

What Positive Impacts Does Peer Tutoring Have Upon The Peer Tutors at SQU?

Dhafra Al kharusi

Center for foundation studies, Middle East College, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, Oman

Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an answer to the question: What positive impacts does peer tutoring have upon the peer tutors at SQU? It is conducted in the LC Tutorial Centre at Sultan Qaboos University where senior English language students are hired to tutor their peers who are struggling with the language. It sheds light on the peer tutors' academic, social, professional, psychological, and personal gains. Data were gathered from twenty-five currently employed peer tutors through a survey questionnaire and a group discussion. The study results prove the success of the adopted one-on-one peer-tutoring program in contributing to the peer tutors' development. The PTs benefited academically through the resources available in the TC and exchanging knowledge with their peers. They also found peer-tutoring a good chance to practice their language skills. Furthermore, the experience opened a horizon for students to expand their social network by making friendships with different students and staff. The PTs learnt to be more responsible, confident, patient, outgoing, and punctual. Most of all, the peer tutors explored the feelings of fulfillment and achievement through hearing positive feedback from their tutees and believing themselves to be productive members of SQU campus life and a reason for somebody's success in learning the English language.

Keywords: Peer learning, Peer Tutoring, Peer Tutor, Tutorial, Tutorial Center, Tutor, SQU, Oman, Positive Impact, SQU, Oman.

Abbreviations: PT (Peer tutor), SQU (Sultan Qaboos University), LC (Language Centre), SSU (Student Support Unit), TC (Tutorial Center), GPA (Grade Point Average)

1. Introduction

With the advancement of studies in human sciences, e.g. psychology and education, students have become a subject of concern for educators. Various methods of teaching have been introduced to suit students' learning preferences. Cross-age and peer tutoring programs are getting popular among higher education institutions. Many universities in Oman started to adopt these peer tutoring programs as a major component of their Student Support Units (SSU).

Few years ago, I applied for a peer tutor position at the Tutorial Centre (TC) in the Language Centre (LC) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and was successful in my application. At that stage, I was not yet aware of the real advantages I was about to gain from being involved in the experience of being a peer tutor except for the certificate and the fair wage I was expecting. Currently, I am working as a peer tutor for the fourth semester. Last semester, I got promoted to be a mentor for the new peer tutors. I became very passionate about my job. My perception of life and university years has experienced several changes and advancements. I have noticed that there are several gains derived from peer tutoring including life, social and personal skills. Hence, I have decided that my research paper will be about the gains of the peer tutors from the peer-tutoring experience. This paper aims to find a systematic and satisfactory answer to the question: What positive impacts does peer tutoring have upon the peer tutor at SQU?

Research has been globally conducted on the matter of peer-tutoring, yet most of the studies focus on the efficiency of the structure of the applied peer tutoring programs, or on the program's advantages for the tutees. However, limited research has shown concern about the gains of the peer tutors themselves. Furthermore, the studies that looked at the peer tutors' advantages were mostly conducted in primary and secondary schools; college-level peer tutoring programs were not commonly in the researchers' spotlight. Studying the positive impacts of peer tutoring on the peer tutor will be a good contribution to the fields of peer tutoring, education and psychology. In addition, there might be similar studies which have examined this specific area of the topic previously, but this one is conducted in a local and different setting: SQU's Tutorial Centre, Oman.

The Language Centre at SQU has been developing a peer-tutoring program for four years when this research has been conducted in Spring 2014, with a view to facilitating and easing the difficulties for English learners. Since then, the program has gained noteworthy appreciation and admiration among both students and

teachers for its noticed effectiveness and positive advantages upon both parties: tutors and tutees. Currently, in the SQU's Tutorial Centre, around 32 senior and junior students of both genders have volunteered to work as peer tutors, whom I opted to be the sample group of my study.

This paper includes several chapters which cover all the process followed to find out satisfactory answers to the study question: What positive impacts does peer tutoring have upon the tutor? The literature review starts by defining peer tutoring, then proceeds to cover the different academic, social and personal advantages that peer tutors gain through tutoring. In addition, the methodology of conducting this research paper is stated in a separate chapter followed by another section that displays the study results. The findings are thoroughly discussed and recommendations are drawn at the end of the research paper.

4. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There is ample evidence that learning occurs when students teach their peers. The effect of tutor learning has been studied in one-on-one tutoring settings and learning by teaching experience by many researchers in different settings and levels (e.g., Beasley, 1997; Colvin, 2007; Eggers, 1995; Johns & Kolko, 2005; & Landrum & Chastain, 1998); in which most of the results indicated positive gains. However, few studies (e.g., Griffen & Griffen, 1995) showed that the peer tutors derived no significant gains from peer tutoring (as cited in Landrum & Chastain, 1998).

a. What is Peer-Tutoring?

