



T. C. YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

MASTER'S PROGRAM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

A RECIPROCAL PEER OBSERVATION EXPERIENCE AT THE  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT OF A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY: THE  
CASE OF FOUR IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS

CANSU DİNÇ-AYAZ

İSTANBUL,2019



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## ABSTRACT

### A RECIPROCAL PEER OBSERVATION EXPERIENCE AT THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT OF A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY: THE CASE OF FOUR IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS

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The present study aimed to investigate (a) to what extent do instructors who observe their peers give feedback on different aspects of teaching including engaging learner, learning, lesson structure, techniques, resources and materials during the POT process, and (b) how instructors and the head of Professional Development Unit evaluate this process in terms of its contribution to their teaching practices. Moreover, as a piloting study for a large-scale POT application in the current institution, possible problems and suggestions were collected, as well. The data were gathered through peer-observation forms, post observation discussions, reflective journals, and interviews conducted with instructors and Professional Development Unit head at the end of the process, and were analysed through content-analysis. The results revealed that instructors mainly focused on the themes of teaching techniques, lesson structure, and engaging learners, rather than learning, and resources and material aspects of teaching. The triangulated data displayed that reciprocal POT offered significant benefits for the professional development of instructors regarding different themes when they had different roles, namely, observee and observer. The study offers important implications for the future planning and implementation of POT process both in this institution and

in similar higher education contexts considering the perspectives and suggestions of those involved in this process.

**Keywords:** Peer Observation Experience, Reciprocal Peer Observation, Professional Development Tool, Higher Education



## ÖZET

ÖZEL BİR ÜNİVERSİTENİN PROFESYONEL GELİŞİM BİRİMİNDE  
KARŞILIKLI AKRAN GÖZLEMİ DENEYİMİ: İNGİLİZCE'Yİ YABANCI DİL  
OLARAK ÖĞRETEN DÖRT HİZMETİÇİ ÖĞRETMEN VAKASI

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Bu çalışma, (a) akran gözlemi yapan öğretmenlerin gözlemledikleri akranlarına, öğrenciyi derse katma, öğrenme, ders planı, öğretme teknikleri, ve kaynak ve materyal alanlarında ne ölçüde geri dönüt verdiklerini, ve (b) öğretmenlerin ve profesyonel gelişim birimi yöneticisinin öğretmede karşılıklı akran gözlemi deneyiminin öğretmenlerin öğretim uygulamalarına ve kurumun geleceğine katkılarını nasıl değerlendirdiklerini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, bahsedilen kurumda planlanan öğretmede akran gözlemi uygulamasına öncül bir çalışma olarak, olası sorunlar ve öneriler de çalışma içerisinde ele alınmıştır. Veriler, gözlemler boyunca gözlem formları, gözlem sonrası tartışmalar, yansıtıcı günlükler ve gözlemlerin bitiminde de katılımcı öğretmenler ve Profesyonel Gelişim Birimi yöneticisi ile yapılan görüşmeler ile toplanmıştır ve içerik analizi (yönlendirilmiş ve açık kodlama) yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar öğretmenlerin gözlemci rolü ile katıldıkları akran gözlemi deneyiminde en fazla öğretme teknikleri, ders planı ve öğrencileri derse katma konularına odaklandıklarını; öğrenme ve kaynak ve materyal konularının ise daha az tekrarlanır olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bunun yanında, güvenilirliği sağlanan veriler öğretmenlerin gözlemleyen ve gözlemlenen olarak iki farklı role sahip olduklarında, öğretmede akran gözleminin farklı noktalar ile ilgili önemli çıkarımlar önerdiğini

göstermiştir. Özel olarak, bu küçük ölçekli çalışmanın buluntuları, bahsedilen kurum içinde uygulanması planlanan öğretilde akran öğretimi sürecine daha derin bir bakış açısı getirmiş ve bunun yanı sıra gerekli öneriler göz önünde bulundurulduktan sonra, benzer bağlama sahip olan bir yüksek öğretim kurumunda öğretilde akran öğretimi kullanımının etkililiğine katkı sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Akran Gözlemi Deneyimi, Karşılıklı Akran Gözlemi, Profesyonel Gelişim Aracı, Yüksek Öğretim



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*To my loving parents Sevinç and Zafer,  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLD	Foreign Languages Department
INSET	In-service Teacher Training
RQ	Research Question
POT	Peer Observation of Teaching
PP	Preparatory Programme
RPOT	Reciprocal Peer Observation of Teaching
TTT	Teacher Talking Time

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background to the Study

Teaching and learning are complex cognitive processes that can be developed through various ways such as interaction, training, and observation (Saroyan & Amundsen, 2001; Shortland, 2004). What makes it even more complex is the constant need for change and development to be able to catch up with the current methods and ideas in various contexts. At this point, development means teachers' personal growth that leads to a positive change in their teaching practices with the aim of supporting learning environment (Freeman, 1982). A considerable amount of research has focused on raising teachers' awareness of professional development and finding the most effective tools to support it (Freeman, 1982; Harris et al., 2008; Munson, 1998; Farrel, 1999; Cosh, 1999; Peel, 2005; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006). With the increasing number of research providing evidence for the importance of professional development, numerous institutions encouraged their instructors to attend training sessions, do observations, or conduct action research to combine learning and teaching to get positive peak in their career (Peel, 2005; Yeşilbursa, 2009; Bozak, 2018).

Communication, interaction, and exchange of ideas are the most significant components of professional development activities that create a collaborative environment among colleagues and an appropriate learning environment for them because people are the agents of change not only for themselves but also for their environments through interaction (Bandura, 1997). Within the field of education, to be able to create interaction, teachers are supposed to enhance and build various pathways by using their creativity and passion to teach (Donnelly, 2007). Therefore, it is not



possible to think a teacher who is incapable of interacting with the students or their peers.

One of the most interactional tools that have been used for decades for professional development is “observation of teaching” by teachers (Freeman, 1982; Gosling, 2002; Blase and Blase, 2006; McMahon, Barret & O’Neill, 2007, Bozak; 2018). Briefly, observation of teaching can be described as monitoring someone or being monitored by someone with the purpose of giving or being given feedback on the pre-determined aspects of teaching (Eraut, 1995). It has been classified into different types that reflect changing needs of the education based on the developments of the era in various contexts. Some of the studies on observation of teaching have focused on their implementation (Gebhard, 1990; Munson, 1998) and classified observation as “directive supervision”, “self-help explorative supervision”, “supervisory observation”, “peer coaching” or “peer observation”. Some other studies focused on their aims and classified the models of observation as evaluative, developmental and peer-reviewed (Cosh, 1998; Gosling, 2002).

In all of these models, peer observation processes are considered to be constructive and effective professional development tools in teaching as they develop teachers’ personal growth and make them gain a positive experience by observing various methods in different contexts (Gosling, 2005; Fletcher, 2017). This way of observation which aims to improve teaching and professional development of teachers through dialogue and reflection is a cyclic process that includes pre-observation, observation and post-observation steps that enable teachers to interact with each other not only during the observation, but also before and after the observation (Martin and Double, 1998; Yiend et al., 2014). Observing each other is a reciprocal exercise which aims to help colleagues develop their teaching by sharing insights and giving mutual support to

each other (Bell, 2005). Within this reciprocal peer observation process, instructors choose or are assigned to observe a colleague during their teaching practices and provide them with feedback and get observed by them in return and receive feedback (Hendry and Oliver, 2012).

Even though the information sharing obtained through these observations stay confidential, teachers sometimes feel nervous about being observed by an outsider (Norrish, 1996; Cosh, 1999). In order to demolish the fear and anxiety of being observed, it is suggested that teachers should be a part of this process both as an observer and an observee (Cosh, 1999; Peel, 2005; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Blase and Blase, 2006; McMahon, Barret & O'Neill, 2007). At this point, reciprocal peer observation of teaching becomes a powerful tool to reduce teachers' observation related anxiety.

In conclusion, development, interaction and teachers are the integral parts of the education systems. For this reason, with the professional development purposes, peer observation is applied in various contexts (Bozak, 2014). As a requirement for a high-quality education, teachers have to improve themselves through a professional development tool that enables mutual cooperation among colleagues, which can be achieved effectively through peer observation (Bell, 2005; McMahon, Barrett and O'Neill, 2007; Hendry and Oliver, 2012).

## **1.2.Statement of the Problem**

As mentioned earlier most of the institutions that take part in the education field offer their teachers various opportunities for professional development (Alan, 2003; Ünal, 2010). The opportunities that encourage teachers to get involved in self-development activities that raise both self-efficacy and reflectivity, such as journal writing, action

research, experiential assignments or collaborative learning activities, have gained importance nowadays (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Burns and Richards, 2009).

As a reflective tool, observation, which comes in the form of supervisory observation, peer coaching and peer observation, has already been shown to increase the quality of teaching process by contributing to evaluation, development, and self-awareness (Freeman, 1982; Tezcan-Ünal, 2018; Munson, 1998; Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). The supervisory observation conducted with the participation of a supervisor or administrator with the purpose of appraisal, however, is not generally perceived to be a developmental tool but an evaluation tool that threatens the instructors emotionally by causing anxiety (Harris et al., 2008; Çağlar, 2013). Although it had been quite popular in 1960s, it lost its popularity today due to its main focus to observe teachers' in-class behaviour (Munson, 1998; Yiend et al, 2014).

The other observation method, peer coaching, is generally implemented as part of pre-service teacher training with the support, suggestions, and assistance provided by a more experienced teacher or lecturer who also gives immediate feedback on the teaching practices of novice or pre-service teachers at the end of an observation (Ackland, 1991; Bowman and McCormick, 2001). Even though it is considered to be a useful tool for training purposes, it has been criticised on the grounds that it is rather evaluative and judgemental than cooperative (Blasé and Blasé, 2006; Çağlar, 2013)

On the other hand, peer observation of teaching (hereafter POT) is acknowledged as a beneficial tool not only for the teachers, but also for the institutions. As the most up-to-date way of observation, POT offers lots of opportunities not only for teachers' professional development, but also for the promotion of teaching for long term purposes (Richards and Farrell, 2005; Bozak, 2018). What makes it different from other types of observations is that it aims mutual development unlike other types of evaluative or

judgemental observations lead by an administrative agent or an expert (Richards and Farrell, 2005). When observations are held with the aim of appraisal or evaluation by a supervisor because of administrative reasons (Richards and Lockhart, 1992; Shortland, 2010), this situation generally prevents teachers from seeing observation as a positive way of professional development, and makes them develop a negative attitude towards it, which limits the expected positive outcome of observation procedure. However, having a more moderate and equal system for observation, POT, enables teachers to gain new insights and new perspectives in a less threatening way (Gosling, 2005; Fletcher, 2017).

Despite its well-acknowledged contribution to professional development, the implementation of POT and its effects in the field of ELT have been under-explored (Çağlar, 2013; Bozak, 2014). To the best of my knowledge, only a few studies were conducted to investigate the peer observation of teaching in Turkish EFL context (Göker, 2006; Yeşilbursa, 2009; Yüksel, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to search for different implementations of POT in higher education institutions in Turkey with a focus on what involved teachers realize about their own teaching, what aspects of teaching they get focused more to give feedback, and how they evaluate the contribution of POT to their teaching and development. Hence, with the perspectives of involved teachers, significant implications can be drawn for its implementations.

### **1.3.Purpose of the Study**

In light of these, the present study basically aims to investigate how POT, as a professional development tool, can be implemented by the professional development unit of a private university in Turkey. The intentions of the unit to make it a regular professional development activity within that institution in the

long run has inspired this study as a pilot project of POT implementation in that context. In other words, before a large-scale implementation of POT in that institution, a small-scale case study was designed to investigate how teachers involved in a reciprocal observation benefited from this process and the feedback they received on some aspects of their teaching, namely lesson organization, learning activities and content, presentation, lesson implementation, and learning technologies and instructional materials, that the professional development unit expects them improve. It is believed that the more teachers engage in such activities, the better they act on behalf of their professional development and for their institution (Cosh, 1999; Peel, 2005; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; McMahon, Barret & O'Neill, 2007).

The second aim of the study is the examination of possible changes of teaching practices on the predetermined five major areas, namely lesson organization, learning activities and content, presentation, lesson implementation, and learning technologies and instructional material whether teachers believe they develop their teaching practices in these five areas or not. Also, as a professional development tool to increase the price of peer observation and give teachers a focus to observe during observations, pre-determined areas help teachers what to look for and what to answer at the end of an observation (Pennington and Young, 1989; Day, 1990; Blase and Blase, 2006).

At last but not least, the last purpose of the study is to collect suggestions about POT conducted by the participants of the process since they are the key components of this whole procedure. Creating a sharing environment for teachers and making them feel valuable in the institution is an important reason to conduct POT. Observing each other gives teachers a strength to develop their self-efficacy in an

enjoyable, useful and inspiring way since all of this process gives them a chance to improve their teaching practices through reciprocal feedback (Bandura, 1997; Hendry and Oliver, 2012). Participating teachers' evaluation of this reciprocal experience in terms of its contribution to their teaching, its practicality, and applicability will provide us an insight into the possible effects of a POT process on teachers' professional development. Moreover, its future applicability in this institution is also aimed to be questioned by not only participant teachers. Head of professional development unit's ideas and criticisms related to the current POT process were also collected to have another perspective over the current implementation and future implementations of POT, as well.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are mentioned below;

For the abovementioned institution;

- 1) To what extent do instructors who observe their peers give feedback on different aspects of teaching including engaging learner, learning, lesson structure, techniques, resources and materials during the POT process?
- 2) How do instructors and the head of Professional Development Unit evaluate reciprocal peer observation of teaching process in terms of its contribution to their teaching practices and for the future of the institution?

