



Investigating Teacher's Perceptions of Reflective Peer Observation to Promote Professional Development

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Peer observation as one of the reflection tools is viewed as an effective strategy to develop teacher's professionalism. Furthermore, peer observation in reflective practice refers to the teacher's act which collaborates with other teachers to identify the strength and the weakness of their teaching. By doing so, it is expected there will be innovation and improvement for better teaching activity after doing an evaluation together. This study aimed at investigating the teacher's perceptions of peer observation as one of the reflection tools to promote professional development. The participant of this study was an In-service teacher in one of Senior High Schools in Surakarta who teaches English with 10 years of teaching experience. The data were gained through an in-depth interview followed by interactive model data analysis for qualitative study in analyzing the data. The results indicated that the teacher has positive perceptions of peer observation as a professional development tool. It brought some advantages for the teacher. Peer observation also helped the teacher to solve the problems she encountered in her teaching and could be used as a learning opportunity by observing new teaching techniques/methods/strategies from other teachers.

Keywords: reflective practice, teacher's perception, peer observation, professional development tool

INTRODUCTION

Quality education requires a quality teacher to achieve the education goals. Thus, every teacher is recently demanded to be reflective and evaluative toward what they have given in his/her teaching [Fatemipour \(2013\)](#). Furthermore, to this point, the teacher is expected to engage in some professional activities to develop his/her pedagogy skill, extend his/her understanding in teaching-learning activity and reflect the quality of his/her teachings for better learning outcomes. Reflective toward teaching activity lead to the term of reflective practice. It leads the teachers to make self-evaluation regarding all activities happens in the classroom [Navaneedhan and Tiruttani \(2011\)](#). Besides, [Ahmed and Hassan \(2014\)](#) also noted that reflective practice is a method to make an innovation in order to have a better learning solution of the teachers. Therefore, linking the reflection with the needs of EFL classroom, the reflective practice can help English teachers change their level of awareness of their practices and enable them to articulate their practices.

Reflective practice is a transformation from the bad condition to a good condition in the teaching-learning process. Further, [Farrell \(2012\)](#) explained more about reflection-in-action called as an interactive reflection means the process of teacher's thinking towards teaching-learning activities while on the job. So, the teacher does reflection while teaching-learning activities is on process. In reflection-on-action, the educators think their previous teaching

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whether there is any problem or not and also to find out another option to solve it. The last, reflection-for-action or anticipatory means teachers consider the situation or problem will happen in the future teaching. Besides, the reflection involves three aspects to be a reflective teacher. Those substantial points of view are open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility.

Several studies regarding reflection found that there are some tools/types, strategies, and techniques can be applied to reflect teaching practice: teacher's diary, peer observation, students' feedback and video/audio recording [Lee \(2007\)](#); [Fatempour \(2013\)](#); [Soisangwarn and Wongwanich \(2014\)](#); [Susoy \(2015\)](#). In Indonesia context, reflection is an up-to-date topic in the educational field since the government propose the term of reflective teaching as the standards or competencies for teachers that centered on pedagogical skills, having good personalities, having social awareness and engaging in professional practice (Ministry of National Education, 2007). Moreover, peer observation is one of reflective teaching tools that must be implemented by the teachers. Thus, in this study, the researcher focuses on peer observation as a tool for reflection because observation is mostly used by the teachers than other reflection tools. Also, it is as usual norm in some schools or private institutions. In most institutions, all classes often observed by the supervisors. [Hendry and Oliver \(2012\)](#) claimed peer observation as the act of two teachers collaborated and observed other's teaching to improve the quality of teaching as the main goal. While, [Richards and Farrell \(2005\)](#) stated the key points of peer observation are looking deeper at the way the lesson is delivered and gaining some understandings related to the teaching and learning process.

