

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss and conclude the findings of the study carried out by the researcher and will give the implications and directions for further research. The purpose of this study is to show the effects of peer tutoring on the improvement of English Language among low achievers. The discussions of the findings were based on five research questions. They are as follows: -

5.1 Research Question 1: -

Has peer tutoring improved the attitude of low achievers towards learning English Language?

The findings were based on pre and post study questionnaires, classroom observation, and interviews. The pre - study analysis shows that the subjects were from average background and staying in Desa Pandan flats, the Indian settlement and housing areas around the school. They were not very interested in English Language, as the majority of the students would not speak the language as their proficiency level was low and they were also very shy to converse in L2. They were poorly motivated and had the opinion that English is very difficult. They had problems in comprehending texts written in English

as their vocabulary was inadequate and they had no habit of reading materials or books in English. In order to read and comprehend successfully one must have a good command of the vocabulary in any given language.

Students in this study fared poorly or were not very interested in writing as they could not understand the topics given to them and it led to problems in generating ideas related to it and finally problems in constructing sentences as their vocabulary was poor.

Post - study interviews conducted on the tutees reveal that peer tutoring showed significant improvement in attitude towards English Language. The tutees agreed that they now showed interest in learning English Language and followed instructions given by the tutors. They were also very attentive and active during discussion and could contribute ideas. This shows that positive attitude of the tutees enabled active learning to take place and all the tutees were very hardworking and committed to the task given.

When asked about their targeted grade for English language: the tutors and tutees gave a low grade such as grade C, and D. However, after peer tutoring, their attitude towards English language changed and they set a higher target such as grade A, B, and C as shown in Table 4.18 and 4.19.

Classroom observation by the teacher, further gave affirmation to students attitude towards English language. Malay students such as Iti Aisyah, Muhammad Firdaus, Eko Bang Bang, who had earlier refused to attempt to talk in English language, developed confidence and overcome shyness over the period of time. Towards the end of the programme, they participated actively during discussion

and started using English language to friends and to their English language teacher.

Mustakim was a male leader whose group made much progress in English proficiency. His weakest student was Muhammad Rizal who has never passed any of the English language examinations and is not liked by others in the class because of his poor performance. Mustakim spent a great deal of time patiently teaching Rizal and the other two members in the group. Rizal's attitude changed towards English Language and in PMR examination, he passed by scoring grade D. Thilagawathy was a female leader, who was very committed to her group and her teaching ability brought changes in the attitudes among members of the group especially to Firdaus. He only spoke in Malay in the beginning and had no confidence achieving success in English because he has never passed his English examination before. After peer tutoring, he managed to score grade C in PMR examination as his attitude changed towards English Language over the time.

In conclusion, it has been proven that peer tutoring has improved the attitude of low achievers towards learning English Language.

5.2 Research question 2:

Is peer tutoring effective in aiding low achievers in their writing skills in particular?

The writing skills of low achievers were analyzed through the comparison study of the tutees Writing Tasks 1 and 2. The components taken into account for Writing Task 1 were the content, vocabulary, mechanics, and total scores. While the components for Writing Task 2 were format, contents, vocabulary, mechanics, and total score.

Table 4.11 and 4.12 shows the performance of the tutees in Writing Tasks 1 and 2 respectively. The total score for Writing Task 1 was 50 marks. In the pre-test 87.1% (n=27) of the tutees scored between 11 and 20 marks. In the post-test, an improvement in writing was shown whereby the majority, 87.1% (n=27) of the tutees scored above 20 marks. In Writing Task 2, 80.6% (n=25) of the tutees scored below 10 marks in the pre-test. However, in the post-test, 90.3% (n=28) of the tutees scored above 21 marks. Overall, the tutees also showed improvement in their scores in vocabulary, mechanics and contents.

