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Peer Observation as a Professional Development Tool for English as a Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract

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This research examines EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' perceptions of peer observation as a tool for developing professionalism. This research uses a qualitative approach, a case study type at Medan High School. The subjects of this research took two EFL teachers as English teachers. Data was obtained through observation and in-depth interviews. Then the data was analyzed using the Miles & Huberman data analysis model which includes data condensation, data presentation and verification or conclusion. The research results show teachers' positive perceptions of peer observation as a tool for teacher professional development. In developing teacher professionalism, peer observation can improve the quality of learning because correlation and input from peers can provide better teaching methods and innovation. It can also support reflection and develop understanding because it builds collaboration by involving colleagues in observing each other in a reciprocal process to improve classroom teaching through self-reflection. Peer observation brings many benefits to teachers. This helps teachers solve problems they face in teaching and provides learning opportunities to acquire new teaching methods or strategies from colleagues. Therefore, this research recommends that teachers conduct peer observations to develop their professionalism. Through peer observation, teachers receive constructive feedback to improve their teaching.

Penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi guru EFL (*English as a Foreign Language*) terhadap observasi sejawat sebagai alat untuk mengembangkan profesionalisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus di SMA Medan. Subjek penelitian ini mengambil dua orang guru EFL sebagai guru bahasa Inggris. Data diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam. Kemudian

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data dianalisis dengan menggunakan model analisis data Miles & Huberman yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data dan verifikasi atau penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan persepsi positif guru terhadap observasi sejawat sebagai alat pengembangan profesional guru. Dalam mengembangkan profesionalitas guru observasi teman sejawat dapat meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran, karena dengan korelasi dan masukan dari teman sejawat dapat memberikan metode mengajar dan berinovasi lebih baik. Kemudian juga dapat mendukung refleksi dan mengembangkan pemahaman, karena membangun kolaborasi dengan melibatkan rekan-rekan mengamati satu sama lain dalam proses timbal balik untuk meningkatkan pengajaran di kelas melalui refleksi diri. Observasi sejawat membawa banyak manfaat bagi guru. Hal ini membantu guru memecahkan masalah yang mereka hadapi dalam mengajar dan memberikan kesempatan belajar untuk memperoleh metode atau strategi pengajaran baru dari rekan kerja. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menyarankan guru melakukan observasi sejawat untuk mengembangkan profesionalitasnya. Melalui pengamatan sejawat, guru menerima umpan balik yang konstruktif untuk meningkatkan pengajaran mereka.

I. INTRODUCTION

To become a qualified teacher and continue to develop, a teacher must improve his professional abilities. Developing teacher professionals must be oriented towards sustainable change and improving student learning outcomes (Medvedev, 2024). Teachers worldwide overcome their weaknesses by changing themselves and becoming more effective by implementing strategies to support teacher learning (Yuliasri et al., 2023). One professional development strategy that teachers can use is reflective practice. Through reflective practice, teachers can improve the quality of their teaching (Gaspersz, 2024). Reflective practice is an evaluation of teacher teaching or an assessment of the results of teacher pedagogical abilities in language classes through collaboration with colleagues. Observing and reflecting can bring about better changes. This approach is called peer observation (Drajati et al., 2023).

By observing, a teacher will see how things are and observe and criticise himself through others. Then, teachers and other colleagues will also observe, evaluate, and assess (Woulfin & Jones, 2021). argue that the essence of peer observation is to look more deeply at how someone conveys their learning and the acquisition of their teaching and learning processes. According to Supiatman et al.

(2023), peer observation is the practice of two teachers working together and observing another person's teaching to raise the standard of instruction. Peer observation is a practical approach to increasing teachers' teaching capacity and self-confidence when teaching and learning more about improving teaching practices (Bates & Donaghue, 2021). In peer observation, the colleague who is the observer sees the class from the teacher's perspective with a positive and non-judgmental attitude. Teachers and observers have the same position and a class results from cooperative decision-making.