According to Keith and Ehly (2009), peer tutoring can be defined as "people from similar social grouping, who are not professional teachers, helping each other to learn and learning themselves by teaching" (extracted from "Students as Tutors and Mentors", by Sinclair Goodlad). Gardiner (1996) defines it as "a student centred, collaborative, learning strategy ... to transform students from being passive, 'teacher'-dependent, uncritical recipients and reproducers of information into engaged questioning, reflective and autonomous learners" (as cited in Beasley, 1997, p. 21). The tutor-tutee situation and cross-age grouping is thought to have a beneficial impact on the tutor's academic and personal levels, as well as developing positive life and social skills (e.g., Beasley, 1997; Boudouris, 2005; Colvin, 2007; Jones & Kolko, 2005; & Mastudam Keiser, Raizada ... & Koedinger, 2010).

2.3 The academic gains of peer-tutoring:

Most of the results regarding the impacts of tutoring on the academic achievement of the tutor announced salient success (e.g., Beasley, 1997; Boudouris, 2005; Colvin, 2007; Eggers, 1995; Johns and Kolko, 2005; & Sadovi, 2008). While peer-tutoring, the peer tutors are revising and reviewing with their tutees the same content and concepts that they have been through in their own classes, which is very helpful to increase and crystallize their own mastery and understanding of the subject matter (Eggers, 1995; Boudouris; 2005; & Sadovi, 2008). In Beasley's attempt to find out the academic advantages of peer tutoring for tutors, she announced great success and improvement nearing 80% with some students (Beasley, 1997). However, others (e.g. McKeachie, 1986) argue that peer tutoring does not have an effective impact on the tutors' academic performance. Most peer tutors follow shallow strategies in helping their peers like summarizing and highlighting. The peer tutors are already outstanding their tutees in their academic performance and excellence, so following strategies like highlighting only does not add noticeably to the tutors' academic gains (as cited in Landrum & Chastain, 1998).

Furthermore, some studies (e.g., Egger, 1995; Sadovi, 2008) claimed that peer-tutoring is helpful for expanding the tutors' knowledge about the subject as they will be investing a great deal of time in looking for the right materials and sources to offer a well-founded support for the tutees, in which they may encounter materials that are helpful for themselves, too. In order to be capable of teaching, tutors need to study the materials they are supposed to teach carefully, which requires them to spend more time revising and preparing (Sadovi, 2008).

In addition, tutors are more likely to go back and check some reference books and sources to achieve their tutoring mission professionally. Exchanging tips with the other peer tutors and teachers also helped improve the whole process of enhancing learning. Therefore, students' academic performance tends to be affected positively by being peer tutors. Learning by teaching is proved to be a success, especially if the program is "well organized and implemented with specific objectives" (Eggers, 1995). In their research, Johns and Kolko (2005) cited the

results of a study done in 1989 by Dimeff, Fantuzzo and Fox to figure out the benefits of a reciprocal peer-tutoring program in a college abnormal psychology class. The researchers found that the peer-tutoring program resulted in "tutors' improvement in personal academic achievement, personal cognitive gains, and higher abilities than those who did not interact with peers" (p. 5). All these findings confirm the already well-known notion that the best way to really learn and understand a subject is to try to teach it to somebody else; or as Sadovi (2008) proposed, teaching could be the best teacher.2.4

2.4 The social advantages of peer-tutoring:

Besides the gains on the academic level, some studies showed social improvement as peer tutors gained and grew in desirable social and life skills from their experience with tutoring (e.g. Boudouris, 2005; Tong, 2004; & Beasley, 1997; Colvin, 2007; & Eggers, 1995). Tutoring requires punctuality; tutors need to be on time for their sessions and their appointments with their tutees, which makes them respect time and develop time management skills. Tutors also learn to balance between the time spent studying and the time used in preparing for tutoring and tutoring itself (Tong, 2004; & Beasley, 1997).

Peer tutors learn problem-solving skills as well; they encounter several areas of difficulty when dealing with the different personalities and problematic issues of the tutees, which requires them to be always alert to provide practical and systematic help to students (Eggers, 1995; & Boudouris, 2005). Eggers (1995) stated that problem-solving skills expanded with her students who volunteered to work as peer tutors as they attempted to find alternative ways for their peers in order to help them understand the mathematical problems and concepts. Furthermore, Beasley (1997) found that her students developed effective communication and listening skills from being involved in a peer-tutoring program.

Socially, the peer tutors become popular among their peers, and they have the chance to develop ongoing friendships and build up positive relations with many other students (Beasley, 1997; & Tong, 2004). In support of the latter proposition, Boudouris (2005) noticed that a special bond was formed between the partners. Moreover, in her attempt to shed light on the social gains of the peer tutors, Colvin (2007) indicated that the peer-tutoring experience positively affected the 'mentors' interpersonal relationships' with their tutees. A sense of being helpful and wanted in the campus life has developed in the tutors, which granted them positive feelings of comfort and satisfaction at college. However, Colvin noticed that "this interaction does not always occur smoothly and that tutors often spend an inordinate amount of time engaged in impression management" (p. 165). Also, she stated that "the tutor/student relationship can be rife with misunderstanding and power struggle."

2.5 The personal advantages of peer-tutoring

Tutoring provides the peer tutors with the opportunity to sharpen their personalities; the tutors work as a bridge between teachers and students, which makes them open to the experience of both the former and latter party (Eggers, 1995; Johns & Kolko, 2005). They gain confidence and self-efficacy as they get immersed in the experience of peer tutoring. Eggers (1995) concluded from her experiment of a successful peer tutoring and cross-age grouping program that "Both tutors and tutees grow in self-esteem" (p. 220). However, other researchers like Landrum and Chastain (1998) found out that "regardless of being tutored or being the tutor, there is a little to no effect on self-esteem" (p. 502), which contradicts the findings of the former researchers (e.g. Eggers, 1995).

