CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The teaching of writing is an uphill task for both the L1 or L2 language teachers. Most of the students, who have completed their fifth form, leave school without fully mastering the English language. In Malaysia, students in secondary schools face a lot of problems in learning to write. Studies have shown that writing is the biggest hurdle for students learning L2 and necessary measures have to be taken to overcome this problem in order to upgrade the proficiency level of secondary school students. One of the strategies found to be productive in teaching writing skills is "peer tutoring" which has brought significant results among students in institutions of higher learning.

This chapter will give a brief outline of writing and its importance followed with discussion of resolution of problems in teaching writing. This is followed by the definition of the terms 'peer tutoring', 'tutors', 'tutees' 'motivation' and 'attitudes'. Further discussions are on historical development of peer tutoring and the personal characteristics of tutors and tutees. This chapter concludes with the studies related to training of tutors and the effects of peer tutoring on writing.

2.1 Writing and its importance

Writing is a process of exploring one's thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what these thoughts are (Zamel , 1982).

All texts are written for an audience even if, in the case of a diary or a journal that audience is the writer himself. The need to pay attention to the audience of the text prompts writers into anticipating and considering viewpoints other than their own. The result of this is that propositions contained in the body of the text are likely to be more rigorously scrutinized than if they were simply thought about.

From the experience of the researcher, the majority of the sample students performed poorly in English language in the end - of - year examinations in 2001 due to the inability to write well in L2. Lack of vocabulary, poor understanding of the compositions questions, and inability to generate ideas are some of the problems quoted by the students which in turn affected the performance of these students understanding of comprehension and grammar - related questions in paper one.

2.2 Problems in teaching writing

The increased focus on writing, with its accompanying prescriptive standards of achievement, has caused some teachers to attend to writing more than they have in the past (Strickland, 2001). Writing is viewed as a meaning - making process in which writers negotiate meaning with texts they are producing. Writers gather and organize their ideas, draft their compositions, revise and edit their drafts, and publish what they have written.

According to Emig, 'writing was clearly the most integrative, originative, and creative' (Emig, 1983). As writing gained importance, educators and administrators started showing concern over students' writing abilities during L2 class. Despite the effort shown, there is not much progress in students' performance because there are many factors that affect the teaching of writing in Malaysian secondary schools, which are key factors for the low performance of students in public examination such as PMR and SPM.

Although teachers have tried using group teaching in writing classes, it was not very successful because of the lack of motivation to learn the L2. Low students' motivation makes any form of teaching more difficult. Furthermore, when groups are used instead of teacher fronted approach, lack of motivation become more obvious. In a teacher fronted mode students often just sit there passively listening to the teacher. The lesson will continue because the teachers are conscientiously performing their tasks.

On the other hand, with group activities, if students do not participate, the lesson cannot continue. While this latter behaviour may seem worse, in both cases no learning is taking place among unmotivated students.

Motivation is related to proficiency, another variable, which affects group work, and is related to writing. Lack of language proficiency is another important reason why students could not function in groups or complete tasks given in L2. Students refrain from asking questions to their teachers because low proficiency and lack of confidence in L2 makes students shy to speak to teachers and peers in the class.

Large class size made any form of instruction more difficult. In a class of forty students, even if the teacher breaks students into groups of four or less, there will be many groups to supervise at one time; and many of the benefits in terms of increased involvement are lost. It is also difficult to maintain the discipline of the students and often there will be a rise in noise level and this will disturb the teaching and learning process.

2.3 Resolution to teaching of writing

Nolasco and Arthur (1986) suggest that group activities be introduced gradually to allow students to become accustomed to new routines and that very clear instructions be given to students and comprehension of these instructions be checked before a group activity begins and while it proceeds (Safril, 1991).

Gan (1992), writing from the Malaysian perspective, notes that, " students can provide individual attention and assistance to one another, something that a teacher teaching a typical class of forty pupils cannot hope to do no matter how enthusiastic and conscientious he/she is..."

In the changing scenario of pro - active, student - centered teaching and learning in the Malaysian education system, group work is fast gaining recognition and is highly recommended by inspectors of schools and administrators. In Malaysia, group projects are one method that the government recommends for integrating values across the curriculum (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 1989).

