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Teachers Observing Teachers: Factors that Contribute to Critical Thinking in Peer Coaching

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Teachers Observing Teachers: Factors that Contribute to
Critical Thinking in Peer Coaching

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Teachers Observing Teachers: Factors That Contribute to Critical Thinking in Peer Coaching

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Many university language programs draw on undergraduate as well as graduate students to conduct their courses. These student instructors do not always have adequate pedagogical preparation or experience. Past research suggests that conducting peer observations followed by a group reflection on basic teaching practice would help teachers become more aware of their own teaching. This research aims to investigate whether peer coaching followed by peer reflection meetings increases instructor effectiveness and confidence, as well as whether it is the observations or the reflections that encourage teachers to think more critically and improve their teaching.

Keywords: peer coaching, peer observations, teacher development, reflection, student instructors

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At Brigham Young University (BYU), as at many other universities, student instructors are hired to teach the lower level language classes. Oft times these student instructors are not trained or licensed teachers, they are students who have learned the language well or are native speakers of that language. While they may be very familiar with the subject matter, they might not be familiar with the pedagogical background that trained teachers are familiar with. Simply said; they might not know how to teach. Student instructors are given lesson plans and are told to follow them. This can be overwhelming and difficult for student instructors unfamiliar with pedagogical research, however, many student instructors come to love teaching and change their major to a teaching major.

This research aims to see how student instructors can be helped to become more aware of their own teaching and thus improve their teaching abilities. It was important to us to help student instructors not be overwhelmed with the difficulties that come with being a novice teacher. This was done by implementing a peer coaching program consisting of observations, observation tasks and reflection meetings for the student instructors of German 101 and 102 and then asking those instructors what they felt was most beneficial to their development as a teacher.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous teachers feel that having another teacher in the classroom is more intrusive than supportive (Thomas, 1993), this causes many classrooms to be isolated and many teachers to resist letting other adults into their classroom (Gottesman and Jennings, 1994; Slater and Simmons, 2001). However, some researchers suggest that teachers would benefit from going

public by letting other teachers into their classroom (Palmer, 1998). Making classrooms more open involves building communities of teachers (Palmer, 1998). According to Wenger (2006) a community is more than just people who have the same job. Members of a community have to participate in discussions, help each other, learn from each other, build relationships, and interact with each other. This means that teachers should not disregard their colleagues, and work alone; instead they should work and learn with their colleagues (Slater and Simmons, 2001). Teachers should also converse about teaching and learning, as well as support each other in their own teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998). Building communities of practice can thus have the potential to improve teaching.

One possible way that teachers can create a community is through peer coaching. Peer coaching is where teachers build groups of at least two members who then work together to reflect on their current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workspace (Robbins, 1991). One thing that teachers who participate in peer coaching can do is conduct peer observations. Farrell (2011) suggests that peer observations are important because other eyes can see things in a more objective way than if one were to record oneself teaching.

In this research this problem was reflected with in the student instructors of German 101 and German 102. These were inexperienced teachers who were rarely observed, and when they were observed it was only for evaluation purposes. These student instructors had the need to improve their teaching and could benefit from building a community of practice to achieve this goal.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. How does peer coaching increase a teacher's perceived teaching skills?
2. When does critical thinking happen in the process of observing and reflecting? Which elements of peer coaching are really crucial and impactful?
3. What factors influence the participants' willingness to participate in peer coaching?

Preview of the Organization & Content of the Thesis

Chapter 2 will review the relevant research that has previously been done. First the role and perception of classroom observations will be explained, followed by an explanation and definition of teacher development, and concluded with an explanation of how teachers can reflect on their teaching.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the participants of this research as well as the methods used to collect data.

Chapter 4 will display the results of the questionnaire the participants filled out at the end of the study.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of the study, their implications for the profession, and implications for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this chapter, the relevant literature on teachers observing other teachers teaching, peer coaching for teachers and reflections on observing and teaching will be reviewed. First the role of teacher observations by a superior or peer will be explained, followed by summary of how teachers perceive observations. Then teacher development will be defined and described, followed by an explanation as to why reflecting on teaching is important.

Role of Teacher Observations

The role of observations must first be understood in order to understand their place in the classroom. Wajnryb (1992) argues that teacher observations are an important tool in teacher training. She explains: “We are often so absorbed in the purpose, procedure and logistics of our lesson that we are not able to observe processes of learning and interaction as they occur through the lesson” (p. 7). Wajnryb’s explanation emphasizes the importance of observation and their resulting in teacher reflections. She also says: “[observing] helps teachers gain a better understanding of their own teaching, while at the same time refines their ability to observe, analyze and interpret, an ability which can also be used to improve their own teaching” (Wajnryb, 1992, p. 7). Not only can teachers see their classroom through different eyes by observing other teachers teach, but they will also develop skills that can help them become better teachers. Wajnryb argues further that a good way to support teachers’ development is to have observations done by peers rather than by administrators or supervisors.

However, one is left to wonder when the critical thinking happens in this process of observation. When are teachers learning? Is it while observing that teachers gain a greater understanding of teaching? Or do they rather gain insights while reflecting on observations

made? Another unanswered question is whether the reflections should be done in groups or simply as a writing process as an individual.

Wajnryb's (1992) book has observation tasks to help observers focus their observations. This focus can help the reflection process be more specific. Having a specific focus when observing is helpful because a teacher might otherwise just observe passively since there are so many things happening simultaneously in a classroom (Avalos, 2011). However, since there are so many things to observe in a classroom, when observers have a specific focus, they will be able to focus on a particular item or teaching technique as well as notice other items that the observer regards as important.

For instance, the observer might gain new ideas by observing others (Arnau et al., 2004). Teachers can at times find themselves continuously doing the same activities. Observing someone else can help them find new ideas and new perspectives. Scrivener (2005) suggests that implementing new ideas or methods can help a teacher avoid boredom in the classroom and burn out or fatigue from doing the same thing over and over again. With all of these potential positive outcomes of observations, not all observations are perceived as being positive.

Teacher Perception of Observations

In the following section, teacher's perceptions of classroom observations will be explored. Lam (2001) surveyed 2400 educators in Hong Kong that were being observed to find out how they perceived observations. The results were categorized into six different types of observations: (1) principal observing teacher, (2) section head observing teacher, (3) teacher observing section head, (4) teachers observe one another, (5) experienced teachers observing new teacher, and (6) new teacher observing experienced teacher. This study found through a survey that 66% of the time principals observed teachers and that only 29% of the time teachers

observed other teachers. Teachers felt that they did not have many opportunities to observe other teachers since teachers have so many other obligations. Even though teachers did not observe other teachers very often in this study, the teachers reported that they also would rather observe each other than have the principal observe them.

This study found a correlation between the teachers' preferred type of observations and what the teachers thought the purpose of the observation was. Teachers who wanted more teachers observing teachers thought of observations as a teacher development tool. On the other hand, teachers who wanted principal or section head observations thought of observations as a way to evaluate teachers.

