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PEER TUTORS' AGENCY AND EMOTIONS IN TERTIARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: Peer support has been found to have significant impacts on language learning as a supplement to formal lessons at school. This study draws on the construct of agency to explore Vietnamese students' self-regulation, awareness of the responsibility, sociocultural factors affecting peer tutoring, and the emotional experiences shaping their commitment. The participants include one junior and two senior students in the BA in English Language Teaching program who volunteered to support their peers in the General English Program at a private university. They were invited to respond to a narrative frame to reflect on their experiences and the critical incidents they encountered in peer tutoring. Findings show the participants' ongoing exercise of agency entailing their self-regulation, awareness of responsibility toward working with peers, and

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sociocultural elements that determined their resilience and levels of enthusiasm. They also found peer tutoring rewarding to their cognitive and affective development in terms of expanding personal relationships, resolving peer conflicts, gaining practical insights, and enhancing linguistic confidence. This study contributes to understandings of peer tutors' agency, emotions, and relational issues that inform curriculum developers and language teachers in providing students with hands-on opportunities for teaching practice.

Keywords: *peer tutoring, agency, emotion, narrative frame, tertiary English language education*

INTRODUCTION

The increasing promotion of collaborative learning in language education brings to the fore the crucial role of peer support in enhancing learning experiences and outcomes (Benson & Cooker, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Parker et al., 2023; Wang, 2021). Peer support in language learning has garnered significant attention for its potential as additional learning opportunities, especially for low-achieving learners (Namaziandost et al., 2024; Solhi, 2024; Tanga & Luggya, 2022). As a form of peer support, peer tutoring is described as a teaching and learning model in which the tutors as well as the tutees gain both linguistic and personal growth (Parker et al., 2023). It offers a versatile platform for collaborative learning that leads to intensive interaction in the target language and positive emotions among those involved (Huang, 2023). According to Topping (2005), a peer tutor is a partner who is more competent in linguistic knowledge and language skills than the student or tutee receiving support. Tutors are able to steer their peers toward a more goal-oriented direction in language learning that enables them to regulate their learning activities and enhance cognitive development (Falchikov, 2003). These studies have confirmed the value of peer tutoring in terms of supporting language learners in the accumulation of language knowledge and skills for

collaborative learning and academic success. However, the affective dimension of peer tutoring has been approached almost exclusively from the tutee's viewpoint. Few investigations have probed tutors' emotions or traced how those emotions intersect with tutors' agentic moves (Chen & Li, 2025; Huang, 2023; Mannon, 2021; Webb, 2012).

Peer tutoring in EFL contexts provides opportunities for authentic communication, such as when students engage in frequent interaction and communication in the target language with their peers. This allows for negotiation of meaning where learners work together to clarify misunderstandings and arrive at a shared understanding. It also fosters learner-centered activities, empowering students to take ownership of their learning and make decisions about their learning goals and strategies. Such communicative and collaborative practices are essential to EFL learners as they are exposed to opportunities for language practice to achieve their goals. Topping (2005) reveals positive interaction mediated by peer tutoring and its effects on tutees' improvement in communication skills. It was also found that peer tutoring enhanced academic performance by 12 percent (Topping et al., 2013). In the same vein, Alrajhi and Aldhafri (2015) point out that peer tutoring helped the Omani university students feel more confident in using English.

Although a robust body of research documents linguistic and academic gains for tutees (Falchikov, 2003; Topping et al., 2013), three intersecting gaps remain unaddressed in the literature on peer tutoring in EFL contexts. First, the emotional labor of peer tutors, i.e., how pride, anxiety, or frustration emerge alongside agentic decisions, has received limited empirical attention. While some studies acknowledge the affective load tutors experience (Asanov, 2025; Nelson et al., 2022), most emotion-focused research in language education concentrates on learners' affective variables (e.g., motivation, anxiety, enjoyment) rather than on the tutors themselves (Dewaele et al., 2023; Huang, 2023). Second, those few studies that explore tutors' emotions are rarely theorized through van Lier's (2008) ecological model of agency, which emphasizes self-regulation, responsibility, and sociocultural