Another advantage for the peer tutors is the direct contact between them and the teachers and lecturers, which trains them to be confident and competent for the task. Beasley (1997) stated that her students found the tutoring experience challenging yet motivating. According to Colvin's findings (2005), the peer tutors were close to noticing and recognizing the students' struggles at college, which inspired them with insights to assess and evaluate their own competence and capability. By interacting with their tutees and responding to their varied needs, the peer tutors ended up mastering other good qualities and virtues like responsibility and patience: "Through peer mentoring, tutors have become aware of their developing personal attributes," (Colvin, 2005, pp. 173). The effectiveness of peer tutoring programs was carried over to homes as well; tutors in several studies admitted that they have developed more patience and positive attitude, not only when working with others, but when working alone too (e.g. Eggers, 1995; & Landrum & Chastain, 1998). Johns and Kolko (2005) cited a study conducted in 1997 by three researchers: Sawyer, Pinciaro, and Bedwell, who concluded from their experiment that "participation in a peer mentoring program can be a developmental task challenging the ways in which intellectual competence, interpersonal relationships, sense of purpose, and personal identity are perceived by the mentor" (p. 4) . Peer tutors, as a result, are more likely to develop leadership skills and be a source of

influence upon their tutees. In many cases, tutors were discovered to be the role-models for their tutees (Beasley, 1997).

2.6 Conclusion

Peer tutoring is regarded as a fruitful experience (e.g. Mastudam Keiser, Raizada ... & Koedinger, 2010; Sadovi, 2008; Boudouris, 2005; & Beasley, 1997) that is helpful for both tutors and tutees. It develops a sense of achievement and self-worth, and brings about a feeling of fulfilment in tutors who believe that they contribute something positive to their communities (Beasley, 1995). These gains may differ from one context to another, influenced by various factors, such as age, subject, format and others. Therefore, the researchers' results could take opposite directions. However, most of the studies in this literature review agreed on the effectiveness of learning by teaching. Also, they almost all agreed on the social and personal advantages. Below is a summary of the benefits that peer tutors gain from being involved in a peer-tutoring and cross-age grouping experience, as quoted from a peer-tutoring handbook compiled by Tudor at Tennessee High School:

In General, Tutoring

- Improves communication skills
- Improves organizational skills
- Improves learning
- For tutor, the understanding of the concept is raised to higher levels, rather than superficial levels
- Improves self esteem and self-confidence
- Provides positive role models and emotional support
- Creates opportunities for enrichment
- Increases mastery of academic skills
- Improves student's attitudes toward school: reduces dropout rates and trancies
- Breaks down social barriers and creates new friendships

The Tutors Receive

- A sense of pride and accomplishment for having helped someone else
- Increased academic mastery
- A greater sense of dedication to their own instruction, so they can effectively transmit it to the tutees
- Increased self-esteem, confidence, and sense of adequacy as a result of being named a tutor
- A new or increased sense of responsibility and awareness for what teachers must do to transmit knowledge to students
- Empathy for tutees for whom learning may be much more of a struggle

Source: Tudor, A. M. (N.D). *Peer Tutoring Handbook for Tutors and Mentor Teachers*. Tennessee High School, Bristol.

The present study aims to underscore the effective impact of peer tutoring on the peer tutor. It is conducted in the Tutorial Centre at Sultan Qaboos University where a successful peer-tutoring program has been applied for four years. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology and the data collection instruments.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings of some studies that were conducted in the domain of peer tutoring, particularly on the peer tutors' gains of the peer-tutoring programs adopted. It showed several advantages that peer tutors derive from being involved in the experience of peer tutoring. Based on the literature review findings as a foundation for my investigations, I have developed a convenient questionnaire to collect data from the sample peer tutors about their academic, social, professional, psychological and personal advantages of peer tutoring. The content of the data collection instrument is clearly covered in the current chapter in addition to a comprehensive description of the study participants. The chapter also highlights the aims of the study.

3.2 Aims

The study focus is to investigate the positive impacts of peer tutoring upon the peer tutors at Sultan Qaboos University as a whole. It sheds light on the peer tutors' gains in the different academic, social and personal dimensions. The paper aims to provide satisfactory answers to the following questions:

- 1- Does peer-tutoring have an effect on the tutor's academic achievement?
- 2- Does peer-tutoring contribute to the maturity of the tutors' social and professional skills?
- 3- Are there personal and psychological advantages that peer tutors derive from peer-tutoring?
- 4- To what extent are peer tutors satisfied with their experience of peer tutoring?