The overall results showed that teachers perceived classroom observations as being more of an appraisal and less of a learning experience, although some argue that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Poster and Poster, 1993). However, in this study teachers were only observed an average of one to three times a year by their supervisor. It leaves one to wonder whether observations would help teacher development more if they were done more frequently, were more focused, and were followed by reflections.

Postholm (2011) looked at teachers who taught in a school in Norway and observed each other at least every two weeks. The teacher who was going to be observed would put together a lesson plan that included learning goals, as well as some specific questions they had about their teaching that day. During the reflections the teachers could then talk about the lesson that they observed and help answer questions that the teachers had, as well as ask each other questions about other lessons that they taught that were not observed that week. During these reflective meetings teachers gave each other feedback and advice. The teachers found this to be useful;

however, they often did not continue this practice after the study ended because they reported that they did not have enough time to dedicate to observation and reflection.

A further study that examines the role of observation is one conducted by Britton and Anderson (2010). The researchers explain that many teachers do not desire to receive feedback on their teaching; rather they prefer receiving positive evaluations. The researchers argue that to avoid this problem teachers need to be trained from early on to develop collaboration skills and a desire for continuous improvement. Their subjects were four student teachers going to student teach at the same school. The participants had also attended the same university. These student teachers were put into two groups of two. They were required to attend at least four seminars during the course of the semester. These seminars taught them the purpose and value of peer coaching, as well as how to peer coach. The model these students used for observations was to start with a pre-conference, then move onto the observation, and follow up with a post-conference.

The participants of this study expressed that they enjoyed the peer observations and that they would be likely to do something similar in the future again. They liked that there was no pressure on them while they taught because they simply had a peer in their classroom with them. They also mentioned that this was a stress free way to look at concerns in the classroom. While overall the experience was positive, some concerns were still expressed. The student teachers mentioned that they felt that their students behaved better when they were being observed. While this research shows that student teachers enjoyed peer coaching, it did not evaluate whether or not it improved these student teachers' teaching skills.

Teacher Development

This section will explore how teachers develop better pedagogical techniques by participating in peer coaching and how peer coaching fits into teacher development.

Slater and Simmons (2001) looked at peer coaching in a high school setting to help overcome feelings of isolation and using new teaching methods. This study took place in a high school in Texas. Seventeen teachers volunteered to take part in this study. Since these teachers did not know much about peer coaching, the first phase of the program included an orientation meeting. The second phase of the program consisted of training the teachers to observe teachers, how to record what they saw, and how to give feedback. During the observation phase, teachers met with administrators every three weeks to talk about the coaching process and to review a new skill area. Teachers also conducted pre-conferences before observations. After the study, teachers were surveyed. The results indicated that more than half of the teachers felt that peer coaching helped them overcome isolation, learn new professional ideas, gain knowledge and ideas about practice, and make positive attitude and behavior changes. However, this school had over 100 teachers, and only 17 teachers volunteered to participate in peer coaching. The fact that the participants of the study were volunteers can also taint the results. If the participants volunteered to spend extra time on developing their teaching skills, they most likely had a great interest in becoming better teachers. If the results are manifold and positive, why do more teachers not participate in peer observations?

Student teachers and new teachers are observed often, but whether or not that is really what novice teachers need to improve their teaching skills is the question Harfitt and Tavares (2004) explore. They surveyed 116 novice and experienced teachers and asked them what they perceived to be the hardest thing about teaching. The researchers found that different teachers

had different needs. For instance they found that teachers might need ongoing professional learning, reflections on their own teaching or the building of communities of practice. The researchers also argued that it is important to empower novice teachers, to let them take more responsibility in their development. This can be accomplished by collaborative lesson planning, peer observations, lesson study, and joint pursuit of knowledge. Harfitt and Tavares (2004) argue that these things should not be seen as “luxuries” but should become practices in schools. These techniques were not actually implemented and evaluated, they were simply proposed. This article also leaves one wondering about the professional development of experienced teachers. Would these techniques also help experienced teachers improve their teaching skills?

A further study that looked at the development of novice teachers was the one by Farrell (2011). He acted as a more experienced teacher that observed a novice teacher to help her become more aware of her teaching practices. Farrell’s research implemented a three step system, which they repeated twice.

First, Farrell (2011) had a pre-class discussion with the teacher he would observe. They would discuss what the focus of the observation should be. The second step was to have the actual observation. In this study Farrell used seating chart observation record (SCORE) charts (Acheson and Gall, 1987) to map out what was happening in the classroom. During the observation he would take notes and focus on the specific question that was agreed upon. In this instance, the teacher wanted to know how many questions she was asking the class during class time. The final step was a post-class discussion. Here Farrell discussed his findings with the novice teacher. They also shared their findings and questions in group discussions with other teachers to try and find more ideas on how to help the teacher improve her teaching.

This study concluded that observations using an observation instrument such as a SCORE chart can help novice teachers become more aware of their teaching practices. If the teacher found just two observations to be helpful, how much more helpful would regular observations and reflections be? Could one expect similar results if novice teachers conducted peer observations for each other?

A further study that looked at peer coaching in pre-service teachers was conducted by Hasbrouck (1997). The participants of this study were 22 pre-service teachers and seven experienced teachers who served as consulting teachers or mediators. The experienced teachers helped the pre-service teachers identify high-, mid-, and low quality performances. The study lasted four weeks. The pre-service teachers participated in three peer coaching sessions, and performed three observations during the course of the study. During the observations the observers used The Scale for Coaching Instructional Effectiveness (Hasbrouck, 1994). This study concluded that the pre-service teachers improved in three main areas: (1) their teaching skills, (2) self-confidence, and (3) better sense of professionalism. However, this study does not conclude that the peer observations are what led to these improvements in the pre-service teachers since during this practicum pre-service teachers are heavily supervised. The progress could come from the supervision as well as from their hands on experience with teaching.

As previously mentioned, studies have found that the benefits of peer observation include teachers conducting observations to improve their teaching (Wajnryb, 1992; Anderson, 2010), gaining new ideas (Arnau et al., 2004), and avoiding boredom in the classroom (Scrivener, 2005). While many researchers have looked at the value of peer observations in pre-service teachers, few have looked at this practice for experienced teachers. It seems that the benefits of observations would also benefit experienced teachers, and not simply novice teachers. Arnau et

al. (2004) studied 14 teachers that had taught for at least 20 years, but they were only in their first or second year of peer coaching. The teachers' motivations for participating in this program were: (1) they had a desire to learn, (2) they wanted informal peer coaching experience, (3) they needed meaningful feedback, (4) they were attracted to all the choices the program offered (who to work with, what to work on, how often to meet, etc.) , and (5) they were dissatisfied with traditional observations. The participants felt that they gained the following through the peer coaching program: (1) meaningful feedback, (2) self-directed learning, (3) gain of trust among peer coaches, (4) increase of moral among peer coaches, and (5) the realization of the worth of extra work.

These experienced teachers enjoyed the freedom they had in this program, and they were able to adapt it to their specific needs and get what they needed out of it. They enjoyed being able to receive feedback from people they trust and getting new ideas by watching others teach. Arnau et al. (2004) suggest that principals should present peer coaching as a voluntary, professional growth program to the teachers in their schools. This study consisted of motivated teachers, and leaves the question of what motivates teachers to participate in peer coaching. In this study we find five reasons that teachers wanted to participate, and it would be interesting to understand what stopped teachers from participating in peer coaching.