The term of observation has been quite familiar with Indonesian teachers. It is conducted regularly in school. Usually, at the end of the semester, observation will be held to evaluate teachers' performance. This activity is called "principal supervision". In fact, according to [Moradi et al. \(2014\)](#), the observation makes the teachers feel discomfort since supervisor criticize their teachings in directive ways. Thus, [Richards and Farrell \(2005\)](#) expected through peer observation, the observer and the teacher being observed could discuss together and learn how to improve and make innovation their teachings in order to develop their professional growth.

In conducting observation in educational field, there are three approaches namely; (1) directive approach which the supervisor is commonly someone who has authority and an expert, then (2) alternative approach which the observer still has the control over the teacher and the observer gives some questions to the teacher which will lead teacher's attention to the problem emerged from the class being observed, while (3) the non-directive approach focuses on the teachers' views of teaching and creates occasions for them to discuss their opinion or perception of their teaching performance, to deal with the problems they identify, and to create their own solutions. The last approach is (4) collaborative observation, the observer tries to look at classroom activities from teachers' view with a

positive mindset or way of thinking.

The reason why peer observation is so important is that conducting peer observation is considered necessary. Peer observation is needed to learn, describe, and to evaluate teachers' pedagogy competencies [Zacharias \(2011\)](#). Moreover, [Çakir \(2010\)](#) claimed that throughout peer observation teachers will get new knowledge/insights to increase and improve their teachings because it supplies teachers a chance to identify some problems they cannot observe by themselves. Furthermore, by conducting peer observation, it helps teachers become more aware of the problem they face up to and it also helps teachers slight the gap between the ideal situation of teaching with what actually happens in the classroom [Richards and Farrell \(2005\)](#). Based on the reasons mentioned before, it can be concluded that peer observation should be managed and conducted well. However, in Indonesia, study about peer observation especially for in-service EFL teacher was still limited. The previous researchers mostly focused on pre-service teachers to help them get new insight in teaching experience. [Megawati \(2017\)](#) (2018) also studied about developing pre-service teachers' confidence through peer observation. Whereas, this tool could be also investigated for in-service EFL teacher. Furthermore, there are three steps in conducting peer observation according to [Bell \(2010\)](#). Those are planning, conducting the observation, and reflecting.

Peer observation is a model for a teacher to reflect his/her teaching in the classroom activity. This is categorized as the term of reflection that has a significant impact for the teacher to develop his/her professionalism. To emphasize, reflective practice is a model can be used to accomplish professional development in teaching [Bailey et al. \(2011\)](#). The previous study comes from Macau in which [Santos and M \(2017\)](#) conducted a study entitled 'how do teachers make sense of peer observation professional development in an urban school'. The result of the study stated that peer observation can be a good tool for teachers' professional development, especially for language education. The research also showed that classroom observation can make enthusiasm among teachers when it is managed well. Therefore, several studies had been conducted to find out the efficiency of the tools/techniques to imitate teacher teaching but only a few studies examined teacher's perceptions about peer observation. With that in mind, this research focused on investigating teacher's perceptions of peer observation and to reveal something novel for the specific field, this study involved an English teacher as the participant to expose the role of reflective practice in the English classroom.

According to [Maba \(2017\)](#), teacher's perception is a response of thought from experts especially in the education field toward their experience in educating, teaching, guiding, assessing, and evaluating students during teaching and learning process which is affected by their feelings and beliefs. Furthermore, he also stated that there are two categories of teacher's perceptions in the implementation of reflective practice aspects that consist of positive and negative perception. So, in this study, the participant will tell about their perceptions

whether it is positive or negative ones regarding peer observation in reflective practice.

Professional development is a term that cannot be separated from the educational field and 21st century learning. Guskey (2000) defined professional development as practitioners' opportunity in the way of seeking particular techniques to improve teaching practices and students' learning. Teaching improvement can be indicated when the practitioners are involved in such activities that seek to enhance knowledge and skills, which may also contribute to their personal, social, and emotional growth Desimone (2009). Consequently, teaching practices lead to a major improvement in teaching abilities and intelligence and teacher has also a significant influence on student achievement. Hence, practicing reflective practice should be developed by the teacher to promote professional development. Furthermore, the use of reflection in teacher professional development is based on the basis that the teachers may improve their teaching practice by methodically reflecting on experiences Farrell (2015).

