

## **Peer Observation in Facilitating Teacher Professional Development: A Study of EFL Novice and Experienced Teachers Perceptions**

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### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### *Keywords:*

Peer observation;  
Novice teacher;  
Experienced teacher;  
Teacher professional development;

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#### *Article history:*

Received 2021-12-11

Revised 2022-04-19

Accepted 2022-08-13

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### **ABSTRACT**

Novice and Experienced English Teachers are inevitably confronted with a must to be a qualified and professional teacher. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where English teachers are graduates of English Education departments has challenged to teach not only English language, but also culture and should have preparation for their duties as English teachers. Peer observation has the potential to facilitate teachers to develop their teacher professional development, particularly those who teach EFL in navigating challenging elements of their teaching practice. For this reason, this qualitative study explored 10 participants' perceptions of peer observation as an aid to professional growth. Data were garnered from questionnaires and in-depth interview. The findings of the study suggest that the participants' understanding of peer observation as an opportunity for them to learn each other to improve their teaching quality and construct their professional identity. Then, the participants also talk about their experiences in doing peer observation, which Experienced Teachers (ET) are more confidence than Novice Teachers (NT). Further, both ET and NT need peer observation to negotiate issues and solve problems. Finally, peer observation enabled the participants to reflect on themselves and their respective weaknesses in teaching English for professional development as both novice and experienced teachers.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Teacher professionalism is not nurtured in an instant and concise time. Teachers need process and experience to achieve their professional development. In particular for teachers of English as a foreign language, they are believed to be professional in terms of English language learning experiences (Golombek, 1998; Hayes, 2005), teacher education programs (Golombek, 1998; Ha & & Murray, 2021) and teaching practices (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Watson, 2015). Professional teacher development, which is typically influenced by education or experience, produces English teachers with a high level of expertise. Teachers' expertise will be updated if they receive teacher education training or gain teaching experience (Freeman, 1993; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Zheng, 2013). Furthermore, numerous studies on language teachers show that teachers' practices sometimes contradict their knowledge, revealing the complexities as well as

the teachers' knowledge (Chen, 2022; Tudor, n.d.). Becoming a professional teacher is not like what is described by almost people who only transfer knowledge partially. Teachers are tested for their ability to create a class atmosphere that is amusing, fascinating, inspiring, and creative (Benekos, 2016; Inan, 2014).

In the context of Indonesia, EFL English teaching is a challenging process, it entails not only the process of teaching a language, but also the process of teaching a culture and new ways of thinking and behaving. The function of the teacher becomes a factor of the success or failure of the learning process. In other words, the presence of qualified teachers is essential for achieving the ultimate goal of English learning. Teachers with limited teaching experience are commonly referred to as novice teachers, whereas teachers with several years of teaching experience are referred to as experienced teachers (usually a minimum of five years). The facts demonstrate that both novice and experienced teachers must develop their professionalism. Participating in professional development among novice and experienced teacher is one approach for them to continuously maintain and advance their expertise. Teacher professional development refers to a teacher's lifelong pursuit of knowledge and skill advancement through both formal and informal activity in order to improve the quality of their teaching practice. In other terms, professional development involves sustained participation. It is not a one-time program, but rather an ongoing process designed to improve teachers' knowledge, skill, and character (Katuuk & Kekek Marthina Marentek, 2014). In accordance with Richards (2005) professional development necessitates a long-term objective and supports teachers' professional and personal progress.

Numerous sorts of professional development are currently available to teachers. According to Talis (2009), there are formal forms of professional development (courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, qualification programs, observation trips to other schools, involvement in teaching groups, individual or collaborative research on a topic of professional interest, mentoring, peer observation, and coaching) as well as less formal ones (reading scholarly and professional publications and engaging in informal peer-to-peer dialogue). Amongst the methods above, peer observation is a trusted tool to ensure great teaching practice (Todd, 2017), assess teachers' performance over the world (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008), and develop teacher's development (Tosriadi et al., 2018) Peer observation boosts teaching and learning by ensuring critical perception among teachers who observe each other.