Reflecting on Teaching

One might wonder how valuable teacher reflections are since many observations are followed by reflections. There are many different types of reflections and different reasons to have reflections. This section will look at those reflections that could follow peer coaching and teacher observations.

Martari (2012) argues that reflections are necessary to be able to switch from the role of technicians to the role of competent professionals. When one teaches, one has a plan, but sometimes a teacher must quickly react to how students are responding to the material being taught. Reflection can help one think about the way the material was taught, why it was taught a certain way, whether or not it was effective, and how one could improve ones' teaching skills.

In Martari's research, teachers were asked to write in journals as a means of enhancing reflection. Many of the teachers found this to be a difficult task because they had to reflect on their thinking; however, they found that after some time they developed the habits of asking questions, being clearer, and being more involved in the process of learning. While reflection is a difficult skill to learn, one might wonder if it would be easier if this were done in groups so that there would be multiple perspectives. Or it might be easier if there were specific reflection questions rather than just meta-reflections in journal entries. After teacher observations, teachers could reflect on their own teaching through journal entries.

In contrast to personal reflections, Kennedy and Smith (2013) examined collective reflections. They found that teachers who have more collective practice are more comfortable in their teaching and those teachers are less likely to be nervous about administrative observations, student outcome data, or colleague observations. However, this research found that leadership had a negative impact on how teachers felt. Kennedy and Smith (2013) argue that this could be remedied if the school leadership had a better relationship with the teachers. This poses the question what teachers' responses would be if the leadership took part in the collective reflections.

Research Questions

Based on the research related to peer observations in teaching, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. In what ways does peer coaching increase the teacher's perceived teaching skills?
2. Is there evidence that critical thinking occurs in the process of observing and reflecting?
If so, which part of the peer coaching process is crucial and impactful?
3. What factors influence the participants' willingness to participate in peer coaching?

Chapter Summary

Many researchers suggest that teachers should build communities of teachers and conduct peer coaching (Palmer, 1998; Robbins 1991; Arnau et al., 2004; Wenger 2006). Some researchers specify that peer observations should have a specific focus (Wajnryb, 1992; Avalos, 2011; Farrell 2011). Some of the benefits of peer coaching that have been found in research are: teachers gain a better understanding of their own teaching (Wajnryb, 1992; Hasbrouck, 1997; Arnau et al., 2004; Farrell 2011), it helps teachers give other teachers new ideas (Arnau et al., 2004), it is a stress free way of looking at concerns in the classroom (Anderson, 2010), it improves teacher confidence (Hasbrouck, 1997), there is a gain of trust amongst peer coaches (Arnau et al., 2004), and teachers can overcome feelings of isolation (Slater and Simmons, 2001; Arnau et al., 2004).

Even with the research studies that have been conducted, there are still some unanswered questions such as the relationship between reflecting and observing. These questions include: when and how do teachers reap the benefits of peer coaching? Is it during the observation, the personal reflection, or group reflection? What is the best way to form a peer coaching team? How often should teachers observe each other? How can teachers be motivated to participate in

peer coaching? How can school leaders help peer coaching without getting in the way of the teachers?

My research is of importance because of these questions that have been left unanswered by the existing research. If peer coaching has such positive results, why is it not more widely implemented? The answer to this question can help the profession know what factors motivate or limit the practice of peer coaching. This research aims to explore the question of when teachers who participate in peer coaching gain knowledge about their teaching. Is it while they are observing, or while they are reflecting? The answers to these questions will help the profession know where the emphasis in peer coaching might be most productive.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

The participants in this study consisted of all eight of the student instructors of German 101 and German 102 at Brigham Young University during the Winter Semester 2013. Most of the student instructors had no prior experience with teaching, were not planning on becoming teachers, had little or no pedagogical training, and chose the job of student instructor because it is one of the highest paying jobs students can find on campus.

In previous semesters, student instructors of German 101 and 102 met once a week to discuss whatever questions they might have had about teaching or about content. For this research study, instead of a weekly meeting, student instructors were asked to conduct focused observations and attend reflection meetings. Each week alternated between an observation week and a meeting week to talk about the observations (see Calendar, Appendix A). Student instructors did not receive any training on how to facilitate discussion meetings, or on how to observe. The purpose of the observing, reflecting, and of the tasks were also never discussed with the student instructors.

Two groups were created; one consisted of the four German 101 student instructors, the other of the four German 102 student instructors. One week students observed a different student instructor in their group, the following week they had a reflection meeting. Each group had a discussion leader to help guide the reflection meeting, this role was fulfilled by the student instructors who took turns taking on that responsibility. There were a total of seven observations and seven reflection meetings.

During the observation week, the participants were given a classroom observation task adapted from Wajnryb (1992) (see Observation Tasks, Appendix B), and they were required to

observe one of the other student instructors in their own group. A class period was 50 minutes long. The participants observed one entire class period. The observation tasks consisted of a specific observation task and multiple questions to help the observer focus and reflect on the task at hand (see Appendix B). The observation tasks were chosen by the supervising professor and the researcher based on what novice teachers might not yet know but is important for them to become more familiar with. These are the tasks that were chosen: attending to the learner, checking learning, eliciting, managing errors, the language to feedback error, and the teacher's meta-language. Some of the tasks were similar to each other because the topic was important for novice teachers to improve their teaching.

The week following the observation week was a meeting week. Here, each group came together and talked about their observations. These meetings lasted 20-30 minutes. Each meeting had a discussion leader (see calendar, Appendix A). The discussion leader was given a reflection guide sheet to help guide the conversation (see Reflection Guide, Appendix C). These meetings were video recorded. At the end of the meeting, the observation task sheets were collected from student instructors for data collection.

Once the semester came to an end, the participants were given a questionnaire with the following: questions about their background, Likert scale questions, and short answer questions (Appendix D). In the short answer questions participants were asked what they liked and disliked about both the reflection meeting and the observations. Participants were asked in Likert scale questions about how much they thought that observations, reflections, and observation tasks helped them notice new things about their own teaching, gain new ideas, implement new ideas in their own teaching, improve their teaching, think about their own teaching, and help build a community of teachers.

Participants

Sample

The participants in this research consisted of the eight student instructors of German at Brigham Young University. The participants were assigned to two groups. One group consisted of the four German 101 student instructors; the other group consisted of the four German 102 student instructors.

The German 101 group consisted of Female 1, Male 1, Male 2, and Male 3. The researcher was Female 1, a graduate student in Second Language Teaching with bachelor's degree in German and French Teaching, and had taught German 101 at BYU twice before. Male 1 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was an anthropology major, and this was his first time teaching German 101. Male 2 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a Biology major, and had taught German 101 two times before. Male 3 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a German literature major, and had taught German 101 once before.

The German 102 group consisted of Female 2, Female 3, Male 4, and Male 5. Female 2 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a German literature major, and had taught German 101 once before. Female 3 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a theatre arts studies and German studies major, and had taught German 102 five times before. Male 4 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a nutritional science major and had taught German 102 two times before. Male 5 was an undergraduate student at BYU, was a German literature major, and had taught German 101 once before.