This current study investigated EFL in-service teacher's perceptions as a means to promote teacher's professional development. There have been several studies discussing this issue, but only few studies involving in-service teacher as the participant and there is a propensity that this tool is only appropriate for pre-service teachers, who are still lack of experiences in teaching. Interestingly, there are only few studies exploring this field in Indonesia context. Moreover, the evaluation on teachers' pedagogy competency is required. That is why educators need to evaluate and reflect their teachings and peer observation facilitates teachers to conduct the reflection in "less-stressed" way. In sum up, through this study, the researchers expect to find new insights from the teacher who practiced peer observation as part of her teachings in a detailed way. Those, to reach the purpose, the research questions of this study formulated as follows: 1) How does in-service EFL teacher perceive peer observation as a means to promote professional development? 2) what are the advantages of getting involved in peer observation concerning teacher's professionalism?

METHODS

This study was a qualitative case study which used a single case study method that fixed on the case of an individual teacher. A case study itself is characteristically practiced if the researcher would like to focus on a single unit to generate an in-depth description within its context Yin (2018). It explored the in-service EFL teacher's perceptions of peer observation as a reflective practice activity to develop teacher's professionalism. Before doing the research, the researcher interviewed some of in-service EFL teachers with different school background and experience in order to get the preliminary data. Finally, one purposively selected in-service EFL teacher in one of Senior High Schools in Surakarta was involved as the participant of the study. The participant should have at least 1-year teaching

experience, it was to make sure that the teacher got experiences of conducting peer observation. Moreover, she regularly does peer observation in the school and has interest in peer observation.

In this case, the participant has 13 years of teaching experience. Further, to reach the objective of the study, the data were gathered through an in-depth semi-structured interview. The interview session was conducted on January, 20th 2020. During the interview sessions, note-taking was conducted to collect important data. The researchers explored what the interviewee shares related to the topic being studied. A common question about doing case study interviews is whether to record them. Moreover, the data of the interview were recorded in the smartphone recordings. Then the data were analyzed by using interactive model data analysis by Miles et al. (2014). It involved three steps of analyzing the data: (1) data collection, (2) data display, (3) data condensation and drawing conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section showed the result the research questions of this study, which is changed into the statement as follows:

Teacher's Perceptions towards Peer Observation as a Means to Develop Teacher's Professionalism

From the gained data, the teacher has implemented peer observation as one of the reflective practice tools when she teaches English in the classroom since 2007. She has a positive perception regarding peer observation. Furthermore, she stated she utilizes peer observation in two different approaches. The first approach is like supervision, there is one teacher who experts and has the authority to assess her teaching practice while another one the observer and the teacher will discuss together after doing observation in order to make a better teaching plan for the next meeting. The data about the statement are as follows:

"I have taught since 2007 and used peer observation since that year also. Though, sometimes there is a time when we don't do peer observation because of something. In doing peer observation, we (school and teachers) have two different approaches of peer observation. Usually, at the end of the semester, there is supervision from school, so the supervisor will come to the class and bring an observation sheet to make some assessments regarding teachers' performance in teaching English. Another approach deals with collaboration among teachers. So, sometimes I come to another class to observe, or I invite another teacher to

observe my class and at the end of the class we discuss, share, make a plan together for the better teaching practice. It can be concluded that it is good to be practiced because we could share anything about teaching activity, get the new method/technique, etc.”

The first statement from the teacher while there is a supervisor came to the class called directive approach. It is about the supervisor's authority, the supervisor is commonly someone who has the authority and a source of expertise. While the second statement of approach, it is called collaborative observation. Observer tries to look at the classroom from teachers' view/perception with a non-judgemental attitude. Additionally, the participant also stated that doing peer observation is good to be practiced because both observer and observee could discuss everything regarding teaching activity. It is in line with [Shukri \(2014\)](#) result in her research. It showed most of the teachers agreed that peer observation was a good tool to make teaching improvements.