According to Bruner (1996) education must be conceived in aiding young humans in learning to use the tools of meaning making and reality construction to better adapt to the world in which they find themselves and to help in the process of changing it as required. Furthermore, teaching students with peers in small groups can bring significant results in their writing.

However, educators need to give due consideration to how group activities can be tailored to suit the varied situations in which they teach. It is suggested that classroom based research be a vital part of this process. So, in this research peer tutoring is used as a device to teach writing. Give and take between young writers and their peers allows children to see what others value in writing, just as defending their ideas causes children to think about those ideas from their peers' perspective (Long & Bullgarlla, 1985). Therefore placing children in small

writing groups where social interaction is a natural part of writing experience is an important part of the writing experiences for the students.

Kos (2001) stated in his research that peer interactions in small writing groups seemed more effective in generating ideas than in generating revisions. Children listened to others' ideas, topics, and descriptive words and sometimes appropriated them. Children also had many opportunities to become aware of audience needs through sharing their writing with peers.

Blatchford (1996) found few gender differences in attitudes to school work between boys and girls in a London school. It was revealed that in general girls put more effort into their work when group tasks were given, and boys, on the other hand tend to work less hard and be more easily distracted from the task at hand.

2.4 What is peer tutoring?

Peer tutoring refers to teaching-learning contexts where one pupil who is more able than the others in the group (often selected as the leader) tutors or teaches the other peers who are less able in the group. It can be said more practically as a less skilled learner working alongside a more competent or skilled practioner. Sometimes the term cross-age tutoring is employed to refer to situations where an older pupil tutors a younger pupil, but the term peer teaching is frequently used to refer to both types of tutoring (Wheldall, 1999).

Co-operative learning (CL) has been among the most widely investigated approaches in the educational research literature. Extensive reviews on CL have been done by Johnson & Johnson (1989), Slavin (1990), and Sharon (1990). Research conducted in many different subject areas and various age groups of students has generally shown positive effects favouring CL in the following areas: academic achievement, developments of social skills, and the ability to have a better perspective of another person.

In recent years, its focus has been expanded significantly to include the study of effective practices in staff development and teacher education for CL, support systems such as peer coaching to sustain CL, and development in education.

Various form of peer learning such as co-operative learning, collaborative learning, and peer and cross - age tutoring have been widely recommended as methods for enhancing equal educational opportunities in heterogeneous classrooms (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, and Simmons, 1997; Oaks and Lipton, 1990). Those approaches, which often rely on the grouping of high and low achievers, have been shown to be effective in producing learning gains relative to more traditional forms of classroom instruction (Bossert, 1989; Damon and Phelps, 1989; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin, 1996).

Ogdeon (2000) says peer collaboration requires reciprocal interaction as children share ideas and gain a joint conception of what they are trying to achieve. Shared activities between peers provide valuable opportunities for children to engage in collaboration activity.

Peer tutoring has gained popularity within educational circles in recent years and it is tempting to regard it as a contemporary educational innovation or even as the latest fad. Peer tutoring has been used as an educational tool to reach many learners in various situations.

According to Crismore and Siti (1997) peer tutoring, a form of CL, has been found to be an effective technique for increasing students' academic achievement. In addition, researchers have found that both tutors and tutees gain in achievement by participating in peer tutoring. Tutors, however, usually benefit most from peer tutoring, perhaps because they engage in rehearsal of course content while preparing to teach tutees.

Noting the benefits that students receive from acting as tutors, Pigotf and his associates (Pigotf, Fantuzzo, and Clement, 1986;Wolfe, Funtuzzo, and Wolfe, 1986; Wolfe, Funtuzzo, and Wolter, 1984) developed a procedure that enables both members of a peer tutoring pair to participate in the tutor role. With this technique, known as reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT), students function reciprocally as both tutor and tutee.

2.5 Historical background of peer tutoring

Peer tutoring is not a modern concept. Throughout the ages, children have always been used to teach other children. Gartner et al (1971) and Allen (1976a), in their review of peer tutoring, trace the history of peer tutoring from the ancient Roman and Hindu cultures through the English 'monitorial system' of the early

nineteenth century to the present tutorial system in the United States. Peer tutoring was well received because it is of real value both to the pupils being tutored and the tutors themselves.

