

PEER TUTORING TO IMPROVE THE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF MULTIAGE EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Social media, an Internet-based technology, enables students to receive and share information, leading to an upsurge in English learning. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are some of the student's most popular social networking apps for students. Thus, the present research was conducted to expose non-EFL/ESL university students' preferences in learning English. A mixed-method research design was used to process the research, and an open-ended questionnaire (Quanti) and semi-structured interview (Quali) were employed. Using purposive sampling, 77 students participated voluntarily, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that YouTube was the most preferred platform, the second most favourable and most favourable, and Instagram and Facebook were the least preferred. The preferences were determined according to the enjoyment, system quality, information quality, interactivity, perceived usefulness and satisfaction of the applications. The present research is beneficial as evidence for an upcoming study comparing the effectiveness of these social media platforms for future English education, especially the features and exploring the users' belief in utilizing the devices.

Key Words: multiage class; non formal education system; peer tutoring; speaking skills.

ABSTRAK

Sebelumnya, para pendidik membuat sistem kelas multi-usia dengan tujuan mengatasi kesenjangan usia yang semakin besar di dalam kelas. Namun, beberapa sekolah di negara tertentu saat ini justru menggunakan sistem ini karena memberikan manfaat yang signifikan dan perkembangan positif bagi siswa atau kelas yang tertinggal secara akademis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode bimbingan sejawat untuk mengatasi masalah berbicara di kelas dan menjembatani kesenjangan dalam pengetahuan dasar Bahasa Inggris siswa. Selain itu, pihaknya berkeinginan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa di kelas EFL multiage dan memperkaya literatur dalam pendidikan nonformal. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori siklus McNiff dan Whitehead dalam melakukan penelitian tindakan kelas: observasi, refleksi, tindakan, evaluasi, dan modifikasi. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes, wawancara, dan kuesioner yang telah dianalisis menggunakan aplikasi NVivo 12 Pro. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa bimbingan sejawat meningkatkan kemahiran berbicara siswa multiusia dalam hal kefasihan, kosa kata, dan pemahaman. Dalam lingkungan non-akademik, bimbingan sejawat secara efektif meningkatkan rasa percaya diri dan kolaborasi siswa serta menunjukkan keterampilan tingkat kelas atau akselerasi di kelas.

Kata Kunci: kelas multiage, pengajaran bimbingan, pendidikan non-formal, kemampuan berbicara.

INTRODUCTION

In rural areas of Western countries, grouping children of different ages in the same class has been widely used for many years. Multiage or mixed-age classrooms place students of a specific grade with two or more years of age gap study in the same class (Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019; Saqlain, 2015). It was established due to a high rate of children dropping out of school during the revolution industry and the military-conflict era from the 1820s to the 1840s. Another reason is that some schools confront geographical and economic crises, which causes schools to have few students or teachers (Kos, 2021). In this situation, a multiage classroom is created based on the school staff's conscious decision to mix the ages of students so the teaching and learning can run well.

Nowadays, the multiage class does not only exist through necessity or choice. It has been commonly used in many schools worldwide because it has a strong philosophical foundation and gives students positive pedagogical and social outcomes. For instance, the multiage system highlights the students' collaboration, encourages spoken language practice, enhances cooperative learning and delivers feedback from interlocutors, peers, and a group of people (Bijani et al., 2022; Hoffman, 2002). Another positive impact shows that it promotes student-centred learning, in which students gain new knowledge outside of what they have learned from teachers (Black, 2022, p. 29; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Although the multiage system is definitely the last option in the urgent situation, it is still a fruitful approach that could develop the students' learning ability to a higher level (Lloyd, 1999).

Meanwhile, implementing a multiage system is challenging and complicated. First, a multiage system comprises students with a larger age gap than a regular class, which can create a strong disparity in students' cognitive ability (Parrott & Cohen, 2021; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019; Song et al., 2009). Based on that, selecting teaching methodologies in the multiage EFL classroom is necessary to adjust the learners' backgrounds and class situations. As Matsuda (2012, p. 178) said, not all teaching methodologies applied in another country or class context could work equally well with a particular class and group of students in other parts of the world. Second, minimum literature and research on English Language Teaching (ELT) in a multiage class (Saqlain, 2015; Suggs, 2017). In Indonesia, the multiage system is categorised as a non-formal education system (Bartin, 2020; Caesaria, 2022; Rahayu, 2020), so implementing it poses a challenge for teachers accustomed to teaching regular classes or a graded-class system.

