The Effectiveness of Grammar Tutoring Program Based on Students' Feedback Batch 2016 ELESP

Maria Vincentia Eka Mulatsih
Sanata Dharma University
mv_ika@usd.ac.id

Abstract
In some ELESP speaking and writing classes, many students failed to meet a standard of good grammar & pronunciation. Therefore, two kinds of tutoring program were held namely grammar tutorial and pronunciation tutorial to improve students' skill. Those programs have run for about six months, but some people questioned whether those programs were effective or not. As an effort in dealing with that phenomenon, this paper will discuss the effectiveness of grammar tutorial as one of the programs. The data were mainly taken from observation, interview, and questionnaire, and were presented qualitatively. In addition to that, this paper also shows some good practices that can be applied in the future tutoring programs. Based on the result of the analysis, grammar tutorial was effective due to the fact that 84% of the students agreed that this program helped them to improve their skill and to understand more about the grammar materials.

Keywords: effectiveness, grammar tutoring program, students' feedback

Introduction

Many ways have been done to make students understand the materials that have been given in class such as having interactive multimedia for teaching (Astuti, et al., 2018), having a literary work as a learning material (Mulatsih, 2018), developing problem-based learning (Isrokijah, 2016), implementing moodle-based learning (Wulandari, 2016), conducting a game session (Kapp, 2012), implementing reflective learning (Brockbank & McGill, 2007), finding students' motivation (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), having additional time for service learning (Sax, 1997) , conducting a tutoring program (Hock, et al., 2001), joining peer review or peer learning program (Chism, 1999), and etc. As one of the efforts in reaching the goal, peer teaching or peer learning has also been started by many practitioners for about four centuries. Osguthorpe and Scruggs (1986) proposed the effective method to improve handicapped students learning ability by having students as tutors in class. For a big class, peer instruction was proposed so that every student took part in the learning process (Crouch et al. 2007).

Tutoring program could bring many benefits and disadvantages. Harper (2016) conducted a research about tutoring program which involved 91 children from grade one until grade eight. This tutoring program was conducted in small group. Statistic data showed that there was a significant improvement of students' skill in reading, spelling and counting. However, there was no progress in understanding

sentences. Different from Harper, Wu (2016) analyzed the labeling system in tutorial program toward learning result and students' motivation. Although tutoring program increased students' self-efficacy and confidence, it turned out that the labeling system did not improve students' understanding. There were some benefits of conducting tutoring program, but some practitioners argued that it could not reach the best level of students' understanding. Although tutoring programs have been done for long time, some people still underestimated the effectiveness of these programs.

Not only did some researchers claim that the tutoring program was not effective, some lecturers of ELESP Sanata Dharma University also thought the same after the implementation of the first tutoring programs. The tutoring programs of ELESP (grammar and pronunciation) itself started in the odd semester 2016. These programs were directed due to the fact that many students made some mistakes in writing and speaking English. For some cases, they did not even meet the minimum requirements of a good sentence. Some words were also mispronounced. This problem also sustained to the draft and defense of an undergraduate thesis.

As stated before that after the first period of grammar tutoring program, some lecturers said that this program still did not help students a lot and it was not effective, it was crucial to know more from students' perspective about the effectiveness of the program due to the fact that they were the participants who experienced this program. Considering that matter, this paper will answer two main questions: to what extend does grammar tutoring program help students? And what are the positive and negative tutees' feedback that can be considered for future tutoring program?

Method

The concept of this tutoring program was adapted from King's peer teaching that was written in 2002 and O'Donnel's peer learning that was written in 2014. King proposed that the peer teaching consisted of a group of students with a tutor who would help their difficulties. The importance lied in these several aspects such as cognitive, interaction, knowledge development, context and its integration. Not only King who had a research in relation to peer teaching, some previous researches also dealt with tutoring program (Angelova, 2006; Briggs, 2013; Narayan, 2016; Ander, et al., 2016; Colvin, 2007). While Colvin (2007) argued that there was a lack of social awareness in peer tutoring that could lead to misunderstanding and power struggle between tutor and tutee, other researchers Angelova (2006); Briggs (2013); Narayan (2016); Ander, et al. (2016); tended to still conduct the peer teaching or tutoring program due to its' benefits. Ander, et al., (2016) had a randomized controlled trial of the Match/SAGA tutorial in Chicago. Their tutorial program has increased students' math grade and decreased the chance of failing in their math course as stated below.