The student tutoring idea spread to the United States in the early nineteenth century. Paolitto (1976) reported that William Bentley Fowle advanced the intrinsic value of the monitorial system as a learning experience for the monitors. He felt that even if teachers had the time to teach each and every one of their students personally, the students should be allowed to teach because by teaching other children they would be constantly reviewing their own work (Ng, 1985).

Today peer tutoring is advocated because students are no longer seen as passive receivers of instruction. They are viewed as active participants in the teaching and learning process. According to Hallinan (1982);

"Peers are strong socialization agents that can shape the academic attitudes, values and behavior of a student."

In summary, peer tutoring has been used throughout the time in all cultural backgrounds and settings. Though very little empirical data has been obtained until recently, the evidence gathered seems to point to the feasibility and effectiveness of student teaching as an alternative approach to instruction in most contexts.

2.6 Why use peer tutors?

Peer tutors are available for training and can be easily monitored and organized within schools. If peer tutoring is used as a strategy in writing classes, then the problems of class size can be overcome. Moreover, the ready and willing peer tutors are available for regular, daily tutoring within the recognized educational environment. Their training, and the careful monitoring of their tutoring performance can be systematically done by teachers as an important part of their professional responsibility. Apart from this, low achievers in a class respond well to peer teacher. In common with other researchers and practitioners, Wheldall (1999) finds that children enjoy being tutored by other pupils. Peer tutoring can provide valuable instruction in a friendly way. As a result, the learning context becomes more relaxed and less threatening for pupils with learning difficulties.

Peer tutoring also benefits the teacher as well as the peers in the group. Research evidence consistently indicates that there are academic gains for both the participants in the teaching partnership. It also promotes caring and concern for others, in contrast to the overly competitive edge evident in much contemporary schooling (Wheldall, 1999).

Crismore and Siti (1997) stated that it was easier for her students to learn English from their classmates who were about the same level as they were in English ability because of the way their peers used both Malay and English to explain English usage. They linked a Malay example to an English example or

used Malay to explain a definition in an English dictionary. Peer tutors' constant using of familiar words, examples and ideas as a link to a new, unfamiliar one made learning and writing an easier process to the learners in the group.

Piaget (1959) and Vygotsky (1962), while differing in several ways, both discussed the benefits of peer tutoring for learners. Piaget pointed out that such interaction could be the source of cognitive conflict, which can lead learners to reexamine and adjust the frameworks through which they view the world. A key concept for Vygotsky was the zone of proximal development, i.e. the area between what we can do on our own and what we can do with others. He saw interaction with others as central to further learning and development. Dewey (1966), was also a strong believer in making students, rather than teachers, the hub of classroom activity. So, he said that using peer tutors to give guidance and feedback on students' writing is a good strategy in teaching.

2.7 Types of peer interaction in the writing classroom

Researchers have studied how students interact at different stages of the writing process and in different contexts. The research reviewed two types of peer interaction, collaborative writing and peer response groups. They differ in the texts produced and the roles peers assumed. The main distinction between collaborative writing and peer response groups is the ownership of texts.

In collaborative writing, two or more students work together "to produce a joint product" (Harris, 1992) which can be a plan or a text. Peers share "the

ownership of the text" (Saunders, 1989) and also share the responsibility in producing the text. In peer response, "group members work in turns with different individuals on their individually owned product" (Dipardo and Freedman, 1988) and also share the responsibility in producing the text. Teachers get students to interact in the form of responding to each other's plan or text.

The empirical studies, reviewed here will be classified under these two broad categories. Some researchers who have studied and adopted the term "collaborative writing" include Daiute and Dalton (1988,1993) and Dale (1993,1994). Some researchers who have adopted the term 'peer response groups', are Freedman (1992), Nelson and Murphy (1992a, 1992b, 1993). Peer response is sometimes referred to as "peer review" (Margelsdorf, 1992; Margelsdorf and Schlumberger, 1992; Mendonca and Johnson, 1994).