#### **1.5. Overview of the Methodology**

The current study adopted a qualitative case study design to investigate the mentioned questions. The participants consisted of four English Foreign Language instructors and the head of Professional Development Unit. Several steps were taken to conduct the study. As the previous peer observation of teaching had been criticized and

seen as an ineffective tool for the professional development of instructors in the current institution, and with the establishment of Professional Development Unit, the need of a new POT process raised. Firstly, the important points that need to be observed during the POT was determined by the contribution of all EFL teachers and stakeholders in the institution through a questionnaire. After not frequently repeated points were excluded, mostly repeated points were categorized under five main themes which consisted of sub-points to be used as a tool during POT for the instructors. Right after being piloted by four non-participant instructors, the tool was reorganized to solve the issues related to the layout and ambiguity of some themes. Then, pre-observation, peer observation, and post observation forms were shaped.

Secondly, the participant selection was made by the coordinator and the professional development unit head. 4 instructors were able to participate in the study as a consequence of time limitations, and inappropriate schedules. A training session which gave detailed information about POT procedure and its rules was held with the attendance of participant instructors, professional development unit head, the coordinator and the researcher., these themes were discussed to create a shared understanding. Through a training session, each form was explained in detail and each theme which was planned to be used during the observation was discussed by giving examples and answering questions to create a shared understanding.

The POT process took six weeks with the instructors' observing each other as both observer and observee. Before each observation, they held pre-observation meetings and completed the pre-observation forms to give their observer peers. During the observation, they used peer-observation form and focused on the themes decided previously. At the end of each observation, an immediate post-discussion session was held to share ideas and give feedback related to the observed lesson. At the end of each

week, instructors were also asked to write a reflective journal to discuss their perceptions related to what they experienced and learnt through POT. This process was repeated for each peer and each of the instructor observed and being observed by their colleagues twice during this process. In total, 24 observations were held, and at the end of these observations a group interview was conducted to get deeper information about the contribution and possible solutions to the problems occurred during this process with the participant instructors. Due to lack of time, head of professional development unit couldn't attend the meeting and her views were taken in a written interview, later. The data which were gathered from peer-observation form, post observation discussions, reflective journals and interviews were analysed using content analysis due to the nature of the research.

#### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

Currently, peer observation of teaching has started to gain importance as a personal, professional, and institutional development activity (Richards, et al., 2001; Bell and Cooper, 2013; Fletcher, 2017). That's why, conducting research in different contexts is reinforced and needed in order to support teachers and stakeholders, have a successful student learning in long term, and find new ways to develop professional development activities (Donnelly, 2007; Bennett and Barp, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2012). Thus; this situation always serves a potential research area since each context offers a unique setting and unique results for POT process.

Moreover, in the field of ELT, peer observation of teaching is a highly recommended technique for teachers to catch up with the new teaching methods in the field through active and hands-on activities that include feedback and awareness raise on ELT specific topics (Freeman, 1982; Trotman, 2015) Studies on reciprocal peer



observation of teaching and instructors' perceptions regarding this process are very limited in number (Çağlar, 2013; Bozak, 2014). Similarly, the studies conducted in higher education institutions cannot offer a variety, even though peer observation of teaching has been offered as an effective tool for higher education institutions as a continuous professional development tool (Hammersly-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004; Hendry and Oliver, 2012; Bell and Cooper, 2013). The current study therefore investigates both EFL and higher education contexts in terms of the possible effects of a newly established peer observation process within the same context.

Moreover, instructors in this study experienced a mutual role and attend the process as not only an observer, but also an observee. This gives us a deeper insight to understand whether the teachers benefit from being an observer and an observee at the same level. Although some studies gave the same roles to the teachers (Donnelly, 2007; Santos, 2017), the perceptions of these instructors on these roles haven't been investigated so far. In that sense, the study fills a significant gap by both investigating the nature of feedback given and received by instructors, what they learn through this experience, and the opinions of instructors both as observers and as observes, and of PDU head as an administrator in this process to create a versatile professional development experience through peer observation.

Besides the study serves such positive implications for the literature, a new way to create collegial spirit in the current institution by giving instructors a chance to work together was also supported. As a case study, this way of implying peer observation of teaching was investigated in detail, and the institution also benefited from the findings of the study to diagnose its pressing needs and make the necessary changes for its future implementation in consideration with the suggestions made by the instructors.

Therefore, the study sheds light into the implementation of reciprocal POT in similar higher education institutions in Turkey. In case this process is proved effective, this would offer a system for the use of peer observation of teaching at higher education institutions in which English is taught as a foreign language and inspire other similar contexts to adopt a similar procedure into their programs to offer a beneficial professional development tool.

### **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations. First, even though the study was designed as a case study, the sample size (4 instructors and 1 unit head) was very small and it might cause some reliability questions and narrow the scope of generalization of the study. As the second issue, it was not a random sampling and the participant instructors who were asked to take part in this study were offered by the coordinator and PDU head. That's why this might be accepted as an ambiguity for the voluntariness rule of peer observation of teaching for the current study. Thirdly, the duration of the training session which is seen as a compulsory rule for the effectiveness of POT was very limited in the current study. Only two weeks were given for the training of teachers related to implication of POT and their questions related to how to give feedback before the lessons and observations started. It would have been offered a better result if the training session could have been done within a longer period of time. Lastly, the number of the observations could be more to obtain more data to investigate. However, as a result of unexpected holidays and exams two weeks of observation were cancelled, and total 6 weeks were available for instructors to observe each other and time constraints and lesson plans of teachers were not available to conduct more than 2 observations in each week.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Teachers' Professional Development

Teachers in most schools and institutions today are expected to be knowledgeable about the most recent developments in their fields so they can train individuals with competencies and skills demanded by rapidly changing needs of society (OECD, 2011). This situation and the reform movements in education around the world makes professional development of teachers a necessity to meet the high standards and global demands in education (Kubanyiova, 2012). With this purpose, it is suggested that some opportunities are required to share teachers' knowledge, to discuss what they need to learn, and to link new concepts and strategies to their unique contexts (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995) and having these said, professional development is defined as the ongoing growth of individual and specialized dimensions of teachers. According to Day (1999:4) ;

professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives.

Professional development is often interchangeably used with the term in-service teacher training (INSET). However, INSET focuses more on short term goals and application of basic strategies into classroom (Craft, 2000). It aims to increase teachers' knowledge on issues like effective strategies to begin a lesson, textbook

adaptation to meet the needs of learners, effective use of group activities, and giving effective feedback on learners' performance (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Instead, teacher development has a long-term aim that enables teachers to develop a gradual understanding of the process of second language acquisition, our changing roles as teachers, decision making in class, different styles of teaching, and our own theories of language teaching.

For these developments to take place, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) suggest that professional development should

- engage teachers in practical tasks and provide opportunities to observe, assess and reflect on the new practices
- be participant driven and grounded in enquiry, reflection and experimentation
- be collaborative and involve the sharing of knowledge
- directly connect to the work of teachers and their students
- be sustained, on-going and intensive
- provide support through modelling, coaching and the collective solving of problems
- be connected to other aspects of school change

Although in the beginnings of 1990s, getting involved in professional development activities was a voluntary act for most teachers, in 2000s, it has been rephrased as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Craft,2000) and perceived to be a compulsory life-long education to get updated with the recent developments in the field. Even though each context offers different opportunities for teachers to develop themselves, an effective CPD is acknowledged to have the following features listed by, Borg (2015):

- relevance to the needs of teachers and their students
- teacher involvement in decisions about content and process
- teacher collaboration
- support from the school leadership
- exploration and reflection with attention to both practices and beliefs
- internal and/or external support for teachers (e.g. through mentoring)
- job-embeddedness (i.e. CPD is situated in schools and classrooms)
- contextual alignment (with reference to the institutional, educational, social and cultural milieu)
- critical engagement with received knowledge
- a valuing of teachers' experience and knowledge.

Richards & Farrell (2005) emphasize the significance of these activities for language teachers as well. In their book, they suggest that teachers' professional development can be supported through various activities such as reflective teaching, action research or team teaching. Teachers are supposed to renew their abilities through professional development activities and catch up with the current innovations in language teaching. The developing professional skills and teaching is seen as an inevitable way of success for both teachers and the educational institutions in which they work. This situation generally gives these institutions a consciousness to set their goals for success related to the institutional development (success of students, achieving better learning), career development (getting appraisal, changing position to the higher levels) and enhanced levels of student learning (reputation of school and teachers). Likewise, subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, self-awareness, understanding of learners, understanding of curriculum and materials, and career advancement are only a few examples of the goals related to the professional development from the perspective of teachers (Hargreaves, 1994; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In order to support teachers' professional development, some suggestions have been made to encourage a creative and critical professional dialogue between teachers. For instance, education system needs to be reformed in a way that it needs to allow teachers to work and learn collaboratively, and strategies for team planning, sharing, learning and evaluating and cross-role participation (teachers, administrators, parents, psychologists) should be developed (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Similarly, Richards & Farrell (2005) offer a wide variety of methods and procedures for the professional development including attending workshops, self-

monitoring, forming teacher support groups, keeping journals, making peer observation, keeping teaching portfolios, making case analysis, analysing critical incidents, joining peer coaching, team teaching or making an action research. What they suggest is collaborative learning and reflection for teachers as a way of developing themselves. Similarly, Craft (2000) offers parallel methods for professional development such as conducting action research, writing personal reflection, joining collaborative learning, being a part of experiential assignments, having membership of professional learning teams or receiving and /or giving on-the-job coaching, mentoring, or tutoring. Similarly, Borg (2015) supports a variety of strategies such as action research (Borg, 2013), peer observation, support groups and various kinds of more and less formal tactics to improve reflective practice which endorses professional development.

However, being able to offer teachers such professional activities requires sharing of responsibilities within the field. While teachers are supposed to keep on developing themselves professionally and socially, policy makers and institutions also need to share similar responsibilities to be a part of this process. Institutions should determine both the needs of themselves and those of their teachers, they should set the goals for professional development and most importantly provide support and evaluate what has been gained through these developmental activities (Craft, 2000; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

## **2.2.Observation of Teaching**

Teachers' professional development has been studied by many researchers. Most of the studies offer various methods for professional developmental activities. Especially, Richards and Farrell (2005) and Borg (2013) highlight the importance

of developing a reflective and critical mind set through these activities to meet the needs for ongoing development of learning and teaching processes. The emphasis made upon the collaboration with peers, administrative agents and policy makers to help the improvement of learning and teaching processes is a clue that teaching and learning are communal processes that include human and cooperation among them (Richards & Lockhart,1992; Brookfield, 1995; Pressick-Kilborn and Riele; 2008).

Therefore, besides activities such as action research, case analysis or workshops; observation is offered as an effective method for teachers to develop themselves socially and professionally. Observation of teaching has been investigated extensively since the early 1940s to the current years (Dewey, 1938; Freeman, 1982; Munson, 1998; Donnelly,2007 ) as a professional development tool and organized staff development activities by institutions and policy makers that increases teachers' awareness on their teaching and aid to gain new perspectives for their teaching practices.

Especially, as an activity which offers interaction, consciousness and cognition, peer observation of teaching is known as one of the best practices of constructivist theory led by Vygotsky. Constructivism is a synthesis of various theories that basically aims to create a meaning out of individuals own experiences (Merriam and Caffarella , 1999). For a deeper perspective of constructivism which supports the knowledge as a cumulative gaining of the active construction (Mascolol & Fischer, 2010), the importance of social interaction is emphasized (Vygotsky,1978). At that point, social constructivism brings an innate understanding, significance and meaning for the relation between knowledge of society and communication which can only be enabled by the coordination and cooperation among humans (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Accordingly, observation as a professional development tool aims to apply constructivist approaches to get feedback on teachers' teaching practices and successful learning outcomes desired by the institutions through a supportive way among the peers (Crawford,1996). Especially in recent years, the potential contribution of the social constructivist approaches for teaching has been emphasized (Stoller, 1996; Skrinda, 2004; Pressick-Kilborn and Riele, 2008). As the teachers who shape the future and being shaped with the needs of developing changes in education, being a part of the problem solving and using critical thinking strategies arises among teachers to have an awareness toward the learning through interaction with other people. As a result of this connection, people start to learn and gain more experience. The experience which is gained with the help of interaction primes to a new process of learning. Thus; social constructivist approach helps individuals to reach their full potential during the learning and development process with the help of unique interaction with other people (Vygotsky, 1980) and social constructivist approach led by Vygotsky forms the theoretical background and explains the logic behind observation of teaching as a social constructivist activity.

