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Reading in Pairs, description and results of a peer tutoring program for English as a foreign language

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ABSTRACT

Reading in Pairs is a peer tutoring program designed to improve oral fluency and reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language. In this program students work in pairs, using an established relationship framework and the support of their teacher. This article outlines the main conceptual foundations of the program: peer tutoring, English as a foreign language, and family involvement in academics; describes *Reading in Pairs* covering the activities per session, roles of tutors, tutees and teachers, training for participants, assessment, and other details and presents results of its implementation in 27 schools, with 974 students. Using a mixed research method, combining a pre and post-test quantitative design (for reading comprehension and oral expression) and qualitative study (analyzing the interaction of 3 pairs and teacher and student perceptions), results suggest the effectivity of the program.

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Cooperative learning; family involvement; oral expression; peer tutoring; reading comprehension

Introduction

Background and objectives of the program

The *Reading in Pairs* program (Duran et al. 2016) is based on the wide experience of the GRAI group (Research Group on Peer Learning from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Catalonia). This research group has developed similar programs in the past, designed to promote reading skills in Catalan (Flores and Duran 2016), Basque (Duran et al. 2011), and Spanish (Valdebenito and Duran 2015). Summary of these research can be consulted in Topping, Duran, and Van Keer (2015).

Reading in pairs: conceptual basis

Peer tutoring

Cooperative learning methods are educational strategies that use peer interactions as learning opportunities, through the creation of positive interdependence (Johnson and Johnson 2009). Peer tutoring carried out in formal contexts is defined as a cooperative learning method based on pairing students in the asymmetrical relationship that arises from the roles of tutor and tutee, with a known and shared common goal that is attained through a relationship framework planned by the teacher (Duran and Vidal 2004).

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Peer tutoring is widely used in many countries, in all educational levels, and curricular areas. It is recognized as a highly beneficial practice for inclusive education, having been placed among the ten most effective practices (Walberg and Paik 2000) and referred to as 'the most effective form of instruction' when combined with other resources (Madden et al. 1991, 594).

Previous research has demonstrated the high effectiveness of peer tutoring when used appropriately. A number of meta-analysis show its high potential for inclusion (Cook et al. 1985) and its effectiveness in different age groups and curriculum areas (Rohrbeck et al. 2003; Jun, Ramirez, and Cumming 2010), regardless of the diversity of the group (Bowman-Perrott et al. 2013).

A key conclusion of the peer tutoring body of research is that both tutors and tutees enjoy the benefits of peer tutoring. Tutors have opportunities to learn academic content when preparing to teach (Fiorella and Mayer 2014), because of the necessary re-elaboration of the content. They also learn in the interactions with their tutee, provided that they avoid a unidirectional and transmissive model of teaching and engage instead in a bidirectional interaction (Cortese 2005). As Roscoe and Chi (2007) point out the formulation of good questions and answers will require them to reflect on the content, integrate previous and new knowledge, reorganize mental models, generate inferences and use cognitive monitoring. The meta-analyses of these authors highlight the advantages for the tutor: greater commitment, sense of responsibility and self-esteem; greater control of content and organization; awareness of her/his own gaps and errors, detection and correction of those of the tutee and, finally, improvement of social interaction skills. In short, tutors can learn by teaching (Duran 2017). Tutees, on their side, receive constant support from the tutor, which helps them in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This adjusted one on one help is much higher quality than the support received in traditional classrooms. Furthermore, previous studies (Good and Brophy 1997) show that having students help each other can be very efficient as they have some advantages over adults to intervene in the ZPD. One of the reasons for these advantages is their status as new learners, which allows them to remember the cognitive challenges their tutees are going through and what kind of support is useful in each case.

It is important to note that the potential advantages of peer tutoring programs are linked to a proper usage of the method which needs a drastic change in the role of the teacher, among other elements. Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982) concluded that greater effectiveness is linked to the initial training of tutors, the existence of a structured interaction within the pair, and the extension of programs through time.

English as foreign language

Providing students with a high quality EFL education has become an important goal of most educational programs in Europe. English teachers still face important challenges in the classroom, however, with the diversity of skill levels among students being one of them. The widely used radial structure, where teachers offer challenges and support to the 'average student', has many negative consequences for most of the students both at an academic and motivational level. Peer tutoring methods, in contrast, take advantage of the diversity of levels to create pairs of students that help each other advance in their respective language skills. The natural diversity then becomes a positive feature of the group.