Comparison study of Table 4.11 and 4.12 of Writing Task 1 and 2 shows that the tutees showed improvement in post-test. The improvement by getting good marks in the components of writing skills in their language course. The improvement by getting good marks in the components of writing skill shows that peer tutoring is effective in aiding low achievers in their language course.

Peer tutoring, also benefited the tutors. The tutors full commitment and leadership qualities brought success in achieving group goals. In the beginning of the semester, collaborative learning groups showed little progress but by the end of the semester these students began to learn quite a lot about using English Language. This acknowledgement motivated them to learn even more.

5.3 Research Question 3

Has peer tutoring brought about an improvement in overall English language scores?

Table 4.14 shows the performance of the tutors and tutees in Mid Semester and PMR Examination 2002. The majority of the tutees, 96.8% (n=30) scored grade E while seven tutors scored grade D and three tutors scored grade C in Mid Semester Examinations. In PMR 2002, the tutors and tutees showed improvement in their grades. Among the tutees, 32.3% (n=10) scored grade C, 45.2% (n=14) scored grade D and only 22.5% (n=7) scored grade E. Among the tutors, two scored grade A, three scored grade B, two scored grade C and only one scored grade D.

The analysis shows that the tutees improved by the majority in scoring grade C and D while only seven tutees (22.5%) scored grade E which may be due

to other aspects related to examinations. Among the tutors, nine managed to score grade A, B, C while only one scored grade D.

In conclusion, peer tutoring has brought improvement in achievement for both the tutors and tutees who participated in the study which has brought about an improvement in overall English Language scores of the subjects in this study.

Table 4.13 shows the comparison study of the performance of tutees in pre and post-tests of Paper 1. In general the students showed improvement in total score. In pre-test, the lowest score was between 11 and 20 marks and the highest was between 21 and 30 marks. In the post-test the lowest score was between 11 and 20 marks but the highest score was between 31 and 40 marks. In grammar section, the lowest score for pre-test was between 6 and 10 marks while the highest score was between 11 and 15 marks. In the post-test the lowest score was between 11 and 15 marks but the highest score was between 15 and 20 marks.

In forms and functions section in the pre-test the lowest score was between 4 marks and below and no one scored more than that but in the post-test, the lowest score was 4 marks while the highest score was between 5 and 7 marks. In comprehension section, in the pre-test the lowest score was 10 marks and below and the highest score was between 11 and 15 marks. The lowest score in post-test was 10 marks and below but the highest score was between 16 and 20 marks.

Table 4.11 and 4.12 shows the scores attained by the tutees in Paper 2. The post-test result shows that the tutees showed improvement in all the components of the writing task. Improvement is seen in the lowest and highest course of tutees in Paper 2. The comparison study of scores obtained by the tutees

in pre and post-test in Paper 1 and 2 shows that peer tutoring was very effective and brought about an improvement in the English Language scores of the tutees.

5.4 Research Question 4

In what areas do low achievers find peer tutoring beneficial?

The findings of this research shows that peer tutoring is beneficial to low achievers in enriching their vocabulary and instilling positive reactions towards learning English Language.

Table 4.15 shows the analysis of Paper 1 exam questions of Mid Semester and Trial Examinations. The tutees showed improvement in scores in Trial Examinations. Improvement was seen in answering comprehension, literature, language forms and functions, and text completion questions. In Mid Semester Examinations about 35.5% (n=11) of the tutees scored between 0 and 10 marks in comprehension while 54.5% (n=20) of the tutees scored between 11 and 20 marks. In Trial Examinations, only 19.4% (n=6) of the tutees scored between 0 and 10 marks while 80.6% (n=25) of the tutees scored between 11 and 20 marks. This shows that peer tutoring has helped in enrichment of vocabulary of the tutees which resulted in they performing well in answering comprehension questions in Trial Examinations 2002.

In order to perform well in comprehension section the tutees must understand the passages well and choose the correct answer. All the tutees admitted during the interview that peer tutoring gave them not only a chance to

discuss but to understand the other aspects of language, which enable them to perform well in Paper 1.