> The tutorials improved math grades by 0.58 points on a 1–4 point scale, a sizable gain compared to the average math GPA among the control group of 1.77 (or essentially a C minus average). We also found that the tutorials cut in half the chance that students failed their math course (Ander et al., 2016, p. 10).

Briggs (2013) also showed the improvement of students' competence including some ways for conducting peer teaching. Moreover, two researches from Angelova and Narayan proposed some strategies and factors that could lead to an effective tutoring program. Angelova (2006) showed some learning strategies for dual language learners in an English-Spanish peer teaching class. They were repetition, scaffolding with cues, codeswitching, invented spelling, use of formulaic speech, and non-verbal communication. Narayan (2016) underlined some factors that affected the effectiveness of peer mentoring. There were mentoring session, maintaining mentees, mentor time table, room allocation, mentor workstation, mentor attitude, attributes, role, previous mentoring experience, communication with support staff and mentor (p. 9). But, none of those previous researches tried to gather the effectiveness of tutoring program based on students' perspective. Thus, this paper would reveal that topic based on students' feedback.

Findings and Discussion

This qualitative research began with pre-test for measuring students' basic competence of grammar. During the program, there were some observation steps for the method of tutoring. The questionnaire was distributed in the last meeting of the program and it mainly asked whether tutoring program has helped students or not based on the Likert scale from one to four. Because of the fact that many students did not attend the program continuously; the questionnaire was distributed to those students who mostly came to the tutoring program. There were 45 students who continuously took part in the program. The written feedback for better improvement was also provided in the questionnaire sheet. After analyzing the result of the questionnaire, there was an interview session with some students who came regularly to the grammar tutoring program.

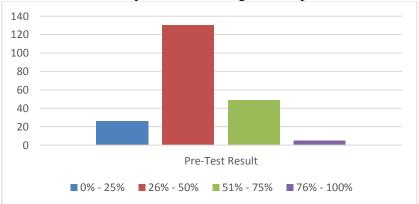*The Implementation of Tutorial Program*

Generally, the concept of tutoring involves at least two learners (one who has good ability for understanding the given knowledge and the other one who has less ability) who spend their time to study together. The one who has better competence will help the other one so that the tutee can understand the materials well. Technically, grammar tutoring program was done with 24 tutors from selective students from batch 2013 & 2014. Six lecturers took part in the process. There were three steps of selection: administration selection, written test, and interview test. In the administration selection, the candidate should have at least 3.5 for his GPA and A score for all grammar subjects. The written test was TOEFL test, and the interview dealt with the candidate's motivation, tutoring or working experience, and teaching method.

The students who joined this program were from batch 2016 who got B, C, D, E, F score and from batch 2015 who got C, D, E, F score in the grammar subject. This program was considered as an additional class of grammar subject. Thus, this

program was compulsory for those students. There were six classes and each of them consisted of 12 students with two tutors. One tutor helped six students. This program was regularly held on Saturdays at 09.00 - 10.00 for 13 meetings. Before this program started, there was a briefing for the tutors. During the process of this program, there was a guidance process from the coordinator of this program.

Students' feedback toward the implementation of tutorial program

This section is the compilation among six parts, namely the result of pre-test as the background of students' competence level, the result of observation, result of questionnaire, interview, positive feedback and weaknesses of grammar tutoring program based on tutees' feedback. Due to the goal of this research that is the effectiveness of grammar tutoring program based on tutees' feedback, this paper does not provide the comparison between pre-test and post-test results. The consideration deals with many interventions from other subjects that increased students' ability. There were structure, speaking, listening, writing, and pronunciation classes that also distributed toward students' competence of understanding English. In conclusion, the measurement of the post test would not be objective due to the fact that there was not only tutoring program held at that time. The chart below is the specific result of grammar pre-test.
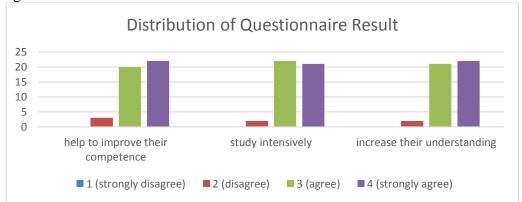

The chart above showed that mainly students' competence was under 51%. The data confirmed that most students needed more effort to increase their competence to gain a better result. The mean of the pre-test result was 43.56% (17.4265 correct numbers out of 40 numbers). This was also the strong reason of conducting grammar tutoring program.