In line with the recommendations from The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2011), *Reading in Pairs* adopts the communicative approach to develop oral language skills. This approach promotes the creation of circumstances in language lessons that approximate genuine communicative contexts. The *Reading in Pairs* program follows the three relevant strategies to help students improve their oral English as pointed out by Jarauta and Imbernón (2012): increasing exposure time and language use, having high expectations, and prioritizing oral use.

In traditional English classrooms students do not have much opportunity to talk, as interactions only happen between the teacher and one student at a time. In contrast, working in pairs in an organized environment dramatically increases the time of oral interaction. *Reading in Pairs* also promotes

active listening using conversations that go beyond a single question and answer interaction, which is often the only possibility they are given in the traditional radial structures. As will be shown in following sections, the *Reading in Pairs* session structure requires that tutor and tutee engage in a conversation about a text they were given. These conversations start with the tutee's hypothesis of what the text is about, and their previous knowledge on the topic. After reading the text several times, they comment on the accuracy of the hypothesis they made previously. They also do some comprehension activities that are guided by the tutor. The tutor reads the instructions and gives support to the tutee, completing answers and helping the tutee understand when necessary. These conversation opportunities, in addition to the reading practice, are a great support for the development of English fluency.

Regarding the way of approaching reading comprehension within Reading in Pairs, it is relevant to note that each session of the program is centered on an authentic text. These English texts, such as texts found in the media or in literary publications are used as a vehicle for information, in the same way native language texts are used in the classroom. The text is presented as an uninterrupted unit, and students work on it as a whole. Students work first on understanding the entire text, and then concentrate on the grammar or vocabulary they do not understand.

The structure of the *Reading in Pairs* sessions promotes the internalization of effective reading techniques. Students get used to making predictions before reading the text by looking at its title and main features, which highly influences comprehension (Smith 1987). They also practice several reading strategies defined as relevant by Solé (1992): focusing on essential information; evaluating the consistency between text content and previous knowledge; and paying attention to their comprehension level while reading the text.

Family participation

There is wide evidence that shows the positive effects of family involvement in school success. For instance, Ofsted (2001) documented the correlation between family involvement and (a) acceleration of the oral language development, (b) improvement of the school efficiency in Maths and Language, (c) promotion of positive attitudes and values, (d) higher self-esteem and confidence, (e) perception of learning as a permanent process throughout life, and (f) enjoyment of collaborative learning. A lot of this literature focuses on reading activities at home (Dearing et al. 2004; Mullis and Martin 2015). In fact, although family involvement can take numerous forms (Conteh and Kawashima 2008), the most successful one when looking at its influence on academic performance is the participation geared to academic achievement (Castro et al. 2014). This is the family involvement promoted by *Reading in Pairs*.

Despite the extensive research that supports family involvement in schools, important barriers still hinder this participation, which includes lack of training for families and their low confidence to support children in academic tasks. To promote the participation of families that do not read often with their children often, *Reading in Pairs* offers the opportunity to participate in the program from home and includes training for family members. The same teachers who put in place the program within their classrooms organize a training session with families and provide them with the necessary materials. In cases where the student has a higher English level than their family member the possibility of inverting roles is suggested, having the student act as the tutor of the family member. As seen in previous sections this is not a problem, because both being a tutor and a tutee have very positive effects.

Another obstacle to families taking part in school life is the requirement to be physically present. It thus seems necessary to diversify the options available for those families that, because of work schedules or distance to the school, are not able to participate. In *Reading in Pairs*, the family participation takes place from home and it is then a way to allow more families the opportunity of participation in school life.

Finally, it is important to highlight that for family involvement to succeed the separation between school and family has to be removed and replaced by a relationship of interdependence (Collet and

Tort 2011). The responsibility of starting this process falls on educational professionals, who should believe in the potential of families and establish a framework of trust and respect. Allowing families to take part in the academic life of their children with programs like *Reading in Pairs* is a valuable step forward in this direction.

Program description

This section will briefly describe the *Reading in Pairs* program, following the calendar of implementation: (1) initial assessment and training sessions with students and families, (2) options for pairing students, (3) *Reading in Pairs* sessions and its activities, and (4) assessment and preparation of materials by tutors.