As a process that needs the interaction among humans to construct social relations, observation also asks individuals to learn and transform through what is experienced and learnt (Donnelly, 2007). When the relation between observation and learning is examined, as a different perspective Kolb (1984) defines learning as a holistic process which is shaped through the transformation of experience and in his theory of Experiential Learning , he emphasizes the importance of observation and sharing experiences as a learning tool for adult development (Willcoxson & Prosser, 1996; Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Kolb and Kolb, 2017). Even though, the



theory is applied in the educational institutions for students' learning process (Healey & Jenkins, 2000; Yamazaki, 2003; Kolb et al., 2014), it is also advocated to be an applicable model for all arenas of life since it enables learning of individuals through experience (Donnelly, 2007; Kolb and Kolb, 2017)

Experiential Learning Theory is used widely as a term for teacher development and Experiential Learning Cycle that originated from this theory supports the logic behind observational practices as a professional development tool for pre-service and in-service teachers (Fitzgibbon, 1987; Fielding, 1994; Donnelly, 2007; Clark, et. al., 2010; Marlow & McLain, 2011). For instance, Donnelly (2007) mentioned the importance of Experiential learning cycle as a non-traditional model of information transmission that presents learning within a recursive circle which assists individuals to reflect on their current practices, share their experiences with their peers, take actions and risks and use them in an active experimentation in a friendly environment to gain awareness on new concepts to analyse and adapt into their own teaching practices. The basic aim here is to turn concrete experience which is gained through reading, hearing, talking or writing into an abstract experience through reflective observations, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Keeton and Tate, 1978; Kolb and Kolb, 2017) (See Figure 1.).

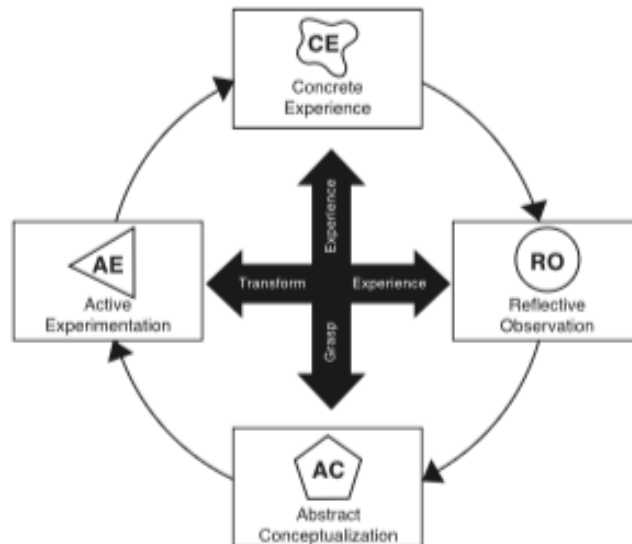


Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle

Source: Kolb and Kolb (2017). *Experiential Learning Theory as a Guide for Experiential Educators in Higher Education*. *ELTHE, A Journal for Engaged Education*, Vol.1, No1, pp. 7-44

### 2.2.1. Models of Observation of Teaching

As Freeman stated "The aspects of teaching that are seen as trainable are discrete chunks, usually based on knowledge or skills, that can be isolated, practiced, and ultimately mastered" (1989, p.39). With the purpose of practising and training, observation has been presented as a tool of peer review and the development not only for the teachers, but also for supervisors and mentors to catch up with the current innovations and qualified education outcomes in the institutions (Freeman, 1982; Boyer, 1990; Benschhoff, 1990; Blackmore, 2005). Consequently, various kinds of observation models have been suggested by the authors who have different perspectives. For instance While Beigy & Woodin (1999) divide observation into three variations namely observation for inspection purposes, supervisory observation and peer observations held by two equals; the study of Gebhard (1990) in which he focuses on the roles of supervisors supports that observation is as a systematic start for the training of

the teachers and he adds this teaching-learning process as a hard and complex concepts to understand.

When the literature is examined, even though lots of names are given to the observations, Gosling's identification of peer review (2002) is widely accepted (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Bennett & Barp, 2008).

<b>Evaluation Model</b>	<b>'Development' Model</b>	<b>Peer Review Model</b> →
Primary purpose: Quality assurance, training, appraisal,	Primary purpose: Improve teaching competencies	Primary purpose: Engagement in discussion about teaching; self and mutual reflection
Underlying dynamic: Power (One-way)	Underlying dynamic: Expertise (One-way)	Underlying dynamic: Equality / Mutuality (Two-way dialogue for learning)
Typically senior staff observe other staff teach	Typically educational developers or expert teachers observe practitioners teach	Typically teachers observe / review each other's practice
Observation based on a 'checklist' identifying criterion for 'excellence'	Observation often more open-ended, but still often using a checklist	Observation focus reflects participant- ownership of the agenda
Outcome: Pass/fail, score, quality assessment	Outcome: Advice on how to improve	Outcome: Non-judgemental, Constructive feedback

Figure 2. Key aspects of Gosling's three models of peer observation

Source: Bennett and Barp (2008). Peer observation- a case for doing it online. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13:5, 559-570.

### ***Evaluation Model (Supervisory Observation)***

Evaluation model named by Gosling (2002) is also known as clinical supervision (Munson, 1998) administrative or supervisory observation (Freeman, 1982; Harris et al., 2008). This is the most primitive and the earliest type of evaluation. In this system, observers are generally selected among the administrators, supervisors or stakeholders such as coordinators or heads of the departments. Basically, this observation type gives a chance to the supervisor or stakeholder to observe teachers'

performance and other education quality to prevent possible problems caused by teachers. While some of the authors such as Gebhard (1990) supported the positive results of this system such as creation of a more complex theory of teaching, the other studies supported that the main aim of this type of observation is more judgemental (Freeman, 1982; Harris et al., 2008 ; Gosling,2005). Also, as a result of the supervisory observation, teachers' anxiety level and instead of learning or reflecting teachers may show resistance (Cosh, 1999; Fletcher, 2017). Especially, teachers may get effected by the main components in the supervisory observation.

Especially, it is a representation of the hierarchical relationship between observer and observe. Thus; it is far from being accepted as a part of teaching training or reflection-based training by many researchers because teachers may act differently from their own teaching exercises to prevent from getting negative feedback of their supervisors (Cosh, 1999; Gosling, 2005). As a result of these views, the evaluation model is known for its negative features for the teachers. Thus; it becomes harder to obtain a positive feedback if the main aim of the observation is creating a reflective view.

#### ***Developmental Model (Peer Coaching)***

The developmental model (Gosling, 2002), which is also known as peer coaching (Blase and Blase, 2006), includes an educational expert during the observation process. The main aim of this modelling is to create the behaviour of a good teacher that is expected by the institution and generally an educational expert is in charge of this coaching (Rey, 1999; Fletcher, 2017). Within this model, generally there is one sided learning and it is more like a master-apprenticeship relation. The vice teachers are assigned as the coach of novice teachers and they lead them after observing their classes by the managers or the institutions may have such a policy for supervising

instructors (Munson, 1998). Besides, the role awareness of the peer coaches is another significant point for this model. Teachers or experts who are assigned as peer coach are reminded not to forget their basic missions such as, giving advice, explaining and checking suitable teaching methods and evaluating the proficiency of the teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 2006).

### ***Peer Review Model (Peer Observation)***

Model defined as peer review by Gosling (2002) is generally known as peer observation (Munson, 1998; Richards and Farrel, 2005; Hendry and Oliver, 2012), and it is the most prevailing model of observation in today's education world. It is defined as two peers' observation of each other in their real teaching environment to get a new perspective for their own teaching practices without being judgemental and having appraisal concerns towards their colleagues (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As a professional developmental tool, peer observation has different features than supervisory observation or peer coaching. Even though it shows a variety in terms of application which is decided as a result of the needs of the professional environment, for many researchers, the four basic stages which is known as pre-observation, observation, feedback/ post observation and reflection of the peer observation is a must (Martin & Double, 1998; Cosh, 1999; Bell, 2002 ) for this model of observation.

### **2.3. Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)**

Peer observation of teaching (POT) is a model of observation and it is based on the watching of peers each other for giving feedback related to their learning and teaching practices in their classes. Numerous definitions have been developed by considering various aspects required for peer observation. For the definition of Cosh (1998) :

This is active self-development: an intra-personal process, which encourages awareness, experiment, and the sharing and dissemination of good practice.

On the other hand, while West (1999) defines peer observation as an opinion sharing process conducting as a way of observing one of the peers for mutual and self-benefits; Bell (2005) describes peer observation as a circular process that includes explanation and discussion of the ideas obtained as a result of peer observation cycle that consists of pre-observation, observation, post observation and reflection steps. Also, Gosling gives great importance on the improvement of teaching through sharing and reflection while defining peer observation (2005).

As a cyclic process that enables teachers to reflect upon different components in each step, peer observation is accepted as a productive and constructive method that include pre-observation, observation and post observation steps (Martin and Double, 1998). Similarly, in the study of Donnelly (2007), these steps are named as preliminary meeting, observation and post observation and it is emphasized that for preliminary step it is important to decide the observation topics and at the end of the observation, it is crucial to discuss the lesson outcomes, lesson plan and observed session. At this point, giving and receiving constructive feedback is assigned as the initial role of POT (Gosling, 2005; Peel, 2005). Although there are numerous schedules and suggested models for observation (Nunan, 1989; Day, 1990; Karabağ, 2000), as one of the forelegs of peer observation the most crucial points stay the same. One of these key factors includes the voluntary participation and mutual trust of the peers during the observation cycles (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000; Bozak, 2018). As a working alliance, peers know started to know the importance of trustworthiness and sharing as Shortland (2004) stated below:

The objective of successful peer observation is to harness the insight of critical friends to promote personal and professional development on a continuing basis, within a supportive framework.

As an of the outcome of the trustworthy environment, peers are able to share disciplinary content knowledge and teaching techniques while contributing a collegial spirit (Bell, 5005). As well as conducting a departmental culture promoting the value of teaching and evaluating this culture, teachers can find a chance to stimulate their own improvement and transform their peers' educational practices into their own classes (Bell and Mladenovic, 2015; Yiend et al. 2014).

Beyond their personal improvement, unlikely to the other peer review models namely evolutionary and peer coaching model, peer observation includes a mutuality and equality among the participant teachers (Gosling,2005). Having enough conscious for giving a non-judgemental feedback or conducting constructive discussions related to the classroom practices of the teachers affect them positively (Bennett & Barp, 2008). Most of the teachers also supported that as Pololi et al. (2002), stated ;

by taking the “expert/student” mentality out of equation it helps me to reflect on all that I have to offer, rather feeling sunk by all that I have to learn. It's empowering.

Further, some researchers have emphasized that the training and education that peers take before going through an observation process is another important factor (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; O'Sullivan et al.1988). Since some of the researchers such as Cosh (1998) has some doubts related to the capability of the teachers who observe their peers, some of the studies support the importance of training before starting a peer observation process in any of the institutions (Gosling, 2009; Siddiqui et al. 2007). During the training, generally Professional Development Units or responsible trainers suggest and direct observer peers not to give judgemental feedbacks and they remind the prominence of creating facilitative and promoting dialogues for the sake of mutual support and the quality of student learning. They

always emphasize the mutual benefits so as to create an awareness for the observer teachers about the steps of peer observation that include creative and supportive thinking strategies such as analysis, reflection, discussion, self and mutual understanding (Gosling, 2002).

### **2.3.1. Goals of POT**

POT basically aims to accomplish a qualified professional development process for teachers to improve their own teaching practices through collaboration and effective use of feedback. As Bennett & and Barp (2008) mentioned in their study, this observation process has purposes such as ‘exploring the learning and teaching process and environment and leading on to reflection and discussion, with the underpinning long-term aim of improving students’ learning’. Similar to their points, Yiend et al. (2014) emphasized POT should have the purpose on the creation of what is good for the teaching practices and in-class instructions by encouraging reflection during this type of peer review model.

Additionally, some other studies highlight the establishment of a self-reflectivity at the end of a peer observation in short term and for their students and teaching practices in long term (Richards & Lockhart, 1992; Joyce & Shower, 2002; Shortland, 2004; Irgatoğlu, 2017) and the implications of these earnings at the end of the observations on the classroom practices are mentioned as another goal of POT.

Similarly, one another aim of POT is specified as creating a mutual development among peers on many themes that can be improved through peer observation. Some of these themes are reflectivity, giving and taking feedback in a constructive way or sharing and solving in-class problems that directly affect their teaching practices. As Bell defined (2005) POT is a collaborative and developmental



activity in which peers give reciprocal support to each other on long-term development through making comments on short-term teaching implications observed in the classes. Similar to Bell's definition of POT, Wang & Seth (1997) remarked that POT gives the teachers an aim of experiencing a more developmental approach during their observations by watching other teachers' teaching practices and learning new teaching aspects from them through a developing perspective. Similarly, while Chester (2012) emphasized the significance of the discussion and sharing of the ideas for improvement during a POT process, Hendry & Oliver (2012) revealed the improvement of teaching practice as an initial aim of POT.

The goals of POT are bounded with the development of teaching and learning practices (Bell, 2005; Atkinson & Bolt, 2010) as well as they serve for the professional developments of teachers. Besides these global aims, some studies mentioned the importance of having contextual aims which enable instructors to focus on POT process in a more personalized way (Richards & Lockhart, 1992; Siddique et al., 2007; Motallebzadeh et al. 2017).

### **2.3.2. Benefits of POT**

Peer observation is defined as an observation more beneficial than other observation models for most of the studies conducted in the field of education in different contexts with different purposes (Chism, 2007; Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; Fletcher, 2017; Bozak, 2018).