Despite all the obstacles, the Montessori curriculum has precisely adopted the multiage system and proven its positive advantages. It is believed that collaboration is the key for multiage students to work together and think creatively in receiving knowledge (Alwi et al., 2021; Demangeon et al., 2023; Kos, 2021). Kazi et al. (2023) conducted research in a Montessori class. They discovered that a multiage system in ELT class could positively engage students in second language acquisition, such as drilling, imitating, peer corrections, peer teaching, and collaboration among different ages of students. Song et al. (2009) added that it supported students to achieve a higher cognitive developmental level. The situation encourages high-academic achievement students either older or younger, to be more creative in assisting their friends' learning difficulties.

Meanwhile, the low-academic achievement students are reassured to study and absorb information quicker. As a result, both students play an active and major role in

teaching and learning than a teacher (Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). According to Kazi and Song's findings, a multiage system enhances students' social, emotional, and academic skills despite their ages. A multiage system enables students to practice the spoken language fluently, properly, correctly, and communicatively.

Another problem appears to be that English itself is not widely used for communication in Indonesia due to limited exposure to English-speaking activity. (Adhelia & Triastuti, 2023; Asfihana, 2021; Jaya et al., 2022; Rahayu, 2020). Employing conventional teaching methods in speaking activities like memorisation, parroting, and reading aloud contributes to the great decline in students' speaking proficiency (Akanbi, 2022; Lillard et al., 2021; Sosas, 2021). For all the reasons above, teachers must pay attention to some aspects, like students' needs and classroom situations. Hence, teaching speaking requires innovative methods and techniques that encourage students to practice spoken language proficiency freely and excitingly in class with their peers.

Peer tutoring, one of the innovations in ELT, has effectively improved EFL students' speaking proficiency and, at the same time, creating a collaborative learning environment in a class (Husni, 2018; Karim & Mohammed, 2018; Orozco-Möhl, 2023; Ratnasari, 2020; Tang et al., 2021). Like a multiage system, peer tutoring splits students into low and high-academic achievement students.

Kunsch et al. (2007) defined peer tutoring as a study in pairs to help each other utilise knowledge and experience meaningfully. Implementing this activity will lead to better comprehension and deeper thought between two or more people with different ability levels. Peer tutoring could be used in the classroom, where students play the role of teachers, and the others are guided students. The characteristic of a family figure is also well-represented in peer tutoring (Alwi et al., 2021). A family comprising adults and kids represents parents and children who complement each other. The family's comfortable place and supportive environment must be visualised in an EFL classroom where students may enjoy learning and practising their speaking with their peers. Moreover, peer tutoring helps students realise and learn from misunderstandings, errors, or mistakes.

Peer tutoring can be implemented in four models depending on the learning needs and material delivered (Hott & Walker, 2012). There are RPT (Reciprocal Peer Tutoring), in which students take turns switching roles as tutors and students to learn together; PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies), in which teacher pairs students who need extra help or more explanation to be assisted by high-academic achievement students; CWPT (Classwide Peer Tutoring), in which students switch roles as tutees and tutors in the same group or another group based on their academic performance; and CAPT (Cross-age Peer Tutoring) that fixed roles older students (tutors) help younger students (tutees) without taking into account their cognitive abilities.

Several studies have been done on peer tutoring in ELT classrooms. Amalia (2021) stated that it effectively improved speaking proficiency and motivation for seventh-grade students, as they could talk and discuss with their peers. Sakti's (2020) research found similar findings to Amalia's, but Sakti added that peer tutoring could overcome knowledge and ability gaps in secondary school students. Nengsi (2019) also conducted similar research, but the difference was in the methodology. The experimental results showed that the peer tutoring method effectively improved students' English-speaking competence in language accuracy and range of language, created an enjoyable learning situation, and developed students' critical thinking.