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Participants

The study is conducted in the Tutorial Centre at SQU. The TC has been developing a successful peer-tutoring program for four years now, with a view to facilitating Language Learning and helping English Language Learners. Since then, the program has harvested a great deal of appreciation by both teachers and students. In this study, random twenty-five peer tutors were asked to fill in a questionnaire that was designed specifically to meet the study purpose. All the sample peer tutors are senior students, varying from third to fifth year, majoring in English and enrolled in the Colleges of Education and Arts. To illustrate further data, a group discussion with six members of the sample group was held. Finally, an elaborate interview with the Tutorial Centre and the Peer Tutoring program coordinator was conducted to match the program set objectives, on the tutor side, with the real gains.

3.3.2 Instruments

The required data were mainly collected from the sample group through a survey questionnaire. Twenty-five copies of the questions were distributed to twenty-five current peer tutors in the TC to be answered individually. Most of the questions are designed based on the findings of the previous chapter. The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section requires the respondents to provide background information about themselves: gender, year of study, duration of peer-tutoring experience, and the GPA. The last component is made optional due to the sensitivity of the idea of sharing one's grades with others.

The second section of the study consists of agreement-scale of five degrees (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). The agreement-scale contained thirty-five items, divided into three categories: the academic dimension, the social and professional dimensions, and the personal and psychological dimensions. The first category has twelve items. These items focus on the academic advantages that peer tutors gain either from the TC available resources or from the people they deal with, e.g. TC staff and tutees. Some items in this category inquire about the extent to which peer tutors relate their tutoring experience with their courses and academic life.

The interest of the next category is to find out the social and the professional gains of the peer tutors. This category contains eleven items that inquire about life issues like the relationship of the peer tutors with each other and their relationship with the tutees. The items also cover the skills that peer tutors are expected to develop like time-management, problem-solving, and communication skills.

The last category covers the personal and psychological gains. It consists of twelve items that discuss issues related to the peer tutors' confidence, pride, and responsibility. Moreover, they cover the peer tutors' competency to keep a positive attitude and to develop patience. These items also cover the respondents' satisfaction about their roles as peer tutors.

The last section in the questionnaire consists of one question that was aimed to illustrate further data and to give the respondents an area to comment openly about their best part of being peer tutors (see appendix A).

In addition to the survey questionnaire, further data are collected from some of the participants through a group discussion. The discussion generally was not structured and framed with formal boundaries. It was more of a chat and spontaneous conversations in order to illustrate authentic and sincere answers from the participant peer tutors. More or less, the points discussed are similar to the ones that are stated in the questionnaire, with addition of justifications for some of the responses.

The following chapter gives an overview of the survey questionnaire results. Discussions of the findings are provided in chapter 5.

4. Results

This chapter displays the results and the responses of the study participants.

4.1 Respondents' Nature

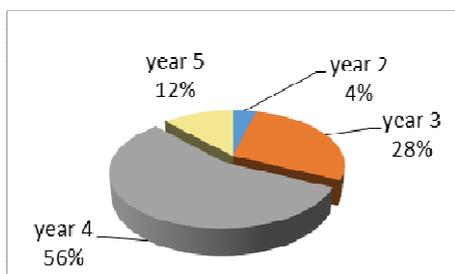


Figure 4.1.1 PTs year of study

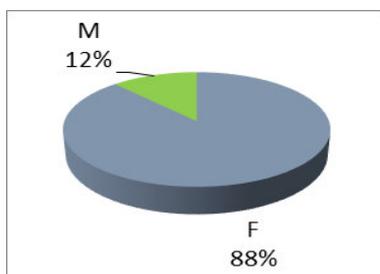


Figure 4.1.2 PTs Gender

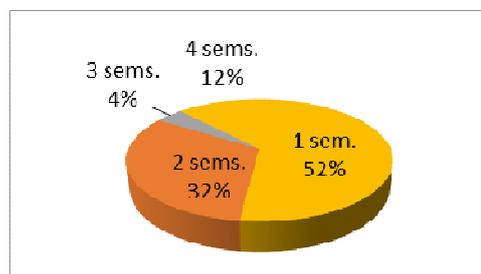


Figure 4.1.3 Peer-Tutoring Experience

The three pie charts above (figures 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3) provide a general overview about the participant peer tutors in this study. In regard to gender, 88% of the respondents are females, which is due to the large number of female peer tutors in SQU's Tutorial Center in comparison to the number of male peer tutors. The middle chart shows that 56% of the PTs are in their fourth academic year at the university, while 4% only represented the number of second year students. In addition, almost half of the sample group is practicing peer-tutoring for their first semester.