Based on observation in tutoring classes, some tutors applied open discussion, only two tutors had a lecturing method. The discussion led to dynamic and lively atmosphere while the lecturing with so many questions to be asked dominantly by tutors made an intense class. For the communication, tutors spoke Bahasa Indonesia to explain grammar materials. Most students asked question to tutors and tutors also asked whether students had a difficulty in certain grammar topic or not. Students also gave feedback that there should be some fun activities during the tutoring program; such as games, tips and tricks session for students of ELESP. The tutoring method should vary in at least three meetings. Most of the tutoring classes did some exercises from a specific grammar book that was also used in the lecturers' classes. First, students did those exercises individually then they might ask the difficulty that they faced if their answer was incorrect. Some students did not come on time

and there were some technical problems, such as the availability of some rooms, the man who was in charge for opening the room door was late, and some rooms were in the third floor. Those were the causes why some students delivered their opinion about the consistency of the starting time.

From the questionnaire sheet that used Likert scale one to four (1 is for those who strongly disagreed, 2 is disagreed, 3 is agreed and 4 is for those who strongly agreed), most students agreed that grammar tutoring program has helped them to improve their competence, to study intensively, to understand about grammar more. The mean of their agreement that the program has improved their competence was 3.373611 (84.34%), the program has given them a chance for studying intensively was 3.413889 (85.34%), and the program has made them understand more about grammar was 3.397222 (84.93%). Below is the chart of the distribution of their agreement.

From the data above, none of the students strongly disagreed that grammar tutoring program did not help them for their understanding and competence. There were only three who disagreed that this program helped them to increase their competence. Two participants disagreed that this tutoring program made them study intensively and increased their understanding. It means that the result of the questionnaire tends to reflect the positive feedback from the students. Students still wanted the grammar tutoring program to be continued.

From the interview session, all interviewees said that this program was effective, even one interviewee confidently said that this program was very effective. The effectiveness of grammar tutoring program was seen from different reasons. First, it increased students' understanding about grammar. Second, tutors helped students in facing their personal difficulties when they studied at home and when they did not understand grammar materials in class by having a discussion session. Third, tutors gave similar exercise to the one in the class and guided students intensively by showing the way on how students should do it and sometimes the tutors' way was more easily understood. Below is one of the transcriptions.

> "When I had a difficulty about grammar material, I could ask the tutor and tutor helped me to face and solve it. I could understand more quickly. Discussion was the good practice of this program. But, it would be better if the discussion forum had less student no more than six students.

Too many students made some could not focus. So I suggest that there should be additional number of tutors."

Table 1. The Summary of Students' Positive Feedback

Result of observation	• Discussion was a good practice
	• Students actively asked some questions
Result from questionnaire	• 84.34% students agreed that this program increased their competence
	• 85.34% students agreed that they could study intensively during this tutoring program
	• 84.93% more understood grammar materials
Result of interview	• The program was effective
	• It increased students' understanding
	• It helped students in facing their individual difficulty
	• There was an intense guidance

Beside positive feedback, students also delivered some suggestions during interview process. They were about additional time, number of tutors, and the need of strict regulation because some students did not come in time.

"Although this program is compulsory one, some students came late and sometimes they only signed three times out of thirteen."

The result of the interview was the same with the written feedback on questionnaire sheet. Students might write their opinion freely. Five students marked that grammar tutoring program should be continued in the following semester, and three students wrote that this program helped them to study again the materials that had been given in the grammar class. The implementation was good based on six students' written feedbacks.

Furthermore, they also added the weaknesses of this program that needed to be improved and some suggestions. Seven students wrote that the time allotment could be extended into one and a half hours. An hour was not enough to discuss the materials deeply for them. In this case, there were two students who explicitly wrote that each material should be discussed more deeply. They also proposed that the day of grammar tutoring program should not be on Saturdays. Weekdays were efficient enough since some of them lived far away from campus, and they needed to go to campus on Saturdays only for tutoring program. On the weekend, some wanted to go to their hometown, and some argued that they needed to spend their time hanging out with their friends. There were nine students who claimed that the day of the tutoring program needed to be changed. No wonder that a student wrote the decreasing of the number of students who came to tutoring program. One of them also suggested that there should be additional tutors so he could study in smaller group. Only one student thought that the program started too early in the morning.