Initial training

Research on peer tutoring shows that highly structured scripts for the interaction between tutor and tutee improve the results (Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik 1982; Topping and Ehly 1998). That is why the *Reading in Pairs* program has a very structured framework, ensuring that both members of the pair know what to do in each part of the session. This constitutes a model that will be rigid during the first sessions, but that each pair will be able to adjust to their needs once its basic structure is mastered.

The only way to assure participants know what to do in each part of the sessions is to invest time on the initial training. This investment will secure the correct functioning of the different stages within the program. Regarding the duration of the initial training of students, *Reading in Pairs* suggests a time frame of three sessions. This is usually appropriate, but can (and should) be adjusted to the characteristics of the group of students. A key aspect of these sessions is the participatory methodology that should be in place from the beginning. It is important that students take on responsibility of the process and that teachers promote their participation using discussion techniques, as well as individual and group brainstorming, modeling, or role playing.

As an example of the organization of these sessions, the first session could be organized around an introduction to peer tutoring and its benefits for both members of the pair. To promote commitment and responsibility in tutors and tutees students could express the attributes they value in both roles, and the ones that the group agrees on could be listed on a sign on the wall, as a kind of post-it. The second session could be focused on the specifics about the *Reading in Pairs* program and the tasks per session. For the third session, an explanation of the assessment plan is suggested. In this last session teachers usually administer the initial assessment, which will allow them to pair the students appropriately and can also serve as indication of improvement when compared to the final assessment.

Regarding the training for families, a two-hour session of initial training is suggested. This session is generally done with all the interested families together, and its main goal is a brief presentation of the program that includes modeling of the activities and explanation of the support materials. This is followed by a second meeting to assess performance once they have done several *Reading in Pairs* sessions with their children.

It is expected that families will be able to develop the program effectively with these two sessions and the possible daily communication if they need it. But it is also true that some families have language barriers and, in this case, the program suggests exchanging the roles: families as tutees and students as tutors.

Pairing students

There are several ways of pairing students, with each of them having advantages and disadvantages, and some may fit best some school contexts than others. First, it is necessary to decide whether to opt for a cross or same age tutoring model. A *cross age* tutoring model should be organized with students that differ in no more than two years of age. This will assure that the academic content is still

relatively challenging for the tutor, therefore assuring their progress in English and fostering motivation. In a cross-age tutoring model, students with the higher English level of each age group should be paired together.

Teachers can also choose a same age tutoring model that can be either fixed or reciprocal tutoring. To organize the pairs of a fixed same age tutoring program, teachers divide the group of participating students in two halves (higher and lower competence). Again, they will pair the student with the highest competence of the first group with the student with the highest competence in group two. This method of pairing helps to maintain a similar competence difference between the members of all the pairs. Teachers can also opt for a reciprocal same age peer tutoring model, in which students will exchange roles every one or two sessions. In this case, students should be paired with a classmate that has a very similar level of competence, to assure both of them can perform each role. The preparation of the sessions will give the tutors the confidence to exercise their role.

The level of competence is the main point when matching up students, but the program also suggests taking into account the students' personality, their communicative abilities and also aims to ensure there is diversity (gender, culture, etc.).

Activities in tutoring sessions

The *Reading in Pairs* program suggests a thirty-minute session per week for fifteen to twenty weeks (see [Figure 1](#)). The 'first step' of each session takes place before the session starts. Tutors receive the *Activity Sheet* (See [Appendix I](#)) with its *Audio File* (containing the text recorded by a competent reader) and *Language Support* (See [Appendix II](#)). Tutors should pay attention to intonation and pronunciation, and be sure they understand all the vocabulary in the text and activities. They are also expected to think about possible questions their tutees may have. This preparation can be done during school hours or at home.