One of the most critical feature of peer observation is known as being able to criticize peers' each other thoughtfully. In order to manage this skill, while creating a non-judgemental environment for the teachers, POT surrounds teachers with various innovative and confidential ways for the development of their own teaching (Bell &

Mladenovic, 2008; Bozak, 2018). By generating a mutual and collaborative learning setting for teachers, it gives a great opportunity to them for the establishment of collegial spirit among co-workers (Bell, 2005) and substitute a culture of teamwork (Beigy & Woodin, 1999). Also, from the perspective of institutions, peer observation is accepted as an encouraging tool since it leads the sharing of disciplinary content knowledge besides teaching techniques (Yiend et al, 2014; Fletcher, 2017).

Above and beyond being encouraging, being able to give to and get relevant feedback from the observer is another benefit of POT. Since each teacher is unique, their teaching practices in various contexts are also unique. The POT gives both observer and observee instructors a chance to witness different and unique environments for their own professional developments by sharing ideas and opinions with their peers in a non-judgemental and non-critical environment (Bell, 2002; Ashgar & Ahmad, 2014).

Learning new skills is another advantage that is offered by POT. During the POT, teachers emphasized the innovation and mutual collaborative learning related to their teaching skills (Gosling, 2002; Tenenberg, 2016; Motallebzadeh, 2017). While observing each other's classes, teachers' awareness raises, and they try to imply some of the techniques that they see and learn in their own classes. As a positive way of imitation, it enables teachers to affect each other in a positive way and they become more aware of what is right and wrong for their own classes through a self-awareness. Such an interpersonal skill, self-awareness, promotes human interaction and self-reflection can find a chance to be developed through this self-awareness (Martin & Double, 1998). While empowering and understanding needs of selves, teachers become individuals who can manage to criticize themselves. As Cosh stated (1998);

...the rationale of the observation here being to make us aware of different approaches, to encourage an open-mind and questioning attitude, and to provide an environment in which we can reassess our own teaching in the light of the teaching of others.

### **2.3.3. Studies Conducted on POT in Higher Education Institutions**

Higher education institutions are the places where always support improvement of learning and offer continuous professional development (Fletcher, 2017). With the educational reforms and raising awareness on the need of professional development and continuous change to answer these needs, the number of studies that examine the use of peer observation in higher education institutions, criticize peer observation implications and create a new pathway for the future implementations has increased starting with the 2000s ( Brancato, 2003; Shortland, 2004; Bell, 2005; Bell & Mladenovic, 2005; Chism, 2007; Donnelly, 2007; Bennett and Barp, 2008; Smith et al, 2013).

Most of the higher education institutions offer a unique context for the studies to examine the peer observation as a must in their contexts. As a result, in each study, it is possible to find out original implications of POT or analytical perspectives related to the POT. While some of the studies focus on the evaluation of POT in their own contexts as a helpful insight for the further studies and special implementations of POT (Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004; Byrne, Brown and Challen, 2010; Hendry and Oliver, 2012; Bell and Cooper, 2013, Bell and Mladenovic, 2015), some studies investigated the relationship between the peer observation and other professional development activities such as conducting collaborative action research, giving collaborative reflection to each other or using feedback as a professional developmental tool (Gökmen, 2014; Yiend et al., 2014). Apart from these studies, some authors

analysed the views and perceptions of the teachers about the POT process in their institutions (Çağlar, 2013; Sullivan et al. , 2012; Donnelly, 2007), as well.

Even though POT is accepted as a newly introduced terminology for higher education institutions it has gained importance rapidly (Bennett and Barp, 2008) ,and some of the studies have started to apply POT and evaluate the effects of it on various elements in their own contexts. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) evaluated two systems of POT in the School of Law and the School of Sciences at a higher education institution in the UK. To be able to evaluate alternative POT systems, five observers and four observees in each faculty (total 18 participants) attended to the semi-structured interviews to gather data about the current POT practice in their faculties, as well as the deans of the faculties. As a result of these data collection Fletcher and Orsmond concluded that there were some similarities and differences related to the implications of POT and the perceptions of their lecturers about POT in two faculties. Although there were some different opinions and implications, POT was considered as an effective tool that provides academics support in their teaching and create a reflective perspective for them in both of the faculties.

Similarly, in the study of Byrne, Brown and Challen (2010), the POT was questioned through the views of participants. In this context, the present POT system was decided to be changed. With this purpose the study aimed to investigate the possible reasons behind why they chose to engage with a new peer development system, what they earned from the previous system and any other issues related to current POT process in the institution questions. The data were collected through questionnaires with the participation of 67 volunteer staff members. At the end of the study, the results revealed that the new peer development system was seen as more effective than the previous implication of POT by the faculty members since they believed that the new

system aimed to facilitate and enhance professional development besides creating a collaborative dialogue and collaboration culture in a more holistic way.

In the study of Hendry and Oliver (2012), the efficacy of RPOT implied in a large, comprehensive Australian University was evaluated. With the aim, interviews were conducted with the Associate Lecturers or Lectures. They were asked about their ideas of the practicality of the reciprocal peer-observation process on their teaching, and in what ways (if any) they experienced their knowledge on this process. Their study emerged some evidence related to the value of the feedback given as an observer and taken as an observee and observation process itself. Their findings showed that lecturers believed the value of giving feedback as a more effective way than being observed and taking feedback.

POT process needs to be evaluated according to the demands of the environments in which it is applied. For instance, in the study of Bell and Cooper (2013), the peer observation process was conducted with the participation of head of school, groups of educators who have more experience than their colleagues, a coordinator, and a group of instructors who want to be a part of POT process voluntarily in an engineering school at an Australian university. Within this study, they aimed to set a POT program considering its aims, design, process and outcomes. The stages of the study were consisted of school meeting, program development of POT, discipline leaders meeting, preparatory (training) workshops, trial observation sessions, partnership forming, use of resources for the observation such as a handbook, planning meetings, observations and feedback, evaluation of the observations by the coordinator, reporting of the program and planning a proforma. One of the most important points of the study was that unexperienced and experienced teachers were assigned as pairs and they were asked to schedule the process, prepare and set the observation sessions and give

feedback to each other as a way of working together at the end of a training and with the help of a coordinator. During the observation stages, 3 random participants were asked to fulfil a questionnaire and were interviewed. As a result, their study offered a further insight into the difficulties of peer observation of teaching and a tested framework for introducing peer observation of teaching as an example for other POT programs.

While Bell and Cooper (2013) pair up inexperienced and experienced teachers for their peer observation process, Bell and Mladenovic (2015) focused on the impact of peer observation for the tutors who work as hourly paid academic staff or graduate teaching assistants in the Business School of the Sydney University. Their multiple source of data collection consisted of peer observation, self-reflective statements, tutor surveys, focus group, and interviews. Their qualitative data analysis showed that tutors believed POT is an important factor that enables them to collaborate with other tutors to reflect on their teaching and to learn new aspects related to their own teaching practices through observing other tutors.

Besides the studies related to the POT evaluation, there are some studies that examine the relation of POT with other professional development activities such as collaborative action research, reflection or giving and taking feedback. In the MA thesis of Gökmen (2014), she applied collaborative action research and peer observation to develop 7 EFL instructors' reflective teaching within a case study at the School of Foreign Languages in Melikşah University, Turkey. The reason behind the choice of peer observation and collaborative action research was explained as both of these activities were directly related with the real teaching practice in their own classes. The results came from semi-structured interviews, reflection forms, the collaborative journals and researcher's field notes concluded that POT and collaborative action

research contributed to the reflectivity of the instructors through encouraging instructors to think about their own teaching practices and offering new ways for professional development.

In a similar study, Yiend et al. (2014) explained the interaction of peer observation and reflection to improve the evaluation and reflection capacity of the instructors. In their study, one lecturer's experience was analysed related to the POT process that was conducted with the participation of disciplinary peers and one educational expert. During the observation process, a lecturer was asked to write critical reflections related to the POT. As a result, when the written feedbacks of the lecturer was examined, there occurred a positive change in the proportion of critical reflection and feedback comments of lecturer before and after participating a POT with an educational expert. Here, the study concluded that the professional development of participants is possible through peer observation and reflective components.

Another point that draws attention of the researchers is the perceptions of the participants during the POT process. In the MA thesis of Çağlar (2013), she examined the perceptions of the observees and stakeholders at the current contexts related to POT process conducted in a higher education institution in Turkey. The data gathered through interviews and reflection diaries revealed that POT was a desirable process for the current institution. However, some problems such as voluntariness, peer cycles, training before observation and timing needed to be solved.

In another context, Sullivan et al (2012) aimed to search the perceived impact of peer observation as a faculty developmental tool by the teachers. With this purpose, twenty teachers were peer observed by their trained faculty members and the verbal and written feedback was given related to the lectures, problem-based

learning, small group teaching, case-based teaching and ward-based teaching in their classes. As a result, through the reflective feedbacks of the teachers, it was found out that they believed POT process was a useful and relevant tool to grow their teaching practices and in a non-threatening environment POT was able to enhance their teaching quality and professional development.

Besides these examples, Donnelly (2007) explored the POT perception of the academic staff related to its effects on their continuing professional development. In the beginning of the study, participants were introduced with a POT scheme as a part of Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Program. This program aimed to support CPD of academic members and the faculty through POT and participants applied this scheme which included pre-observation meetings, teaching observation and feedback discussions. The data were collected through evaluation forms, interviews, and document collection includes peer observation of teaching portfolios gathered from ninety participants. As a result, the study provided a valuable insight related to the needs of active engagement of pedagogical actions through a purposeful critical reflection in teaching practices of academic staff. The creation of collegial reflective dialogue and interdisciplinary learning was another result of the study that served a beneficial perspective for them, as well.

During the studies, not only instructors' or academic members' perspectives were examined, but also the ideas of the higher education institutions' leaders were investigated (Wingrove et al., 2018). Within two different university contexts, one Australian and one English university, the perspectives of senior leaders who had the role of Deans, Heads of School, Faculty and Deputy Heads of School and school-based leaders who had the role of establishing and running the teaching and learning activities in the faculties were collected through semi-structured



interviews. As a result, four main themes, namely conceptions of peer observation, garnering academic buy-in, managing challenging and tensions, and securing institutional support occurred. All of these themes were believed to be mitigated through respectful and collegiate relationship which can be supported with the implication of professional development through peer observation.

#### **2.3.4. Studies Related to the Peer Observation of Teaching in ELT Context**

English language teaching is another searchable context which gives language teachers a huge opportunity to improve themselves through peer observation as a way of professional development and self-reflection (Farrell,1999). To investigate the results and different implications of POT, some studies were conducted in the classes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and English Language Teaching (ELT) practicum (Farrell, 1999; Yeşilbursa, 2009; Sanif, 2015; Trotman, 2015; Fatemipour,2013; Santos, 2017; Göker,2006; Yüksel, 2011).

In the field of ELT, EFL classes are one of the contexts in which teachers may find various chances to use different techniques to innovate themselves for the needs of their classes. In the study of Farrell (1999), peer observation of teaching was used as a complementary tool for self-reflection meetings on the teaching of three EFL teachers. With the purpose of reflecting on themselves and each other's teaching practices under the categories of theories of teaching, approaches and methods used in classes, evaluation of teaching, participants' self-awareness on their own teaching, and the questions about teaching and direct references to the group, these three instructors had weekly reflective meetings and shared their ideas on their own teaching practices. Peer observation was also used but the amount of this was limited. When the results were analysed, Farrell found out that reflectivity couldn't be earned only with reflective

discussion of teaching practice, but peer observation of teaching was implied as a more significant tool for the development of teachers' reflectivity levels.

While the Farrell's study (1999) emphasized the use of peer observation as a reflectivity tool, Yeşilbursa (2009) conducted an action research that investigated the beliefs, perceived problems and possible solutions of ELT teachers at a university to improve teaching practices of them through peer observation and reflective journals. The data were collected through Language Teachers' Beliefs Systems with 20 open-ended questions, the audio recorded post observation conferences and the electronic personal reflective journals written on the video-recorded lessons of each participant who had the roles of observer and observee at the same time. At the end of seven-week observation cycle, the results revealed that there occurred a reciprocal interaction related to the change in the beliefs about language, learning and teaching. Each participant discovered that peer observation as a professional tool offered them a wider perspective to find out problems and solutions related to their own teaching practices while observing and being observed.

Apart from these two studies, in the PhD Thesis of Salif (2015), it is possible to see similar use of peer observation of teaching. In the higher education context of Malaysia, the study was conducted to explore the EFL teachers' teaching practices and their experiences on teacher evaluation and how they are related to the introduction of peer observation. In the first step of the study 72 EFL teachers from 10 different universities completed a questionnaire and semi-structure interviews and in the second step, one university was chosen, and 24 teachers attended a workshop and completed a survey related to this workshop, as well as 10 peer observations and eight semi-structured interviews. The data analysis brought out that even though some teachers felt nervous about being observed as a result of some judgemental comments of their peers

and the top-down approach for the implication of the peer observation, most of the teachers supported the start of a peer observation process providing developmental purposes which generates a more critical, calm, and celebrating discussion for the professional development of teachers.