Peer observation is necessary in developing teacher professionalism because it can improve teaching implementation and provide constructive feedback (Liang, 2024). According to Cakir, by conducting peer observations, teachers will gain new insights into improving their teaching and provide opportunities to identify problems that teachers cannot observe (Algraini, 2024). Peer observation is also helpful in helping teachers become more aware of the issues they face in teaching and assisting teachers in reducing the gap between ideal teaching and what is happening (Tosriadi et al., 2018). For this reason, peer observation must be carried out well. According to M. Bell, the steps that can be taken in conducting peer observations are planning the implementation of observations and reflection (Almusharraf, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Woulfin & Jones (2021), the steps that need to be taken into account are observing, remembering, studying, and responding to the event.

With this approach, observation and reflection as reflective teaching are considered a way for professional development and teacher empowerment (Mahara, 2024; Motallebzadeh et al., 2017). This method assumes that teachers will be active and work collaboratively for better results (L. M. Dos Santos, 2016; Kurosh et al., 2020). Through reflective teaching, teachers can reflect on their performance in teaching, teaching results, experience, and background to meet empowerment needs and empower teachers to strengthen previous teaching experiences so that teachers' self-perception increases. Reflecting on teachers offers a deeper understanding of their beliefs about teaching. Teaching has a positive relationship with EFL teachers' professional development practices

(Kurosh et al., 2020). Self-confidence in teaching will influence the teacher's teaching process and become a reason for them to do good teaching. Reflective teaching, which is a whole of trust, will provide signals for teachers in class planning and decision-making and improve good teaching practices.

Much previous research has discussed peer observation as a reflective practice that encourages teacher professional development. For instance, in research in Turkey conducted by Susoy (2015), it was found that pre-service teachers benefited from watching teaching videos. By assessing themselves through recordings of their teaching, prospective teachers become aware of what events occur during teaching that they cannot be mindful of in the classroom. Similarly, a study by Merç (2015) reported that EFL teachers had positive attitudes toward peer classroom observations despite insufficient experience. These examples highlight the practical benefits of peer observation.

On the other hand, this research also confirms that classroom observation has more advantages than disadvantages. In 2017, Santos conducted research in Macau titled *How Teachers Understand Peer Observation Professional Development in Urban Schools*. This research reveals peer observation is a good tool for teacher professional development, especially in language education. Peer observation research in the classroom can also generate excitement among teachers if done well.

In the Indonesian EFL context, peer observation as a reflective practice has also garnered significant interest among researchers in the past decade. However, only a few studies involve service teachers as research respondents in conducting peer observations, and there is a tendency for peer observation to be suitable only for pre-service teachers with less teaching experience. Relatively little empirical evidence reveals peer observation as a strategy to improve teacher professional development for new and experienced teachers. Peer observation is critical to evaluate teachers' pedagogical competence. Therefore, as educators, it is essential to reflect on and assess their teaching. In the educational context, teachers are rarely involved in peer observation activities. Peer observation activities are only

carried out in certain schools. Through this research, researchers hope teachers who practice peer observation will find new insights from their teaching.

II. METHODS

This research, which utilizes a qualitative case study approach, is significantly enriched by the participation of two esteemed teachers from Medan High School. These teachers, chosen purposively, have provided invaluable insights into the perceptions of Indonesian EFL teachers regarding peer observation as a means of developing teacher professionalism and the benefits obtained from peer observation (Creswell, 2019). The data for this research was meticulously collected from two sources: classroom observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were conducted with teachers with at least one year of teaching experience, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their teaching practices. The interviews, conducted with the participant's permission, were designed to elicit broad responses, providing a rich data source for analysis (Ikhwan, 2021).