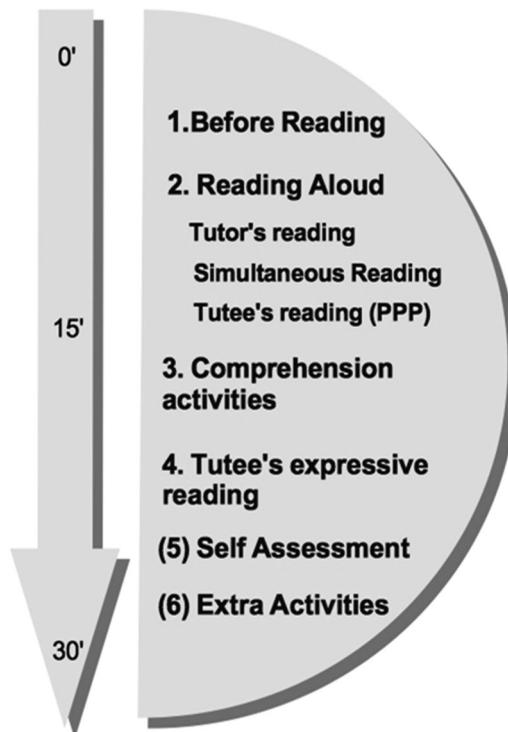


Figure 1. Timing of the activities per session.

Before Reading. During the first five minutes approximately, the pair explores the general characteristics of the text (format, title, structure, etc.) and the tutee is asked by the tutor to make a hypothesis about the content. Tutor and tutee also explore their prior knowledge on the subject which awakens their interest.

Reading Aloud. The reading part of the session starts with the *tutor reading aloud* for their tutee, acting as a model of pronunciation and intonation. The tutor's task is facilitated by the previous preparation of the texts using the Audio File. Right after, *tutor and tutee read aloud together* which gives the tutee an opportunity for imitation of the correct pronunciation and intonation. Then, it is the *tutee's turn to read aloud alone* while the tutor applies the Pause Prompt Praise (PPP) Technique (McNaughton, Glynn, and Robinson 1987; Toomey 1993). This scaffolding strategy consists of pointing out the tutee's error, and then waiting a few seconds to allow for self-correction. In the case that the sought self-correction does not happen, the tutor is expected to offer one or several prompts. The correct answer is only given by the tutor when these hints do not work. The PPP routine always ends with a positive reinforcement. During this third reading, tutees stop after each paragraph or section and paraphrase what those sentences were about. This helps the tutor determine if they need some support to better understand the content.

After reading. The second half of the session starts with the reading comprehension activities. First the pairs talk about whether the initial hypothesis was fulfilled or not, and what information in the text allows them to determine this. The following comprehension activities have various levels of challenge. The first one(s) asks the tutee to retrieve information from the text in different ways (filling out a table, finding explicit information, etc.). Following questions require some interpretation, for example, an identification of the main topic, listing supporting evidence for some of the statements, etc. The last question(s) is guided towards reflection and evaluation. The pair may evaluate formal aspects of the text, or talk about related topics, connecting the content with their previous knowledge.

The *Activity Sheets* include a range of comprehension activities that are as various and rich as possible: closed and open-ended questions; extracting main ideas; making schemes and inferences; connecting previous knowledge with the content of the text, etc. Of course, these activities can be adapted to the needs and preferences of the students.

Expressive Reading. The last reading aloud of the text is done by the tutee, and it is named 'expressive reading'. At this point, when the tutee has a clear understanding of the meaning of the text, she or he should be able to do a more 'natural' reading, focusing on pronunciation and intonation.

Self-assessment. Every four sessions the pairs evaluate their progress, using a guide that the program proposes and teachers and students negotiate and modify depending on their interests and needs. This suggested guide includes open and closed ended items that refer to the appropriate fulfillment of the roles and the respect of the structure of the session. The self-assessment document can also contain goals that each pair has set for themselves in the previous self-assessment session.

Extra Activities. Although the routine of the program has the great advantage of facilitating good work dynamics, after a number of sessions some students may find it repetitive. To contribute to a good level of motivation, teachers may decide to break up the routine from time to time by organizing an activity inspired by the topic of one of the *Activity Sheets*. For instance, teachers may decide to facilitate a debate, student presentations, or a research session. Another option is to organize reflection sessions in which the students can discuss topics on the dynamics that are taking place in the tutoring program, or how peer tutoring is different from other ways of teaching and learning.

Besides the organization of extra activities, another source of flexibility is the fact that control of the structure is progressively handed over to the students once they have internalized their roles and the basic structure of the sessions. This responsibility allows students to adjust the structure to their own needs, prioritizing some sections and reducing the time spent in others. These adjustments must be reasoned in the self-assessment questionnaire and agreed upon with the teacher.