Table 4.16 shows the performance of tutees in Paper 2 in Mid Semester Examinations the majority of the tutees, 64.5% (n=20) only scored between 0 and 10 marks while the 35.5% (n=11) of the tutees scored between 11 and 20 marks in Question 1 whereas in Question 2, 58.1% (n=18) of the tutees scored between 0 and 10 marks and 41.9% (n=13) of the tutees scored between 11 and 20 marks. In Trial Examination improvement was seen in scores of the tutees in both Question 1 and 2. It was noticed that only 45.2% (n=14) of the tutees scored between 0 and 10 marks while the majority, 54.8% scored between 11 and 20 marks.

Improvement of scores of the tutees in Paper 2 shows that peer tutoring has brought about improvement in their writing. Through peer tutoring the tutees acquired vocabulary skills which helped them in constructing sentences in composition writing.

The positive change in attitude of the tutees helped them to progress in English Language. Table 4.17 shows the post-study reaction of the tutees on peer tutoring. All the tutees stated that they enjoyed learning with their friends as it is easier to ask friends for clarification whenever they had problem in English Language. They got more ideas when the topics were discussed among friends before writing. The tutees looked forward to tutoring sessions and this positive attitude of the tutees was essential for the success of the tutoring programmes. It is proven here that low achievers have benefited in many aspects of L2 learning through peer tutoring sessions.

5.5 Research Question 5

In what areas low achievers find peer tutoring problematic?

The low achievers stated that brainstorming session and discipline as problematic areas during peer tutoring. Table 4.20 shows the tutees opinion on brainstorming session. All the tutees find listing out words related to the topic given for writing tasks as a big problem. About 67.7% (n=21) of the tutees stated that sometimes they lacked ideas related to the topics and thus generating ideas in L2 an uphill task. Majority of the tutees, 87.1% (n=27) had problems in constructing sentences in English Language. Most of the time the tutees depended on their tutors' help to overcome this problem. So, these tutees could not participate actively in the brainstorming session in the beginning.

Another area, which was problematic during the peer tutoring, was the discipline of the members in respective groups. Table 4.21 shows the summary of the tutees' perception on group work. Subjects in this study were divided into 10 groups and they were all seated in the same classroom, which did not have more room. So, the movement of the tutees was restricted. During discussion tutees tend to raise their voice in excitement when contributing ideas. When the class is noisy, it is difficult for the other tutees to concentrate in their work. Another problem that the tutees disliked during peer tutoring was the playful nature of the tutees in particular groups. If the tutors are not strict the tutees do not work seriously and not committed to their work. Misunderstandings among members in a group and exchanging of harsh words hurt each other's feelings. Although only

one tutee had this problem, the tutors must be aware of this and must try to solve misunderstandings amicably.

The tutor's role is very important here to make sure everyone in the group cooperates and tolerates each other during peer tutoring. Discipline has to be maintained in order to get the cooperation of the members in the group in order to carry out peer tutoring sessions successfully.

Towards the end of the semester, the tutors and tutees managed to overcome this problem because by helping each other an understanding was developed and slowly a positive attitude was developed which contributed to successful peer tutoring.

5.6 Summary

In conclusion, findings showed that peer tutoring improved the attitude of low achievers towards English Language. Warrington, (2000) stated that different attitudes of students either promote or hinder success. The tutees showed full commitment towards completing tasks given during tutoring sessions. The tutees also developed a liking for English Language and cultivated responsibility towards the Language.

Table 4.11 and 4.12 shows the scores of tutees' writing skills in pre and post- tests of writing tasks 1 and 2. The improved scores in the components of writing skills in the revised draft shows that peer tutoring is effective. The classroom observation showed that students felt happier and more confident as

they progressed in acquiring the language skills. Moreover, the analysis of the pre and post test questionnaires regarding writing skills show that these students look forward to tutoring sessions because they can get an opportunity to socialize with the other members of the group. By doing this, they also improve their language skills and spend their time in a fruitful way.