Data Sources

For this research, video footage of the reflection meetings was recorded, the reflection task sheets (Appendix B) that instructors used during the observations were collected, and

student instructors were asked to complete a survey on Qualtrics at the end of the semester (Appendix D).

Chapter Summary

For this research, eight student instructors were put into two groups according to their teaching subject (German 101 or German 102). During the course of one semester they observed each other using observation tasks (Appendix B) and reflected on their observations together. The reflections were videotaped. At the end of the semester student instructors took a survey on Qualtrics that consisted of questions about themselves, Likert scale questions, and short answer questions.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In this study, three aspects of peer coaching were compared to try and understand what part of peer coaching is most crucial to professional development and critical thinking: observations, observation tasks, and reflection meetings. The following three tables show participants responses to the Likert scale questions from the survey at the end of the semester. The possible values participants could choose from were: (1) I disagree strongly, (2) I disagree, (3) I somewhat disagree, (4) I somewhat agree, (5) I agree, and (6) I strongly agree. The results within the following three tables are organized from highest scoring to lowest. The tables show three different values for each question: the highest value that was chosen for that question, the lowest value that was chosen, and the average value that question received.

Observations

Table 4.1 Results of Observations

Question:	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Observing other teachers made me think about my own teaching	6	5	5.71
Observing other teachers gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching	6	4	5.57
Observing other teachers helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed	6	4	5.29
Observing other teachers helped me improve my own teaching skills	6	5	5.29
Observing other teachers helped me feel more confident about my own teaching	6	4	4.86
Observing other teachers helped me become part of a community of 101/102 teachers	6	3	4.86
Overall average:			5.26

The results in Table 4.1 are responses to questions about the observations the student instructors participated in. The highest ranking response was that “observing other teachers made

the student instructor think” (5.71) and the two lowest ranking responses were “observing other teachers helped me feel more confident about my own teaching” (4.86) and that “observing other teachers helped the student instructor become part of a community of 101/ 102 teachers” (4.86). The overall average response to observations was 5.26.

This table shows that participants felt that through observing other teachers they were best able to think about their own teaching and they gained new ideas that they could then implement in their own teaching. However, when comparing all the answers, becoming part of a community of 101/102 teachers received the lowest score. It is important to note that it did receive a (6) I strongly agree, so some participants did feel they became part of a community, but overall it seemed that that was not the main gain of observations.

Observation Tasks

Table 4.2 Observations Tasks

Question	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Observation tasks gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching	6	4	5.00
Observation tasks helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed	6	4	4.86
Observation tasks made me think about my own teaching	6	4	4.71
Observation tasks helped me improve my own teaching skills	5	4	4.43
Overall Average:			4.75

The results in Table 4.2 represent the student instructors’ responses to the Likert scale questions about the observation tasks that were used for this study. The highest ranking response was that “the observation tasks gave the students instructor new ideas to implement in their own teaching” (5.0) and the lowest ranking response was that “observation tasks helped student instructors improve their own teaching” (4.43). The average response to the observation task questions was 4.75.

Overall the observation tasks scored lower than both the observations and the reflections. This might be due to the fact that the participants were not teaching majors and were very unfamiliar with some of the concepts in the observation tasks such as elicitation. Other concepts such as error correction were probably easier to understand and observe. Generally observation tasks were still viewed as positive, simply not as positive as observations and reflections.

Reflection Meetings

Table 4.3 Reflections Meetings

Question	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Reflection meetings helped me better understand what I observed	6	5	5.14
Reflection meetings made me think about my own teaching	6	4	5.14
Reflection meetings helped me become part of a community of 101/102 teachers	6	4	5.14
Reflection meetings helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed	6	4	5.00
Reflection meetings gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching	6	4	4.86
Reflection meetings helped me improve my own teaching skills	5	4	4.86
Overall average:			5.02

The results in Table 4.3 represent the Likert scale responses to the questions about the reflection meetings that the student instructors attended. The highest ranking responses were that “the reflection meeting helped the students instructors better understand what they observed” (5.14) and that those “meetings made them think about their own teaching” (5.14). The lowest ranking questions were that “the reflection meetings gave the student instructors new ideas to implement in their own teaching” (4.86) and that “the meetings helped improve their teaching skills” (4.86). The average response to the questions about the reflection meetings was 5.02.

The fact that participants felt that the reflection meetings best helped them understand what they observed might be due to the fact that some of the participants did not understand the

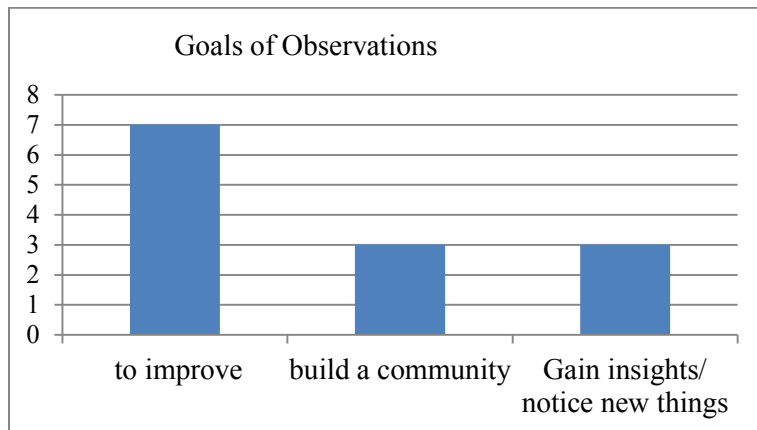
observation tasks and used the reflection meetings to better understand the concepts presented in the observation tasks. This understanding then led them to think about their own teaching. The reflection meetings also scored highest in the area of community building. This could be due to the fact that during those meetings the participants were able to discuss ideas and problems in the classroom together as a group, whereas during the observations the participants were not part of the classroom, they were simply observers.

Part of the post study survey consisted of short answer questions. The participants' answers were organized into categories. The following charts are a summary of the categories found and number of times mentioned by participants.

Goals of Observations

When the student instructors were asked what they perceived the goals of peer observations to be, most of the responses were related to improving teaching skills some of the responses were "to improve our own teaching skills," "to become better," "to always keep a keen interest in improvement," and "to become better and to fine tune skills in teaching." Other responses also mentioned building a community: "observing one another does build comrade and community", and "to unify student instructors". Finally gaining insights or noticing new things were also mentioned: "to notice things one hasn't learned or noticed before," and "to observe and gain insights." As Lam (2001) suggests, participants tend to prefer items that they perceive to be of importance, this then suggests that the participants of this study supposed improving their own teaching to be the most essential goal to them. The following chart (4.1) shows how many times each topic was mentioned.