4.2 Analysis

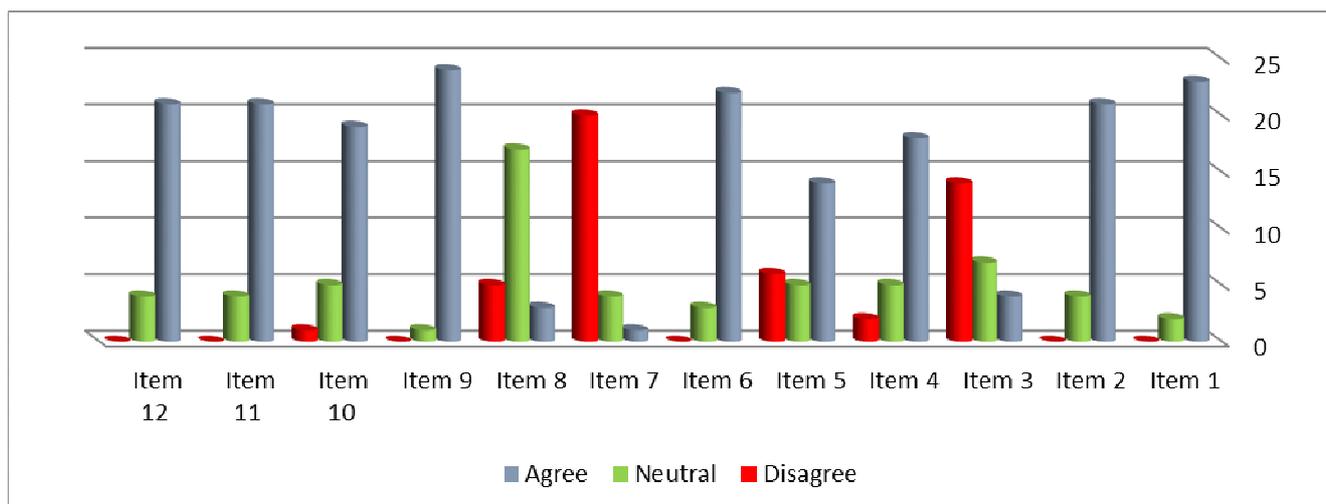


Figure 4.2.1 The First Category's Items of the Survey Questionnaire: The Academic Dimension

Figure 4.2.1 above presents the responses that the peer-tutors provided for the first category's items in the survey questionnaire they filled in. As noticed, none of the respondents disagreed with the items 1, 2, 6, 9, 11 and 12. A large number of the PTs agreed that peer-tutoring helps them consolidate and evaluate their existing knowledge, increase their understanding of the subject matter, and realize their weaknesses in the language. The peer tutors also supported that their experience with the Tutorial Center makes them more likely to participate in conferences and academic events than before. In items 6 and 12 the respondents stress that interacting with the native staff in the Student Support Unit and exchanging tips with the other peer-tutors help them practice and improve their language skills. Item 8, however, discriminates the respondents' point of view very slightly. The number of the peer tutors who agreed that their GPA has improved after joining the peer-tutoring program almost equals that of those who did not agree. The discrimination in item 5, which suggests that peer-tutors check more reference books and resources, is not very clear either. There is a variation of about only 5 cases between the supporters and the opponents.

In Items 7 and 3, the number of the respondents who disagreed with the provided statements is noticeably larger than that of those who supported them. The peer tutors mentioned that peer-tutoring helps them academically and they do relate their experience as peer tutors to their studies and academic life.

The Academic Dimension	
1	I revise and reinforce my existing knowledge when I tutor.
2	I have increased my own understanding and mastery of the subject matter.
3	I do not benefit academically because what I do basically is summarize and highlight some rules and facts for my tutees.
4	My knowledge in the language matter has improved because of the various resources available in the TC.
5	Now I check more reference books that help me in my studies.
6	I usually exchange tips with the other peer tutors and I benefit from this in my own academic life.
7	I do not relate being a peer tutor to my studies and courses.
8	My GPA has improved since I joined the peer tutoring program.
9	Peer tutoring has helped me evaluate my current knowledge and realize my weaknesses in the language.
10	The different strategies I have learnt from both the peer tutors and tutees help me in my studies.
11	I have more opportunities to participate in different local and international conferences and events.
12	Interacting with the native speakers in the Student Support Unit (SSU) has helped me improve my language skills.

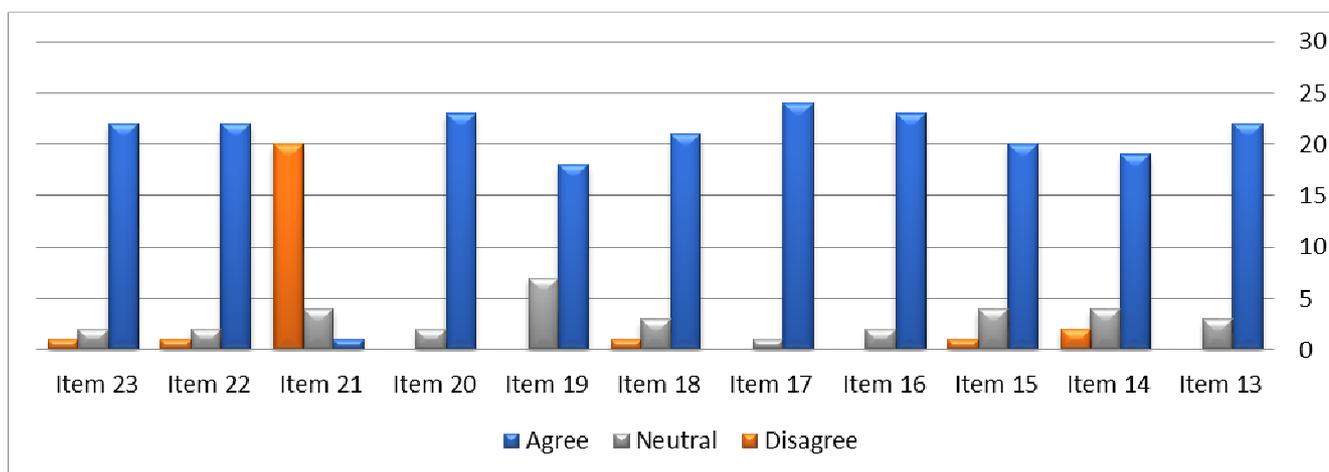


Figure 4.2.2 The Second Category's Items of the Survey Questionnaire: The Social and Professional Dimensions