Peer tutoring has also brought about an improvement in language scores of the students in the study. Table 4.14 shows the comparison study of the tutors and tutees in Mid Semester and PMR Examinations. Mid Semester Examination was conducted in the first week of May 2002 while PMR Examination was conducted in first week of October 2002. The overall performance of the tutors and tutees was very satisfactory.

In Mid Semester Examinations, 96.8% (n=30) of the tutees obtained grade E. In PMR Examination only 22.5% (n=7) still obtained grade E while the rest obtained grade E. Among the tutors, 70.0% (n=7) scored grade D while 30.0% (n=3) scored grade C in Mid Semester Examinations. In PMR Examinations only one tutor scored grade D, four scored grade C, three scored grade B and two scored grade A.

The comparison study of the results of the tutors and tutees in this study showed that over time peer tutoring helped them to score better grades in their English Language performance.

By the end of the semester, students were able to speak, read and write well in English language. Students who always used Malay Language to contribute points slowly started using English Language although they were not

very proficient. Students in a group started to compare grades in every examination and were aspiring to progress. Nichols & Miller (1994) said that when children collaborate, opportunities arise for social comparisons between themselves and their partners. Their findings were proved true in this study.

Fourthly, it was found that the low achievers benefited through this peer tutoring session. The students could get help from the tutors to get ideas regarding topics given for writing sessions. Some of the students stated in the questionnaire on writing aspect, that they often encounter problems because they either cannot understand the topics or have no ideas related to the topic. Peer tutoring was a good alternative. Moreover, Bronfen Brenner (1970) states that students learn better with peers than adults and this is proven to be true.

Peer tutors were about the same age, came from the same culture, had the same schooling experience and had a similar socio-economic background. The tutors used Malay language to explain the meaning of words and translated sentences in Malay language to English language. The tutees also felt free to ask many questions to their tutor without feeling any embarrassment or fear of using incorrect sentences in English language.

The research showed that, students who participated in this peer tutoring session could achieve good grades because of the co-operation shown among the members in each group. Each tutor felt responsible for the progress of the members in the group. Thus, the tutor was very committed throughout the tutoring session and was willing to help the poor students in the group. Co-operation was seen among the students to complete tasks given in every tutoring session. The

tutors spent extra time after school to help the students in their group to overcome problems related to English Language. Peer tutoring was beneficial in many aspects but then the students who participated, still encountered problems during the peer tutoring. Low achievers faced problems during brainstorming sessions because of their inability to converse in L2. The tutors used translation methods and was quite successful in sustaining these students' attention during English lessons as they cannot expect this method from their English Language teacher.

Most of the students stated in their questionnaire that they encountered problem in writing because they could not construct sentences in English. Peer tutors' translation method proved successful in helping them overcome this problem and over time, there was a change in their attitude towards English language. A few students had problems with the attitude of the members in their group. Patience and tolerance of the tutors brought changes to the students' attitude and they started to co-operate well and started caring for each other. Lack of discipline among the weak students who were not interested in the beginning caused slight problem in the beginning of the session. With the guidance of the teacher, peer tutors managed to overcome this problem. At the end of this programme, the students who were not interested in the beginning showed a positive reaction when they improved in English language scores and was motivated to learn.

5.7 Implication of findings

Based on the literature reviewed and the findings from this research, group work such as peer tutoring has brought improvement in English Language among low achievers. During peer tutoring collaborative learning takes place. So, collaborative learning needs to be ingrained in the students at secondary school level. Students being in a new environment for the first time create different reactions and this adds richness towards invention, improvisation, and discovery, which are hallmarks of successful teaching and learning.

As stated by Hallinan (1982), in the literature review, peers are strong socialization agents that can shape the attitudes, values, and academic behavior of a student. This study on peer tutoring brought significant improvement in the English language among the low achievers.