In the Indonesian context, there are samples studies on the EFL teachers' perceptions of peer observation (Agustina et al., 2020; Cholifah et al., 2020). Sufficient studies have been reported on either Indonesian EFL novice teachers' perceptions of peer observation (Hidayati, 2018; Megawati, 2017) or experienced teachers' perceptions (Tosriadi et al., 2018) yet, research on comparing Indonesian EFL novice teachers' and experienced teachers' perceptions has not been sufficiently documented. This research addresses the research question: "What are the EFL novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of peer observation in facilitating Teacher Professional Development (TPD)?" Therefore, this research will give an alternative solution to answer that question. This research aims to explore EFL novice and experienced teachers' perception of peer observation developing their professionalism in teaching English.

## 2. METHODS

This research adopted a qualitative research. This study was aimed to investigate EFL novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of the peer observation in facilitating their teacher professional development. The research piloted participants randomly among ten English teachers from some schools in Medan, Indonesia. Participants were differentiated by experienced and novice teacher. There were five novice English teachers and five experienced English teachers. The participants were chosen based on four criteria. (1) teaching English in an Indonesian junior high school; (2) having less than 3 years of experience as a novice teacher and exactly or more than 5 years of experience as an experienced teacher; (3) participating in a peer observation program for professional development; and (4) graduating from the English education department.

For ethical deliberation, the researcher sent an informed agreement message to all participants before they are involved in this research. This message informed about the research, the aims of the

research, and the voluntary participation of the participants. The name of participants has been changed into pseudonyms. Therefore, it attempted to explore the teachers' insights and experiences in pursuing their professionalism development through peer observation.

**Table 1.** Identity of Participants;

<i>No.</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Identity</i>
1.	Rz	Novice
2.	Ky	Experienced
3.	Lr	Novice
4.	Ms	Novice
5.	Ab	Experienced
6.	Hk	Novice
7.	Pt	Experienced
8.	Yn	Experienced
9.	Mw	Novice
10.	In	Experienced

<sup>1</sup>Participants' pseudonym

The data were collected using two instruments, close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth interviews. To understand teachers' experiences and perceptions of having peer observation in their classroom, the questionnaires will be collected. The questionnaires will be administered to investigate their experiences and perceptions. However, to develop a more in-depth understanding of novice and experienced teachers' perceptions, only some volunteered EFL teachers will be recruited as participants in the interview session.

The questionnaires and Interview guide were constructed based on four themes (1) the participants' understanding about peer observation for facilitating their professional development; (2) the participants' experiences in peer observation for their Teacher Professional Development (TPD); (3) the need of peer observation for facilitating TPD; (4) Teacher barriers or obstacles when doing peer observation. The first, the second and the third themes were would reveal that all teachers have the same view from the novice and experienced teachers' about peer observation for facilitating their professional development. Furthermore, the fourth theme was intended to investigate the barrier/obstacles which they faced when doing peer observation.

The collected data were analyzed thematically using content analysis. The researcher has transcribed the interview in order to analyze its contents. Researchers ensured the reliability of their findings by relying on participants' direct quotations during interviews. The reliability of the transcribed data has been maintained by its dissemination and clarification to the participants. As long as the data was transcribed, the coding process began. Next, the transcribed data was classified using the categories developed in light of the research questions. The responses from the participants were organized into themes, and then an interpretation was developed. Finally, the problems that had arisen were examined in light of the relevant theories and earlier research.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Findings

The questionnaires and the interviews were employed the data about the teachers' perceptions of peer observation for facilitating Teaching Professional Development (TPD). The data displayed will immediately distinguish between the perceptions of novice teachers and experienced teachers in viewing peer observations. This certainly makes it easier for researchers to compare their perceptions, especially in relation to facilitate teacher professional development.

### 3.1. EFL Teachers' Understanding of Peer Observation

The researchers dig up information to several teachers about their understanding of peer observation, and associate it to their teacher professional development. There are several general perspectives about peer observation according to both novice and experienced teachers.

**Table 2.** EFL teachers' Understanding of Peer Observation

Indicator	EFL Novice Teachers	EFL Experienced Teachers
EFL Teachers' Understanding	"Peer observation is an observation activity done by teacher to another teacher for developing their classroom practice"	"Peer Observation is when one teacher observes another in order to improve their own teaching methods, this form of observation is known as peer observation."
	"Peer observation is an activity to supervise fellow teachers of certain subjects, so that teachers can prepare all combat equipment properly when teaching."	"Doing peer observation can improve and update my teaching competency since the first year of teaching"
	"For novice teachers can learn from the practices of their more seasoned colleagues through the process of peer observation."	"Peer observation gives experienced teachers with the opportunity to observe how other educators address learning challenges, which can be beneficial."

