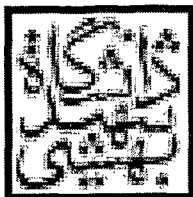


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***The Effect of Peer-Tutoring on Iranian
Elementary Students' Achievement in Listening,
Reading / Writing and their Overall Achievement***

By

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Thesis

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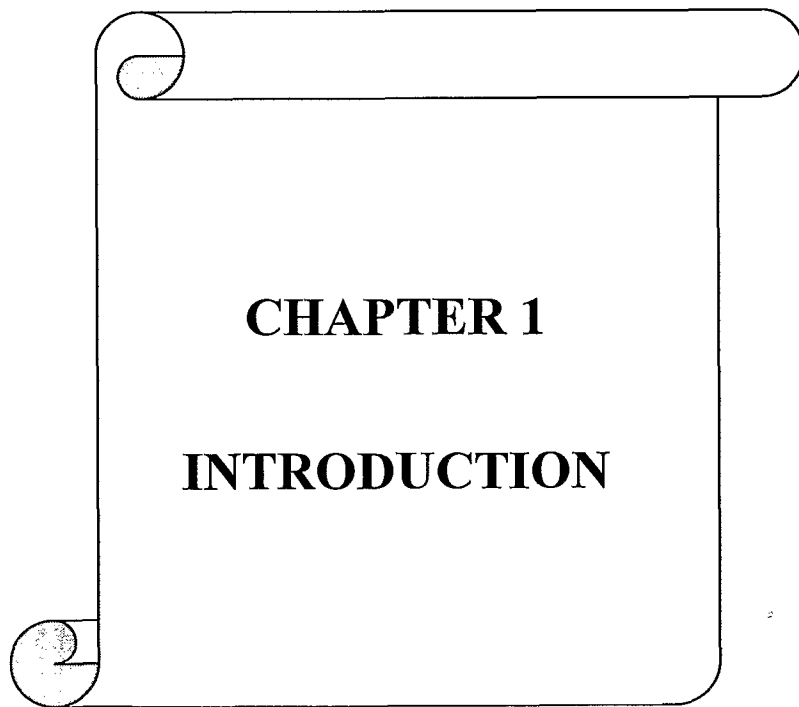
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List of abbreviations

ASR: Active Student Responding
CIRC: Cooperating Integrated Reading and Composition
CL: Cooperative Learning
CPR: Calibrated Peer Review
CSTT: Class wide Student Tutoring Teams
CWPT: Class wide Peer Tutoring
DI: Direct Instruction
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages
LD: Learning Disabilities
LMS: Learning Management System
PMII: Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention
PPP: Prompt, Pause, Praise
RPT: Reciprocal Peer Tutoring
SSBC: Social Skills Behavior Checklist
STAD: Student Team Achievement Divisions
TAI: Team Accelerated Instruction
TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TGT: Teams-Games-Tournaments
ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development
YLE test: Young Learners English test

Abstract

While strong evidence has been provided for the effectiveness of cross age peer tutoring, there is less empirical evidence to support the efficacy of same age peer tutoring. Hence, the purpose of this study was to determine the academic effects of same age peer tutoring on elementary students' achievement in listening, reading/writing and their overall achievement. Peer tutoring is a method to maximize opportunities for students to receive individualized instruction and practice; it involves recruiting peers who are trained and supervised by the classroom teacher to instruct and respond to each other. As tutors, peers provide prompts, cues, reinforcement, and feedback to their tutees. The treatment consisted of about 16 sessions containing 15 to 30 minutes peer tutoring for each of the 3 subjects in the study. The subject areas of the study were around 60 grade one elementary students. The experimental group students were taught under peer mediated system while the students in the control group were taught under teacher mediated system. The data were analyzed using several independent and paired *t*-tests and a one-way ANOVA, which were administered across pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test scores. The results indicated that same age peer tutoring led to students' significant improvement in listening, reading/writing and their overall achievement in the experimental group, and that this improvement was to stay over time as indicated by the delayed post-test. The findings also showed that students' gain score in the experimental group was significantly higher than students' gain score in control group in all subjects. The results have implications for instruction in primary schools.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminaries

Peer tutoring is a method of teaching in which one student (or a small group of students) receives personalized and individualized instruction (Medway, 1995). In tutoring, the teacher is called a tutor, while the student is called a tutee. Tutoring most often supplements traditional classroom instruction which is typically conducted in large groups for those students who require remedial help and those who have difficulty learning by conventional methods. Being closer in knowledge and status, the tutee in a peer relation feels freer to express opinions, ask questions, and risk untested solutions. The interaction between instructor and pupil is more balanced and livelier when the tutor is a peer (Damon and Phelps, 1989).