Some contrasting findings on peer tutoring reveal the obstacles to its implementation. An unclear understanding of the concept of peer tutoring compared to other types of cooperative learning in the classroom and its nuances makes it difficult to implement in

class or for research purposes (Leung, 2019; Svellingen et al., 2021). The study posited that status differences could disrupt the teaching and learning process. Specifically, it makes students divided into specific roles as tutors (high status) or tutees (low status) less effective (Azizah, 2023); there is no difference in learning achievement, and partiality tends to be towards tutees and not tutors (Thurston et al., 2020), as well as incorrect feedback (Nadia et al., 2023).

Many previous studies have explained separately the advantages and challenges of a multiage system or peer tutoring in overcoming students' speaking problems. However, these studies have not yet addressed the integration of peer tutoring in a multiage classroom. Academicians in Indonesia also have not extensively researched ELT in a multiage system. Therefore, this research is designed to fill the gap in studies (between peer tutoring in a multiage class) and enhance the spoken language competency of multiage students. The present study also formulated the research questions: (1) how does peer tutoring improve students' speaking skills in a multiage EFL classroom? (2) what speaking elements significantly improved after implementing peer tutoring in a multiage EFL classroom? (3) what is the EFL students' opinion after implementing peer tutoring?

METHODS

Research design

The research followed the systematic workings of Classroom Action Research (CAR) from McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p. 37): observation, reflection, action, evaluation, and modification. A multiage classroom was unfamiliar to Indonesian teachers, requiring more time to obtain real experience before designing the lesson plan for teaching in a multiage class. Therefore, observation was appropriate as the first step in the theory cycle.

The research was done in about two cycles, around thirteen meetings. The cycles were a series of activities, and each activity was interrelated. The researcher also collaborated with the English teacher at a multiage school and the headmaster, who upheld the multiage system in the school.

Research site and participants

The study occurred at the first and only multiage school in Surakarta, Indonesia, which was still in its early establishment stages. It was a semi-formal and non-formal school based on the criteria set by the Ministry of Education (MoE) (Senjawati & Fakhruddin, 2017). It was a semi-formal school because the students still attended class from morning to afternoon, like in other formal or regular schools.

There were three multiage classes: Class A, B, and C. The researcher chose Class B due to its larger student population and age gap. The 15 participants, similar to the junior high stage students, were willing to participate in this study. The research followed the systematic workings of Classroom Action Research (CAR) from McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p. 37): observation, reflection, action, evaluation, and modification. A multiage classroom was unfamiliar to Indonesian teachers, requiring more time to obtain real experience before designing the lesson plan for teaching in a multiage class. Therefore, observation was appropriate as the first step in the theory cycle.

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Data collection and analysis

The first step was observation where the researcher conducted a preliminary study

on the research setting. It employed observation sheets and interview guides. The researcher used observation sheets before taking action in the first cycle. The purpose was to find the problems in class and gain the same result from the day 1 to the day 2 observations. It used checklists comprising 24 items related to the multiage system, peer tutoring, and speaking activity in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. It was modified from Baroroh (2022), Goh and Burns (2012), Jinabe (2022), and Sakti (2020). Aside from that, three interview guides were also prepared for the three different interviews. The researcher conducted the first interview with the English teacher. It aimed to identify problems in multiage EFL classrooms and determine the best method and action for lesson plans.

The next step involved reflection. The researcher combined the preliminary data with the topic students would have to learn. The researcher then created the lesson plan by reflecting on the problems and solutions presented.

Following this, the researcher took action by teaching and implementing peer tutoring. The English teacher, seated at the back, accompanied the researcher during the action. In the first cycle, the researcher conducted pre- and post-tests to determine the student's initial and latest speaking abilities. The researcher also developed the speaking rubric as a guideline to score the spoken language proficiency of multiage students.

The researcher then evaluated teaching and learning in the first cycle by calculating the students' scores during the test. The students' mean or average scores were compared to determine whether their speaking ability improved. Afterward, an interview was also conducted to gain additional insights from the perspective of the English teacher. Here, the interview guide was conducted differently compared to the previous one. Ultimately, the researcher used all the test results and the teacher's interview from the first cycle as a starting point to modify and improve teaching and learning in the next cycle.

In cycle two, the researcher followed the same steps but applied the questionnaire at the last meeting. It aimed to gather the multiage students' perspectives on their recent speaking proficiency and peer tutoring implementation so far.