In collaborative writing, students are usually expected to interact throughout the four stages of writing. At the planning stage, the main task is to produce a prewriting plan. As participants in a group, students are expected to generate topics, to suggest, evaluate, and monitor the organization of points; and to consider the audience and the purpose of the texts. As listeners in a group, students need to listen to and monitor peers' and their own thoughts, and to verbalize the thoughts. The appointed writer jots down the points.

In peer response, students can respond to plans at the planning stage, and texts at the revising and editing stages of writing. At the planning stage, the writer may need to read or talk about the content, and to justify the points generated in the individual plans. Peer reviewers need to evaluate ideas, the relevance of the

content of the texts and organization of points, and to suggest alternatives. Thus, peer interaction can be purposeful and can assume an important role in the writing process.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CL methods for the promotion of pupil learning and social relations relative to more traditional whole-class methods of teaching, (Abrami et al., 1995; Bennett & Dunne, 1992; Cohen, 1994b; Johnson & Johnson,1989; Sharon,1999; Slavin,1995).

2.8 Studies on the effects of peer tutoring in writing

Peer tutoring has been used in almost every field; the bulk of the research studies on peer tutoring have been done in the area of reading. Not many empirical studies have been done on peer tutoring in writing.

Crismore and Siti (1997) carried out an exploratory study on collaborative learning out of long - standing frustration with the traditional "talk and chalk" or "sage on stage" style of teaching. She implemented this strategy to teach English at Polytechnic Staff Training Centre (PSTC) in the state of Johore, Malaysia. Her students at PSTC represent three ethnic groups. About 80% are Malays, 10% are Chinese, and 10% are Indians. The peer tutoring programme was done with carefully selected mixed ability group each with carefully chosen leader who was good in English but who also had appropriate leadership qualities, such as

patience, dedication, motivation, assertiveness or non-assertiveness, teaching ability and interpersonal skills. The class was divided into five groups of students who stayed together all semester. The leaders were two male and two female Chinese students and one female Malay student.

Findings showed that Chinese students tend to take the risks of communicating in English with students from other cultures, such as Malay students. However, most Malay students seem to shy away from taking the risks of using English with others. Over the semester, she observed that she had selected good leaders, which is an important factor for successful collaborative learning.

All were very effective at teaching concepts and skills in English to their mostly Malay group members but each leader was effective for different reasons. Each leader had different strengths and used different teaching styles and approaches; however all were patient and showed promise to become excellent future polytechnic teachers.

Crismore and Siti's study is similar to the present study in using a tutor who is more able in English Language to tutor the less able peers in a group. The leaders and learners who participated in Crismore and Siti's study were adults and were in institution of higher learning. The leader was able to understand the instructions for writing tasks, so they did not undergo special training. In the present study, the tutors who were only fifteen years old underwent training in order to carry out the tutoring session as designed by the researcher. Since the

students in the present study were from lower secondary school they needed constant supervision and guidance from the researcher.

A study was conducted by Mohsa (1994) who examined the effect of Peer Conference on the quality of written composition. The study was conducted by using twenty eight TESL trainee teachers who were divided into three groups namely the lower intermediate, intermediate and advanced language proficiency groups. The students were under observation for a period of eight weeks. It explored the nature of language used during the interaction in the conference sessions. The speech acts used in the peer conference which will enable ESL teachers to prepare their students for conference sessions in writing were closely examined. The findings of the study proved that all the three levels of teacher trainees showed significant improvement in their writing after peer conference in important aspects of writing such as the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics compared to their first and revised drafts done prior to peer conference.

Students in Mohsa's study were TESL teacher trainees and they interacted in a group to generate ideas and produce individual text. No tutors were involved and the students were very independent as they were matured students and could give ideas. They collaborated in order to generate better ideas and construct good sentences. In the present study the researcher had to guide and train the tutors as they were not highly proficient in English Language. All the writing tasks used for tutoring session had to be carefully explained to them before the tutoring session started. The role of the tutor was very important in this study as the

success of the tutoring programme depended on the efficiency of the tutor to impart the knowledge they have received to the tutees in their groups who were low achievers.

Yong (1998) conducted a study on UPM undergraduates to examine how collaborative group functions to improve writing strategies. The researcher used the group of students in her English class as subjects to gain insight into collaborative writing to explore how students develop their ideas through their interactions; for content-based report writing.