awareness as mutually reinforcing components. Without such theoretical framing, it remains unclear how and when emotional shifts co-occur with agentive acts in peer-tutoring contexts (Mercer, 2012). Third, to overcome constraints in formal language education and provide more learning opportunities for students, several Vietnamese universities have informally encouraged peer learning activities or peer groups to provide mutual academic assistance (Luu et al., 2023). These peer initiatives are often led by high-achieving English majors who volunteer to assist lower-proficiency peers. However, such programs typically lack systematic frameworks for tutor training, particularly in regard to emotional regulation and pedagogical strategies for effective support (Pham 2024). The emotional labor and cognitive demands placed on peer tutors remain insufficiently theorized, despite their potential to mediate key challenges in learner comprehension and engagement. As Zapata (2020) argues, peer tutors' perceptions of their role drastically influence their attitudes toward their current activities and the effectiveness of their undertaking. Further, Loda et al. (2019) advocate the cognitive and social rewards of peer-assisted learning in developing their language skills and expanding their social networks. This process of interaction with peer tutees is inevitably overwhelmed with both positive and negative emotional nuances. These affective elements will in turn impact the quality of the interaction and the degree of commitment tutors may expend. In this regard, Imai (2010, p. 279) propounds that "Emotions are not just an individual's private inner workings in response to external stimuli but are socially constructed acts of communication that can mediate one's thinking, behavior, and goals." As such, emotion has a strong association with learners' construction of agency.

This study aims to explore how Vietnamese peer tutors navigate peer tutoring by addressing the ways in which they exercise their agency, their emotional responses to the critical incidents arising from peer tutoring, and the interpersonal relationships with peers in shaping their teaching and learning experiences. It draws on van Lier's (2008) construct of agency which involves learners' self-regulation, sense of

responsibility, and awareness of sociocultural context. Through this tripartite framework, agency is generally understood as learners' ability to regulate their activities by assigning significance and relevance to such involvement within their own sociocultural settings (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2008). In other words, learners actively monitor their own activities and make decisions on their course of action based on their personal interpretation of the social and cultural conventions underpinning their interaction with others. Regarding the three components of agency, self-regulation refers to tutors' capacity to plan, monitor, and adapt their instruction (e.g., adjusting explanations when comprehension lags); responsibility reflects their felt duty toward tutee improvement and maintaining tutoring quality; and sociocultural awareness captures their sensitivity to communal values such as collectivism and relational harmony (Wang, 2020). Emotions are understood as context-contingent, socially mediated appraisals that can amplify or inhibit agentive behaviors (Imai, 2010; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). For instance, pride may reinforce commitment, while anxiety rooted in peer dynamics can restrict initiative.

This study contributes to enriching understandings of peer tutors' agency, emotions, and the complexities embedded in the tutors' interaction with their peer tutees. The theoretical lens allowed gaining a holistic picture of the ways in which the tutors actively regulated their tutoring through their own perception of responsibility under the impacts of social, cultural, and relational elements in their own educational contexts. It is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Vietnamese students exercise their agency in tutoring their peers in learning English?

RQ2: What are the emotional experiences embedded in the students' peer tutoring process?

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a multidisciplinary private university in Ho Chi Minh City whose priority is to enhance students' English language proficiency for their tertiary studies and future workplace communication using English as a primary medium of instruction. The selection of this research site was based on convenience sampling for the ease of access as it is the researchers' workplace. Compared to other higher institutions in Vietnam, this university places a stronger focus on English language education for international communication and global careers with diverse activities for language practice within and beyond classrooms. The students participated in an intensive General English Program in their first and second years to prepare them for specialized courses delivered chiefly in English in later years. The students have varying levels of English depending on their language learning backgrounds and motivation. In addition to formal language lessons, the university has carried out a wide variety of out-of-class learning activities to boost students' use of English beyond classrooms. Peer language tutoring sessions are arranged for low-achieving students who desire more learning opportunities. The tutors are voluntary students majoring in English Language Teaching with a willingness to support their peers as well as develop their language teaching skills. These students are required to pass a language screening test and work as teaching assistants in English classes at the university for a certain period of time prior to becoming eligible for the role of tutor.