After the data was obtained, it was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive data analysis model, including data collection, condensation, data presentation, and conclusion. Data condensation is the process of simplifying and focusing on the coarse data that has been collected. It involves selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data. Data condensation aims to direct attention to the data's most relevant and meaningful parts according to the research objectives. This process occurs throughout the research project and helps researchers to distil large amounts of information into a more focused and organized form. Data presentation is the process of arranging data that has been condensed into an organized and easy-to-understand format, such as tables, matrices, graphs, charts, or conceptual maps. The aim of presenting data is to make it easier for researchers to see patterns, themes, relationships and trends that emerge from the data. Good data presentation helps researchers formulate interpretations and make better decisions during analysis. The process of drawing temporary conclusions based on the data that has been presented and analyzed.

This initial conclusion was then verified through data cross-checking, triangulation, and critical reflection. Concluding is not the end of the analysis but is an iterative process in which conclusions are refined and strengthened as the researcher's understanding of the data develops. Verification is carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the conclusions drawn (Miles et al., 2014).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data collected through interviews and classroom observations shows positive teacher perceptions of peer observation as a means of developing teacher professionalism. Teachers also show their awareness of the benefits obtained from peer observation in improving their pedagogical and professional competence. These findings are discussed below in connection with primary data. They will be divided into two categories: findings related to peer observation as a means of developing teacher professionalism and conclusions regarding the benefits obtained from the involvement of peer observation in teacher professional development.

Peer Observation as a Means of Developing Teacher Professionalism

Improve the quality of teaching

Peer observation is seen as a positive and progressive technique for improving the quality of teacher teaching. Teachers are introduced to new things in the teaching process through peers. Watching other colleagues teach will inspire teachers to try new pedagogy in teaching classes and help teachers to know whether what the teacher is doing in class is in line with good quality teaching practices. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

"Peer observation explores my teaching and helps me evaluate the way I deliver subjects to students when teaching in the classroom." (Excerpt 1, Interview, Participant 1).

As illustrated in Excerpt 1, Participant 1 believes that peer observation will bring better changes to teachers' teaching methods in the classroom. This peer observation helps teachers evaluate the teaching carried out in the school by colleagues. Here, teachers give each other constructive evaluations.

Another opinion that supports peer observation as a means of developing teacher professionalism was expressed by Participant 2, who revealed that through peer observation, teachers receive constructive and beneficial input for teacher professional development. As illustrated in Excerpt 2 below:

"Peer observation is very beneficial for teachers' professional development because teachers receive constructive input from their colleagues. Peer observation is the best way to evaluate teacher teaching. However, there are still many teachers who are reluctant to carry out peer observations because they feel they are being watched." (Excerpt 2, Interview, Participant 2).

The statement in Excerpt 2 reveals that peer observation is instrumental in developing teacher professionalism. Through this observation, teachers can receive constructive input from their colleagues based on the assessments. However, there are still many teachers who are reluctant to conduct peer observations because teachers feel nervous about being watched when teaching and are afraid of being assessed if they are not satisfied with their teaching. However, peer observation is a means of improving teacher teaching so that teacher quality continues to develop.

Support reflection and develop understanding

Reflecting on teaching is very important in peer observation. Teachers carry out activities to observe each other when teaching and reflect from different points of view. This helps teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods. As illustrated in Excerpt 3 below:

"I can evaluate myself and try to make teaching improvements through comparisons with my colleagues." (Excerpt 3, interview, participant 1).

As illustrated in Excerpt 3, participant 1 believes peer observation can improve teacher performance after self-reflection and discovering the weaknesses and shortcomings in teaching.

Another opinion supporting peer observation as a reflection of teaching was expressed by participant 2 who stated that teachers will receive constructive feedback through peer observation. As illustrated in the Excerpt below:

"After peer observation, I studied the evaluation provided and realized the need for development and improvement." (Excerpt 4, Interview, Participant 2).

The statement in Excerpt 4 reveals that the evaluation, such as weaknesses and strengths, motivates teachers to improve their teaching in a better direction to increase more effective teaching.