<sup>1</sup>general perceptions

In this study, when novice teachers were asked about their understanding of peer observation as it relates to their professional development, Novice Teacher (NT) emphasized that her participation in peer observation is primarily to develop their classroom practice, similar to how they would prepare before teaching English in the classroom. This preparation entails authoring the lesson plan, finding the appropriate materials and media for English class, and designing the appropriate evaluation for students. For novice teachers, they can learn from the practices of their more seasoned colleagues (experienced teachers) through the process of peer observation. Similar to the Novice Teachers (NT), the Experienced Teachers (ET) has been utilizing peer observation to improve and update their teaching competency since the first year of teaching. However, in contrary to NT, stresses that teachers need peer observation to maintain and enhance the quality of their teaching practice. Through peer observation, they claim to be able to get fresh insights on how to better present the lesson, as well as expand their own knowledge as educators. ET can update their teaching method which looks monotonous and old-fashioned by observing NT, which is more fresh and creative in their teaching method. Peer observation allows experienced educators to observe how other educators handle learning issues, which can be advantageous.

### 3.2. The EFL Teachers' Experience Doing Peer Observation

Here are the perspectives of novice and experienced teacher who have participated in peer observation. For novice teachers, peer observation is still conducted multiple times (less than 3 times). As for experienced teachers, they have frequently participated in peer observation. Based on their experience, when their own English teaching was observed by their colleagues, most of them felt nervous and challenged, this is because after the observation they usually receive criticism and feedback whether it was successful or not while teaching. However, some experienced teachers consider that not all experienced teachers take the initiative to develop themselves through peer observation carried out. Some of them consider that it is only a formality, for supervision activities.

### 3.3. The Need of Peer Observation to Novice and Experienced Teachers

The following is a collection of perceptions of EFL teachers in Indonesia, both Novice Teachers (NT) and Experienced Teachers (ET), in viewing peer observation is a need for them. Both agreed that peer observation is good and beneficial for them in facilitating teacher professional development.

Peer observation is needed for novice teachers because:

- It can motivate NT to develop their professionalism.
- It can also boost confidence for NT.
- It can give knowledge of teaching, such as planning to teach, teaching execution, assessment, and evaluation.

Peer observation is needed for experienced teachers because:

- By peer observation, ET can improve their teaching quality, which will lead to improved student learning.
- Peer observation forced ET to develop their own teaching, even though they have been teaching for a long time.
- It affords ET the opportunity to share best practices with NT.

### 3.4. The Obstacles When Doing Peer Observation by Novice-Experienced Teacher Pairs

While the researchers queried NT and ET about the challenges that arise when performing Peer Observations with Novice-Experienced Teacher Pairs, the researcher was presented with a number of responses. When doing peer observations, the outcome reveals that NT and ET do not wish to be matched. Below is a transcription of the responses.

**Table 3.** EFL Teachers' Obstacles of Peer Observation

Indicator	EFL Novice Teachers	EFL Experienced Teachers
EFL Teachers' Obstacles	I feel that ET does not really indicate that they are experienced in teaching, because when I observe there are still many English teachers who have taught for years but are not proficient. These obstacles sometimes make me afraid to criticize them, especially because they are no longer young, causing someone to be offended more quickly.	"When I am being observed by a novice teacher, sometimes I feel, I also know what he is teaching the students. Maybe I should be observed by a teacher who is more experienced than me, so that there is no inequality. Maybe that is also what peer means, the same regarding the quality of knowledge."
	I find that many ETs don't want to be observed because they think that ETs have more experience and a lot of knowledge. This refusal of course made me reluctant to do peer observation.	"Maybe if NT were observed by ET, they would give some feedback – all is well –. Because of the feeling of reluctance in giving criticism."
	Maybe the problem is with me, I feel inferior when it comes to pairing with ET. Especially those who have spent many hours flying in various schools.	I'm actually embarrassed that the observer is NT, because I know my quality when I teach, which is stiff and monotonous.