Participants were three student tutors: Jack (aged 21, male, junior), Nancy (aged 22, female, senior), and Simon (aged 22, male, senior), who met the inclusion criteria: (1) having a high level of English language proficiency and (2) having over six months of prior experience as peer tutors and teaching assistants in the General English Program. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis with no potential bias or harm to the students. All three were Vietnamese nationals who preferred English pseudonyms, which they felt better

aligned with their professional identity in an English-medium academic context. Their tutoring sessions were arranged flexibly based on mutual availability with tutees and typically occurred once or twice weekly over 15 weeks. The tutors focused on language areas identified as challenging for their tutees, including grammar, vocabulary, writing, and speaking.

Procedures and Data Analysis

This study relied on a narrative frame as a primary tool for gathering data. This instrument provides a written story template with incomplete sentences and spaces for participants to produce their own narratives drawing on their experiences and personal reflections (Barkhuizen, 2014). It has been found to be a useful tool to delve into the lifeworld of the participants through their personal constructions of meaning guided by the narrative prompts (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Pham, 2024a). The narrative frame was designed based on van Lier's (2008) tripartite model of agency (self-regulation, responsibility, and sociocultural awareness) and included prompts related to emotional responses, teaching strategies, peer relationships, and context-specific challenges (see Appendix). To enhance the trustworthiness of the data, member-checking interviews were conducted with each tutor following the analysis of the narrative data. These brief interviews aimed to clarify ambiguous responses and see whether the students agreed with the interpretation of the data.

The narrative data were analyzed based on a deductive approach to thematic analysis (Pham, 2024b). From this analytical perspective, the narrative and interview data were coded according to four a priori categories serving as the guiding themes: (1) self-regulation, (2) responsibility, (3) sociocultural awareness, and (4) emotional experiences. Coding was performed manually, based on these theoretical constructs as illustrated in Table 1. Data were then collated under the four predetermined themes, and representative quotes were selected to illustrate them.

Table 1.

Coding of qualitative data

Theoretical categories	Definitions	Sample excerpts	Coding rules
Self-regulation	Students' monitoring of their own activities and decisions on their course of action	<i>"Once I saw he had improved to a certain level, I began to give him some extra activities."</i>	Activities related to peer tutoring and their decision on how to work with their peer tutees and their resilience
Responsibility	Students' accountability in relation to their social roles	<i>"When I agree to take on the tutoring role, it means that I am responsible for the students' progress."</i>	Including their role perceptions as a university student and as a peer with higher language achievement
Socio-cultural awareness	Awareness of social and cultural elements embedded in their own context	<i>"I think this is a noble job ... This activity contributes significantly to our peer community."</i>	Including collectivist practices that emphasize group interests and the desire to support others
Emotional experiences	Any emotional expressions out of peer tutoring activities	<i>"I felt disappointed with myself that I did not have enough time to help her."</i>	Including both positive and negative emotions

FINDINGS

Peer Tutors' Self-Regulation

As a component of agency, tutors' self-regulation concerned their initiatives and the choices they made in their interaction with peers. The data showed that the tutors could create goals, plan their stages for action, check on their progress, and make changes according to their own altering circumstances. For instance, Nancy shared about her preparation for the peer tutoring in the following:

I prepared for the peer tutoring by giving my tutees a small test in the beginning to determine which level they belonged to. Next, I analyzed the field of knowledge which they lacked based on the test results and tailored my teaching methodology to help them become better. (Nancy)

Nancy developed her strategies for working with the tutees by gaining initial insights into their current level of language proficiency to formulate relevant teaching methods. This illustrated her effort to assess their needs and design individualized tutoring approaches. In the same vein, Simon revealed how he regulated his tutoring and the modifications he made in working with the tutee:

The first student I tutored was a female student doing a BA in Law. She was relatively good at English, especially grammar. She wanted to expand her vocabulary. ... I devised a topic-based and cumulative approach for her to learn new words and apply them in different contexts. For each meeting, I also provided her with about three legal terms and helped her revise all the items she learned in the previous meeting. I prepared some small gifts for her to motivate her if she did well. (Simon)

Simon appreciated the necessity of situating the instructional activities within the tutee's field of specialization. He not only helped the student overcome her language weaknesses through a customized teaching plan, but he was also committed to boosting her improvement through careful revisions and timely encouragement.

As for Jack, he adjusted his teaching methods according to the students' needs. For example, "Once I saw he had improved to a certain level, I began to give him some extra activities which were mostly the videos that I would watch and asked him to point out the main idea or the jokes in these clips" (Jack). These activities were based on Jack's observation of the student's ongoing performance and his evaluation of the further support that might be beneficial for the student. His adaptive approach indicated a profound understanding of his students' learning needs and an endeavor to implement alternative ways to meet those needs.