Figure 4.2.2 shows the respondents' level of agreement with the items from 13 to 23 in the survey questionnaire. The mentioned items' basic focus is the social and professional impacts of peer-tutoring upon the PTs. over 80% of the respondents agreed with items 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, and 23. Peer-tutoring helps students develop time management, problem solving skills, and listening and communication skills. The PTs also reported that they became more sensitive towards their peers who struggle with the language. Peer-tutoring brings about a good feeling in students of being productive members of SQU campus life.

Items 18 and 19 show the extent to which peer tutors have managed to make friendships with their peers. Around 84% of the sample group stated that they became good friends with many of the other peer tutors. However, only 72% of them reported that they were successful in making friendships with their tutees as well.

Through item 21, it is clear that the Tutorial Center is a good environment for healthy and positive communication among the students. A wide range, of about 80%, of the peer tutors denied any kind of misunderstanding and conflict between them and the other staff in the working place (TC).

The Social and Professional Dimensions	
13	I have developed time management skills and punctuality.
14	I find it easy to balance between the time I spend studying and tutoring.
15	I have developed problem-solving skills by dealing with the different areas of difficulty of the tutees.
16	I have developed a sense of empathy towards others who struggle with the language.
17	I have developed effective communication and listening skills.
18	I have managed to form good friendships with many peer tutors.
19	I have managed to form good friendships with many of my tutees.
20	My relationship with the SSU staff is affected positively by being a peer tutor.
21	My relationship with teachers and students in the TC is entangled with misunderstanding.
22	I like to be involved in teamwork with the other peer tutors.
23	I feel I am a more productive member of SQU campus life.

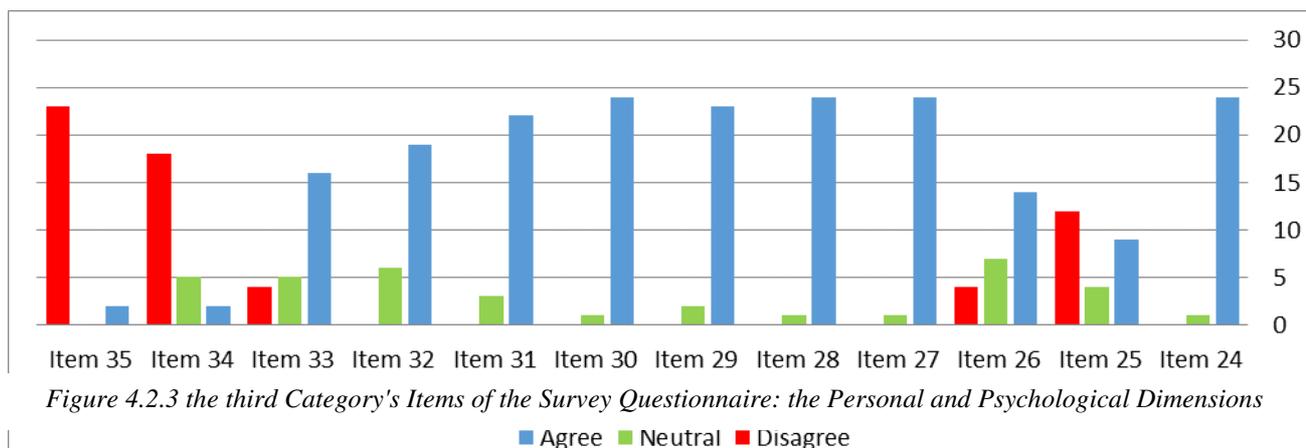


Figure 4.2.3 the third Category's Items of the Survey Questionnaire: the Personal and Psychological Dimensions

Figure 4.2.3 above represents the respondents' level of agreement with the items from 24 to 35. These items focus on the peer tutors' gains on the personal and psychological levels. Almost none of the sample group members disagreed with items 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32. All the PTs reported that their experience of peer tutoring helped bring about good feelings of achievement and fulfillment. They also developed a sense of responsibility and grew in self-confidence. Most of the PTs regarded themselves as role models for their tutees. In addition, the respondents remarked that being peer tutors helped them develop patience and keep a positive mood. Almost 100% of the PTs admitted that they feel proud and happy when their tutees show their appreciation and thank them after the sessions.

The Personal and Psychological Dimensions	
24	I feel more confident when I am in the TC.
25	I feel superior to my tutees.
26	I feel that tutees regard me as someone who is proud of being a peer tutor.
27	Peer tutoring brings about feelings of achievement and fulfillment in me.
28	I have developed a sense of responsibility.
29	I am more patient now when others ask me for help.
30	I feel proud and happy when tutees thank me after each session.
31	I keep a positive attitude all the time while I am in the TC.
32	Tutees look up to me as a role model.
33	I like to identify myself as a peer tutor for others.
34	I like it when my tutee does not show up.
35	I am planning to quit the Peer Tutoring Program.