Chart 4.1 Goals of Observations



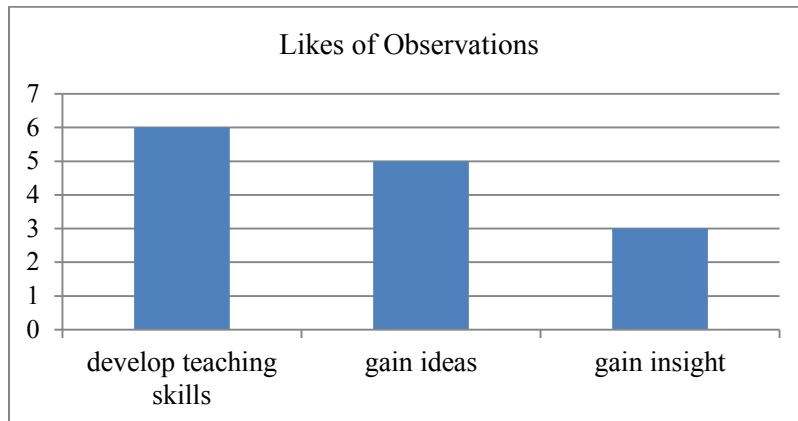
Likes of Observations

When student instructors were asked what they liked about the observations, most responses were related to helping the instructor develop their teaching skills, e.g., “the peer observations are great for teaching development” and “I thought it was beneficial and helpful to me as a teacher to improve my skills”. A further benefit mentioned was gaining new ideas. Some said: “you see what others do and can incorporate the good things into your own style” and “it’s helpful to observe other teaching to better understand how you yourself teach and what you might do differently.” Also student instructors mentioned that they were able to gain insights into teaching while observing their peers. “I really enjoyed having the opportunity to view others teach, because it allowed me to see how they taught different concepts as well as dealt with problems in the class.”

It is interesting to compare these answers to the Likert scale results of the observation (table 4.1). In the short answer participants liked that they developed their teaching skills, whereas in the Likert they most strongly felt that observing made them think about their own teaching and gave them new ideas to implement in their own classroom. This then implies that participants associated developing their teaching skills with thinking about their own teaching

and gaining new ideas to implement. The following chart (4.2) shows how many mentions each category received by participants when asked what they liked about observations.

Chart 4.2 Likes of Observations

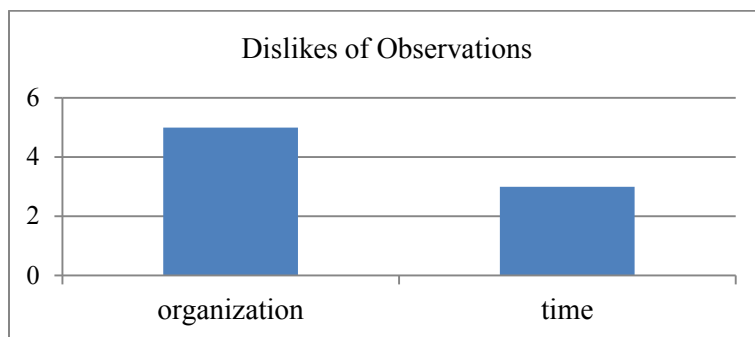


Dislikes of Observations

Student instructors were also asked about what they did not like about the observations and what they would change about them if they could. The organization of the observation was the main thing that student instructors wanted to change. However, when looking closer at the responses it seems that what most student instructors did not like about the organization was that the observation tasks seemed confusing or irrelevant. Some said: “I would review which ones seemed to be the most helpful, and edit or remove the others” or “sometimes the tasks were not all that clear”. Some students did say they did not think the rotation in observations was well set up; “I would just improve the cycle as I observed Female 3 far more than the other teachers”. This is interesting since there was a rotation set up so that each student instructor observed someone else each week unless their schedule did not allow for them to observe other instructors. So this dislike of the rotation might simply be due to the participant’s class schedule and it might be a misunderstanding of the rotation schedule. This could be remedied in the future by having instructors participate in organizing the peer coaching.

The other aspect that student instructors did not like was the time commitment that it took to participate in the observations. “It’s difficult to always fit observing into a tight class schedule though” and “I wasn’t very good about planning my visits and was therefore often distracted by other things on my ‘to do’ list”. However, when asked on a Likert scale question whether the observations were worth the time commitment the high value was 6 and the low value was 4 with an average response of 5.00. Chart 4.3 shows the response categories to the dislikes of observations.

Chart 4.3 Dislikes of Observations



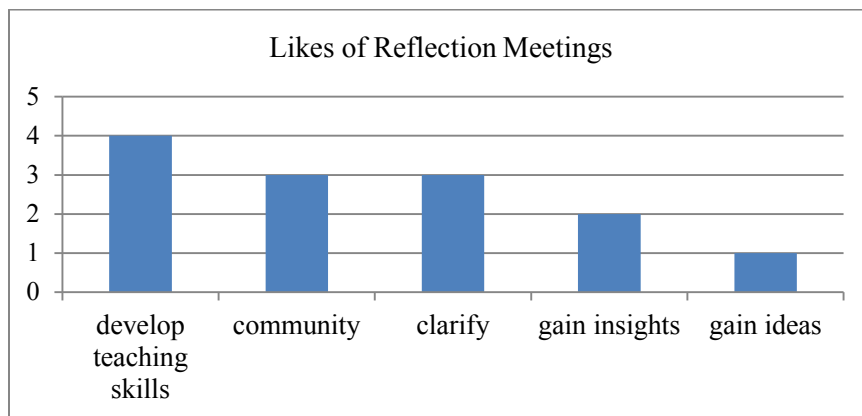
Likes of Reflection Meetings

Student instructors were then asked what they liked about the reflection meetings. The responses mentioned the most is that the reflection meetings helped develop teaching skills. Some student instructors said: “I liked discussing teaching philosophies and tactics” and “it is mostly through social discourse that solutions to teaching problems for self-motivated teachers can be located.” Others mentioned that the reflection meetings helped them feel a part of the teaching community. It was also mentioned that the reflection meetings helped clarify some of the observation tasks: “The reflection meetings were a good opportunity to get any needed clarity on the tasks.” Since most of the student instructors were not German teaching majors, tasks

focused on elicitations seemed to be difficult for them to understand. Gaining insights and gaining new ideas were also mentioned as benefits of the reflection meetings.

Interestingly, in the short answer section participants mostly mentioned that they liked the fact that reflection meetings helped develop their teaching skills, when in the Likert scale questions (Table 4.3) developing teaching skills through reflection meetings scored the lowest. This can be explained that participants liked that they were able to develop their teaching skills through reflection meetings. The reflection meetings helped them understand what they observed and think about their own teaching (Table 4.3) and participants perceived this to improve their own teaching. Chart 4.4 shows the number of times each category was mentioned when asked about the likes of the reflection meetings.