Another statement from the participant is about the way she does peer observation as a teacher being observed. When the participant would like to do peer observation, she will invite or make an appointment with the observer vice versa. Then, the peer observation would be held and at the last the will discuss/reflect together, as following here:

“Usually I will make an appointment or I will invite another teacher to come to my class and observe my teaching activity. Or sometimes, another observer will tell me if she/he will observe my class. So, there is no observation without communication first. After we deal with the schedule, the peer observation will be held at that time and at the end of the class, we will discuss, do reflection, share each other about the method I used or about my performance and body movement to the students. We also think about the best solution for the next meeting. So, after doing peer observation, I always get new insight and can find another good solution for the problems that I cannot do by myself.”

From the statement above, it is in line with [Bell \(2010\)](#) who stated there are three general steps in conducting peer observation. Those are planning, doing the observation, and reflecting/discussing. The participant in this study makes a plan first which she called an appointment then they will conduct peer observation and the last is do a reflection. By doing peer observation teacher will get new insights to improve her teaching and find the best solution for the next teaching practice by discussing and reflecting together which is in line with [Çakir's](#) result in his study.

With the respect to the teacher's perceptions regarding peer observation as one of the reflective tools to promote profes-

sional development, it can be concluded that the teacher has a good perception because it gives some benefits for the teacher while she cannot observe her teaching by herself.

The Benefits of Conducting Peer Observation to Teacher's Professionalism

From the obtained data, it was found that the teacher got some benefits using reflective practice for her professional development. She mentioned that teacher should not stop learning in order to develop her teaching practice. The obtained data about the statement are as follows:

“As I said before, reflective practice gives some benefits for the teachers and peer observation is one tool of reflection's types. By doing peer observation I could develop individual needs in teaching because I could get some insightful feedback from the peer. So, it is clear that I could learn new teaching techniques, and I also get the evaluation on my teaching strategy whether it is still applicable or not to be used in the classroom. In conclusion, suggestion and feedback from the observer are really useful for my professional life.”

It is in line with [Fletcher et al. \(2006\)](#) who claimed that peer observation might be used to encourage reflection to complete individual development necessity. Furthermore, peer observation was also an effective tool that could be utilized by EFL teachers to construct awareness of using a wide range of teaching techniques to run the class more efficiently and share ideas related to teaching materials or methods [Tzotzou \(2014\)](#). The teacher also stated that teachers should not stop learning which is in line with [Heydari and Abbasian's](#) statement who said as the main role in the education field. Teachers should keep learning to do well with educations goals. [Kennedy \(2016\)](#) also reinforced through professional development teachers could develop their teachings. Hence, peer observation is really beneficial for the teacher in order to promote teacher's professionalism.

CONCLUSION

The researcher drew some conclusions related to the teacher's perceptions in practicing peer observation as a means to develop teacher's professionalism. To be a professional English teacher, the teacher should always study and increase her/his teaching practice. Then, reflection is considerably more significant to involve an English teacher in developing professionalism. Reflection/ reflective practice means the teacher could think back critically about what they have done after teaching in the classroom, how the activity is going, how the students performance and achievement, why that could happen,

and others. Accordingly, EFL teachers can use some existing tools in practicing reflection and peer observation is one of them. As mandated by the regulation of the Indonesian government (*Law no. 14 Year 2005*), a professional teacher must be able to develop his/her pedagogy, social, professional competence, and personal. Peer observation was proven to be an effective tool/type in evaluating teacher's teaching activity.

Further, utilizing reflective practice through peer observation brings some benefits to the teacher. The teacher has a positive perception regarding reflective practice. Moreover, by getting some valuable feedback, a teacher can make improvement in their classroom. The teacher can also get ideas after sharing session with other teachers to exchange the teaching

method/strategy/technique in order to have better teaching activity. As we know, 21st century educators face more challenging problems. Problems related to students, learning outcomes, classroom instruction, and management, or integration teaching techniques in the classroom. So, the teacher needs to regularly do some reflection to be more skillful.

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