In conclusion, Indonesian EFL teachers view peer observation as a means to develop teacher professionalism because it brings positive changes. Teachers and their colleagues can evaluate each other's teaching and provide each other with constructive input to establish teachers' professionalism.

Deep reflection through peer observation opens up great opportunities for teachers to develop their professionalism. Through reflection, teachers can identify their strengths and weaknesses and receive feedback that helps develop teaching competencies. Peer observation encourages teachers to continue learning and growing in the profession, creating a dynamic and collaborative learning environment.

Peer observation also changes the teaching paradigm from an individual activity to a collective effort. In this context, teachers work together to improve the overall quality of their teaching. They share best practices, innovative teaching strategies, and solutions to challenges faced in the classroom. This kind of collaboration creates a positive professional culture and supports ongoing development.

Peer observation is an effective and progressive technique in improving the quality of teaching and developing teacher professionalism. This process allows teachers to evaluate and reflect on their teaching methods, receive constructive feedback, and develop better teaching strategies. Although there are some barriers to implementing peer observation, this technique can significantly benefit teaching and student learning outcomes with the right approach and adequate support.

Overall, peer observation not only helps in improving the quality of individual teaching but also creates a collaborative and supportive learning environment. By integrating peer observation into professional development programs, schools can ensure that teachers continue to learn, develop, and provide high-quality instruction that positively impacts their students.

The Benefits of Participating Peer Observation

Cultivate collaboration

Peer observation is a process that underscores the importance of trust and respect. It involves colleagues reciprocally observing each other to enhance classroom teaching through self-reflection. This relationship, which evolves naturally through the interaction between the observer and the observed, is founded on equality, mutual trust, and respect. It is a space that values confidentiality and creates a non-judgmental environment (Duong & Tuan, 2021). Peer observation enhances classroom teaching and provides a platform for individuals or teachers to build new friendships, share knowledge and experiences, and exchange ideas, thereby strengthening peer relationships. As illustrated in Excerpt 5:

"Peer observation is very beneficial for both observers and those being observed. They get the opportunity to interact, share knowledge, and support each other in achieving common goals." (Excerpt 5, Interview, Participant 1).

As illustrated in Excerpt 5, participant 1 stated that the benefits of peer observation were numerous. As observers and those being observed, you will gain new knowledge, discuss, and support each other to achieve common goals. For example, discussing teaching techniques and how to convey learning topics that should be used for certain teaching materials and discussing the weaknesses and strengths of colleagues when teaching so that they can become even better.

Another opinion that supports the benefits of peer observation in teacher professional development was expressed by Participant 2 who stated that peer observation was instrumental. Through peer observation, teachers can be open to each other to provide input, observe successful practices by colleagues to increase knowledge and learn from the strategies used by peers to enrich their skills. As illustrated in Excerpt 6 below:

"I think peer observation is instrumental. When observed, I get input from my peers to develop my teaching strategies. Through peer observation, I can learn new teaching techniques and evaluate my teaching strategies to make improvements if any which is inappropriate." (Excerpt 6, Interview, Participant 2).

The statement in Excerpt 6 reveals that peer observation is beneficial for developing teaching strategies. Teachers who observe and are observed provide input and evaluation to each other to improve teaching methods. And teachers are also learning new teaching techniques.

Normalize constructive feedback

Peer observation has the benefit of referring to the process of processing feedback so that it is more constructive and positive. This involves adjusting feedback, where the feedback given is more focused on things that have been done successfully or can be improved productively. Here, the input given is more inclined towards the successes obtained, recording achievements, and offering helpful input or support for future improvements. The aim is to create a good environment that supports development and progress and to build self-confidence and self-motivation. After understanding constructive feedback to make improvements, observers and those being observed must familiarize themselves with the input given and must get used to giving and receiving constructive feedback. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

"Peer observation is useful for providing constructive feedback. When I make mistakes in teaching strategies, my colleagues provide feedback on the teaching strategies that he uses." (Excerpt 7, Interview, Participant 1).