Overall, the peer tutoring activity could improve students' speaking proficiency if the students' speaking scores were higher than the average results, and the average result in post-test cycle 1 to cycle 2 rose (Sugiyono, 2015, p. 55). Along with the test, there was a speaking rubric to score the students' speaking proficiency. It assessed some aspects, like fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content. Meanwhile, each element was assessed on an odd score of 1, 3, and 5 (the lowest, the middle, and the highest score).

During the actions, the researcher documented the ELT situation in detail through field notes. It could provide more comprehensive information, embedded and depicted in observation checklists, interview guides, and questionnaires. The researcher wrote the report every day as evidence of her claims.

The quantitative and qualitative data instruments were analysed using a mixed method, and then the results were combined. Through thematic analysis, the qualitative data was analysed by (1) familiarising the data, (2) selecting keywords and quotations, (3) generating initial codes, (4) creating themes, (5) interpreting the keywords, codes, themes through models, and (6) developing the conceptual model (Naeem et al., 2023).

In the meantime, the speaking tests provided quantitative data that addressed the first research question. Next, the results of the mean scores in tests would be compared to each other to determine precisely what English-speaking aspects had increased and decreased after the actions. It would answer research question number two. Last, the open-ended questionnaire presented students' opinions and would answer the third research question.

All data results were analysed through these steps: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 31–33). The study also employed NVivo 12 Pro, an application, to store, organise, label, code, and interpret the data through tables and figures (Creswell, 2012, pp. 241–243). O'neill et al. (2018) also claimed that adhering to data analysis tools could achieve accuracy and generalise to other contexts and complexity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on a preliminary observational study (observation step), the researcher discovered that (1) the English teacher spoke more Bahasa Indonesia than English during class. (2) Little exposure appeared during speaking practice. Yet, they did other activities like reading aloud, translating a text, and practicing the conversation through text memorisation. (3) The teacher instructed students to write vocabulary that was rarely used in the topic learned. (4) During the learning process, students often exhibit both individual and solitary behaviours. These situations were obviously seen through the researcher's eyes from the two-meeting observations.

The result of the observation was affirmed by the result of the teacher's interview. Based on the analysis through codes and themes, the researcher concluded that multiage students' prior experience: (1) had never received a proper English lesson in their previous school before they dropped out, and (2) suffered from long-term learning loss.

Answer Research Question 1: The Impact of Peer Tutoring on Multiage Students' Speaking Skills

Table 1. The Mean Scores of Students' Speaking Skills

	Pre test	Post Test 1	Post Test 2
Average Score	1.5	1.96	2.3
Fluency	1.2	2.2	2.5
Pronunciation	1.3	1.8	2.3
Grammar	1.3	2.1	2.3
Vocab	1.1	1.7	2.4
Content	1.3	2.0	3.0

Table 1 illustrates that the students' speaking skills were poor at pretest. The fact that multiage students were low-proficiency speakers showed they needed to pass the minimum criteria or mean score the researcher set. In this part, the mean scores of the pretest and post-test cycles 1 and 2 should be above 1.5, 1.96, and 2.3, respectively. Nevertheless, almost all aspects of the speaking rubric in the pretest were lower than the mean scores.

Then, the pretest result was compared to the post-test cycle 1. In post-test cycle 1, the mean scores for all aspects were higher than the pretest. These results indicated that peer tutoring steadily improved the multiage students during the first cycle. The speaking aspect that increased the most was fluency, while two other aspects, pronunciation and

vocabulary, would need more emphasis in cycle 2. The mean score between pretest and post-test cycle 1 rose from 1.5 to 1.96.

Still in Table 1, the result of the post-test in cycle 2 was greater than in cycle 1. Here, the aspect of pronunciation and vocabulary had arisen in the post-test cycle 2. The content aspect also appeared to be the greatest score in cycle 2. The mean score was also increased from 1.96 to 2.3 in cycle 2. The table shows that multiage students' speaking proficiency improved moderately from post-test cycle 1 to post-test cycle 2.