Chart 4.4 Likes of Reflection Meetings



Dislikes of Reflection Meetings

Student instructors were also asked what they did not like about the reflection meetings. The only thing that was mentioned was boredom. Some of the responses were: “They were good discussion but sometimes got boring,” and “I felt that toward the end of the semesters the meetings and reflections got monotonous.” Boredom was mentioned 3 times in the short answer section. This could also be due to the fact that the participants were not interested in taking time

to become better instructors and that they simply had the job because of their language skill. This could also possibly be avoided if the participants had more say in the observation tasks that are used so that they chose the topics of discussion.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Past research has shown that peer coaching can be an effective tool for teacher development (e.g., Wajnryb, 1992; Hasbrouck, 1997; Arnau et al., 2004; Anderson, 2010; Farrell, 2011). However, peer coaching has many different important aspects and parts to it and it is still uncertain what specifically helps teachers improve their teaching skills, as well as how other benefits are gained from peer coaching. In this chapter the answers to the research questions will be discussed in the order they were presented, followed by suggested implications for the profession as well as suggestions for further research.

Discussion

1. In what ways does peer coaching increase the teachers' perceived teaching skills?

To answer the first research question, the three factors used in this research to develop teaching skills, namely: observations, observation tasks, and reflection meetings, need to be compared. In the Likert scale questions the student instructors rated observing as being the most influential in improving their teaching skills and the observation tasks the least helpful, this comparison can be seen in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Improving my own teaching skills

	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Observing other teachers helped me improve my own teaching skills.	6	5	5.29
Reflection meetings helped me improve my own teaching skills	5	4	4.86
Observation tasks helped me improve my own teaching skills	5	4	4.43

Observing other teachers proves to be the most impactful element in increasing teachers' perceived teaching skills. When looking at Table 4.1, which shows the different benefits gained

from observing other teachers, the benefit that received the highest score was: observing other teachers made the student instructors think about their own teaching (5.71). In comparison, critical thinking or thinking about their own teaching, scored lower in the reflection meetings (5.14) as well as in the observation tasks (4.71). Critical thinking then seems to be an important factor to help teachers develop their skills.

When looking at the short answer questions, the question that mentions developing teaching skills the most is the one asking the participants what they thought the goal of peer observations was. All seven student instructors mentioned that they thought improvement of teaching skills was the goal of the observations. Also the question asking the participant what they liked about observations had nearly as many mentions of improvement; there were six mentions that observations helped develop their teaching skills. This then implies that to develop teaching skills, instructors need to think critically about their own teaching practices.

In Table 4.1 the second most valued benefit of observations is that student instructors gain new ideas by observing their peers (5.57). Gaining new ideas through observations (5.57) is more successful compared to gaining new ideas through reflection meetings (4.86) or through the observation tasks (5.00). A second important factor to improving teaching seems to be gaining new ideas.

Looking at the short answer responses, gaining new ideas is mentioned most in responses to the questions regarding what student instructors like about observations. This question received five responses about gaining new ideas, which implies that the participants equaled improving their teaching with gaining new ideas and insights.

In conclusion to answering the first research question, which asks how peer coaching increases the teacher's perceived teaching skills, results show that observations are the most

important factor in improving teaching skills and the benefits that were gained by observations were critical thinking and gaining new ideas. It can be concluded that peer observations are such an important tool in developing teaching skills because they aid in critical thinking as well as gaining new ideas.

2. Is there evidence that critical thinking occurs in the process of observing and reflecting?

If so, which part of the peer coaching process is crucial and impactful?

The second research question is in part answered by the first research question's answer. If the goal of peer coaching is improving teaching skills, then it seems that peer observations is the most crucial and impactful piece of the peer coaching process. As Martari (2012) suggests, it is important for teachers to switch from the role of the instructor to the role of competent professional. Since there is so much going on simultaneously in a classroom (Avalos, 2011) it can be difficult to think about one's own teaching while teaching in one's own classroom, hence observations present themselves as a good time to think about teaching practices.

When comparing the Likert scale questions about critical thinking, the results also show that observations are the more crucial component of the process (see table 5.2). In comparison observing other teachers scored 5.71 compared to 5.14 for reflection meetings and 4.71 for observation tasks.

This result is interesting because as Wajnryb (1992) suggested, there are many things happening simultaneously in a classroom (Avalos, 2011), and it is useful to have a specific focus to not get distracted while observing. However, it does not seem that the participants of this study found the observation tasks to have as much value as observations and reflections. The tasks received the lowest scores for every Likert question. This might be explained by the negative feedback received about the organization and clarity of the tasks in the short answer

responses. However, it is also important to note that while they received the lowest overall scores, the scores were all still positive scores, so participants did enjoy the tasks, simply not as much as they did the observations and reflection meetings.

Table 5.2 Thinking about teaching

	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Observing other teachers made me think about my own teaching	6	5	5.71
Reflection Meetings made me think about my own teaching	6	4	5.14
Observation Tasks made me think about my own teaching	6	4	4.71

The lack of clarity in the observation tasks for this study might be due to the fact that none of the participants, with the exception of the researcher, were teaching majors and thus were not familiar with many aspects and concepts of second language teaching. This might have caused the confusion with the observation tasks. However, we can conclude that student instructors unfamiliar with the field of second language teaching who want to develop their teaching skills benefit most from observing their peers and think most critically during those observations.

However, if the goal of building a community is analyzed, it is not observations that received the most value. While the short answers responses showed that building a community should be a goal of observations, it was not mentioned as something they liked most about observations. It was; however, mentioned as something they liked about the reflection meetings. This is also reflected in the Likert scale questions (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Becoming part of a community

	High Value	Low Value	Mean
Reflection Meetings helped me become part of a community of 101/ 102 teachers	6	4	5.00
Observing other teachers helped me become part of a community of 101/ 102 teachers	6	3	4.86

This is likely due to the fact that during the reflection meetings participants were able to talk with each other and discuss what they observed and perceived as important. However, during the observations, participants were simply observers in the classroom; they were not part of the community of students that the instructor had created. So if the goal is to build a better community of teachers, then reflection meetings are an important and crucial part of the process. On the other hand, if the goal is to improve teaching skills, then as previously mentioned, peer observations are a crucial and important part of the process.

As previous research has shown, peer coaching has many benefits; however, many teachers do not participate in peer coaching once research studies they have participated in are completed (e.g., Lam, 2001; Slater and Simmons, 2001; Arnau et al. 2004; Harfitt and Tavares, 2004; Anderson, 2010; Farrell, 2011; Postholm, 2011). This research aimed to understand what influences participants to participate in peer coaching and what things keep teachers from participating in peer coaching.

3. What factors influence the participants' willingness to participate in peer coaching?

When asked what participants disliked about the observations, the two items mentioned were organization and time (see Chart 4.3). In this study participants were most frustrated about the observation tasks and the organization of the observations. Some said: "Sometimes the tasks were not all that clear, so I wasn't exactly sure what I was supposed to be looking for" or "Maybe we need the Tuesday meeting to have more instruction for what to look for during the observation". Since the observation tasks were unclear, it made the tasks not as useful. As one of the comments suggests, time could be taken to explain the tasks so that the tasks are more useful; however, the second thing mentioned that participants disliked about observations was the time commitment.

If finding time to observe is difficult, instructor cannot be expected to make even more time to meet to ensure that the observation tasks are clear. Especially since some of the participants found that the tasks were not always relevant to the specific instructor or situation.

Understanding that time and organization are important factors that prevent teachers from peer coaching is important in order to help teachers participate in peer coaching. Also, understanding what parts of peer coaching are crucial in critical thinking can help teachers. It can be explained that observations help in thinking critically and in gaining new ideas. If this is something that someone is interested in, they should invest the time.