As illustrated in Excerpt 7, participant 1 stated that the benefit of peer observation from constructive feedback is that it can improve teachers' teaching experience and gain new insights. Teachers who receive constructive feedback will gain greater self-confidence for future teaching.

Another opinion that supports the benefits of peer observation as a means of getting used to constructive feedback was expressed by Participant 2, who stated that peer observation would encourage teachers to be more prepared to teach. As illustrated in Excerpt 8 below:

"In my opinion, the input given encourages teachers to be more confident, raises enthusiasm, and makes teachers more qualified in educating students." (Excerpt 8, Interview, Participant 2).

As illustrated in Excerpt 8, participant 2 believes that normalizing constructive feedback through peer observation can encourage teachers to be more confident in exploring students' learning interests and teaching in the

classroom. Teachers are more convinced that they can improve their classroom management ability after peer evaluations are carried out.

Learn from peers' best practice

Peer observation is a learning process that involves observing colleagues and studying their best practices. The goal is to learn from the experiences and expertise of others to improve our performance and teaching abilities. Through peer observation, a person will understand how colleagues face and resolve challenges when teaching. So, teachers can adopt practical strategies and solve problems that arise in their teaching. Teachers can provide enlightenment to students who react differently and in different classes. As illustrated in Excerpt 9:

"In my opinion, teachers can make improvements in their teaching after seeing colleagues who are observed teaching in class." (Excerpt 9, Interview, Participant 1).

As illustrated in Excerpt 9, participant 1 stated that peer observation allows one to learn from the best practices of one's peers. Teachers can find out what weaknesses they have when teaching. And teachers can make improvements to their teaching.

Another opinion that supports the benefits of peer observation in allowing someone to learn from peer practice was expressed by Participant 2, who stated that behaviour considered adequate in a particular context would be obtained by observing peer practice. And can be motivated by the success achieved by colleagues. As illustrated in Excerpt 10:

"I get the opportunity to exchange ideas from my colleagues' practice and gain knowledge in new teaching techniques so that I can develop my teaching abilities." (Excerpt 10, Interview, Participant 2).

The statement in Excerpt 10 reveals that teachers gain new insights and experiences after seeing the best practices of their colleagues. Seeing colleagues succeed can inspire them and set higher standards for themselves. Thus, this is an efficient event to expand knowledge and improve skills to achieve teacher success.

In conclusion, Indonesian EFL teachers realize that peer observation is instrumental in improving teachers' pedagogical and professional abilities. Both for the teacher being observed and as an observer. Through this peer observation, teachers can develop their teaching strategies. In teaching, if the teacher's way of

teaching is not by the teaching materials, then he can improve his teaching by the teaching materials. Peer observation allows them to explore new potential, get constructive feedback, and develop more effective teaching strategy skills. For this reason, peer observation is essential in the classroom environment to improve teaching.

In this research, teachers explored EFL teachers' perceptions of peer observation to develop teacher professionalism. Data analysis shows that teachers' perceptions of peer observation are positive because they are instrumental in language teaching and learning. Peer observation can improve the quality of teaching and create a professional learning community (Hamilton, 2013; Visone, 2022). Encourage teacher professional development (L. Santos, 2016), and increase reflection on teaching practice. Therefore, peer observation can develop teachers' professionalism and significantly impact individual teaching practices (Mouraz & Ferreira, 2021).

Based on the data collection results, the following analysis is presented: teacher perceptions regarding peer observation can encourage teacher professional development, and it can be concluded that participants have a positive attitude toward peer observation activities. They found this peer observation to be very effective in improving their teaching. Through peer observation, teachers, as observers, can enhance their teaching performance by observing the performance of other teachers and finding more specific feedback about their teaching to improve teaching practices. In short, teachers as observers and those being observed can mutually develop the interests of their teaching performance (Carbone, 2014). New or prospective teachers will especially feel peer observation is instrumental in increasing self-confidence. Kennedy (2016) also stated that teachers can develop their teaching through professional development.