Figure 1 was also another piece of evidence of the improvement in students' speaking proficiency in related topics. It depicted each element assessed in the speaking test, from pretest to post-test cycle 2. The bar charts in Figure 1 demonstrate that peer tutoring enhances students' speaking proficiency across all cycles. For example, the mean score for fluency in the pretest was 1.2, but it increased to 2.2 and ultimately reached a score of 2.5. Similarly, the aspect of vocabulary started with a mean score of 1.1; it rose to 1.7 and reached 2.4 in the post-test cycle 2. This situation also occurred in the other speaker's elements, with no reduction appearing in the figure.

Figure 1. The Improvement of Multiage Students' Speaking Skills in Tests

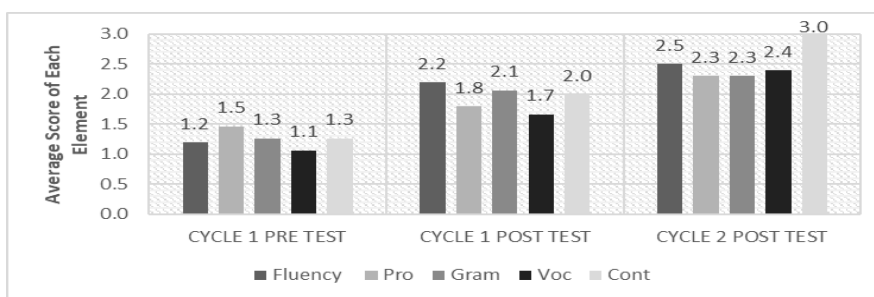


Figure 2. Answer Research Question 2: The Most Improved Speaking Elements

	Fluency	Improve ment	Pro	Improve ment	Gram	Improve ment	Voc	Improve ment	Cont	Improve ment
CYCLE 1 PRE TEST	1.2	↑83%	1.5	↑23%	1.3	↑63%	1.1	↑56%	1.3	↑58%
CYCLE 1 POST TEST	2.2		1.8		2.1		1.7		2.0	
CYCLE 2 POST TEST	2.5	↑14%	2.3	↑28%	2.3	↑11%	2.4	↑44%	3.0	↑50%

In Figure 2, the analysis could be done by combining two or more data sets. Here, the improvement was seen by comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test cycles 1 and 2 in all aspects revealed different findings. The biggest improvement was seen in the aspect of fluency (83%), followed by grammar (63%). Meanwhile, the comparison of post-test cycles 1 and 2 increased by approximately 50% and 44% in aspects of content and vocabulary, respectively. Hence, all aspects of speaking improved, as indicated by the green arrows pointing to the top.

Answer Research Question 3: The Multiage Students' Opinions on Peer Tutoring in Speaking Class

To answer the third question, the researcher also utilised the NVivo 12 Pro software application to visualise the qualitative data, which worked through codes and themes. From Figure 3, six out of fifteen students felt that their spoken language skills and self-

confidence improved considerably after implementing peer tutoring and practising speaking with classmates regularly.

Comparing the results of pre-test and post-test cycle 1, and then post-test cycles 1 and 2. The green arrows indicate the percentage of improvement counted by comparing the mean score of tests through the formulation of Excel analysis.

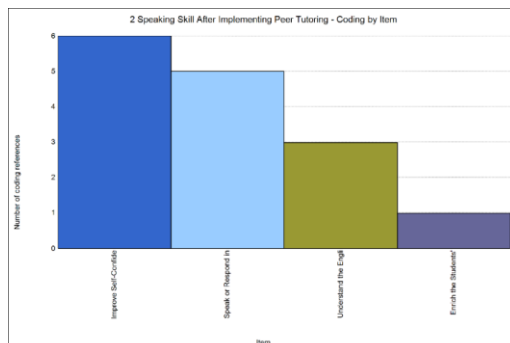


Figure 3. The Result of the Questionnaire on Academic Aspect

Next, five students mentioned that it encouraged them to speak English more than in the class. The peer tutoring had non-academic impacts on their lives, as shown in Figure 4. Since they studied with peer tutoring, the six students realised they had better and closer friendships with all their classmates. Meanwhile, another five students responded that they could share ideas through speaking activities and had a study partner or interlocutor to assess their speaking performance.