In the context of Turkey, a recent study conducted by Trotman (2015) in İzmir Katip Çelebi University investigated the usability and implementation of peer observation as a strategy to demolish the burden on the coordinators who were in the charge of CPD activities besides its contribution on the EFL teachers' professional development. With 24 teachers, 12 peer observation cycles were formed, and the data collected through these observations were analysed by the researcher who were also the head of CPD of the university. He analyzed most frequently repeated points that emerged at the end of data analysis procedure and grouped them as pedagogic and affective. The themes, such as, Classroom management, L1 use, in-class teaching methods, lack of student perspective, and comparison with a colleague were highlighted as a result of this peer observation corpus. All in all, the study offered a new scheme for peer observation and proved that peer observation not only helps teachers create awareness on the points that need to be developed, but also assists coordinators who plan and apply professional development activities for teachers to use an effective tool in a more practical way.

What is more, peer observation is not investigated only in EFL context, ESL and pre-service teacher development through peer observation is also investigated in some studies (Fatemipour,2013; Santos, 2017; Göker, 2006; Yüksel, 2011). Starting with the ESL studies, Fatemipour (2013) conducted a study with the aim of searching whether the same kind of data is gathered from different reflective tools or not, if so, which tool is more reliable for serving teachers to make their teaching practices better.

10 ESL teachers and 234 students took place in the study in the English department of a college in India. Teacher diary, peer observation, students' feedback and audio recording were used for comparison. The study started with a short orientation for the teachers and kept on with the administration of these research tools in one class hour for each participant. Peer observer observed the class to take notes during the lesson while the lesson was video recorded for another peer to review later. At the end of the lesson, students were supposed to write feedback on their teaching and lastly, teacher was asked to reflect on his/ her teaching. Each instrument was guided with different questionnaires. Finally, when the data were analysed, the research concluded peer observation as the second most reflective tool that came after the teacher diary and peer observation supported a valuable data for reflective teachers even though some of the instructors didn't like being observed.

In a similar study, Santos (2017) examined the development of a peer-observation programme applied in an extension language school within ESL context. The investigation of teachers' perceptions on this programme about improving teaching practice, giving a meaning to this programme, and suggesting alternative approaches and measures were the objectives of this study. Six ESL teachers participated in the current study and they took parts in observation cycles which were formed with the attendance of experienced and novice teachers in the same groups to allow more meaningful sharing and the data were collected through an interview process. Subsequently, the research acknowledged that peer observation was a beneficial tool for professional development of teachers in terms of improving teaching practices because it promoted practicality, interest and excitement among teachers.

Besides EFL and ESL contexts, observation of teaching is presented in pre-service language teacher education programmes as a way of conducting a terminology

for understanding and discussing the teaching process, creating an awareness on decision making, differentiating effective and ineffective classroom practices and identifying new techniques to apply in their own classes (Day,1990). However, as Wajnryb (1992) emphasized models of observation which aim assessment or evaluation may cause value-based and directive feedback which does not help pre-service teachers to develop their critical thinking skills. That's why for pre-service teachers, interaction with their peers to create a supportive and reflective model for the establishment of beliefs and principles of is essential for their own teaching (Richards et. al., 2001). Further, the reciprocal nature of peer observation is crucial for the professional growth of pre-service teachers since it advances communication and trust among peers while demolishing isolation and burnout (Forbes, 2004).

Considering the roles of peer observation in pre-service teacher education, studies were conducted in different contexts (Göker, 2006; Yüksel, 2011). In the study of Göker (2006), the aim was to investigate the differences between the effectiveness and satisfaction level of traditional supervised observation of teaching and peer student teachers' observation of each other as a peer coach to demonstrate efficient instructional skills and develop self-efficacy. From the English language teaching Department of European University of Lefke, 32 pre-service teachers were chosen as the participants of the study and they were assigned to either experimental group or control group randomly. Before the observation cycles started, these student teachers were trained on peer observation rules, encouraging increased use of research and best practices in applying new instructional strategies, curriculum materials, assessment strategies, and classroom organizations, and identifying necessary conditions, structures, and supports to get the most valuable outcome out of this peer coaching program. While controlled group was observed by a faculty member and cooperating teacher during seven-week

observation cycles, experimental group was observed by their peers and cooperating teacher. The treatment for the experimental group was that they received feedback from a peer and a cooperating teacher right after the direct observation during post-conferences. However, control group sometimes got their feedback with some delays and both of the people who gave the feedback were authorities for student teachers. The observations of each group were video-taped and post-conferences were audio-taped and these data were analysed. Findings in the study indicated that student teachers in experimental group felt more free to ask questions and express themselves. Their instructional skills and self-confidence improved thanks to consistent and immediate feedback they received compared to the control group.

Within a similar context in Turkey, Yüksel (2011) investigated the change in the pre-service teachers' language teaching beliefs at the end of two different post-observational reflective modes, namely teacher mediated feedback and peer feedback. This comparison study included 16 pre-service English language teachers at Anadolu University, Turkey and they were grouped into two to get different types of post-observational reflective feedback. During the eight-week procedure, selected participants were given different treatments in different groups in terms of getting post-reflective feedback from a supervisor or their peers who were trained on giving feedback earlier. The data was gathered through teaching belief inventory in the beginning of the study and in-depth semi-structured interviews later. The findings indicated that different modes of reflective feedback affected the pre-service teachers' beliefs on their teaching. Peer feedback obtained at the end of peer observation could influence critical reflection skills of pre-service teachers to give and get feedback.

Consequently, when the ELT literature is examined, POT is revealed having an effect on the professional development of in-service EFL and ESL teachers, as well as

pre-service language teachers. POT in ELT has been investigated in different contexts for answering different questions and findings of these studies contributed to the ELT field to prove that POT broadens the perspectives of in-service and pre-service teachers, especially in terms of gaining reflective feedback skills, creating critical thinking skills or establishing a different perspective for in-class teaching practices.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study investigates what instructors who get involved in reciprocal peer observation of teaching process (RPOT) both as an observer and as an observee learn about their teaching and how they evaluate the contribution of this process to their teaching practices. Besides, it examines their perspective on the future implementation of this process as a professional development activity within the institution they work. More specifically the study investigates the following questions;

- 1) To what extent do instructors who observe their peers give feedback on different aspects of teaching including engaging learner, learning, lesson structure, techniques, resources and materials during the POT process?
- 2) How do instructors and the head of Professional Development Unit evaluate reciprocal peer observation of teaching process in terms of its contribution to their teaching practices and for the future of the institution?

#### **3.1. Setting**

This research is conducted at an English-medium private university in Istanbul during the Fall semester in 2017. It has an English Preparatory Programme under the Foreign Languages Department since 2013. At the time of the data collection, the program had 650 students and 35 EFL instructors (24 native speakers of Turkish and

6 with different L1 backgrounds). The main aim of the Preparatory Programme (hereafter PP) is to graduate the students who are competent in English language skills and who are autonomous and life-long learners with critical thinking skills and academic honesty. Therefore, the program offers courses at four proficiency levels, namely A1 Elementary, A2 Pre-intermediate, B1 Intermediate and B2 Upper-intermediate designed based on the Common European Framework (CEFR) outputs within two semesters. In this system, each level has eight-week modules in which students are offered skills-based courses to improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking and grammar-based courses to teach grammar rules and use of English. In each level, students take a total of 25 hours of English grammar and skills-based courses a week. The distribution of grammar and skills-based courses are determined by the curriculum, and material development unit and the coordinator of Foreign Languages Department (FLD) beforehand and during the implementation considering the various outputs of CEFR for each level. The prescribed learning outcomes for each level are checked by the administration through stakeholders, namely level heads, unit heads and coordinator herself during weekly level meetings, unit meetings, and spot checking. Revision and collaboration form the main route of the student and learning based programme and curriculum within this institution.

Preparatory Program includes five units with different responsibilities: Curriculum and Material Development Unit, Testing Unit, Digital Support Unit, Student and Instructors' Affairs Unit, and Professional Development Unit. The coordinator of the PP determines the missions of these units and assigns roles to the heads of each unit and level. Level heads are responsible for informing instructors about the weekly academic and administrative issues assigned by the coordinator and



units through weekly meetings. The heads also supervise the implementation of the classes in their levels.

The aim of Curriculum and Material Development Unit is the preparation of weekly course schedules and course materials for each level before the academic year begins. The materials prepared are then shared with the instructors on Google Drive.

Testing Unit, with its two members, is in charge of preparation and the implementation of the placement and proficiency exams at the beginning of the semester, and midterm and final exams in each module. In this setting, at the beginning of the Fall semester, students are required to take the Placement Exam to identify their proficiency level. If they get sufficient grades to be classified as B2 students, they are directed to take Proficiency Exam prepared by the same unit to be able to determine if they have enough proficiency in English to follow courses at their faculties without getting enrolled in PP.

Digital Support Unit deals with the technical problems, and provide instructors and students with technical support on the use of technological devices and online homework grading. The head of the unit makes announcements on the website of the program to inform students.

Student and Instructors' Affairs Unit is responsible for providing students and instructors with support on administrative issues.

The last unit in the PP is Professional Development Unit (PDU) which has been recently established in this setting. During the first semester, the unit head conducted instructor observations with the attendance of coordinator, and the level head. PDU head is in charge of all teacher training implementations for professional development purposes and of creating an encouraging environment in which teachers exchange their reflections on their teaching needs and practices. During the first

semester, PDU implemented formal observations of instructors with the presence of coordinator and the PDU head in order to supervise the performance and in-class implementations of the instructors during a class hour. The researcher was also assigned as a member of PDU during the first semester. Since PDU is the context of the current study, it is explained in more detail in section 3.3 of this chapter.

The students in this setting are required to attend 80 % of the courses at their levels, and obtain an average score of 60 out of 100 on their in-class performance (including quizzes, portfolios, midterm, and final exam) to proceed to an upper proficiency level. Those who reach B2 level at the end of two semesters are given the right to take Proficiency Exam and start their undergraduate programmes if they obtain the passing score of 60.

## **3.2. Participants**

Four English language instructors with L1 Turkish background and one head of Professional Development Unit were the participants of the study.

### **3.2.1 English Instructors**

Participants of this study were 4 English language instructors with L1 Turkish background who were selected as a result of a series of the formal observations conducted by the professional development unit head and the coordinator. These instructors were teaching at pre-intermediate (A2) and intermediate (B1) levels at PP.

All four participants had been teaching young adult learners for 20 hours a week and they had 25 office hours to meet with them outside of the class and fulfil other responsibilities such as grading, giving feedback on the writing assignments or entering the numbers of students' absentees and grades on the online system of the university. Each instructor had advisory duties as well. Student and Instructors' Affairs Unit

assigns them as the advisor of a class and expect them to create an online class using a social education networking site, Edmodo, to share the announcements about exams, worksheets or any type of student and system related information with their students.

Participants of this study were given pseudo names to protect their anonymity and confidentiality. Melda, who was at the age of 30, was an English instructor with nine years of teaching experience. She graduated from American Studies department. After her graduation, she took part in a European funded project on intercultural communication as project coordinator. After the completion of the project, she began her career in education and had Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). She had been working at the PP as an instructor since 2015, and teaching skills and grammar courses at various levels. At the time of data collection, she had been teaching a class with 24 students at pre-intermediate level.

Beril, who was at the age of 26, was an English instructor with a BA degree in English Language Teaching. She was an inexperienced teacher with her two years of experience. She started working at this setting right after her graduation. During the study, she was teaching grammar course at a class with 23 students at intermediate level.

Müge, who was at the age of 32, received her BA degree in English Language and Literature, from the Faculty of Science and Letters. She worked as an English teacher for seven years in various colleges and high schools. She had been working as an English Instructor in the PP for a year to teach grammar-based classes to a class with 20 students at pre-intermediate level.

Yeliz, who was at the age of 30, held a BA degree in English Language Teaching and an MA degree in Creative Drama in Education. She had worked in various private institutions as an English instructor and coordinator for 11 years. She

had been working at the current institution for five years and teaching skills and grammar courses to a class with 23 students at an intermediate level.

### **3.2.2 Head of Professional Development Unit**

The head of Professional Development Unit has started to work as an instructor at the beginning of the fall semester. Then, with the emerging need to create a Professional Development Unit for the accreditation process, she was appointed as the professional development unit head. She got her BA degree in English Language and Literature in 2003. While working for a private university in Ankara, she completed the master's program in English Language and Literature at the same university. She served as an instructor and group head at the same institution between the years 2003-2010. She has been a part of the current university for 2 years. Before getting appointed to this position, she was sent to a short-term in-service training programme about teacher training held by the Cambridge University.

### **3.2.3. The Role of Researcher**

Within the study, the researcher was a member of PDU. She was in charge of controlling the implementation of observations in this institution in line with the objectives of PDU. The institution had a peer observation policy for years but it needed improvement and hence the coordinator and PDU head gave her the mission of creating a new peer observation system and evaluation of it. With the purpose of creating a new scheme of peer observation, she conducted this research. Her role was more etic and she was an outsider observant of the study who tried to stay objective for the evaluation of the newly established POT process. Within the study, she had the role of thematising the study to answer the questions of what, how and why to research, designing the

study, collecting the data through various tools and reporting the results and outcomes of this whole process.