Apart from Hallinan, another researcher and practitioner on peer tutoring stated in Literature review was Wheldall (1999) who finds that children enjoy being tutored by other pupils and peer tutors can provide valuable instruction in a friendly way. Wheldall's statement was found to be very true in this study. The low achievers were shy to approach their English language teacher although she is friendly and approachable, because they were not proficient in L2. Peer tutoring came as a good solution for these low achievers because they had their peers as tutors who are also their classmates. So, they approached their tutors who teach in a friendly way to help solve problems related to English Language. As a result the

learning context becomes more relaxed and less threatening for pupils with learning difficulties.

From this analysis of all the five research questions, it is proven that peer tutoring has brought an improvement in academic performance, attitude, values, and behaviors of the low achievers. As a whole the students who participated in this study benefited a lot in acquiring the English language skills. Apart from this, they also developed leadership qualities and learner qualities such as patience, tolerance, cooperation, sincerity, and sacrifice. All these qualities were instilled in the students over the time during the peer tutoring session. So, peer tutoring should be carried out in all the secondary schools in Malaysia in order to attain vision 2020.

Peer tutoring is beneficial towards helping weak students. Slavin's (1983) Meta analysis of cooperative learning describes the results of forty - one studies on student achievement and supported cooperative learning as beneficial. Johnson at al. (1981) who found positive effects of cooperative learning through their analysis of the results of 122 studies which proves that collaboration resulted in significant gains in achievement, self esteem and social development.

Zhang (1995), an English tutor at Fijian University in China, states that "In cooperative learning, advanced students can work as peer teachers to help relieve the teaching burden and strengthen their own mastery of the thing taught, while the slow ones get more attention and it will prove a way out for both students and tutors." All this research consistently indicates that not only weak

students but also good students in cooperative learning situations score higher on achievement tests than students learning through other methods.

5.8 Implementation

There are four critical components of any successful peer tutoring programme and are called as four C's of effective peer tutoring (Wheldall, 1999). They are content, context, confidence, and competence

a) Content: the importance of using the right material

The first thing to determine before setting up a peer tutoring partnership is whether tutors have a learning task that is suited to peer tutoring. In most circumstances, this means that tutors should select learning tasks that may be appropriately structured, sequenced and made suitable for the pupils to work on together. Research shows that the most successful peer tutoring occurs where the material to be taught has to be both something the pupil needs to learn, and also within the knowledge and competence base of the tutor.

b) Context: the importance of creating the right environment.

The context in which peer tutoring takes place is an important consideration. Context means the physical and the psychological environment. For effective peer tutoring to take place, pupils need to feel comfortable, secure, and relaxed. It is important to match pupils and tutors carefully. When selecting tutors, focus should be on personal qualities such as patience, commitment, empathy, and a friendly, non-aggressive disposition.

c) Confidence: the importance of training.

The training of tutors is the key to effective peer tutoring. Effective training in how to tutor is an important pre requisite skill for anyone who is to instruct another person optimally. To be effective, tutors must be confident, but confident in a positive, practiced way. We need peer tutors who are quite confident of their tutoring skills, who instill confidence in the pupils they are tutoring and who are sensitive to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Tutors need to know exactly what to do at each stage in each session and how to cope with any problem that arises. Plan for at least two or three training sessions for tutors prior to the commencement of the programme.

d) Competence: the importance of monitoring.

Having trained the peer tutors and commenced the programme, it is important to keep an eye on the performance of the tutors, as it is to monitor the progress of the low achievers. Observing a tutoring session is one way to check that the tutor is undertaking the tutor role competently. Providing feedback to the tutor is very important but remember to recognize and to praise the positive ways in which the tutor is working with his or her partner as well as pointing out any areas for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties can learn quickly only if they are taught effectively.