These examples highlighted the various ways in which the tutors exercised their agency in the peer tutoring process. By setting clear goals, continuously monitoring progress, and adapting their strategies, they showed their initiative and ongoing self-regulation in response to tutees' specific needs and emerging circumstances.

Peer Tutors' Awareness of Responsibility

The peer tutors exhibited a strong sense of responsibility toward their peers. They felt accountable for their tutees' progress and were determined to bring about positive changes in their learning outcomes. The point of departure for most of the tutors was being teaching assistants in General English classes. They decided to embark on peer tutoring originated from their observation of their peers' needs and their awareness of the importance of English to the tutees' academic progress, as Nancy confided that *"they could use their knowledge of English which they learned from me to serve their studies in their specialized fields"*. Similarly, Jack reported that *"one day as I was sitting at home scrolling through my phone, a boy from that class [where he had worked as a teaching assistant] reached out to me and asked me for personal guidance on how to further improve his English."* Becoming tutors meant that they would be able to offer further individualized language support for those peers who desired to improve their language skills.

Simon was highly aware of his role by proactively responding to the tutees' needs: *"When I agree to take on the tutoring role, it means that I am responsible for the students' progress. It is my obligation to improve their knowledge and offer them what they lack."* Further, his awareness of responsibility went beyond the conventional expectations of a tutor as he actively sought to *"alleviate teachers' burden"*. He was sympathetic towards the teachers given the fact that they had to work with a large number of students at various levels of language proficiency and might not be able to cater to all their language needs.

The tutors also began to define their accountability and form professional perspectives, as Jack stated:

The responsibilities of a peer tutor are exactly like those of a teacher. Apart from all the fundamentals such as perseverance, consistency, confidence, and careful preparation, one must find a way to connect to the students, which could be easier if the students are their peers, as well as teach from the heart. (Jack)

In his words, Jack likened his role to that of a teacher, indicating a high level of responsibility and awareness of a clear understanding of the professional duties and commitments to the role that he was supposed to fulfill. He reiterated the need to build rapport with tutees and the dedication he should expend on the tutoring activities.

These examples showed the tutors' multiple responsibilities, entailing not only a commitment to individual tutees' success but also their goodwill in sharing the workload of the teachers at their university. Their conceptualization of the role of peer tutors and the desired traits suggested the students' intensive utilization of agency.

Sociocultural Elements Underpinning Peer Tutoring

The findings also indicated the impact of sociocultural factors on the participants' decisions and considerations about peer tutoring. In the case of Simon, his motivation to work as a tutor stemmed from a desire to contribute to the peer community, reflecting a collectivist practice in Vietnamese culture where the well-being of the group is prioritized as he maintained "*Our purpose when we started this group was to help students who are weak in English to have the opportunity to improve their foreign language level*" (Simon). Similarly, Nancy believed in the cultural reward of being a tutor as "*In whatever situations, I think this is a noble job when a tutor has a chance to share their experience in real life. This activity contributes significantly to our peer community.*" These tutors were deeply convinced of the positive contributions that their tutoring made to their peers. Such belief energized them further in their peer engagement as Jack stated "*Working with the guy has greatly strengthened my outlook on tutoring. It has also boosted my self-confidence in what I will choose to do.*" In addition, Simon hoped that he would pass on his enthusiasm about peer tutoring to his fellow students as he insisted "*I inherited the peer tutoring activities from former students in my faculty, so I*

really hope that my current work will motivate more students to boost the peer tutor club's activities." As such, he felt the importance of being a role model of peer tutor to ensure the continuity of this activity among prospective tutors.

It is evident that the tutors adopted a collectivist approach and a community-oriented mindset in working with their tutees. These sociocultural values were the major driver behind their endeavor to support their peers in learning English and sustained their resilience in the tutoring process.