A theoretical grounding for peer tutoring can be found in Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development. Vygotsky wrote that problem-solving collaboration with a more capable peer could enable children to enter into new areas of their potential (Vygotsky, 1978). These new areas which Vygotsky called the leading edge of children's intellectual growth constitute the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky argues that it is not only information that is internalized, but also fundamental cognitive processes that are implicit in communication. Accordingly both parties of the communication stand to benefit. The tutee profits from the very acts of questioning, challenging and providing feedback to the tutor. The tutor profits from the act of reformulating knowledge for transmission to the tutee, from answering the tutee's questions and from responding to the tutee's challenges. This is what is

meant by the old axiom that one never really knows a subject until one tries to teach it (Damon, 1995).

When students do not understand a teacher's explanations, peers are often able to provide explanations in words that are more easily understood (Webb, 1991). Othman (1997) conducted a study to gain understanding of significant mechanisms of peer tutoring (PT) with respect to the balance between enhancing tutee's learning, while maintaining tutor's own achievement. Data analysis revealed that enhancing tutee's learning required tutors and tutees each to perform roles that were individually relevant. For example, at a cognitive level, tutees had to think aloud, verbalize what they had learned, and pay attention. On a behavioral level, students had for example, to listen, cooperate, compromise explain, repeat and provide cues. At the affective level, tutors had to reinforce, praise and encourage successful responses from the tutees. Many studies have indicated the benefits of peer and cross-age tutoring for students in the learning of academic skills, the development of social behaviors and classroom discipline and the enhancement of peer relations. It is recommended to use peer tutoring as an alternative means of lessening the potential effects of several factors that put low socio-economic students at risk for dropping out of school. Peer tutoring reinforces perceptions of students towards school and decreases feelings of alienation.

In most of the studies conducted so far, tutors were older than tutees and each subject had the constant role of either a tutor or a tutee to the end of the project. Therefore the present study was aimed at observing the results of peer-tutoring in a context in which tutors and tutees had the same age and each subject experienced both roles. Since as mentioned earlier tutors also benefit from instructing another peer, in

this study the tutor-tutee roles constantly changed according to the participants' ability in different subject areas.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In earlier studies of classroom second language learning, attention had been focused on teacher-pupil interaction. However studies of classroom groupings suggest that pupil-pupil interaction may lead to more comprehensible linguistic input and more productive and negotiated output. One broad review of studies of both regular and special education students and across a variety of subject areas concluded that cross-age and same-age peer mediated strategies were as effective as or more effective than the traditional teacher-mediated practices to which they were compared (Greenwood, Carta, and Kamps, 1990). But the problem is that in spite of the big number of studies conducted in this area, peer and cross-age tutoring is not in widespread use. One reason may be that although there are many positive reviews and studies in the literature, prominent researchers considered the evidence on tutoring to be insufficient as recently as 1988. One of the limitations or areas in need of further research is the effect of tutoring procedures as compared with alternative teacher- or materials-mediated procedures. A prominent issue in this area is the uncertainty about the differential effects of same-age and cross-age peer tutoring reported in the literature. Thus further studies need to be conducted in order to investigate the efficacy of same-age tutoring vis a vis cross-age tutoring and the teacher-mediated procedure. And this is what the present study intends to achieve.

1.3 Research questions

The intent of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. Does peer tutoring have any effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in listening?
2. Does peer tutoring have any effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in reading and writing?
3. Does peer tutoring have any effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' overall achievement?
4. Does peer tutoring have a long term effect on promoting students' achievement in listening?
5. Does peer tutoring have a long term effect on promoting student' achievement in reading and writing?
6. Does peer tutoring have a long term effect on promoting students' overall achievement?
7. Is there any difference between what the students have gained in listening, reading/writing and their overall score as a result of peer tutoring?

1.4 Research hypotheses

The specific hypotheses that will be tested in this study are as follows:

Null Hypothesis 1: Peer tutoring has no significant effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in listening.

Null Hypothesis 2: Peer tutoring has no significant effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in reading and writing.

Null Hypothesis 3: Peer tutoring has no significant effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' overall achievement.

Null Hypothesis 4: Peer tutoring has no significant long term effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in listening.

Null Hypothesis 5: Peer tutoring has no significant long term effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' achievement in reading and writing.