### **3.3. Professional Development Unit**

#### **3.3.1 The Aim of Professional Development Unit**

Having been established officially in the fall semester of 2017, Professional Development Unit had been the newest unit of the preparatory programme. The main purpose of the unit had been verbalized as creating a collaborative teaching and development environment through teamwork considering the administrative curricular needs, teachers' expectations and their roles as peers, instructors and lifelong learners. For this purpose, the unit had two missions to accomplish: To provide instructors with in-service trainings, and arrange formal observations.

To achieve these missions, instructors were required to get involved in activities that included the use of needs analysis questionnaires, in-service teacher training sessions on a variety of issues (e.g. classroom management, effective lesson preparation and so on) and educational workshops for observations. In-service trainings were generally done with the attendance of well acknowledged and experienced teacher trainers in the field. Due to the workload of instructors and limited time during the semesters, these trainings were held at the beginning of the semesters and during the winter breaks.

Since formal observations were regarded to be the most significant professional development tools in this unit, observation schedules were made for each instructor followed by feedback sessions to raise their awareness on different aspects of teaching through pre-discussions, written reflections, and post-meetings arranged by the

coordinator and head of professional development unit. In this process, PDU valued three basic elements of learning and teaching: perspectives of instructors who are observers, perspectives of instructors who are observed, and the expected learning outcomes of the PP. Hence, through reciprocal and collaborative observations in which instructors both observe a peer and get observed by a peer, instructors would be fully developed with reflective thinking skills, and with a self-evaluative mind-set to be able to meet the developmental needs of their students and colleagues better. These observations were realized throughout the semester on a regular basis. In fact, a written document was created to initiate a regularly implemented peer observation programme which can be applied as a long-term project within the institution so as to develop their instructors' professional development.

### **3.3.2 Implementation of Observations before the Foundation of PDU**

Between 2013 and 2014, observations were made only by the FLD coordinator, and called formal observations, in order to evaluate teachers' performance in the classroom to foresee the possibilities for the upcoming contract. Since the main purpose was neither related to the professional development nor the teacher training, the effectiveness of these observations was questionable.

Between 2014 and 2015, with the arrival of a new coordinator, the observation system had been rearranged to include another type of observation. In addition to the formal, administrative observations, the instructors were encouraged to be a part of peer observations through a peer-coaching system to find out and solve basic problems that instructors encounter in the classes, as well. Even though a valuable aim was intended, lack of the systematic observational schemes and tools affected the procedure, and the

system could not meet the needs of the instructors in terms of professional development and training.

During the fall semester 2015, the current coordinator was assigned to lead the PP and she initiated systematic observations. Even though these observations were limited to formal ones, teachers were highly recommended to do peer observations with their colleagues. Within that year, the informal peer observations were made by some of the instructors. Even though, they tried to be as reflective as possible, they were not able to give effective feedback to each other as a result of their insufficient training on the topic.

Finally, as a positive attitude of the administration, from the beginning of the fall semester in 2016, several professional development conferences and seminars were held. Additionally, as a supportive precaution for teachers to gain a generous perspective to be reflective teachers and learners, a new observation scheme was composed by stakeholders.

These observations were conducted for two different purposes, as formal observations done by coordinator and unit heads to observe and assess teachers' teaching practices or as peer observations done by instructors to observe each other's classes to develop themselves in terms of in class teaching practices. Unlike the previous years, in this system, peer observations became as important as formal observations. The aims of these visits were announced as to improve the quality of students' learning by providing them with a better learning environment and enable the coordinators to take the necessary steps to help the students and instructors realize their full potential. With this design, pre-discussion, observation, post discussion and reflection steps were more familiarized to the teachers as of the beginning of the

semester. The necessities and rules of each step was explained to instructors in detail before the observations started. The coordinators and unit heads directed instructors to have a chance for gaining and implementing a reflective practice and be a part of the continuous learning offered in the PP. During the first semester, these formal and peer observation processes were followed by the instructors, coordinator, Professional Development Unit head and the researcher. Compared to the previous implementations of observations, this system was voted for being more systematic and teacher friendly by the instructors as teachers were given explanations and enough time for reflections and discussions. The aforementioned procedure was implied as one of the initial gains of the newly established Professional Development Unit in PP during the first module and these observations were done as the piloting of the upcoming ones.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

Throughout the study, the data came from qualitative sources. The data for this study were collected through peer observation forms, post observation discussions, post observation reflective journals, semi structured group interviews and the interview with the Professional Development Unit head. All of the instruments were designed to get information from these participants bearing in mind the mutual roles of instructors as observers and observees in the study. Each of the data collection tool was developed for the purpose of the study considering the needs of the PP, and piloted before they were used for data collection.

#### **3.4.1. Selection of the Participants**

Participating instructors of the study were selected in consultation with the coordinator and the PDU head as a result of the formal observations that were held twice in the Spring semester of 2016 and the Fall semester 2017. Before the reciprocal



peer observations of the study started, 30 teachers were observed by the PDU head in their classes as part of formal observations; and 8 of them was evaluated to be in need of improving their teaching practices and the skills expected by FLD and PP. FLD coordinator and PDU head's comments revealed that these instructors were expected to develop their teaching practices regarding several aspects such as lesson structure, timing of the lesson, planning of the activities, rapport with students, and critical thinking skills. Besides, FLD coordinator wanted to invest in these instructors because they showed a more volunteer attitude for the development of the institution.

However, only four of the instructors' schedule allowed them to be part of the current study. Hence, these 4 instructors were assigned as the observers and the observees of the study.

After getting these instructors' consents to participate in the study, a meeting was held to inform them of the observation process, and their responsibilities during the observations (See Appendix A). Then, weekly schedules were arranged. The participants were also ensured about the confidentiality of their names and responses.

### **3.4.2 Determination of the Observation Themes**

For peer observation to be beneficial as a development tool, teachers need to be aware of possible aspects of teaching to get focused during the lesson to be able to give each other effective feedback. Therefore, determination of the focus of observation had been an essential stage not only for this research study but also for the PDU that aimed to train its teachers on the process of POT.

First, before the formal observations started in the first module of the Fall Semester 2017, the coordinator, the PDU head, and the instructors came together to discuss the

needs of the PP from the perspective of students, instructors, and common ESL needs theoretically based on CEFR.

Additionally, instructors were asked to fulfil a form prepared by PDU head to understand how they classify the aspects of a qualified language classroom. A questionnaire with two open-ended questions were delivered to the instructors which asked them to think about the qualities of a good language classroom and a qualified teaching process. Following themes emerged from their answers: a) the organization of lesson, b) presentation of lesson, c) teaching approach and aids, d) student response, and e) general observation (See Appendix B). These observation themes were planned to be used by the coordinator and the head of Professional Development Unit during the formal observations.

However, during the piloting of these themes, the coordinator, the head of Professional Development Unit and the researcher realized that some of the actions could not be observed during the lessons under the given title or there occurred additional themes. The observation tool was not clear enough either. In order to create a more useful tool to be used during the reciprocal POT, initially composed themes were revised by the researcher in collaboration with the PDU head and in reference with the literature. With reference to Wajnryb (1992), the themes were grouped under the headings of a) engaging learners, b) learning, c) lesson structure, d) teaching techniques, and e) resources and materials (See Appendix C).

Finally, four of the instructors in PP who weren't the participants of this study, piloted the tool in a session of peer observation, and hence the final scheme was approved by the coordinator and the PDU head.

### **3.4.3 Development of a Shared Understanding**

After the themes were determined by the PDU, a training session was held with participating instructors to develop a shared understanding with regard to the meanings and definitions of these themes.

The first theme ,engaging learner, was defined as the active participation and the readiness level of the students for learning and it was investigated under the sub-themes of active involvement, student interest, feedback, critical thinking skills of the learners, and communication. These themes were discussed with the instructors through the questions ‘Are students engaged actively?, Are students interested?, Do students receive effective feedback?, and Are they encouraged for communication and critical thinking?’.

The second theme, learning, was defined as the appropriateness for the nature of learning environment whether it is relaxed or controlled, appropriateness for objectives/ pacing and including scaffolding. The theme was explained through the questions ‘What kind of learning environment does the teacher create (controlled/relaxed)?, Is environment appropriate to achieve the objectives?, Does teacher monitor student learning effectively, does teacher provide scaffolding?’.

The third theme, lesson structure, focused on how teachers organize their lessons and their class activities and the appropriateness of these organizational steps for students learning and it was investigated under the sub-themes of organization, timing, sequencing, planning, transition and individual, pair and group work. Within the session this theme was discussed through the questions ‘How is the lesson organized / sequenced?, Does teacher allocate enough time for the activities?, Does teacher use

individual, pair and group work activities effectively?, Does teacher make smooth transitions between the activities?’

Teaching techniques was the fourth theme that included the sub-themes of instructions, error correction, connections, teacher talking time (TTT), evaluative/questioning. As part of this theme, the following questions were directed to create a clear and better understanding; ‘Are instructions clear and appropriate to the age and the proficiency level of the students?, Does teacher use effective error correction techniques?, How much does teacher talk, does teacher ask any questions during the lesson to evaluate the understanding of the learners?’

The fifth and the last theme was decided to be the resources and materials and that included the sub-themes of smart board, extra material and course book, the use of technology and materials used in the classes during a lesson. These subthemes were discussed through the questions ‘Is technology used effectively in the class?, Does teacher use supplementary material effectively?, and Does teacher use course book effectively?’.

At the end of the training session, participants explained their understanding of each theme and to make sure a shared understanding was achieved through the discussions.

#### **3.4.4. Reciprocal Peer Observation Process and Data Collection Tools**

After the development of observation scheme, participating instructors’ observation schedule was made considering their teaching hours. Two of the instructors were assigned as afternoon teachers and two of them as morning teachers. So as not to interrupt the observation procedure, their workloads were decreased from 25 to 20 hours per week by the coordinator. Throughout the POT process, each of four

instructors had the role of observer and the observee. In other words, they all attained to the process of giving and taking feedback at the end of each lesson . These instructors observed and were observed by their weekly partners. At the end of the week, the partners were changed to be able to observe more peers. This process of reciprocal observation lasted six weeks during the last module of the second semester, and instructors made 24 hours of observation in total. The feedback was given and taken through post-discussions and reflective journals kept twice a week. The observation schedule of teachers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Peer Observation Cycle*

<b>WEEKS</b>	<b>OBSERVEE</b>	<b>OBSERVER</b>
<b>1-2</b>	BERİL	YELİZ
	YELİZ	BERİL
	MELDA	MÜGE
	MÜGE	MELDA
<b>WEEKS</b>	<b>OBSERVEE</b>	<b>OBSERVER</b>
<b>3-4</b>	BERİL	MELDA
	MELDA	BERİL
	MÜGE	YELİZ
	YELİZ	MÜGE
<b>WEEKS</b>	<b>OBSERVEE</b>	<b>OBSERVER</b>
<b>5-6</b>	BERİL	MÜGE
	MÜGE	BERİL
	YELİZ	MELDA
	MELDA	YELİZ

#### **3.4.4.1 Pre-Observation Form**

Pre-observation form was filled by the observee to inform the observer of the teaching objectives and the organization of the lesson. This tool was given to the observer at least one hour before the lesson started. This way the observer had an initial idea about the class to be observed. (See Appendix D)

#### **3.4.4.2 Peer Observation Form**

Peer observation form included the possible aspects of teaching that the instructor could give comments on. Mainly, it included five basic titles (engaging learner, learning, lesson structure, teaching techniques and resources and materials) determined by the involvement of PDU head, coordinator, researcher and some instructors as explained above. Each of these components had six subcomponents. Before the reciprocal peer observation of teaching started, each item was explained and discussed in a meeting by the attendance of researcher, PDU head and participant instructors to avoid any kind of problems faced during the observations. The items were formulated in questions forms to make the observation process easier for observers. Each question was designed to gather observers' own comments on the lesson and their peers' activities during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, observer teacher used these notes to give feedback (See Appendix E).

#### **3.4.4.3 Post-Observation Discussions**

Post-observation discussions aimed at giving immediate feedback to the observee while the lesson was easy to recall. Basic aim of the post discussions was to share opinions on the lesson and give feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the observed lesson from the perspectives of both observers and observed instructors.

These discussions audio-recorded by the researcher generally took 10 minutes. In total the data included approximately 8 hours of recorded data.

#### **3.4.4.4 Post Observation Reflective Journals**

Post observation reflective journals included the weekly accounts of reflections regarding the weaknesses and strengths realized during the observations, how the instructors felt giving and receiving feedback, and what they learned through this process. Although instructors indicated that they were all familiar with reflective journal keeping, they were informed about reflective writing and given guiding prompts. (See Appendix F). The guiding questions were formulated both for observers and observees. Throughout the observation process, each participant was supposed to submit one weekly writing to the researcher, which means 24 journal entries in total.

#### **3.4.4.5 Semi Structured Group Interview with Participant Instructors**

At the end of six weeks, all four instructors were brought together to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of reciprocal peer observation, and their suggestions related to its implementation. Within a semi-structure interview, the instructors made an overall evaluation of the POT process both as the receiver and the giver of the feedback. The interview was video-recorded. Data was collected in English. However, at the end of the interview, instructors added some comments in Turkish. The data included approximately one hour of recorded data.

#### **3.4.4.6. Interview with the Professional Development Unit Head**

At the end of the observations, PDU head had a chance to discuss the ongoing project with the instructors to have an insight about the observation process. Besides, she had the opportunity to observe one hour of each pair, in total four hours to check the applicability of the reciprocal peer observation process in the classes as well.