In item 25, the respondents split into almost three equal groups. A third of the PTs stated that they feel superior to their tutees, while another third denied having such feelings of superiority while tutoring. The last third was neutral. A large slice of the sample group expressed their interest in what they are doing and explained that they have no intentions to quit the peer-tutoring program.

Further explanations for these results are provided in the next chapter.

5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides discussions and explains the previous chapter's findings.

The findings in chapter 3 almost match those of the literature review in chapter 2. The expected impacts of peer-tutoring upon the peer tutors were generally met according to the respondents' feedback. The sample group reported that being peer tutors helped them improve their academic skills and realize their strengths and weaknesses in the subject matter. However, only few PTs reported an increase in their GPA, and this could be resulting from various factors; it was not directly obvious whether the peer-tutoring experience lent a hand in this matter or not. Through a group discussion with some peer tutors, they clarified that most of the tutees dealt with are still in the Foundation program, so interacting with them was not noticeably beneficial at the academic level. However, the various available resources and continuous practice of English while in the TC are the most enriching factors in terms of the academic dimension.

The peer tutors seemed to benefit more from each other than from the tutees. A good explanation for this could be attributed to the fact that all the PTs who work for the TC are excellent students with high cognitive abilities. All the students who are admitted to practice peer-tutoring should have a GPA of 2.7 or above. Also, the senior students' courses (peer tutors) are more advanced than those of the Foundation program students (tutees). Therefore, discussing the subject matter among the seniors themselves was more productive. Also, in regards to friendship making, the PTs were more successful in becoming friends with each other than with their tutees. One reason for this is the students' common experiences. The PTs are all seniors while most of the tutees are freshmen. In addition, the peer tutors are more likely to meet with each other than to meet with their tutees. Each peer tutor may come across the same tutee in a countable number of sessions while s/he would meet with the same peer tutors who are scheduled to tutor during the same time for a whole semester. However, some tutees make sure to book their sessions with a specific PT all the time if they tended to feel more comfortable with him/her, and so a bond of friendship is more likely to be established between the PT and the tutee in this case.

All in all, the peer-tutoring program proved its effectiveness and contribution to the peer tutors' development. Responsibility, patience, confidence and punctuality are all values that peer tutors became more aware of after working for the Tutorial Center. The peer tutors deal with tutees of different backgrounds, levels and personalities. This experience helped the peer tutors enhance their communication skills. Moreover, the various needs of the tutees taught the PTs to develop problem solving skills and to become critical and quick thinkers.

Feelings of fulfillment and achievement were experienced by all the sample peer tutors. The best part of being a peer tutor, as stated by a number of PTs, is the feeling of pride, fulfillment and achievement when the tutees thank them and show that they have benefited from the sessions. Another point that the PTs mentioned through the discussion is that they regard peer-tutoring as a new experience and an escape from their routine of studying. Below are some quotations from the answers that the respondents provided in section C of the survey questionnaire, which asks about the PTs best part of the peer-tutoring experience:

"I like how I can transfer my knowledge to other people, which is part of my human nature"

"You feel as if you have done something great when you help the tutees"

"I like working with others as a group and practicing my language"

"It's a great opportunity to exchange knowledge and help people"

"I like it very much when my tutees get benefits out of my tutoring. I feel I have achieved a great success"

"I like being a reason for someone to develop and improve his/her language, as well as being an active member at SQU"

"Hearing positive feedback from the tutees is really great"

"I like helping others and expanding my social network"

The next chapter wraps up the discussion, restates the study focus question, and summarizes the key findings. The chapter also provides recommendations for further studies in the field of peer-tutoring.

6. Conclusion

The Tutorial Centre at Sultan Qaboos University has been applying a peer tutoring program for four years now. Senior English Language students of excellent academic performance are hired to tutor their peers who are

struggling with the language. Most of the TC customers are freshmen and Foundation program students. This study has shed light on the peer tutors' gains of the peer-tutoring experience. It has investigated through questionnaires and a group discussion the academic, social, professional, psychological and personal advantages of peer-tutoring upon the peer tutors.

Twenty-five currently employed peer tutors participated in the study. Through their feedback, and my personal experience as a peer tutor for four semesters, it was demonstrated that the peer-tutoring program adapted by the Tutorial Centre in the LC at SQU is a successful method of enriching students and contributing to their skills' development. The peer tutors benefit academically by exchanging knowledge with their peers, especially the other PTs. They also found the experience a good chance to practice their language skills and expand their knowledge through the available resources in the TC. Furthermore, the peer-tutoring experience opened a horizon for students to expand their social network by making friendships and interacting with different students and staff. They learnt to be more responsible, confident, patient, outgoing, and punctual; skills which they would certainly need in their future career life. The peer tutors explored the feelings of fulfillment and achievement when they realize that they have eased some difficulties and contributed to somebody's success in learning the English language.

This study investigated only the positive impacts of peer-tutoring upon the peer tutors in the TC at SQU. There could be opposite impacts that need further exploration. Moreover, there might be differences between the gains of male and female peer tutors, an area for future research that could be undertaken by peer-tutoring investigators.