Conclusion

Basically, students showed their good appreciation for grammar tutoring program. This result is taken from the analysis of questionnaire, students' written feedback and interview. These are the some good points of conducting a grammar

tutoring program: students could tell and discuss their difficulty in the grammar subject with their tutor, students agreed that the program helped them to increase their competence and understanding, students agreed that they studied intensively during the program. However, there were some suggestions from students to make next tutoring program run better such as increasing the number of tutors, extending the time duration for tutoring, having a strict regulation, avoiding Saturday as tutoring day and having a smaller group discussion. In a nutshell, ELESP grammar tutoring program was effective based on students' opinion, and they needed it in the following semester too.

References

Ander, R., Guryan, J., & Ludwig, J. (2016). Improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged students: Scaling up individualized tutorials. *Report prepared for the Brookings Institute. Washington DC: Brookings Institute*.

Angelova, M., Gunawardena, D., & Volk, D. (2006). Peer teaching and learning: Co-constructing language in a dual language first grade. *Language and Education*, *20*(3), 173-190.

Astuti, F. K., Cahyono, E., Supartono, S., Van, N. C., & Duong, N. T. (2018). Effectiveness of elements periodic table interactive multimedia in Nguyen Tat Thanh high school. *International journal of Indonesian education and teaching (IJIET)*, *2*(1), 1-10.

Brockbank, A., & McGill, I. (2007). *Facilitating reflective learning in higher education*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Briggs, S. (2013). How peer teaching improves student learning and 10 ways to encourage it. Retrieved on 1st March 2017 from http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/peer-teaching/

Brockbank, A., & McGill, I. (2007). *Facilitating reflective learning in higher education*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Chism, N. V. N. (1999). *Peer review of teaching. A sourcebook*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.

Colvin, J. W. (2007). Peer tutoring and social dynamics in higher education. *Mentoring & tutoring*, *15*(2), 165-181.

Crouch, C. H., Watkins, J., Fagen, A. P., & Mazur, E. (2007). Peer instruction: Engaging students one-on-one, all at once. *Research-Based Reform of University Physics*, *1*(1), 40-95.

Harper, J., & Schmidt, F. (2016). Effectiveness of a group-based academic tutoring program for children in foster care: A randomized controlled trial. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *67*, 238-246.

Hock, M. F., Pulvers, K. A., Deshler, D. D., & Schumaker, J. B. (2001). The effects of an after-school tutoring program on the academic performance of at-risk students and students with LD. *Remedial and special education*, *22*(3), 172-186.

Isrokijah, I. (2016). Developing problem-based learning (PBL) worksheets for the eighth grade students at junior high school. *LLT journal: A Journal on language and language teaching*, *18*(2), 99-106.

Kapp, K. M. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: Game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. John Wiley & Sons.

King, A. (2002). Structuring peer interaction to promote high-level cognitive processing. *Theory into practice*, *41*(1), 33-39.

Mulatsih, M. I. (2018). Learning poetry as a strategy to develop teaching skill among students. *International journal of Indonesian education and teaching (IJIET)*, *2*(2), 1-8.

Narayan, J., & Sharma, S. (2016). Peer mentoring program as a student support tool: A conceptual approach. *Instructional technology*, 3.

O'Donnell, A. M., & King, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning*. Routledge.

Osguthorpe, R. T., & Scruggs, T. E. (1986). Special education students as tutors: A review and analysis. *Remedial and special education*, *7*(4), 15-25.

Sax, L. (1997). The benefits of service: Evidence from undergraduates. *Educational record*, 25.

Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of educational psychology*, *85*(4), 571.

Wu, E., & Yang, S. C. (2016). Examining the impact of online labeling on tutoring behavior and its effect on the English learning and motivation of low-achieving university students. *Computer assisted language learning*, *29*(2), 316-333.

Wulandari, M. (2016). Moodle-based learning model for paragraph writing class. *LLT journal: A Journal on language and language teaching*, *18*(2), 73-90.