Teachers role and assessment of progress

The classroom organization during peer tutoring allows for, and needs, a shift in the traditional teacher's role. An important part of the teacher's role during the first few weeks is to remind some student pairs of the structure of the session, using different strategies such as individual or group reminders or signs on the walls or tables. Teachers are also expected to monitor and assess the students by listening to the pairs interacting, observing and keeping track of the student's difficulties and their progress. Teachers can use their own observation techniques or the guides supplied by the program.

After some sessions of practice most pairs are usually independent, which allows the teacher to focus attention on those students that need extra support. This is done with a clear conscience since the rest of the class is also involved in challenging and appropriate academic work, and constitutes another key change in the teacher's role.

Tutors create teaching material

The provided *Activity Sheets* are examples for the tutors that allow them to develop similar materials once they are familiar with formats, text characteristics and the variety of activities. The elaboration of teaching materials by students is, without doubt, a good learning opportunity (Duran 2017). Therefore, tutors will be asked to develop at least two *Activity Sheets*. Teachers will determine the form of assistance for the creation of these materials, as they can vary from individual work without assistance (serving as summative assessment) to the assistance of more experienced tutors or the teacher's help.

Materials and method

As said before, the *Reading in Pairs* program is based on the experience and data gathered by the GRAI research group in the program *Leemos en pareja*, which has been developed in the languages of Catalan, Spanish and Basque within more than 260 schools. *Reading in Pairs* shares a lot of elements with those other programs, but it is also a novel proposal that includes some elements specifically designed for learning of a foreign language. These are the *Audio File*, the *Language Support* guide and some steps of the session routine.

Next section presents the results of the initial implementation of *Reading in Pairs* within 27 schools throughout Catalonia and Navarra during the 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic years. The focus of the research is the evaluation of the program's effectiveness in reading and speaking competence in EFL.

The study presented here is based on a mixed method approach, with an explanatory sequential design, which begins with a quantitative strand -to find possible changes- and then a qualitative study, to explain quantitative results (Creswell 2015). There are three main axes of the data collection.

Academic achievement quantitative data

The Movers Cambridge Young Learners English Test (Cambridge 2011) was selected to measure the improvement in reading comprehension and oral expression skills in EFL. A pretest – posttest design without control group was chosen, given the ecological character of the research. The time between pretest and posttest varied between 13 and 18 weeks depending on the school, with an average of 15 weeks.

Reading comprehension data was collected from a representative sample of 27 Primary and Secondary schools that implemented the program in their classrooms during 2014 to 2016. The sample consisted of 974 participating students aged 11–13 and 35 teachers spread over 4 schools in Navarra and 23 schools in Catalonia. The sample of participating students was distributed in 764 students who developed fixed tutoring (385 tutors and 379 tutees) and 210 reciprocal tutoring (playing both roles). For the oral communication skills, a subsample of 288 students was selected, composed by 113 tutors, 112 tutees and 63 in reciprocal role. The pretest – posttest data was analyzed using a Student's *t*-test (SPSS 22).

The hypothesis for the study was a significant improvement in the measured skills, as measured by the Movers test (Cambridge 2011). This was expected given the opportunities for oral interaction in the program and the academic benefits of peer tutoring that have been shown in previous research.

Perceptions of the program qualitative data

Teachers' perceptions of the program were assessed through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Teachers were asked about the academic and social benefits of the program for tutors and tutees, the benefits of family involvement, the quality of the teacher training they received, and their opinions on the appropriateness of the different elements of the program. The 35 teachers that participated in the interviews and answered the questionnaires carried on the program on the same schools that were selected for the reading comprehension analysis.

In the case of students' perceptions, a representative subsample of 24 students from the same school was asked to fill out a questionnaire about the same topics as the teacher's. In both cases, the answers of teachers and students are analyzed by three researchers, codifying the answers to look for qualitative complementary explanations about the possible quantitative changes.

Analysis of the tutoring interaction

A subsample of three pairs of students was recorded during three tutoring sessions and their interactions were analyzed in terms of time spent in oral interaction, number and types of interactions, and fulfillment of the expected tutor and tutee behaviors.

The three pairs belonged to the same school and were described by their teachers as having different levels of competence (low, medium, high) representative of the diversity in their classrooms.

Results

Reading comprehension

The pre and post-test analysis showed a significant difference in the reading comprehension section of the Cambridge Movers pretest ($M = 58.11$, $SD = 20.51$) and posttest scores ($M = 63.36$, $SD = 21.52$), $t(973) = -10.506$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.25$.