5.9 Role of the English teacher

Effective peer tutoring is wholly dependent upon the professional skills and expertise of the committed teachers. The teacher, who is the researcher, relied on the findings of the collaborative learning research studies carried out by Zhuang (1995), Kagan (1992), Long and Bulgarella (1985), as a guide. By coordinating peer tutoring programmes in their classrooms, tutors can harness the talent of their pupils to optimize effective learning time. Teachers should be active monitors of group interaction and task progress. Such monitoring is needed at the beginning of the group work to be sure tutors in the groups understand their tasks.

5.10 Conclusion

From the interview with the students it was gathered that their English language teacher is very helpful, cheerful, caring, innovative, willing to sacrifice time and often motivated them. These abilities in the teacher attributed partly to the success of this research on peer tutoring.

5.11 Limitations of the study

There are four limitations to this study, which focus on peer tutoring to improve the English Language performance of low achievers.

1. The study was conducted over a period of six months. The time for training the tutors for each session and implementing it in the class is insufficient. The peer tutoring session has to be continued after school hours. The study gave emphasis to aspects in writing as the low achievers writing ability was poor. So grammar rules and sentence patterns were taught during writing sessions. Therefore in order to know whether the important aspects of language learning has taken place, a longer time period is needed to observe the students in each group.
2. The study did not analyze the composing processes of the students when they were constructing texts individually. This was because the students constructed individual texts within the stipulated time after school. Their low proficiency level and insufficient class time did not permit the actual act of composing at the individual level.
3. The student's actual level of ability in English language within the zone of proximal development was not defined at the beginning of the study. The tutors were regarded as more capable than the tutees based on the scores in End – of - Year examinations while they were in Form Two.

4. The situational factors that influence peer tutoring that were identified were limited to the ones that were observable at the time of the study, and that could be confirmed by the use of interviews and questionnaires. There are other possible contextual factors that could have an effect on peer tutoring.

5.12 Recommendations for future study

Future research should improve on the present study and should examine peer tutoring in greater depth. There are three aspects of peer tutoring that need further investigation.

1. Studying students over a longer period of time

Proficiency in English consists of the writing ability which mainly consists of vocabulary, content and ability to construct sentences, comprehension, ability to read and understand a text, meaning of words. Grammar is the main tool for writing tasks. Since writing is a complex cognitive process and it takes time to develop, more time should be allocated to carry out writing session, comprehension and grammar related aspects should be studied separately. Preferably, studies on peer tutoring and effects of peer tutoring in English language performance and writing texts should cover the whole period of time students are in primary school (Year 1 – 6), in the lower secondary school. (Form 1 – 3) and in the upper secondary (Form 4 –5).

2) Studying the social context in greater detail.

In this study, it is evident that social context plays an important role. Some possible aspects of the social context that can be studied are students' attitude towards learning in general and the learning of English, students socio-economic background, physical environment and facilities available in school, teacher's level of English proficiency, teacher's choice of material, teacher's commitment, methodology in teaching English, and finally learning and writing composition in English Language in primary and secondary levels. The main aim is to study the possible effects of the factors and make the necessary changes so that learning will take place. According to Hentz-Lazarowitz, (1992) classroom context plays determinant role in shaping students' behaviour and the learning process.

3) Analyzing individual students in greater depth

There is a need to define the individual students zone of proximal development in writing, which can help in acquiring skills in other aspects of Language learning. The current state of each student's level of knowledge of writing at the beginning of the studies needs to be established. Students need to be observed when composing session takes place. Students' linguistic knowledge, composing and content of the topic given can be recorded. This will help the teacher to know the strengths and weakness of a child. This will help in the observation regarding the progress of the child. Teacher should also be constantly monitoring students level of progress.

4) Studying other aspects of peer tutoring in great detail.

This study had only identified some aspects and benefits of peer tutoring that is related to the students' performance in L2. Perhaps, there are other possible factors that could influence the outcome of peer tutoring.