The findings show that students who were engaged in this collaborative writing not only mastered the techniques in report writing but also collaborated well in brainstorming plans, generating ideas, making decisions and revising drafts to produce a joint text.

In Yong's study students collaborated to generate ideas but they produced a shared text. However, in the present study, the tutors and tutees collaborated during peer tutoring but produced individual texts at the end of each tutoring session.

Sim (1998) conducted a study on the role of peer interaction in a writing class of Form Four students. The research was a case study of four mixed ability students of average and below average proficiency students working together to plan and compose assigned writing tasks that they would not do on their own prior to the collaboration in a naturalistic context of a secondary school classroom. The focus is on the four students engaging in spontaneous peer

interaction and on the functions of speech in the process of planning and constructing texts.

In the studies conducted locally by Crismore and Siti, Mohsa and Yong, the subjects were adults studying in colleges and universities. In Sim's study the subjects were upper secondary school students. In the present study, the researcher carried out an exploratory study on peer tutoring among the low achievers in a lower secondary level. No research has been done on this area with using lower secondary school students who were to be guided by the peer who played the role of a tutor. It was the concern of the researcher to bring improvement in English Language to the lower secondary school students who will be sitting for PMR, the first government examination at the lower secondary level. Apart from this, the writing skills that they have acquired during the peer tutoring would help them to be more proficient in the English Language and prepare them cope well in Upper Secondary level where they have to sit for SPM examinations.

Jacobs (1989) conducted a study at Chiang Mai University, Thailand, to investigate miscorrection in group writing activities. The subjects were eighteen third year English majors. They were enrolled in a course devoted seventy percent to writing and 30% to reading. The class met twice a week. The normal procedure for writing compositions in the course was for students to first write a sentence outline, which was checked by the teacher for content, organization, and grammar, and students changed the outline into a three-paragraph composition.

Next, the composition was evaluated by the teacher and returned for possible correction by students.

Jacobs discovered that many students felt inadequate to comment on their peer's writing. They felt that they were homogeneous in the knowledge of writing to help each other. There was no room for disagreements because most students agreed with their peers' comments. They did not argue when their peers commented on their writing.

Although they were instructed to converse in English the students spoke Thai more than English in the group. They were not very confident in using English as they felt if they use English they would say less and may not able to express their comments clearly. The researcher concluded his findings by stating that students' interaction had a valuable role to play in foreign language teaching. Working together in groups provided students with a different context in which they could use their new language structures.

In Singapore, a report mentioned in schools council Papers (1983), by a school using peer tutoring states that students can relate better with their peers rather than with adults (Ng, 1985). The report also states that there are students who need more personalized attention than others. In the tutoring programme, better students are used to tutor weaker students once a week outside curriculum time. The tutors act as "teachers" to their weaker classmates. The tutor's not only help the students with the tasks given to them, but they also grade the assignments done. The tutoring programme appears to be successful. Students involved in the programme claim to enjoy the experience and find it helpful. Weaker students

who are shy to approach their class teachers now have somebody to turn to for help. The programme was beneficial for both the tutors and tutees as well. The tutors particularly were motivated to work harder to know the subject better. It concludes that better students had become less selfish and competitive and had become more willing to share their knowledge.

Prema Kumari Dheram (1995) conducted a study on feedback on writing. Five respondents were selected from a ten-week pre - sessional course conducted at a British University. Two of them were from Japan. One had completed his schooling, and planned to register for an undergraduate course in engineering, the other was a graduate who intended to do business studies in Britain. The others comprised one student each from Turkey, Libya, and Qatar, who were not only considerably older than their Japanese counterparts, but also had work and research experience in their home country. Four sources were used to collect the data: a questionnaire, an interview, classrooms observation, and the repondents' writing.

The respondents' observations revealed that they considered peer feedback useful for both developing and evaluating content. It appears to reduce students' dependency on the teacher, encourage them to accept someone other than the teacher as their teacher, and help them become aware of the need for producing reader based text. The necessary guidance is given by encouraging peer feed back during the writing process. Peer feedback on the first draft helps the students to rely on both the teacher and peers for collaborations rather than for evaluations.