The results, broken down by type of tutoring and role of the student, are shown in Table 1. All students, regardless of their role, had significantly higher results in the reading comprehension posttest. The students involved in reciprocal tutoring (i.e. experiencing both roles) show the largest improvement ($d = 0.46$).

Oral communication skills

There was a significant difference in the oral communication section of the Cambridge Movers pretest ($M = 47.00$, $SD = 23.55$) and posttest scores ($M = 55.41$, $SD = 22.52$), $t(287) = -11.451$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.37$. Table 2 collects the results obtained for this variable broken down by type of tutoring and role.

The pretest – posttest Oral Communication results show significant improvement in the fixed tutoring condition for both tutors and tutees. It is also observed, through analysis of effect size, that tutees show a higher increase in oral expression than tutors. Regarding the reciprocal tutoring condition, the effect size showed less improvement rather than fixed tutoring.

Table 1. Reading Comprehension results according to the tutoring type and role.

Type of tutoring	Student's role	N	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	t	Sig. (Bilateral)	d Effect size
Fixed	Tutors	385	69.56 (16.52)	72.94 (19.46)	-3.964	.00	0.19
	Tutees	379	45.63 (15.69)	50.78 (17.34)	-6.306	.00	0.31
Reciprocal	Reciprocal	210	58.29 (22.23)	68.15 (20.39)	-9.097	.00	0.46

Table 2. Speaking results according to the type of tutoring and role.

Type of tutoring	Student's role	N	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	t	Sig. (Bilateral)	d Effect size
Fixed	Tutors	113	57.66 (19.99)	64.32 (20.34)	-6.400	.00	0.33
	Tutees	112	27.21 (14.25)	39.61 (18.17)	-9.702	.00	0.76
Reciprocal	Both	63	63.07 (17.46)	67.51 (16.27)	-3.223	.00	0.26

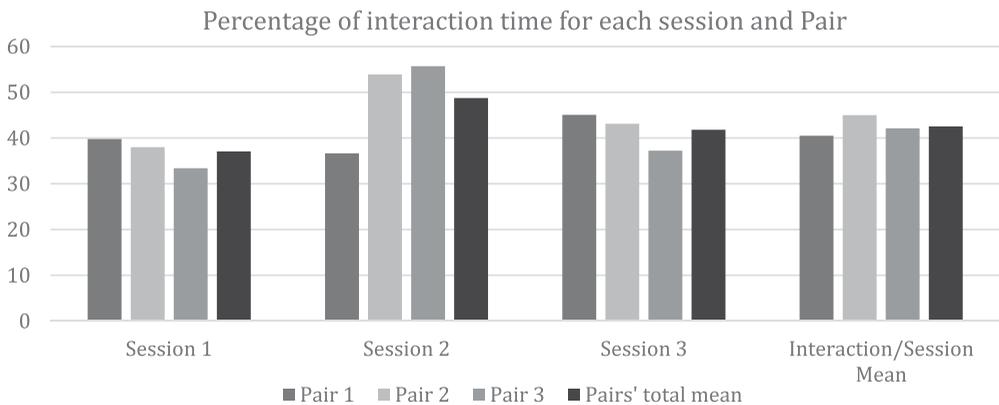
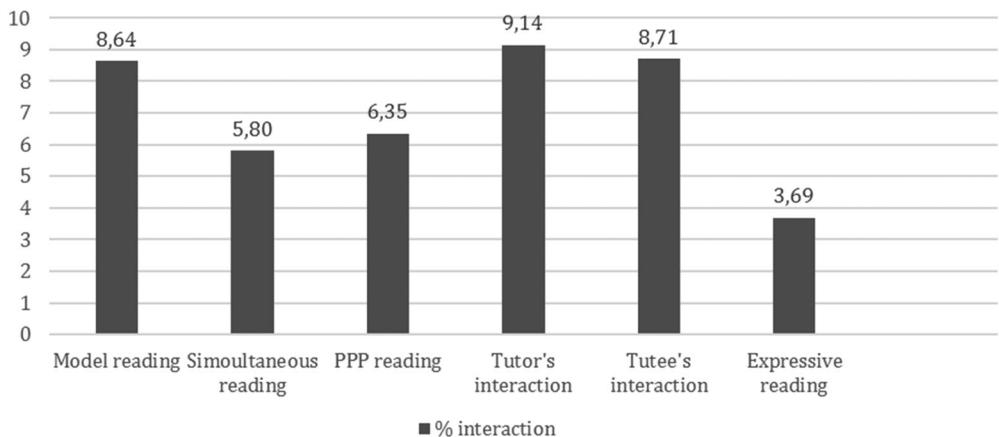
Tutor-tutee's interaction