References

- Beasley, C. J. (1997). Students as teachers: The benefits of peer tutoring. *Teaching and Learning Forum*, 97, 21-30.
- Boudouris, C. (2005). Peer-tutoring: Positive peer interactions. *Ohio Reading Teachers*, 37(1), 9-19.
- Colvin, J. N. (2007). Peer tutoring and social dynamics in higher education. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 15(2), p. 165-181
- Eggers, J. E. (1995). Pause, prompt and praise: Cross-age tutoring. *Teaching Children Mathematics*, 4(2), 216-220.
- Jerome, R., Jeimee, E., & Tiffani, C. (2011). *Tutoring matters: everything you always wanted to know about how to tutor (2nd Edition)*. Retrieved from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/squ/docDetail.action?docID=10481052>
- Johns, M., & Kolka, V. (2005). The psychosocial growth of peer mentors in a college program for students on academic probation. *Psychosocial Growth of Peer Mentors in College*.
- Landrum, R. E., & Chastain, G. (1998). Demonstrating tutoring effectiveness within a one-semester course. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39(5), 502-508.
- Matsuda, N., Keiser, V., Raizada, R., Stylianides, G., Cohen, W., & Koedinger, K. (2010). Learning by teaching SimStudent: Technical accomplishments and an initial use with students. *Lectures Notes in Computer Science*, 6095, 317-326. doi: 10.1007/978-3-642-13388-6_36
- Sadovi, C. (2008). Tutors are helping themselves too: High schoolers taking part in reading program are showing improvement as they teach 1st graders. *Ohio Reading Teachers*, 41(3), 112-117
- Tong, E. (2004). Tutoring aids tutors, learners. *Collaborative Learning*, 661, 253-257.
- Tudor, A. M. (N.D). *Peer Tutoring Handbook for Tutors and Mentor Teachers*. Tennessee High School, Bristol.

Appendix

A. The Survey Questionnaire



Department of English
 College of Arts and Social Sciences
 Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)

What Positive Impacts Does Peer Tutoring Have Upon the Peer Tutor at SQU?

I am conducting a study on the positive impacts of peer tutoring upon the peer tutor in the Language Centre's (LC) Tutorial Centre (TC) at SQU. I will be very grateful if you could find a slot of your time to fill it in. This questionnaire is designed for research purpose only, and all your answers will remain confidential.

Section A: Please provide the following:

1. Gender:
2. Year of study:
3. How long have you been peer tutoring in the TC? semester(s)
4. GPA (optional): before joining the TC / after working as a peer tutor.....

Section B: From your experience as a peer tutor in the TC, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, N: Neutral, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree

No.	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
The Academic Dimension						
1	I revise and reinforce my existing knowledge when I tutor.					
2	I have increased my own understanding and mastery of the subject matter.					

3	I do not benefit academically because what I do basically is summarize and highlight some rules and facts for my tutees.					
4	My knowledge in the language matter has improved because of the various resources available in the TC.					
5	Now I check more reference books that help me in my studies.					
6	I usually exchange tips with the other peer tutors and I benefit from this in my own academic life.					
7	I do not relate being a peer tutor to my studies and courses.					
8	My GPA has improved since I joined the peer tutoring program.					
9	Peer tutoring helped me evaluate my current knowledge and realize my weaknesses in the language.					
10	The different strategies I learnt from both the peer tutors and tutees help me in my studies.					
11	I have more opportunities to participate in different local and international conferences and events.					
12	Interacting with the native speakers in the Student Support Unit (SSU) helped me improve my language.					
The Social and Professional Dimensions						
13	I noticed that I have developed time management skills and punctuality.					
14	I find it easy to balance between the time I spend studying and tutoring.					
15	I have developed problem-solving skills by dealing with the different areas of difficulty of the tutees.					
16	I have developed a sense of empathy towards others who struggle with the language.					
17	I have developed effective communication and listening skills.					
18	I have managed to form good friendships with many peer tutors.					
19	I have managed to form good friendships with many of my tutees.					

20	My relationship with the SSU staff is affected positively by being a peer tutor.					
21	My relationship with teachers and students in the TC is entangled with misunderstanding.					
22	I like to be involved in teamwork with the other peer tutors.					
23	I feel I am a more productive member of SQU campus life.					
The Personal and Psychological Dimensions						
24	I feel more confident when I am in the TC.					
25	I feel superior to my tutees.					
26	I feel that tutees regard me as someone who is proud of being a peer tutor.					
27	Peer tutoring brings about feelings of achievement and fulfilment in me.					
28	I have developed a sense of responsibility.					
29	I am more patient now when others ask me for help.					
30	I feel proud and happy when tutees thank me after each session.					
31	I keep a positive attitude all the time while I am in the TC.					
32	Tutees look up to me as a role model.					
33	I like to identify myself as a peer tutor for others.					
34	I like it when my tutee does not show up.					
35	I am planning to quit the Peer Tutoring Program.					

Section C: Please, answer the following question:

1- What do you like most about being a peer tutor in the TC? Explain your answer.

.....

Thank you for your time and cooperation.