Limitations of this Study

The limitations of this study included a sample of convenience, it was a small sample, only eight student instructors were able to participate, one of which was the researcher. Also the sample consisted of inexperienced teachers, many of which were not studying to become teachers; they simply completed a one semester methods course. Some of the student instructors were in their last semester of studies thus busy with completing their degree.

Further, this study only lasted for the duration of four months and results might be different if the duration of the study was different. For instance participants might find that observations are less useful after a certain amount a time and that reflections become more important.

Additionally all the participants taught German and were grouped with others who teach the same level as themselves. The results might be different for teachers of different disciplines. It would be interesting to see if similar benefits can be gained through observations of different subject areas.

Suggestions for Future Research

Because this study has many limitations, such as a limited number of participants who are all in-experienced teachers and not part of the field of second language teaching, future studies should compare observations, observation tasks, and reflection meetings amongst larger groups as well as more experienced groups, to see whether or not what is important and crucial to further developing teaching skills remains the same. An interesting question to consider would be whether observation tasks become more or less useful the more experienced the teacher is. Future research should also try to understand if the participants have a more significant role in the organization of the peer coaching, if that improves their likes of the observation tasks and the reflection meetings.

Conclusions

While many researchers have suggested that teachers should build communities of teachers and conduct peer coaching (e.g.: Palmer, 1998; Robbins 1991; Arnau et al., 2004; Wenger 2006), there are many questions still unanswered about peer coaching. There are also a variety of formats suggested for peer coaching. In this research study the questions that were aimed to be answered were: how peer coaching increases teaching skills, what elements of peer coaching are crucial and impactful, and what factors influence teachers to participate in peer coaching.

The results suggest that observation is the most crucial and impactful element of peer coaching for unexperienced student instructors whose goal is to develop their teaching skills. However, if the goal were to build a community, then this study suggests that reflection meetings would be a crucial element. This study further suggests that time and organization are factors that influence participants' willingness to engage in peer coaching. It can be concluded that if time is

limited, teachers should, at the very minimum, simply observe each other in order to gain the benefits of peer coaching without having to make too great of a time commitment.

Appendix A – Calendar

January 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Observation Week Learning check	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 Holiday	22 Reflection meeting 101: Female1 102: Female 3	23	24	25	26
27	28 Observation week Eliciting	29	30	31		

February 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5 Reflection meeting 101: Male 2 102: Male 4	6	7	8	9
10	11 Observation Week Attending to the Learner	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 Holiday	19 Monday Instruction	20	21	22	23
24	25 Observation Week The language of feedback to error	26 Reflection meetings 101: Male 1 102: Male 5	27	28		

March 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5 Reflection Meeting 101: Male 3 102: Female 2	6	7	8	9
10	11 Observation Week Teacher's Functional Language	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 Reflection Meeting 101: Female 1 102: Female 3	20	21	22	23
24	25 Observation Week Managing Errors	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Reflection meeting 101: Male 2 102: Male 4	3	4	5	6
7	8 Observation Week Managing Group work	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Last Day of Class Reflection meeting 101: Male 1 102: Male 5	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Appendix B – Observation Tasks

Checking Learning

1. Script the teacher’s language (including any non-verbal signals) used to check learning.
2. In each case, what is the teacher checking?
3. Can you identify the trigger that prompted the teacher to check, for example, a student appearing confused; a necessary logical step in the lesson; repeated and similar errors by a number of students?
4. How does the student respond to the check?
5. What, if any, follow-up happens?
6. What did the learning check achieve?
7. When does the teacher not check for learning?

1.How does teacher check?	2.What does teacher check?	3.Why does teacher check?	4.How does student respond?	5.What follow-up is there?	6.What did the learning check achieve?
1.How does teacher check?	2.What does teacher check?	3.Why does teacher check?	4.How does student respond?	5.What follow-up is there?	6.What did the learning check achieve?

Reflection:

1. What do learning checks achieve?
2. How often do you use learning checks?
3. What types of learning checks do you use?
4. Did you find patterns? Any relations?
5. Did you think there were enough or too many learning checks?

Eliciting: Teacher Prompts

1. What does the teacher say in order to elicit a response?
2. How much time does the teacher allow before re-phrasing, or re-directing, or adding a prompt (count time in seconds)?
3. What are the students' responses?

Teacher Prompts	Wait time	Student responses

Reflection:

1. Is there a pattern?
2. What types of questions asked? When do students respond most often?
3. What is the average wait time?
4. What is the purpose of eliciting?
5. What does your own classroom look like?
6. What are the purposes of your questions?

Attending to the Learner

1. Make sure you are seated in a position where you are able to observe when and how the teacher attends to individuals – by names, gestures, stance, facing them or not, eye contact, verbal prompts, etc.
2. For a portion of the lesson, keep a record of every time the teacher attends: write down each time the teacher attends to a particular person.
3. Do not write down the students’ names down, just mark down if they are male or female (and any other distinguishing characteristics that you find important)
4. You may wish to record some field notes on student response to the teacher’s attending strategies, for example, when the teacher looks at a student to discourage talking, or to encourage a response does the student react?

Student	Teacher’s Attending Strategies	Student’s reaction

Reflection:

1. Do any patterns emerge? Were some students named or attended to more often than others?
2. What purposes do different attending strategies have?
3. What comment can you make about your own teaching behavior? What have you learned from this observation that you could apply to your own teaching?
4. Did you notice anything about the students' own attending behaviors towards other students?

The Language of Feedback to Error

1. Collect some samples of the four-utterance paradigm (teacher question + student response + teacher feedback + student response to feedback). We are especially looking for examples that include learner error and teacher feedback to them.
2. Wherever you can, note any non-verbal and supplementary support that is given to the information, for example, use of the board, visual, and gesture.
3. Consider whether the feedback was generally positive and encouraging (+) or negative and discouraging (-).

Sample		Supplementary support	+/-
Teacher question			
Student response			
Teacher feedback			

Student response to feedback			
------------------------------------	--	--	--

Sample	Supplementary support	+/-
Teacher question		
Student response		
Teacher feedback		
Student response to feedback		

Reflection:

1. Is the feedback encouraging? Is it more positive or more negative?
2. Did the teacher provide the learner with information that explicitly and specifically highlights where the error is?
3. How do you give your students feedback?

Teacher's Functional Language

1. Use the chart to help you monitor the teacher's classroom language.
2. Script a chunk of teacher meta-language (about 5 or 6 times)
3. State what you think the teacher's communicative purpose is.
4. Briefly describe the immediate context.
5. Consider how the same thing might be delivered to a native speaker.

What does the teacher say?	What is to communicative purpose?	What is the immediate context?	How might this be said to a native speaker?

Reflection:

1. What the teacher's purpose immediately obvious to students?
2. Is the language adjusted?
3. Were there any patterns?
4. What can the teacher do to heighten contextual clues?
5. How do you speak in your classroom? Do you have any reoccurring patterns?