Peer Tutors' Emotional Responses

The tutors exuded a plethora of emotions as they dealt with the incidents emerging from their peer tutoring. They were proud of their students' achievement, frustrated at times when challenges arose, and disappointed if they felt that they could have helped their students more than they actually did. For instance, Nancy was in a mixture of affective experiences as she propounded

After a while, I felt satisfied with her improvement in English. She could speak more fluently than before and her vocabulary increased significantly. However, I felt disappointed with myself that I did not have enough time to help her as the huge workload of being both a student and a tutor exhausted me. (Nancy)

Nancy's account reflected a deep sense of fulfillment with the student's progress. However, she was also blaming herself for not being able to invest more time in providing more support as a result of her multiple roles as a student herself and a peer tutor.

In the case of Simon, his experiences underscored the importance of patience, understanding, and adaptability in peer tutoring. He could navigate through challenging situations, such as dealing with students' lack of focus or slow progress, demonstrating his emotional intelligence and commitment to creating a positive and supportive learning environment as illustrated in the following account:

There were many things that happened to us during the peer tutoring, such as her improvement in learning made me feel proud of her. Nevertheless, sometimes she was so annoyed, which confused me. Maybe she did not understand the lessons at that time. I had to change the atmosphere immediately. I used to think I would give up on this. (Simon)

Such occasional disappointment blended with excitement was also found in Jack's account as he worked with his tutees:

It was kinda disappointing at first because he missed out on almost all of my favorite jokes but we both knew failing is just an obstacle, so he's just kept on trying. Then one day, he texted me saying he was able to comprehend 80% of a stand-up comedy and that he developed a new hobby thanks to me. (Jack)

As most of the students who required further tuition were low achievers in language learning, it was not unusual that the tutors faced many challenges in working with them. Such emotional responses from the three participants indicated both the pleasures and the negative experiences that peer tutors might have to tackle in their peer engagement. These examples also showcased the emotional richness and complexity of peer tutoring.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate how the sociocultural context of tertiary education in Vietnam contributed to shaping the ways in which peer tutors exercised their agency in working with students deficient in English, particularly through their self-regulation, sense of responsibility, and emotional responses. Drawing on van Lier's (2008) framework, this discussion presents how the three dimensions of agency were reflected in the experiences of the peer tutors and the emotional complexities implicated in the peer tutoring process. The peer tutors demonstrated their self-regulation by setting clear goals for their tutoring sessions, evaluating their tutees' progress, and adapting their teaching methods based on their initial assessment of tutees' needs. For instance, Nancy's implementation of a diagnostic test illustrated her proactive approach to goal-setting and progress

monitoring, aligning with van Lier's (2008) conceptualization of the active role of participants in constructing their own environments. Similarly, Simon's customized and cumulative approach to working with his tutee was an evident sign of his self-regulation in evaluating the student's language needs and his consideration of the teaching and learning methods that would be the most efficient and effective for her. Jack's adaptability in using diverse teaching methods, such as videos and humor, further revealed this dimension of agency. These findings align with Parker et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of peer tutoring in empowering students to take ownership of their learning. They also highlighted the significance of providing peer tutors with opportunities to develop self-regulation and initiatives which not only enhanced tutoring quality and outcomes but also enhanced their personal and professional growth. In addition, these findings corroborate Mercer's (2012) assertion that learner agency is not only about behavioral autonomy but also about dynamic self-monitoring in situated contexts. In particular, Simon's ability to revise teaching plans or offer motivational rewards resonates with studies by Zhang and Zhang (2023), who found that emotionally resilient tutors showed greater strategic adaptability under stress.

The peer tutors displayed a strong sense of responsibility toward their tutees and the tutoring process, reflecting van Lier's (2008) second dimension of agency, i.e., awareness of one's role and responsibility. All three participants were dedicated to supporting their peers out of their awareness of the importance of English in their academic journey. Further, Simon's goodwill in reducing the teachers' burden exemplified his deep commitment to supporting struggling students. This finding is in line with Parker et al. (2023), who found that peer tutors cultivated a supportive culture through their sense of responsibility. Furthermore, this sense of duty was further underpinned by cultural expectations. As Truong et al. (2017) highlight, Confucian ethics in Vietnamese higher education emphasize collective well-being, academic diligence, and moral responsibility, which resonate with the tutors' willingness to assist their peers and