Null Hypothesis 6: Peer tutoring has no significant long term effect on promoting Iranian elementary students' overall achievement.

Null Hypothesis 7: There is no difference between what the students have gained in listening, reading/writing and their overall score as a result of peer tutoring.

1.5 Rationale of the study

In most Iranian classrooms, the existing teacher student ratio limits the teachers to match their instruction with each student's level of ability and there are often some students left behind the schedule. Most of the teachers cannot give those students enough extra help due to lack of time. Some educators argue that increased small-group discussions, as a form of tutoring, may encourage greater student participation and growth (Webb, 1992), providing opportunities for peers to assist one another in

their learning. Implementation of peer tutoring programs can increase the learning opportunities offered to students, where peers can provide individualized help to their under achieving classmates at no extra cost. Although a number of researches have been conducted on peer tutoring abroad, few empirical studies have been conducted in this area in Iran and also the efficacy of same-age tutoring compared to cross-age tutoring has not been thoroughly researched. Thus this study is going to investigate the effect of peer tutoring on students' achievement in the context of Iranian elementary schools in comparison to the traditional teacher-mediated procedures in a same-age project.

1.6 Definition of key terms

The key terms in the present study are as follows:

Class wide tutoring:

Class wide peer tutoring systems (CWPT) involve all students working in tutor-tutee pairs simultaneously (Carta, Greenwood, Dinwiddie, Kohler, & Delquadri, cited in Greenwood, 1991). As such, CWPT has been used to improve basic skill performance of low-achieving minority, disadvantaged, or students with learning disabilities (LD) within the general education classroom setting (Delquadri, Greenwood, Whorton, Carta, & Hall, 1986), and to increase the number of opportunities each student has to respond actively to academic materials (Greenwood, 1991).

Cooperative learning:

Cooperative learning is defined as a system of concrete teaching and learning techniques, rather than an approach, in which students are active agents in the process of learning through small group structures so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. There are five characteristics that feature cooperative learning: (1) positive interdependence, (2) face-to-face interaction, (3)

individual accountability, (4) interpersonal and small group skills, and (5) group processing.

Cross age tutoring:

Cross-age tutoring is an effective method to provide individualized instruction (Schradj & Valus, 1990). In cross-age tutoring arrangements, the tutor is approximately two or more years older than the tutee and usually from the same school. In some cases, however, junior-high or high-school students from nearby campuses have served as tutors of elementary students (Barbetta, Miller, Peters, Heron, & Cochran, 1991).

Peer collaboration:

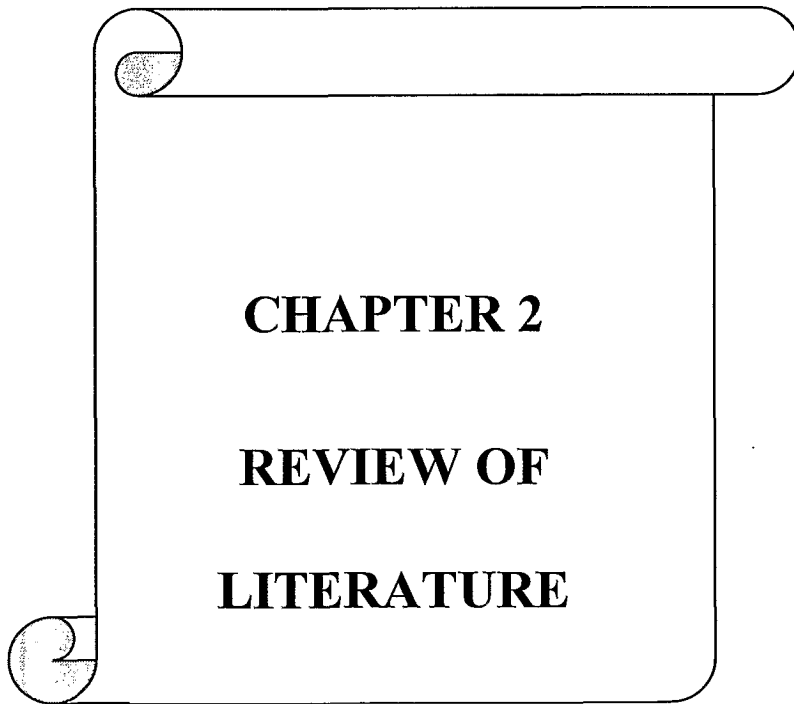
Peer collaboration differs from peer-tutoring in that children begin at roughly the same levels of competence when they collaborate to "solve tasks that neither could do previously" (Damon and Phelps 1989, p.142).