Therefore, in order to find how she evaluates this process, she was interviewed, too. (See Appendix G).

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

The current study used qualitative methods to analyse data collected through written peer and post-observation forms, discussions, interviews and reflective journal. Data analysis procedure started with the transcription of the audio recorded data (post discussion and interviews). In other words, the audio data were transformed into a written data for the sake of not losing messages and important data in the audio version (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)

After the transcriptions are complete, the raw data was ready for the content analysis by using a systematic classification procedure of coding and identifying themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

During this coding process, the steps suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) was followed by

- a) Reading the transcriptions to make some notes,
- b) Labelling the relevant, repeated, surprising aspects such as actions, activities or concepts,
- c) Deciding which codes are the most important and classifying them by bringing several codes together to create categories and themes,
- d) Labelling categories to decide the most relevant ones and how they are connected to each other,
- e) Describing categories and connections among them to interpret the results with the similar to or different from the previous studies, concepts and theories.

After various techniques for qualitative data analysis and studies were examined, content analysis method was chosen as the appropriate data analysis method for the current study. Since data was gathered under the pre-determined themes for the



first research question, to be able to interpret the results directed content analysis with pre-determined codes was used, which enables results to support the theory related to each theme (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Similarly, the data for the second research question, were collected through reflective journals, post discussions and group interview, and analysed through open-coding of content analysis which is a method that enables researchers to allow using their own categories and names to flow from the data instead of using limited perceived categories driven from the literature (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Besides having a second coder apart from the researcher to ensure reliability, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the coded data, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria was used. The four steps of the evaluative criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, were followed through various techniques as described in their study. Credibility which is defined as "the match between constructed realities of respondents and those realities as represented by the evaluator" by Guba and Lincoln (1989), was ensured through prolonged engagement, triangulation, and peer debriefing techniques. Transferability, which is defined as the similarity level of contexts, was ensured through thick description that presents a detailed description of contexts and give a chance to transfer results to the similar contexts. Dependability, which is explained as the stability of the data was ensured through external audits which leads evaluation of accuracy of the findings, interpretations and conclusions by an outsider. The last step, confirmability which is defined as "a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest." (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), was ensured through audit trial and triangulation.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.1 Findings related to the first question

The findings in relation to the first research question that investigates the extent to which instructors who observe their peers give feedback on different aspects of teaching is presented in this section. The peer observation form included the questions that help them reflect on the observation themes determined collaboratively by the PDU head, the coordinator, instructors of the institution and the researcher, and the themes were discussed through a training session with the participant teachers in detail to get a shared understanding of the themes. The themes were formulated both to guide instructors in giving feedback to each other and to contribute to their professional development by raising their awareness on these aspects of teaching. Data revealed the following results in relation to the themes of the observation:

##### 4.1.1 Engaging Learner

Under the theme engaging learner, observer teachers needed to focus on the aspects of teaching regarding active involvement, student interest, feedback, learners' critical thinking skills, and communication factors.

Active involvement is defined as the active participation and the readiness level of the students for learning. The peer observation forms and post discussion transcriptions were investigated to gather observing teachers' ideas regarding how students were engaged to the lesson. In their comments on the peer observation forms and post-discussions, they gave some suggestions for the taken and untaken actions related to the student engagement in classroom as shown in the following excerpts:

“Eliciting one student’s answer may not be enough for engaging others to the lesson.”;

“While giving instructions, you should be aware of that monitoring is also another part of engaging students. Warm up questions, for instance! You could have used them.”

Another aspect, student interest is defined as the use of activities that arise student concentration on the learning process by making learning environment more interesting for the students. Even though a few comments were done on the importance of student interest as exemplified in the following excerpts, this aspect was not repeated as frequently as other themes.

“Student interest was limited, and you did nothing. You may walk around the students and give some attention grabber information.”

“To raise their awareness, she should have asked some specific questions from their own lives.”

Feedback is another important factor for the institution under the theme of learner and it is defined as teachers’ actions to collect information about their students’ learning through asking questions or using other techniques to correct major issues and any misunderstanding within the lesson. As a result of the investigation of peer observation forms and post discussions, the data revealed that observer teachers generally focused on the frequency of feedback and whether teacher used feedback as a learning tool during the needed situation or not. Observer teachers made more comment on this issue that they did on the student interest. As shown in the excerpts below, participants were mostly dedicated to observe actions related to giving the feedback in time or the way of giving feedback:

“Teacher used immediate feedback to explain the meaning of the vocabulary.”

“When students answered incorrectly, she skipped to the following activity without any feedback and students failed to understand and answer the question.”

“You could have asked some questions to check their understanding and I believe you understood that one of your students didn’t get the meaning, so you should have demonstrated that word as a feedback.”

another aspect, critical thinking skills, is defined as provoking students’ minds to think critically and reflectively through creating true classroom environment by asking reflective and critical questions to let them discuss in groups and express themselves individually. This subtitle was mentioned as much as the feedback aspect. While some of the observer instructors mentioned the effectiveness of in-class activities for the critical thinking skills, they tried to offer extra ways to raise awareness on the critical thinking skills as given in the excerpts below:

“You used Reading between the Lines part for the make them think, I liked it!”

“You read the title out and asked them ‘What’s good for you?’ .”

“You should ask more questions like ‘How do you know, why do you think in that way?’ .”

Hereby communication is defined as the use of moderate and smooth communication techniques such as body language and intonation towards students to make students feel understood by their instructors during a lesson. When the data were analysed, it was revealed that for observer teachers the importance of communication is as essential as active involvement for a learning process. As can be seen in the excerpts, observer instructors emphasized the importance of communication during the peer observations or they criticized their peers with not communicating efficiently with their students:

“You used your tone of voice effectively, that was nice. Also, you used your body language while explaining a word, I also liked it!”

“You always turned your back to the students, but they need to see your face to communicate with you.”

“You addressed your students with their names, that was a great way to start to communicate with them.”

As can be seen in the Table 2, while observing their peers to give feedback for the creation of a clearer and more effective student engagement, observer teachers generally focused on active involvement, communication, feedback, and critical thinking skills. Active involvement aspect was mentioned 18 times in 24 observations. Similarly, communication aspect was repeated in 14 observations while feedback and critical thinking skills were repeated 10 times. The least repeated item was student interest that could be found in 4 of the observations and it was not seen as a primary point of the observations.

Table 2

*Number of comments on the theme ‘Engaging Learners’ in observations*

<b>The Theme of</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>
<b>Engaging Learners</b>	<b>(N= 24 Peer Observations)</b>
• Active Involvement	18
• Communication	14
• Critical Thinking Skills	10
• Feedback	10
• Student Interest	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>

#### 4.1.2. Learning

Under the theme learning, observer teachers needed to focus on the aspects of teaching regarding the nature of learning environment (controlled/ relaxed), appropriateness for objectives/ pacing, and scaffolding.

The nature of learning environment is defined as appropriateness for the nature of learning environment and its controlled and relaxed characteristic. Teachers are to be careful about creating a positive learning environment for the students or have adequate and effective control over the learning process and students so as to have a peaceful learning environment. Under this aspect, while some of the comments were done regarding demolish stress or teacher behaviours that affect students positively, some of the comments were related to classroom management or appreciation of the students as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

“She tried to make some jokes to relax students, that was nice.”

“You shouldn’t have forced students to talk in English in a negative way, this affected some of them negatively and they stopped talking totally.”

“When she came to the classroom, you were so stressed that students could feel it, too.”

“She generally warned the students to talk in English and students got affected by these warnings.”

“You lost your control at a point and they started to conduct their discussion in Turkish, the one about their driving licence. You should check your students more frequently.”

Another aspect, appropriateness for objectives and pacing is defined as aiming to be standard and follow the specific objectives for the same level for each lesson. To be able to be standard during the whole institution being able to follow same pacing

and applying the same objectives are crucial for the assessment and implicational purposes. Before the observations started, observee instructors were asked and handed out a pre-observation tool to their observer peers to explain pacing and the objectives of the observing lesson and observer teachers examined the pre-observation form and checked whether the observee instructor was following related objectives or not. Although they tried to be careful about this point, sometimes they had difficulty in focusing on the objectives and pacing of the instructors and they also had some comments on this aspect as can be seen in the excerpts below:

“The objectives were about simple past tense but she insisted on asking questions such as ‘What happens, what does she say?’”

“You had problems while meeting your objectives, it was skimming but you did nothing about it.”

“The course objectives couldn’t be met in this lesson.”

One another aspect, scaffolding is defined as the need for providing help for each student through monitoring and sharing information either by their teachers or their classroom friends. As a result of the data analysis, it was revealed that scaffolding is one of the most frequently repeated point by the observer teachers as exemplified in the following excerpts:

“She made students ready by explaining the words before reading, and she walked during the reading to help her students.”

“You monitored the students, that was good.”

“You used some pair work and let pair-scaffolding, that was useful, I try to use it in my classes.”

As can be seen in the Table 3, the nature of learning environment was the basic focus of the instructors, and it was repeated in 16 of the observations. Scaffolding aspect

was also considered by the observer instructors and it was mentioned in 10 of the observations. However, the appropriateness for the objectives and pacing were not mentioned as much as the other two aspects and it could be met in 6 of the observations.

Table 3

*Number of comments on the theme 'Learning' in observations*

<b>The Theme of</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>
<b>Learning</b>	<b>(N= 24 Peer Observations)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nature of Learning Environment (controlled / relaxed)</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Appropriateness for Objectives and Pacing</li> </ul>	<p>16</p> <p>10</p> <p>6</p>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>

#### **4.1.3. Lesson Structure**

Under the theme lesson structure, observer teachers needed to focus on the aspects of teaching regarding organization, timing, content, sequencing, transition, and individual, pair and group work. The aim of this theme is more to observe teachers' theoretical knowledge related to lesson planning and how they act to manage these components during a lesson.

Organization is defined as how teachers organize their lessons and their class activities and the appropriateness of these organizational steps for students learning. Observer teachers focused on the organization of the lessons. Whether instructors had a warm-up stage or not, they applied all kind of activities such as controlled, semi-



controlled and free and similar questions were the main concerns of the observer teachers and following excerpts showed some example comments:

“She applied her warm up questions effectively.”

“It was lack of warm up, you should have given some instructions like ‘Write three jobs that you like and write three jobs that you hate’.”

“The lesson was lack of production stage so we couldn’t understand whether they understand the topic clearly or not.”

“Most of the activities were controlled activities, so organization was stuck to the mechanic applications.”

Timing is defined as logical and appropriate time allocated for each activity. Timing which is seen as an important factor for the running of the lesson was discussed for setting the time for each activity or giving adequate time for the activities as shown in the following excerpts:

“She set the time like ‘You have got five minutes’.”

“She set the time clearly and warned students whenever was needed.”

“You should have set the time limit, you spent too much time on one activity.”

Another aspect, content is one of the basic components for the lesson structure and it is defined as having a meaningful context and having one clear topic to cover during the lesson. Observer teachers generally focused on whether their co-workers used a content or they were lost within various unsuccessful topics and activities. While some comments mentioned limited content, some of them only mentioned having unrelated contents as given in the excerpts below:

“While the content of the lesson include some reading features, how did you manage to end up the whole reading text with grammar focus?”

“The content of the lesson was very limited for the students. Even you outlined it, they didn’t understand. ”

The sequencing of the lesson is another aspect and it is defined as being able to form and adapt the activities planned to be used during the classroom within a logical in order to promote student learning. Observer teachers concentrated on whether their colleagues were successful or not during different practices that needed to be applied for the variety of the lesson and the suitable planning for the fruitful learning outcomes. Half of the observations include a comment related to sequencing. Each of the participant had a saying for the planning procedures and techniques for their peers as can be understood from the following excerpts:

“She started with the reading then asked students to elicit some grammar items and that was a nice planning move.”

“As a part of your plan, you gave guidance to the students by asking questions about a picture. Nice.”

“You organized adjectives as positive and negative adjectives. That was an immediate action, even though you didn’t plan to use such an activity, you turned it into a positive activity.”

“She prepared nothing, she was unplanned so the only thing she did was following the course book.”

Transition which is defined as smooth passing between the activities so as to create a contextualized and conscious learning environment was mentioned in some of the observations. Observer teachers focused on the importance of transition for a smooth learning process as can be understood from the following excerpts:

“The lesson was lack of transition, you jumped from one activity to the other one without any questions or signalling. ”

“There should be a variety, a transition among your activities, it was too mechanic.”

“She asked some follow up questions to draw their attention to the following exercise.”

Another aspect, individual, pair and group work is defined as one of the ways that needed to be considered during the learning for the activity variety to ensure success and readiness for the mixed ability students. Observer teachers widely cared and observed this aspect and they made several number of comments related to this topic as given below:

“Working the meaning of the words individually, reading individually. Any group work?”

“Pair work was a good exercise for modelling the activity.”

“You encouraged your students for pair and group work, that was nice.”

“She tried to use group work but it turned into an individual activity. She should have been more careful and checked students.”

“In a class discussion, a few of the students were active, need to be reorganized as pair or group work.”

“You used pair work as an error correction activity, that was clever.”

“In one of your activities you said, it’s up to you whether work individually or with your pair. I think this is a negative student autonomy example because it was a great pair work activity.”