Figure 2 shows the percentage of time each of the recorded pairs spent in active oral interaction during each of the three sessions recorded. The results vary from 33% to 55%, with an average of 42.33%. In our experience, this is considerably above the mean oral interaction that could be expected in a traditional EFL class.

Figure 3 shows that of the 42.33% average time devoted to oral interaction in the *Reading in Pairs* sessions, a total of 24.48% was spent in reading tasks (model reading, simultaneous reading, PPP, expressive reading) and 17.85% is time devoted to developing answers for the comprehension activities.

Teachers and students' perceptions of the program

Regarding the information collected in the interviews, teachers expressed that the program structure helps their students achieve positive results. They specified that reading the text several times during


Figure 2. Total interaction time for each session and pair (percentage).

Figure 3. Percentage of interaction time by type of interaction.

the work session favors the development of reading skills in both intonation and pronunciation. Teachers also emphasized the utility of the Audio File to ensure a good model of intonation and pronunciation, the positive work environment and proximity among students, and the active role of most students during the working sessions. Finally, another important aspect of the answers is the potential benefits of the tasks and responsibilities that are part of the tutors' role. Among these teachers highlight the prior preparation of the vocabulary and pronunciation, and the responsibility of being a good model for the tutee.

When answering the questionnaire, most students emphasize how easy it is to work with a peer and to develop a deep level of understanding and trust. Students also expressed their motivation for preparing sessions making an effort in the communicative aspects, and declared feeling more confident expressing themselves in front of a classmate rather than a wider audience. In general, students who develop the role of tutor (whether in fixed or reciprocal tutoring) show satisfaction.

Discussion

The pretest – posttest results suggest that *Reading in Pairs* has an important influence on the development of reading comprehension, both in fixed (tutors and tutees) and, particularly, in reciprocal tutoring. These results also indicate an improvement in oral communication skills for both conditions (fixed and reciprocal tutoring), and in particular for tutees. As a whole, the results in reading comprehension are positive. Even though the lack of a control group prevents us from confirming a causal effect of the program, the results are a solid indicator of the potential benefits and support the qualitative analysis of the data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

The analysis of the interaction between tutors and tutees provides important clues about the explanation of the program potential. First, numerous instances of tutors providing adjusted aid were observed. This is important because adjusted aid regulates the cognitive process of joint construction, which in turn facilitates metacognitive reflection in both partners as well as progress in the tutee's ZPD. Also, oral use of EFL for a substantial part of the interactions is relevant, especially because teachers often find it difficult to motivate students to speak in the foreign language. The combination of these elements strengthens the learning opportunities offered by the program. Evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, confirms this.

Besides providing explanations about quantitative results, the qualitative analysis of the interaction also offers helpful information about possibilities of improvement. First, the analyses showed some instances of tutors not supporting their tutees to achieve a high level of comprehension. A better understanding of the content is key to promoting conversations that go beyond the comprehension activities. Another aspect that had room for improvement was a certain tendency of tutors to answer the tutees' questions without giving them hints or providing enough scaffolding for the tutees to answer on their own. Therefore, training tutors in specific strategies to give appropriate support is strongly recommended for the correct development of the sessions. Finally, to provide better support for the tutees, teachers are advised to ensure that tutors listen to the Audio Files before the sessions in order to strengthen confidence and improve pronunciation and intonation.

Reading in pairs offers the opportunity to substantially increase the time for real oral expression with an audience, which is a common challenge for EFL teachers. In a prototypical thirty-minute session, students spend between ten to fifteen minutes speaking in English, an impossible ratio to offer within traditionally organized classrooms.