Peer tutoring:

"Peer tutoring is an approach in which one child instructs another child in material on which the first is an expert and the second is a novice (Damon and Phelps, 1989a, p.11). However, multiple definitions of peer tutoring exist, and they are not all consistent. For example not all peer-tutors are experts. They are sometimes randomly assigned same age classmates (Greenwood, Delquardi, and Hall 1989; Palincsar and Brown, 1986; Dinwiddie, 1986) or same age low achievers (Pigott, 1986).

Reciprocal tutoring:

Reciprocal tutoring programs" (1) give all students the opportunity to be tutors and thereby learn through teaching, and (2) have all tutors experience the tutee role as part of a tutoring apprenticeship" as well as including teacher supporting groups (Cartner and Riessman, 1993, 1994, p.58).



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present research that encompasses four crucial areas: learning among young learners, zone of proximal development, cooperative learning and peer tutoring. The discussion will be divided into those areas that are essential to a clearer understanding of the present research; therefore in the first section a general theoretical framework of the aforementioned issues and in the second section a review of some of the most influential works that have been done over the notion of peer tutoring are presented.

2.2 Young language learners

We all know that young learners are different from adults and due to their special characteristics they require special considerations in their education process. Young language learners are those who are learning a foreign or second language and who are doing so during the first six or seven years of formal schooling. In the education systems of most countries, young learners are between the ages of approximately five to twelve. Many young language learners can be called bilingual. Bilingual learners are those learners who learn two (or more) languages to some level of proficiency (Bialystok, 2001, p.5). This rather vague definition- impossible to pin down because of the variety of experiences of learners- would tend to include children who are learning a foreign language in immersion and bilingual programs. The term would also include many, many children who learn a foreign or second language as they interact with speakers of other languages and dialects outside formal language programs.

Young language learners may be foreign language learners. Learning a language in a situation where the language is seldom heard outside the classroom. They may be learning languages like Vietnamese, Spanish or Chinese in Germany or the United States or they may be learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in countries like Turkey, Malaysia or Iran. Other young learners may be second language learners. Second language learners are usually members of a minority language group in a country where the majority of their peers have spoken the language from birth. Second language learners do not need to speak both languages fully to be bilingual, especially in a second language situation. These learners learn the majority language as their second language. For example, they may be learning Japanese as a second language in Japan, where large number of Japanese have returned in recent years with their non-Japanese-speaking children. They may be learning English as a second language, also referred to as English as an Additional language (ESL) in Britain, Australia, Canada and the United States. They may have been born in the country and have spoken only their home language before school or they may have immigrated because of family decisions to migrate or because of traumatic events in their home country. For young second language learners, the language they are learning is usually the main language of communication in their classroom, school and community. They are spending every moment of the week engaged in learning the language and at the same time learning through the language; for these students the language is a vital pervasive foundation to their life at school.

Young language learners around the world share many common characteristics and they learn in programs that share many common beliefs and practices concerning the environment that young learners need in order to learn. Language programs for young learners vary in their purposes and intended outcomes, their duration and their

intensity. A range of different program types exist around the world for young language learners. Some foreign language programs are language awareness programs or introductory programs, designed to raise children's interest in the language and to show that language learning can be enjoyable, but without the aim of achieving set language learning goals by the end of the course. Such language programs for young learners often have a very small number of contact hours per week, perhaps only 20 minutes per week. However regular scheduled foreign language classes are the most common type of foreign language program in elementary schools. The contact hours for scheduled language classes for young learners are generally longer than introductory programs, up to two hours per week or more. These classes are often taught by a foreign language teacher who moves from class to class, talking over the class from the classroom teacher for the lesson period. In some programs classroom teachers are encouraged to work with the foreign language teacher to incorporate the language into children's content learning in other subject areas like social studies and science. Partial immersion and total immersion programs are examples of foreign language programs that are designed to ensure greater language learning gains. In partial immersion programs, children study their curriculum subjects through the target language for part of a day or language for every day of the week and every week of the year. Immersion programs are sometimes called bilingual programs.

The learning outcomes expected in foreign language programs for young learners depend on a number of factors, including the starting age, the amount of contact time and other factors, such as the appropriateness of the curriculum, the language proficiency and teaching skills of the teacher (proficiency is a general term denoting the degree of skill with which a person can use a language), and whether there are wider opportunities for the language to be encountered (e.g., in other subjects as part