Using peer observation as a tool for professional development, teachers can expand their knowledge and skills, improve teaching practices, and collaborate with their colleagues to create a more effective learning environment (Almusharraf, 2020). Therefore, they highly recommend peer observation to

develop better teaching. The findings of this research align with what Shukri (2014) found in his study, namely that most teachers agree that peer observation is suitable as a tool for improving teacher teaching (Alzubi et al., 2024; Shukri, 2014). Research shows that teacher awareness of this activity can make changes and build self-confidence, which is used to develop teacher professionalism. From a primary perspective, teachers must continue to learn to achieve better educational goals (Tosriadi et al., 2018).

Peer observation is the most common form of collaborative professional development. This peer observation also becomes a source of reflective analysis for teachers to improve their professional development (Ahmed et al., 2018; Tosriadi et al., 2018). Peer observation also provides in-depth feedback to teachers regarding their professional and personal competencies as reflective practice. Cosh said peer observation aims to provide constructive feedback to the observed participants to ensure further improvement in learning practices and stimulate reflective review based on what other people do (Jakfar & Rahmatillah, 2023). In other words, feedback from peer observation can allow the person being observed to know whether the teaching strategies they use when teaching are good or need improvement (Al-Amrat, 2024). This research finds that peer observation must be well-designed, and teachers must know the purpose of peer observation for joint learning. There is prior training and the provision of information on how to carry out peer observations so that violations do not occur (Ismail & Nikpoo, 2023). The teacher who was a participant said that three stages had to be carried out in conducting peer observations, namely pre-observation, observation, and post-observation. These three stages must be carried out so peer observation activities run smoothly.

Peer observation helps encourage reflection to achieve individual development needs (Tosriadi et al., 2018). Peer observation is essential to teacher professional development and provides insight into how teachers can continually improve their practice and performance in ever-changing educational contexts. Peer observation is an iterative and continuous process of reflection on teaching practice (Drew et al., 2017). Peer observation also provides opportunities for

teachers to obtain objective and constructive feedback about their teaching practices. Allow teachers to learn from each other through the reflective teaching carried out while teaching.

According to Tzotzou (2015), peer observation is an effective tool that EFL teachers can use to build their awareness of using various teaching techniques in the classroom and exchange ideas regarding teaching methods and materials for new insights. The participants said they could obtain new teaching techniques, materials, and strategies for dealing with students by conducting peer observations. In conducting peer observations, there must be collaboration between teachers and colleagues to strengthen professional relationships and create a good and open learning environment (Zhang & Liang, 2013). With peer observation, teachers can develop self-reflection skills to improve classroom teaching to continue to grow and improve the quality of their education. It can be hypothesized that the input given by observers to the observed participants is constructive and therefore very useful in developing teacher professionalism. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Cakir and Richards & Farrell in their research, which revealed the aims and benefits obtained from peer observation.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research focuses on teachers' perceptions regarding applying peer observation as a reflection tool in teaching. This peer observation is related to friends who have the same profession and observe each other in class to improve teaching. However, this peer observation is a non-evaluative program. For this reason, a teacher must conduct activities to develop aspects of teacher professionalism to become a professional teacher. An experienced teacher must establish pedagogical, social, personal, and professional competencies. One strategy that a teacher can use to develop their professional competence is to reflect on teaching through peer observation. Peer observation has proven to be an effective tool that can build teacher professionalism in teaching in the classroom. As a teaching reflection tool, peer observation has several benefits for a teacher. By providing constructive input from colleagues, a teacher can improve

classroom learning. In peer observation, a teacher and other teachers can exchange their ideas or concepts in teaching, such as what methods and strategies are used when teaching and teaching materials. So, to become a professional and qualified teacher, a teacher needs to reflect on teaching to become more skilled.

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