The results of the initial implementations of *Reading in pairs* show the potential of this program for the development of reading comprehension and oral communication skills, falling in line with other research conducted in previous programs in first languages in Spanish, Catalan and Basque (Valdebenito and Duran 2015; Flores and Duran 2016). This fact can allow to think that this program could be suitable for learning English as first language, especially in bilingual or multilingual contexts and for students with particular difficulties. Research in this field is needed.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

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Maite Oller Sánchez is a primary education teacher with a long experience as practitioner, headteacher and teacher trainer. She is teacher trainer in the Network of schools in Reading in Pairs program, for the Educational Department of Catalan Government.

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APPENDICE I – Activity Sheet example

ACTIVITY SHEET (number) _____ LEVEL: _____

Before reading ...

Look at the picture: Do you know who these men are? Do you know where they're from? Have you ever been there? What do you think their profession is? What do you think the text is about?

The Fab Four (part I)



The Beatles, or the Fab Four, were one of the most famous bands in the history of pop music.

The line-up:

John Lennon (vocalist): born 9 October 1940, died 8 December 1980

Paul McCartney (vocalist and guitarist): born 18 June 1942

George Harrison (vocalist and guitarist): born 25 February 1943, died 29 November 2001

Ringo Starr (drummer): born 7 July 1940

They were all from Liverpool originally. George Harrison and Paul McCartney took the same bus to school, and found out they had music and guitars in common.

In 1956, Paul introduced George to a band called the Quarrymen which John Lennon sang in.

George was only 14 at the time and not old enough to join the group. But a few times he filled in for the regular guitarist and gradually became a member of the band.

The Quarrymen became The Beatles, performing regularly at the Cavern Club in Liverpool, and within another four years the foursome became worldwide superstars.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_1680000/newsid_1684900/1684965.stm

Reading comprehension

- Why do you think they were known as The Fab Four? This is part I of the text, could you guess what part II would be about?
- Match the names with the musical instruments that they played:

John Lennon	Guitar
Paul McCartney	Drums
George Harrison	No musical instrument, just a singer
Ringo Starr	Guitar
- Say if the following sentences are True or False.
 - George Harrison was the eldest member of the group.
 - Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr are still alive.
 - Paul was the singer of the Quarrymen.
 - George was 18 when he became a superstar.
- Fill in the gaps with ONE word:

'The _____ were originally from _____. George Harrison and Paul McCartney took the same _____ to school, and found out they had _____ and _____ in common.'
- What kind of music did they play according to the text?
- Do you know about this music genre? Do you know of other groups that play this style of music? Can you think about other music genres?
- Look at the picture. What are they wearing? What is their hairstyle? Do you think this was something common or something new at that time (the 60's)?
- What do you think about famous people? What kind of life style do you think they have? Would you like to be a famous person?

Extra activities

- Ask your mum and dad (or grandpa and granny) if they used to listen to this group and which their favourite song was (or still is!!!!).
- Listen to the songs 'Let it be' and 'Yellow Submarine'. Do you like them? Why? Why not?

APPENDICE II – Language Support Example

LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The Fab Four (part I)

Before reading ...

TUTOR	TUTEE
1. Look at the picture, do you know who these men are?	Yes, they are ... No, I don't know them.
2. Do you know where they're from? Have you ever been there?	Yes, they're from ... No, I don't know. Yes, I've been there. No, I haven't.
3. What do you think their profession is?	I think their profession is ...
4. What do you think the text is about?	I think it is about ...

Reading comprehension

TUTOR	TUTEE
1. Why do you think they were known as The Fab Four? This is part I of the text, could you guess what part II would be about?	Because they were ... I think/In my opinion, part II would be about ...
2. Match the names with the musical instruments that they played.	John Lennon played ... Paul McCartney played ... George Harrison played ... Ringo Starr played ...
3. Say if the following sentences are True or False.	Sentence/s ... is/are True. Sentence/s ... is/are False.
5. What kind of music did they play according to the text?	They played ...
6. Do you know about this music genre? Do you know of other groups that play this style of music? Can you think about other music genres?	Yes, I do./No, I don't. Yes, I do. For example ... /No, I don't. Yes ... /No, I can't.
7. Look at the picture. What are they wearing? What is their hairstyle? Do you think this was something common or something new at that time (the 60s)?	They are wearing ... Their hair is ... In my opinion ... /I think ... /I have no idea.
8. What do you think about famous people? What kind of life style do you think they have? Would you like to be a famous person?	I think they are ... /I don't like them/ In my opinion ... They can/can't ... /They have /haven't ... /They live/don't live ... Yes, I do/No, I don't.