alleviate teacher burden. In Vietnam, emerging institutional reports describe peer mentoring as a nascent but rapidly institutionalizing practice, with tutors navigating dual roles as educators and emotional supporters (Duong et al., 2024). Accordingly, Nancy demonstrated an understanding of her tutee's academic needs, not only in language learning but also in supporting their studies in their specialized fields. Nancy's sense of duty to support tutees across specialized content areas also parallels findings by Huang (2023), which demonstrated how peer support could extend beyond linguistic scaffolding to foster learner confidence and subject engagement. Jack's perseverance, even after initial setbacks, in continuing to engage with his tutee, further highlighted the peer tutors' responsibility. His determination to adjust his approach despite the existing challenges reflected a strong commitment to ensuring his tutee's success. Such a sense of accountability led them to develop their own professional perceptions and the qualities required for this role. This developmental trajectory aligns with the findings from the study by Griffiths et al. (2018) that peer tutors' sustained agency and decision-making contribute significantly to their evolving sense of pedagogical self-efficacy. However, this culturally grounded approach contrasts with more formalized Western peer tutoring programs, which often rely on pre-set guidelines and structured mentor training (Le et al., 2024).

The tutors' sociocultural awareness, the third dimension in van Lier's (2008) framework, was evident in their understanding of the sociocultural factors influencing their tutoring practices. Simon's motivation to contribute to the continuity of the activities of the tutor club among prospective tutors was a typical representation of Vietnam's collectivist culture. Nancy's awareness of the importance of English proficiency underscored her sensitivity to the sociocultural context. Jack's ability to adapt his communication dynamics further illustrated how sociocultural awareness shaped his interaction with peers. These findings suggest that sociocultural awareness is vital for effective peer tutoring as it allows tutors to adjust their support based on the language needs of their tutees. The influence of cultural values

and social expectations on peer tutoring practices in Vietnam is consistent with Wang's (2021) observations in Chinese culture where the well-being of a group often takes precedence over individual interests. While Wang (2021) primarily focused on classroom dynamics, the current study expands this understanding by examining the agentive and emotional dimensions of peer tutoring, showing how cultural values, personal motivation, and emotional experiences shape the effectiveness of peer tutoring activities.

The emotional experiences of peer tutors played a central role in their tutoring process. Tutors such as Nancy and Jack navigated through a range of emotions, from pride and satisfaction to frustration and disappointment. Simon's ability to maintain a positive emotional atmosphere during challenging tutoring sessions underscored the importance of managing emotions to sustain engagement and motivation. This finding is in line with contemporary research suggesting that positive emotions such as enjoyment could mitigate anxiety and boredom, leading to a more productive learning environment (Dewaele et al., 2023; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Richards, 2020). Similarly, Huang (2023) highlighted the role of enjoyment and motivation in enhancing the learning process. However, the current study adds significance to the existing literature by showing that peer tutors were not only aware of their own emotions but also facilitated their tutees' emotional states, highlighting the emotional labor involved in peer tutoring. This reciprocal relationship supports Imai's (2010) argument that emotions are not merely affective byproducts but shape decision-making and interpersonal behavior. The bidirectionality observed here reflects what Dewaele et al. (2023) termed a "dynamic affective ecology," wherein positive and negative emotions interact with learners' agency to either enhance or inhibit learning outcomes. Emotional awareness and regulation are essential for creating a supportive learning environment (Dewaele et al., 2023), and this study expands the understanding of emotional experiences in the peer tutoring process by emphasizing the tutors' active role in shaping emotional experiences.

Whereas previous studies tend to focus on the emotional benefits for tutees (Namaziandost et al., 2024), the present research delved into the emotional demands and responsibilities on the part of peer tutors. Moreover, the findings reveal that peer tutors fostered a sense of community and responsibility, contributing to a positive learning experience for both tutors and tutees. This finding aligns with Huang's (2023) research which showed that peer support positively predicted higher levels of enjoyment and self-efficacy while reducing anxiety.