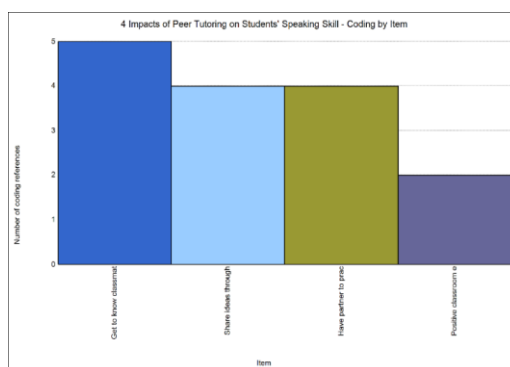


Figure 4. The Result of the Questionnaire on Non-Academic Aspect

Lastly, peer tutoring could create a positive and supportive classroom environment where students can discuss the material, practice speaking with classmates, ask for more assistance, review the material, and even talk without any related topic to the learning material.

Based on the explanation above, it is feasible to conclude that peer tutoring can improve the speaking proficiency of multiage students. It also enables students to be more sympathetic to their friends' learning difficulties and forthcoming in collaboration. The statements above correspond with several previous studies indicating that peer tutoring has positive impacts on ELT and multiage classrooms (Husni, 2018; Karim & Mohammed, 2018; Orozco-Möhl, 2023; Ratnasari, 2020; Tang et al., 2021).

Discussion

Based on this, the preliminary study or observation step, the main problems faced by multiage students in this school were as follows: First, the learning difficulties were due to a lack of exposure to speaking practice. Thus, the English teacher was required to decide whether the learning purpose corresponded to the target skill used in the class. The complexity of spoken language proficiency necessitated extensive exposure and practice, both within and outside the classroom (Purwanti et al., 2022; Rahayu, 2020). Therefore, teaching-learning should be emphasised the target skill used in the classroom. Here, the researcher put more exposure to practice speaking almost in every meeting. To avoid boredom, the researcher took turns the students' roles to be students or tutees. It aligned with the exchanging role presumed by Hott and Walker (2012), like RPT, PALS, CWPT, and CAPT in peer tutoring's theory and multiage class system.

Second, limited vocabulary, as they did not acquire sufficient words related to the topic, and the learning loss was slowing down the ELT arranged in the lesson plan. Instead of overwhelming students with a bunch of vocabulary, a decision to enrich the student's vocabulary through daily homework writing familiarised students with the vocabulary being used in class and the topic learnt. Shen and Chiu (2019) confirmed that speaking proficiency closely relates to how much learners use related vocabulary and how the message can be well-transferred through good grammar and correct pronunciation. Therefore, some vocabulary activities were added during the actions was the best method to enrich their vocabulary related to a topic.

Based on the results of the preliminary study, which involved observation and interviews, the researcher developed a lesson plan by analysing and reflecting on the collected data. As the actions in cycle 1, the researcher planned to teach multiage students a particular topic for about five meetings.

However, implementing peer tutoring in cycle 1 proved challenging during the action step. In the evaluation step, the researcher explained how to use the rubric, peer, and self-assessment sheets and simulate peer tutoring, which extended the teaching and learning to eight meetings. It confirmed the result of a preliminary study and findings that multiage students varied in ages and abilities (Parrott & Cohen, 2021; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019; Song et al., 2009). Some students were able to absorb the material faster (high academic achievement), and others were slow (low academic achievement). As a result, the teacher preferred to follow their progress rather than encouraging students to catch up.

Modifying the teaching and lesson plan is necessary, although the students' speaking proficiency results improved moderately. Cycle 2 was successfully completed in five meetings. The use of appropriate assessments, like self- and peer assessments, in speaking practices and tests exposed students to the target language.

Using the assessments in multiage seemed appropriate, as the researcher was not the only person who could assess and justify students' proficiency. Hence, the multiage students could learn from their classmates, create an ability standard, assess their peers, and progress. Then, the researcher or English teacher validated the scores by comparing their own assessment. This finding was in line with the finding of Amiruddin (2022) that all multiage students also learned how to be students and tutors alternately, as they would share their ideas or learn from other performances. The researcher's interview with the English teacher specifically validated it.

The results of students' questionnaires confirmed the findings, which emphasised the importance of language exposure to the target language in the EFL classroom. Students could immediately practise the target language, such as spoken language, grammatical

structures, and pronunciation abilities in a particular context in daily life conversation (Bing et al., 2022; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Rahayu, 2020). Furthermore, they understood several English phrases and familiarised themselves with many English vocabularies.