<sup>1</sup>general perceptions

## Discussion

The study of teachers' perceptions of peer observation in order to facilitate the professional development of their teachers was started by asking them for their understanding of peer observation itself. Both Novice Teachers (NT) and Experienced Teachers (ET), both, understand that peer observation is an activity carried out by teachers with their peers, in certain subjects, with the aim of improving the quality of their teaching. However, both of them have different views when asked for more detailed objectives when conducting peer observation. For NT, they think that peer observation is an opportunity for them to learn about ET, when they observe ET. The knowledge is in the form of how to start learning, making lesson plans, preparing media and teaching materials, and controlling the class. In contrast to ET, they want to update their teaching method which looks monotonous and outdated. This is consistent with Farrell (2018) assertion that novice teachers can learn to apply previous teacher experiences to their own teaching practice through this activity. ET concurs with Todd (2017) assertion that peer observation enables teachers to overcome problems, practice specific skills, and address teaching deficiencies.

Based on the experience of doing peer observation, most of NT felt scared and challenged when their English teaching was observed by their colleagues. They usually receive criticism and feedback on how successful or not they were. Some ET believe that not all of them after doing peer observation, they want to enhance themselves. Some consider it is only a formality for supervising. According to the findings of research conducted by Herawati (2016), the majority of teachers believe that academic supervision (including peer observation) should be prioritized because of its importance and benefits. Some teachers perceive academic supervision is only as a formality and to fulfill regulations.

Peer observation was necessary in NT's opinion since it would help them become better instructors, boost their confidence, and enable them to create lesson plans and behave appropriately in the classroom. While ET believes that peer observation can enhance teaching quality, develop it, and provide them with the chance to share their best practices. The answers from ET demonstrate they are more confident by saying that peer observation can be a place for them to share their knowledge with other instructors, which tends to be different in terms of the amount of teacher confidence. This is consistent with Todd (2017) results that compared to ET, NT felt more exposed when being observed and given comments on their practices. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that teachers with more experience may have better levels of self-efficacy, which would make them less vulnerable to the stress brought on by being observed.

Finally, it is worthy to note that there are several obstacles experienced by both, Novice and Experienced Teacher. Some ETs think that their knowledge capacity is better than NT's, so they feel unbalanced if NT has to observe them. They want someone who is equal to their knowledge even more, because they can't just share knowledge, without getting knowledge. They do peer observation and also want to gain knowledge. This also makes some NTs insecure when it comes to pairing with ETs in peer observations. Sun & Zhang (2022) agreed with this finding, that Experienced Teachers have better knowledge than Novices. According to complexity dynamic system theory (Feryok, 2010), language teachers' cognitive dynamics are linked to teacher growth, which is normally gained through teacher education or teaching experience. However, some of the data in the findings show that it is also possible that the teaching quality of novice teachers is actually better than experienced teachers. This is certainly contrary to the theory above, because years of teaching experience are also not enough without a desire to improve the quality and develop the professionalism of teachers. That is why TPD is important, both for novice teachers and experienced teachers. As is indicated in the findings of Nazari et al. (2019), teachers require more courses in professional development to improve their teaching quality.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the perceptions in which Novice Teachers (NT) and Experienced Teachers (ET) engaged in peer observation for their teacher professional development. The current study's findings basically revealed that there was a significant difference in perceived Peer Observation

between novice and experienced Indonesian EFL teachers. Novice EFL teachers were more creative and colorful in their teaching while being less knowledgeable. In comparison to novice EFL teachers, experienced EFL teachers had more knowledge but were monotonous and less creative.

Likewise, it was shown that novice and experienced EFL teachers viewed their peers' observations differently. Considering that as a new teacher, novice EFL teachers have less teaching experience, which makes them nervous and insecure when getting experienced teachers as their peers. They believe that if they have an experienced teacher, they will be able to imitate something good from that teacher. However, they were disappointed to find an experienced teacher who was no better than them. Similarly, some experienced EFL teachers are unaware of creative teaching techniques. However, because of their extensive teaching experience, experienced teachers have sufficient knowledge of pedagogy and content, and they may feel unsuitable when observed by novice teachers. Because they believe that novice teachers do not provide them with knowledge. Whereas what they believe is not entirely correct, because it is through peer observation that they can correct each other, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and use this information to teach themselves and their peers.

As mentioned, this study has 10 qualitative participants. A larger sample would have produced more information. This design was meant to yield qualitative data for a broader study of peer observation and teacher professional development, not to generalize. The study were used to highlight issues raised in the literature review and set parameters for a future study. The study's findings could inform novice and experienced teachers' professional development efforts.

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