Moreover, while prior studies often frame peer tutoring as cognitively enriching (Falchikov, 2003; Topping et al., 2013), the current findings reveal that tutors' emotional labor is equally significant where linguistic mediation and cultural values are deeply intertwined. This contributes to emerging scholarship (e.g., Nelson et al., 2022) that emphasizes the need to support tutor well-being and identity development in informal learning roles.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to three participants drawn from a single institution, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Although qualitative designs value depth over breadth, the small sample may not capture the full variability of peer-tutoring experiences across Vietnamese contexts. Second, the data relied primarily on written narrative frames and member-checking interviews. While these methods elicited reflective and nuanced accounts, the absence of direct classroom observation and in-depth interviews means that the tutors' self-reports could not be cross-validated with actual interactional behaviors. Future studies may benefit from combining reflective data with ethnographic observation or video-stimulated recall to examine how agency and emotion unfold in real-time practice. Lastly, the study focused solely on tutors' perspectives. Including tutee viewpoints would offer a more holistic understanding of the relational dynamics and reciprocal emotional influences in peer tutoring.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the peer tutors demonstrated self-regulation by setting goals, monitoring progress, and adapting their strategies. They also exhibited a strong sense of responsibility towards their peers and were committed to helping them to thrive in their language learning journeys. The peer tutors were deeply aware of the sociocultural context in which they operated. They were motivated by a desire to contribute to the community by offering peer support. However, through such a challenging endeavor, the peer tutors experienced a wide range of emotions, including pride, frustration, and disappointment. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the cognitive and affective dimensions of peer tutoring, particularly in a context where community values and cultural expectations play a significant role.

One of the key pedagogical implications of this study is the importance of providing peer tutors with training and support. This may include training on how to set goals, monitor progress, and adapt their strategies according to the specific needs of tutees. It could include support in terms of methods of dealing with emotionally laden situations and building relationships with peers. Additionally, creating a sociocultural context that fosters peer tutoring is important. This involves raising students' awareness of the benefits of peer tutoring and providing opportunities for tutors to connect. This study also sheds light on how curriculum designers and teachers may provide students with the hands-on opportunities for teaching practice that will engage them and maximize their learning opportunities to sharpen their professional knowledge and skills for English language teaching. An important point is that this study was conducted at a private university where the quality of English teaching and learning is the top priority for its internationalization mission. That was the major reason for the promotion of the tutor club that aimed to provide low-achieving students with further language support outside classrooms. Through this example, universities should strengthen the operation of such peer

groups as platforms for students to put their knowledge into practice and for those who are in need of academic support.

Despite its significance, this study has a few minor limitations regarding the data gathering instrument. Although the narrative frame could encourage participants to generate in-depth reflections, it is necessary to conduct follow-up interviews to gain further insights as well as to consolidate the interpretations made from the narrative data. The context of the university under investigation is also somewhat unique, as it is a private institution where English language education is strongly reinforced as part of its internationalization agenda. While this context provided a rich environment for studying peer tutoring, it may not fully represent the broader spectrum of Vietnamese universities, particularly public institutions with more limited English language resources.

Future research may benefit from including direct classroom observation or multiple stakeholder perspectives, such as those of the tutees, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between agency and emotion in peer tutoring practices.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES

During the preparation of this work, the authors used QuillBot grammar checker for optimizing language and readability. The authors have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication after the use of this tool.

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Appendix

This narrative frame invites you to reflect on your peer teaching as a tutor of English. Please provide a rich and detailed account of your experiences. Write a coherent narrative; i.e. link each idea to the next like you would in a story.

I was a peer tutor of English for approximately
when I
I decided to be a peer tutor because

Before doing this job, I had felt
.....
.....

My expectations were
.....
.....

I prepared for the peer tutoring by
.....
.....

The first student I tutored was (provide information about his/her language level, why he/she needed your support, his/her attitudes towards learning English and other information you consider relevant)
.....
.....
.....

My plan for helping him/her included
.....
.....

My initial impression about working with this student was
.....
.....

I thought he/she could benefit from studying with me because

.....

For every meeting, I

.....

Together we

.....

After a while, I felt (describe your feelings, what you had done and what else you needed to do to help that student).....

.....

There were many things that happened to us during the peer tutoring (report on the interesting and disappointing moments and your feelings, reactions and whether there was a change of mind in such cases)

.....

In whatever situations, as a peer tutor I think (talk about your sense of responsibility for doing this job, for contributing to community and to the student you worked with)

.....

In general, I think peer tutoring is

.....

What I learned from being a peer tutor was that

.....

This activity also contributed to my current studies in terms of.....

.....

After working with the first student, I chose to (say whether you would continue or quit this job)
.....
because
.....
Students who look for peer tutors of English should
.....
.....
Potential tutors should
.....
.....
The university should