles the students play in the learning environment. As educator, they must incorporate varying teaching strategies into the classroom and also need to adapt their belief parallel to the changes in technology and students' needs.

In general classroom environment, students' learning needs can be met when two guidelines are kept:

- (1) The interaction between students and instructional environment can influence students' performance.

(2) Teachers can cater student needs after analyzing their learning needs which suit the instructional environment.

(Adapted from Nebraska Department of Education, 1996)

In relation to the above mentioned, teachers should consider to use strategy that can cater students' learning needs in any lesson. Studying literature, especially poetry cannot be done alone by student since the nature of the particular genre needs more students' involvement. They need to response to literary texts and try to form opinion based on meaning and values implied by the writer in the texts (Shahizah & Nackeeran, 2003). However, it is rather disappointing to find out that over reliance on the worksheets as one of the methodologies used in teaching strategy, has been widely used in teaching the literature component by some teachers in many ESL classrooms (Rosli & Jayakaran, 1994).

An alternative for enhancing students' competence in interpreting poems and enhance their achievement in studying literature is through the used of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy. Reciprocal Peer tutoring is a collaborative approach where pairs of students interact to assist each other's in their learning. Students assume both roles of tutor and tutee during tutoring activity and this allows each student to gain the benefits from preparing to teach another student. The strategy is widely used in reading and comprehension. Nixon and Topping in their research (2001) claimed that students who had undergone a structured peer interaction activity improved in their



achievement compare to those who did not. This research strongly suggests that when properly implemented, reciprocal peer tutoring can be an effective teaching strategy in enhancing students' performance regardless of the subject area.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Swengel (1991) asserted that the major problem in teaching with formal schooling until this present day is due to the basic instructional unit of teacher-and-classroom interaction. Research indicates that the way most teachers teach usually influenced by the way they learn the material best (Thewlis, 2001). Their belief on this notion implies that what worked with them must work with others too. These teachers favour formal teaching methods, favouring less student involvement, more content oriented and more structured classroom activities (Pithers, 2001). However, it is imperative to recognize students' learning needs and that they may not learn well if a teacher incorporates only one strategy in his or her teaching without taking into consideration the learning needs of the students.

In many academic classrooms, there will be students with multiple learning styles and learning needs regardless of the subject matter. They bring their own individual approach, talents and interests to the learning situation. To provide an equal opportunity for all students to be successful in school, educators must first develop a deep understanding of individual differences in learning. Teachers are required to tackle these conditions and conform to students' learning needs in order to



teach effectively. They need to change or adjust their own teaching strategies and provide students with different types of activities to meet the needs of different learning styles. By doing so, the possibility for students to success in activities is far better thus, increases their achievement in the particular subject since the strategy used is suitable with their learning needs. As educator, they should know what are the learning needs of their students, they weaknesses, learning style as well as their learning preferences on certain subject, thus, should make an attempt to cater those needs in order to narrow the gap among the students.

It is doubtless that a good teaching strategy is imperative in any lesson. Even if students were provided with lots of material, without good strategy the material would be just like an additional homework which seems to be the burden to students. According to Rosli & Jayakaran (1994) the problem with teaching literature in ESL classroom is the assumption which many teachers held that the students' work can be provided through worksheets and that the support material such as teaching files are self sufficient for teachers' guide. They further explained that the situation above which is supposed to be a literature class would have the tendency of becoming a normal ESL reader class with its focus on reading comprehension and the activity would be focus more on teacher instead of the students. Teachers' teaching strategy that relies on students' worksheet could impede the achievement of the programme if the worksheet exercise were over-use and over reliance which in turn affect the



objectives of the programme. Therefore, this research is set to concentrate on the used of one particular teaching strategy for teaching figurative of speech used in poem.

It is clearly stated in Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris for form 1 to 5 under Literature Component expecting students to be able to response to literary texts such as poems. However, students' preference in studying poems is rather small and less favorite mainly due to its deviant use of language (Timucin, 2003). The deviant use of language is referring to ambiguous words or phrases used by poets to convey their messages. The ambiguity of the language used in which can be understood in many possible senses or ways is the essence of poetry thus, it is human nature to try to find meaning within an exchange (Clare, 2003). Learners have to interpret the messages conveyed to get the meaning. This is rather troublesome to many students particularly when it comes to understand the figurative of speech used in poem.

Figurative of speech is one of the poetic devices used by poets to express their feeling imaginatively and convey their message indirectly. In other words, figurative speech represents the speaker's attitude and feeling towards the subject. The text does not simply refer to reality but requires students to create their own representation. Understanding of these speeches would enable students to come out with the theme, tone and mood of the poem, thus, enable them to understand the whole poem thoroughly. Therefore, it is imperative for students to know and understand the meaning of each figurative speech used in poem because it can help them to interpret



the message a poet trying to convey. Failing to identify and understand the meaning of figurative speech would create difficulty in interpreting the poet's message.

Figurative of speech can be found in a form of words or short phrases made up of several words or chunks of language (Morner & Rausch, 1996). They create a special kind of mental picture in the poem and usually have partners that together formed meanings in certain restricted ways. It also can have two different meaning, denotation and connotation meaning. Denotation refers to conveying surface meanings of the word whereas connotation refers to conveying hidden meanings of the same word in the particular language. Nevertheless, many students think of language as a medium for conveying only literal meaning which is specifically for communicating ideas. Even when we use language literally, misunderstandings of the message conveyed could arise and the meanings shift. The message conveyed can be intentionally or unintentionally ambiguous when a word or potentially an ambiguous sentence is uttered by the speaker. Usually only one meaning of it occurs to the speaker's mind and he or she intends the sentence in this one meaning. Students are usually bewildered when it comes to interpret these meaning in poem.

Understanding how figurative speech work and be able to identify them in a poem can help students interpret what messages are conveyed. To teach all these, different strategies should be used if the present one could not generate a good outcome. In other words, teachers should vary their teaching strategy and apply the



one that best matched with the students' learning needs. In this study, researcher suggests that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring to be an alternative approach as one of the teaching strategy used in teaching the figurative of speech. As suggested by Swengel (1991) the used of peer tutoring approach as alternative for mutual instruction is at least seen to be the solution in accommodating the diversity of students' needs in one classroom. The chosen strategy is believed can enhance students' understanding on poetry in English Second Language (ESL) classroom lesson.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

This research looked at reciprocal peer tutoring strategy on how it can assist students in discovering and enhancing their understanding on figurative speech used in poems. However, this research did not look at the approaches used in teaching literature but rather focused on the strategy used by the teacher in teaching poem, particularly on figurative of speech. The figurative speeches are Simile, Hyperbole, Oxymoron, Metaphor, Personification and Imagery. The teaching of these figurative of speech are basically focusing on understanding the literary meaning of the speech and how they are used to convey different meaning in poem.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This research aims to focus on the effectiveness of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy on students' achievement in enhancing their understanding on the used of figurative speech compare to conventional instruction. Apart from that, it also hopes

to show that the strategy (RPT) can assist students in improving their understanding in interpreting poem.

The objectives of this research are:

1. to compare students performance between those who have gone through reciprocal peer tutoring strategy with those who have gone through the conventional instruction in enhancing students' understanding on figurative speech used in a poem as measure in posttest.
2. to find out students' reaction and perception towards the use of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy in classroom situation in general.

## **1.5 Research Question**

The effect of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy in discovering figurative of speech to enhance students' understanding of poetry.

## **1.6 Hypothesis**

### **1.6.1 The Alternative hypothesis:-**

Students will perform better in understanding figurative speech used in the poem after they have gone through the reciprocal peer tutoring activity compare to the conventional instruction.