Yarrow (2001) conducted a study on the effects of meta - cognitive prompting and structured peer interaction. This project was implemented with a mixed ability class of (10-11) year olds in a medium sized primary school with a catchment area of overall average socio economic status. The class included a significant number of children, who exhibited social and behavioral difficulties, and the teachers in the school had serious concerns about the work ethics and slow academic progress of the class as a whole. This age group was chosen as they were considered developmentally mature enough to comprehend what was required of them (Sutherland and Toppings 1999).

The findings show that every child who took part in this study indicated that their writing had improved. They stated in the post questionnaire some areas of improvement such as in ideas, organization and structure, description, spelling and punctuation. Apart from this, the students also felt more confident in writing and had better concentration.

Gabriele and Montecinos (2001) examine whether motivational goals influence the participation and performance of low achieving students during collaborative problem solving with a high achieving partner. Thirty-five pairs of fourth and fifth grade students were randomly assigned to a set of instructions designed to induce students to adopt a learning goal or a performance goal. The following day, the students were individually given a post test on problems similar to those worked on collaboratively.

The findings showed that, the low achieving students given learning goal instructions performed better on the post - test problems and perceived their

partners' competence as more similar to their own than did the low achieving students given performance goal instructions. No differences in overall amount or level of low achievers' participation during collaborative problem solving were observed.

Andrea Machado (2000) did a small-scale research project applying Vygotskian concepts of the zone of proximal development to the evaluation of English as a Foreign Language, suggesting that language assessment should be adapted to meeting the students' needs for using language in 'real life' learning situations. For Vygotsky, the mental development of a child is distributed along stages: the child progresses to a more advanced stage where she/he is able to carry out alone certain tasks for which, in the previous stage, she/he would have needed the help of an adult (or "more capable peer") to perform successfully. The findings show that relying on the collective resources of the group minimized frustration and risks. Furthermore it proved that it is possible to learn a foreign language from one's peers. It is perfectly possible for an L2 learner to internalize, that is, to learn, what he/she has heard from another learner in a mutually collaborative situation.

Veenman (2002) conducted a study to assess the implementation effects of a course on cooperative learning (CL) for students and teachers. The course was conducted at two different teachers education colleges in The Netherlands. The participants in the study were primary school students and teachers from two teacher education colleges enrolled in either second or third year. At both locations sub-studies were undertaken: Firstly, an observational study of the

implementation of the CL teaching behaviors and pupil engagement rates during co-operative activities: Secondly, a questionnaire was administered on the student teachers' attitudes towards CL: Thirdly, there was a questionnaire study of the pupils' attitudes towards CL; and fourthly, a questionnaire study of the reaction of the student's teachers to the course on CL.

The findings of this study showed that the majority of the student teachers subscribed to CL to achieve both academic and social goals and also showed readiness to use CL methods in their future lessons. The pupils taught by the student teachers also showed positive attitudes towards working in groups and rated the benefits of working in groups relative to working alone quite positively.

The findings showed that the students believed RPT to be an effective technique for learning difficult course content and as a result, they were better prepared for the in-class examinations.

2.9 Conclusion

Generally, studies show that peer tutoring is beneficial. The main function of peer tutoring is that it improves the academic performance and attitudes of the students who receive tutoring and those who provide it. It helps slower and under achieving students to learn and succeed in school. The peer tutors benefit from preparing and giving lessons to other students because they learn more about the lessons they prepare and present. According to Montague (1993) peer tutors and their students receive higher grades on texts and develop more positive attitudes towards the courses in which peer teaching has occurred.

Students who are involved with peer tutoring are almost always more motivated; seem to have increased attention span and engage in more spontaneous conversation apart from being more active and involved in their classes. Another notable benefit that students involved in peer tutoring gain is, participation in learning increases and the nature of their discourses becomes more analytic and problem-solution-oriented-which results in a large increase in vocabulary. Peer group members can offer emotional benefits such as affection, sympathy, and understanding (Blacks, 2002).

The researcher carried out peer tutoring in her ESL class which seemed very ideal for her students who were low achievers. The findings show that peer tutoring helped the tutors in this study to obtain grades A and B which are considered quality passes in PMR examinations 2002. Simultaneously, 37 out of 41 subjects who were involved in this study passed the English Language in PMR 2002.