Managing Errors

1. Script the instance of learner error; this might be inaccurate or inappropriate language.
2. Note whether the teacher responded and if so, a brief note as to what was said or signaled.
3. Note down where roughly in the lesson it occurred. This is a prompt to help you recall it later.
4. Note whether there was a particular focus at that point of the lesson, for example, on accuracy or fluency.

Lerner error	Teacher response	Lesson phase	A/F

Reflection:

1. Did you find a pattern in the teacher's way of responding to learner error? (ask the teacher for a rational)
2. Which instances did you think were important but got overlooked? Which were not so important, but got attention?
3. How did other students respond to a student's error?
4. Did students self-correct?
5. What experiences do you have being corrected when speaking a foreign language? Has that influenced your teaching?
6. What are your beliefs on error managing? Why?

Managing Pair and Group Work

Observe these 3 phases:

- moving into an activity
 - organizing the groups and seating
 - giving instructions, including modeling and checking
 - appointing and briefing group leaders (if applicable)

- monitoring the activity
 - how do we monitor students
 - when and how do we speak to the group?
 - our voice, position, proxemics (distance between people who are conversing)

- moving out of an activity
 - winding pairs/ groups down
 - signaling for everyone's attention
 - re-orienting group to new phase of lesson
 - organizing and monitoring the report back phase

	sub-skill	Observation	Comment
moving into an activity	1. organizing the groups and seating		

	<p>2. giving instructions, including modeling and checking</p> <p>3. appointing and briefing group leaders (if applicable)</p>		
<p>monitoring activity</p>	<p>1. how do we monitor students</p> <p>2. when and how do we speak to the group?</p> <p>3. our voice, position, proxemics (distance between people who are conversing)</p>		
<p>moving out of an activity</p>	<p>1. winding pairs/ groups down</p> <p>2. signaling for everyone's attention</p> <p>3. re-orienting group to new phase of lesson</p>		

	4. organizing and monitoring the report back phase		
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Reflection:

1. Do you think these statements are True or False?

- A teacher monitoring a group is there to listen, help and monitor, but not to teach.
- Any teacher comment must be preceded by the teacher listening closely to the group to find out how they are getting on.
- Any interaction must be initiated by the group or its members but not by the teacher.
- The teacher must give equal time to the groups.
- The teacher must give equal time to individuals in groups.
- The teacher must sit or crouch down so that she or he is at the same height as the students.
- Proxemics, eye contact and tone of voice in group work are necessarily different from those in full class activities.

2. How do we build groups? Are they always in the same groups? Why?

3. How do we have students report back? Why?

Appendix C – Reflection Guides

Reflections –Checking Learning

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. What do learning checks achieve?
2. How often do you use learning checks?
3. What types of learning checks do you use?
4. Did you find patterns? Any relations?
5. Did you think there were enough or too many learning check?

Reflections - Eliciting: Teacher Prompts

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. What does the teacher say in order to elicit a response?
2. What types of questions are asked?
 - a. When do students respond most often?
3. How much time does the teacher allow before re-phrasing, or re-directing, or adding a prompt?
4. How long do you think teachers should wait? Why?
5. What are the students' responses?
 - a. Are the responses better if we wait longer?
6. What is the purpose of eliciting?

Reflections – Attending to the learner

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. Do any patterns emerge? Were some students named or attended to more often than others?
2. What purposes do different attending strategies have?
3. What comment can you make about your own teaching behavior? What have you learned from this observation that you could apply to your own teaching?
4. Did you notice anything about the students' own attending behaviors towards other students?

Reflections – The Language of Feedback to Error

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. Is the feedback encouraging? Is it more positive or more negative?
2. Did the teacher provide the learner with information that explicitly and specifically highlights where the error is?
3. How do you give your students feedback?

Reflections- Teacher's Functional Language

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. What the teacher's purpose immediately obvious to students?
2. Is the language adjusted?
3. Were there any patterns?
4. What can the teacher do to heighten contextual clues?
5. How do you speak in your classroom? Do you have any reoccurring patterns?

Reflections – Managing Errors

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. Did you find a pattern in the teacher's way of responding to learner error? (ask the teacher for a rationale)
2. Which instances did you think were important but got overlooked? Which were not so important, but got attention?
3. How did other students respond to a student's error?
4. Did students self-correct?
5. What experiences do you have being corrected when speaking a foreign language? Has that influenced your teaching?
6. What are your beliefs on error managing? Why?

Reflections –Managing group work

Guide for Group Leader:

Remember that people should be:

- reflecting on teaching in general (don't say "I saw so and so do this and this....")
- staying on the principle level
- talking about themselves and ideas that they have

Here are some possible questions to use if the conversation is not flowing very well and people do not know what to say. Do not feel as though you have to discuss all of these, they are just ideas.

1. Do you think these statements are True or False?

- A teacher monitoring a group is there to listen, help and monitor, but not to teach.
- Any teacher comment must be preceded by the teacher listening closely to the group to find out how they are getting on.
- Any interaction must be initiated by the group or its members but not by the teacher.
- The teacher must give equal time to the groups.
- The teacher must give equal time to individuals in groups.
- The teacher must sit or crouch down so that she or he is at the same height as the students.
- Proxemics, eye contact and tone of voice in group work are necessarily different from those in full class activities.

2. How do we build groups? Are they always in the same groups? Why?

3. How do we have students report back? Why?

Appendix D – Questionnaire

About the teacher:

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your major?
4. How many times have you previously taught German at BYU?
5. Do you have other teaching experience?
6. What level are you teaching?

Likert Scale Questions:

1. I disagree strongly 2. I disagree 3. I somewhat disagree 4. I somewhat agree 5. I agree 6. I strongly agree

1. Observing other teachers teach made me think about my own teaching.
2. The observation tasks made me think about my own teaching.
3. The reflection meetings made me think about my own teaching.
4. Observing other teachers helped improve my own teaching skills.
5. The observation tasks helped improve my own teaching skills.
6. The reflection meetings helped improve my own teaching skills.
7. Observing others teachers gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching.
8. The observation tasks gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching.
9. The reflection meetings gave me new ideas to implement in my own teaching.
10. Improving my teaching skills is part of my role as a student instructor.

11. Observing other teachers helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed.
12. The observation tasks helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed.
13. The reflection meetings helped me notice things in my own teaching that I had not previously noticed.
14. Observing other teachers helped me become part of a community of 101/102 teachers.
15. The reflection meetings helped me become part of a community of 101/102 teachers.
16. Observing others made me feel more confident about my own teaching.
17. The reflection meetings helped me better understand what I observed.
18. I would like to continue observing other teachers in the future.
19. Observing and reflecting offered me benefits that were worth the time commitment.
20. Did you change anything in your classroom because of the peer observations?

Short Answer Questions

1. What do you think the goal of peer coaching is?
2. What did you like and dislike about the observations? What would we do to improve them?
3. What did you like and dislike about the reflection meetings? What would we do to improve them?
4. What could be improved to make the reflection meetings more helpful?
5. Would you rather have the regular Tuesday meeting, or Peer Observations? Why?
6. Would you like to keep doing peer coaching in the future? Why or why not?
7. Any other comments?

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