While experiencing the improvement in speaking proficiency, some non-academic elements were enhanced through peer tutoring:

i. Confidence

The multiage students also experienced shyness while making mistakes in front of younger or older students. While reaching a communicative language or fluency was a purpose of this speaking activity, the multiage students should practice it with different classmates. It supported the students in having a broader context of the related topic given. According to Harmer (2007, p. 343), speaking was not defined as a planned and arranged conversation but a spontaneous communication in which self-confidence and more practice play the most important roles (Guvendir & Hardacre, 2018; Renandya & Nguyen, 2022). To be confident, the researcher allocated time for peer tutoring in cycles 1 and 2 in the speaking class. As a result, they were confident enough to come in front of the class and perform their speech in a loud voice.

ii. Collaboration

The collaboration between multiage students in the class needed to be improved. Conversely, it appeared since the students applied peer tutoring in cycle 1. The researcher regularly did a simulation about peer tutoring so that students would get used to applying this activity to solve learning problems in the class. Students also did peer tutoring in pairs or groups and occasionally experienced different roles (students or tutees). The study by Hott and Walker (2012) also suggested several types of peer tutoring applied in ELT classrooms, like cross-age peer tutoring (CAPT), reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT), class-wide peer tutoring (CWPT), and peer-assisted learning strategies (PALS). The English teacher also appreciated the use of peer tutoring in ELT class through a transcript:

Ronksley-Pavia et al. (2019) and Song et al. (2009) already found that the multiage classroom system could cause inferiority due to age gaps and abilities. Students were reluctant to ask for assistance or help or to practice speaking with peers. However, this finding definitely confirmed that the multiage system and peer tutoring could encourage learners' creativity, collaboration, interaction, and friendships between different-age students (Alwi et al., 2021; Kazi et al., 2018; Parrott & Cohen, 2021). The moments like guiding, helping, mentoring, accompanying, and evaluating were also well-depicted in peer tutoring and multiage systems. It supported the findings of Kazi et al. (2023) that a multiage system could create family-like environments in which the high-ability students helped and assisted the low-ability students in any age group.

iii. Acceleration

The multiage system seemed challenging to implement, but the advantage greatly impacted the low-academic students, high-academic students, and teachers. The assessment also could be done by the teacher and students. Students were more critical as they figured out the errors in students' speaking. The low-academic students learned how to increase their ability by elevating their ability to be similar to the high-academic students. Then, the high-academic students put an effort to deepen their knowledge and ability to exceed one level above. Peer tutoring is emphasised to fulfil students' learning needs and higher-order thinking skills.

Referring to the statement from Song et al. (2009), multiage grouping helped increase students' academic and social competencies. Students also improve academically and socially because they learn together through peer tutoring and are motivated to accelerate and expand their knowledge and abilities. Acceleration in this academic achievement

encouraged students to learn material faster or above their age level.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

After thirteen meetings, the research findings finally refuted these opposing opinions and found that: First, peer tutoring has improved the spoken language skills of multiage students in the ELL classrooms. Second, the most significant improvement that occurred in cycle 1 was in students' speaking fluency, reaching 83%, and students' grammar mastery, around 63%, towards a simple and communicative conversation on the topic learned. Furthermore, students' vocabulary and understanding of topics (content) dominated the improvement in cycle 2, at around 50% and 44%, respectively. In non-academic learning, some aspects also improved, like self-confidence, collaboration, and acceleration. Third, according to the questionnaire results, the implementation of peer tutoring improved students' understanding of daily vocabulary and English phrases related to related topics, increased their proficiency in English compared to Bahasa Indonesia, boosted their self-confidence in speaking, and provided them with study partners or interlocutors. In addition, the learning environment was more fun and alive as they brainstormed ideas with peers, practiced spoken language together, and got to know their classmates better.

Another future study is suggested on peer tutoring in other ELT multiage schools which have the same system as this research conducted in a semi-formal school. However, due to the small number of schools of this type in Indonesia, research can be done in schools that have fully adopted the non-formal system. Future research can also explore the other productive or receptive skills in ELT classrooms, like writing, reading, and grammar, to enrich the ELT manuscript in a multiage system.

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