As can be seen in the Table 4, individual, pair and group work was commented most in 14 of the observations. Then, sequencing was given as another aspect for the observer instructors and they mentioned this aspect in 12 of the observations. While organization and timing were commented 8 times, with the 6 comments content and

transition were not seen as the initial focus of the observations under the theme of lesson structure.

Table 4

*Number of comments on the theme 'Lesson Structure' in observations*

<b>The Theme of Lesson Structure</b>	<b>Number of Comments (N= 24 Peer Observations)</b>
• Individual / Pair / Group Work	14
• Sequencing	12
• Organization	8
• Timing	8
• Content	6
• Transition	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>

#### **4.1.4. Teaching Techniques**

Under the theme teaching techniques, observer teachers needed to focus on the aspects of teaching regarding instructions, error correction, connections, teacher talking time (TTT), evaluative/ questioning aspects.

Instructions are seen as the primary and most chief component of the lesson by the institution and it is defined as a facility that makes teachers use the clear, direct and understandable ways while telling students how to or why to do something. As the beginning of each activity, teachers were supposed to explain what to do to the students by telling additional explanations that express the reasons of doing something for learning purposes. When the data were examined, it is clearly comprehended that all of the participants were really cautious about giving instructions in a clear way. The

instructions were accepted as one of the widely-repeated points during the discussions and the importance given to the instructions can be confirmed within the following excerpts:

“Instructions were so mechanic and they didn’t go beyond what was written on the book.”

“Instructions were clear and they were explained again by using modelling.”

“The use of clean language helped you to give clearer instructions.”

“In the listening, you said feel free to ask your questions. Do you think that is it logical to give such an instruction for the listening activity?”

As a teaching technique, error correction is defined as a way of giving feedback to correct the misunderstanding or the mistakes of the students within a positive manner. It is also understood that, observer teachers mostly commented on the importance and the error correction types during their observations and gave large feedback related to this issue during post-discussions. They were really alert about the actions to use error correction and its effectiveness from the perspective of students. Their excerpts stated the importance they gave to that aspect:

“One of your students said ‘He is scaring.’ But you did nothing, error correction in terms of the wording might be a good action to take at that point.”

“Correction of the errors at the time of speaking. It may not a be good idea for all of the students.”

“Error correction was on the spot and effective.”

“You may wait for a few seconds to give students a chance to correct their mistakes on their own instead of instant error correction.”

A another aspect, connections are identified as being able to make logical transitions among the previous and current lessons or the first and the following

activities used during the lesson and observer teachers concentrated on this aspect, as well. Compared to the other aspects such as instruction, connections took less part in the notes and the post discussion of the observers. However, a few important comments were gathered and can be seen within the excerpts below:

“She showed pictures from the previous reading passage and asked students make some relation among them.”

“You could have explained the words while making a revision of the previous lesson to create a bridge between the lessons.”

“You should have made some connections before you started listening. Do they know every word in the listening?”

“You asked them what they remembered from the previous lesson and it awoke their attention. That was nice”

TTT is another factor that affects the learning process and it is defined as the talking time of the teachers during a lesson. Generally, comments revealed that TTT was seen as a factor that should be limited and it shouldn't exceed student talking time in each level. Keeping in mind that, observer teachers gave their attention to grab some information related to TTT and all of them took some notes and made comments during discussions related to the over-timing of TTT as it is shown in the following excerpts.

“There was a huge amount of TTT, let the students talk more.”

“TTT seemed to be high but she did let students talk as much as she could.”

“In this level (B2), students should be the ones who lead class discussion not the instructor.”

Evaluative and questioning aspect is defined as making students be able to evaluate what they learn and question why they learn with an exploratory manner. Observer teachers were able to catch a few motions applied with the purpose of creating

evaluative and questioning environment and sometimes they criticized their peers for not giving enough opportunity to the students to ensure such an environment. The excerpt below demonstrated some comments related to this aspect:

“You checked their understanding asking ‘Am I correct?’. I think this is a much better evaluation tool than asking ‘Do you understand?’.”

“Comparing the answers after students finish the activity would be a better idea to give them a chance of some evaluation.”

“Did you realize? There were almost no questioning in the lesson.”

“You should have turned the discussion activity into a questioning activity and pushed students to be more aware of the activity.”

As can be seen in the Table 5, instructions were mostly commented aspect of the theme teaching techniques and there were 16 comments in 24 observations related to this aspect. The following aspect evaluative / questioning was mentioned in 12 of the observations out of 24, while error correction, connections, and TTT were commented on 10 times in the 24 observations.

Table 5

*Number of comments on the theme ‘Teaching Techniques’ in observations*

<b>The Theme of</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>
<b>Teaching Techniques</b>	<b>(N= 24 Peer Observations)</b>
• Instructions	16
• Evaluative/ Questioning	12
• Error Correction	10
• Connections	10
• Teacher Talking Time (TTT)	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

#### 4.1.5. Resources and Material

Under the theme resources and material, observer teachers needed to focus on the aspects of teaching regarding use of smartboard, use of extra material, and use of course book. The main purpose of this theme was to observe the technology use and material use in the classes during a lesson by different instructors.

In each classroom of the prep school, there were smart boards that gave teachers use technology as a part of their own lessons. All the books and extra materials related to the books' online components were uploaded to the smart boards and each smart board was connected to the internet. As an opportunity, PDU and instructors in the institution decided that use of smart board during the lesson is an inevitable part of this century and it promotes not only technology assisted learning, but also students interest. Observer teachers focused on the use of smart board and technology use in the classes and they made following comments:

“You could have used smartboard not only for showing book but also for other purposes.”

“She used smart board a lot to underline the words that she was going to ask.”

“Very efficient use of smart board.”

“You used smart board to highlight and underline the vocabulary, I love it!”

“Since some of the students didn't have a book, it might be better to show the book in a bigger size by using smart board.”

“She used smart note , that was nice for the students.”

“She wrote students' opinions on the board, that was good.”

“You may organize your writing task on the board by using Smart Note.”

“She is using smart board well but she could have used smart note for the synonyms and the antonyms of the words by circling them in the beginning.”



“You could have shown a video on YouTube about Lady Gaga?”

“You showed a real website about the reading passage from the Guardian, but you could have embedded this into your activity instead of only showing.”

Since the prep school didn't have an in-house curriculum and material bank, teachers were supposed to use a course book which was changed according to the levels of the students and the type of the lesson such as reading-writing or essential book. Observer teachers focused on the using ways and the using amount of the course book during the observations. As it is understood from the notes and the discussions, sometimes they had negative opinions about their peers' course book use and sometimes they appreciated their efforts to change the usage of course book as it is shown in the following excerpts;

“You used the course book efficiently, not too much, not too little.”

“You only focused on the book, as if it was the Bible.”

“You should have copied the pages for the students who didn't have a book. Since you applied everything through course book, they couldn't follow.”

“You used the book as a must. Even you presented the term ‘noun phrases’ by reading from the book. You should do it in another way.”

Apart from the course book, teachers had enough opportunity to use some extra materials during the lessons. However, at the end of the data investigation, observer teachers' observations revealed that most of the instructors delayed the use of extra material. Thus, only a few comments could be seen related to the use of extra material:

“You brought and used an extra material but what was the aim of it?”

As can be seen in the Table 6, the use of smart board was the basic focus of the instructors, and it was repeated in 20 of the 24 observations. The use of course book was also considered by the observer instructors and it was mentioned in 10 of the

observations. However, the use of extra material was not observed and mentioned as much as the other two aspects and it could be met in only 2 of the 24 observations.

Table 6

*Number of comments on the theme 'Resources and Material' in observations*

<b>The Theme of</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>
<b>Resources and Material</b>	<b>(N= 24 Peer Observations)</b>
• Use of Smart Board	20
• Use of Course Book	10
• Use of Extra Material	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>

#### **4.2. Findings related to the second question**

The second research question (How do instructors and the head of Professional Development Unit evaluate reciprocal peer observation of teaching process in terms of its contribution to their teaching practices and for the future of the institution?) aims to investigate how instructors and PDU head assess this process regarding its contribution to teaching practices of instructors and the future implementation of a similar study in the current institution. The findings gathered through reflective journals and group discussion transcription were investigated through open coding of conventional content analysis. With the aim of getting a deeper understanding of different perspectives of the same process and making suggestions related to the future implementations, data was investigated under the categories of observee, observer, and PDU head.

#### **4.2.1. As an Observee**

Regarding this theme, the participant instructors' ideas about being an observee during a POT process were investigated. While writing reflective journals and during group interview, instructors were asked to share their ideas related to the POT process from the perspective of an observee. They were directed through semi-structured questions to share their ideas regarding to their own experiences in this process. As a result of the analysis, instructors declared a positive attitude towards being an observee, and they made constructive comments related to the effect of being an observee on their teaching practices and professional development experiences.

The data gathered through group discussion and reflective journals revealed that being an observee created an awareness on instructors regarding their teaching practices, and their strength and weaknesses during a class hour. All of the instructors declared that at the end of the POT process, after they got feedback from their peers, they tried to change their attitude into a more positive practice and use new techniques as suggested by their observer peers. Additionally, they mentioned that getting feedback and being an observee made them feel more comfortable about being observed than they had experienced before. They stated that as a result of being observed by a colleague, they developed their self-confidence, as well. The following table reveals detailed comments related to the finding of this category:

Table 7

*Themes that Emerged for the Category of 'Observee'*

<u>Themes for the category of Observee</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Examples of Participants' Words from Group Discussion (GD) and Reflective Journals (RJ)</u>
<b>Awareness</b>	Raising awareness in terms of teaching practises Realizing their own mistakes on their lesson plans or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I guided students by asking concept-checking questions and my peer gave me the same feedback to do so. (RJ)</li> <li>• When our post-discussion session was over, I realized that planning a lesson really makes things smoother. (GD)</li> <li>• I started to be more aware of the details in the classroom thanks to my observer peer. (GD)</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths and Weaknesses</b>	Noticing the abilities Paying more attention on the weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I realized that, things can change while teaching and I was able to manage these things while teaching (RJ)</li> <li>• As my observer peer mentioned, I used body language and intonation a lot to engage students into the lesson. I didn't see these as a positive thing before. (GD)</li> <li>• As a weakness, I can say that I realized that I could encourage and praise my students more. (RJ)</li> </ul>

<p>Being able to criticize themselves</p>	
<p><b>Change</b></p> <p>Changing their attitudes toward teaching practices</p> <p>Starting to apply new techniques</p> <p>Imitating different methods through suggestions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ... students had difficulty in achieving this and my colleague suggested me to make them write their own examples and then I realized that was something I always do, insisting. I tried to change my attitude in the following week. (RJ)</li> <li>• When Y. came to my class, she gave me some suggestions about highlighting and underlying the vocab, I tried to do it and it worked really well in terms of vocabulary teaching. (GD)</li> <li>• Setting the time was hard for me but after I got feedback from almost each observer on this topic, I tried to be more careful on this. (GD)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Confidence</b></p> <p>Feeling more comfortable while being watched</p> <p>Gaining confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I started to feel more comfortable while somebody is watching me while I'm teaching. (GD)</li> <li>• I mostly got you know positive feedback from my observers and if at least three teachers tell you that you are doing good, you continue doing it and become more enthusiastic. (GD)</li> </ul>

<p>through comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After going through today's lesson, I felt more confident because being observed by another teacher raises a kind of self-awareness. (RJ)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feedback</b> Feeling relaxed while getting comments Erasing negative attitudes toward getting feedback Being more open to be criticized</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting feedback from peers was okay for me even though sometimes I tried to protect my teaching, I got used to getting feedback since it is a positive way of being criticized by a person just like you. (GD)</li> <li>• It was nice to explain yourself without any hesitation or fear related to the comments about your own teaching. (RJ)</li> <li>• The more feedback I got, I felt more relaxed. (RJ)</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.2. As an Observer

Concerning this theme, the participant instructors' ideas regarding being an observer during POT were investigated. Through the examination of ideas about POT from an observer perspective, participant instructors were asked to evaluate this process through their own experiences as an observer. The data gathered through reflective journals and group discussion declared that instructors mostly experienced positive outcomes as an observer regarding some aspects such as fruitful discussion, collection of new ideas, and feeling valuable.

However, the aspect of feedback emerged during analysis was declared to be negative. While as an observee getting feedback was accepted as a professional development tool, it was found that giving feedback as an observer created a kind of anxiety on instructors and they found it the hardest mission of the POT as an observer. The following table reveals detailed comments related to the finding of this category:

Table 8

*Themes that Emerged for the Category of 'Observer'*

<u>Themes for the category of</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Examples of Participants' Words from Group Discussion (GD) and Reflective Journals (RJ)</u>
<b>Anxiety</b>	Raising anxiety Causing stress Having hard times to criticize Not knowing how to act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was a bit stressful for me because I was afraid of whether the person get offended and the way of my speech may affect her negatively while giving feedback as an observer. (GD)</li> <li>You need to have a poker face, and this was really stressful for me, I always thought whether my facial expression affected my peer negatively or not. (GD)</li> <li>I knew that my peer was open to criticism, but I felt really stressful while giving my first feedback this week. (RJ)</li> </ul>
<b>Creativity</b>	Raising creativity Being able to see various examples	<p>It was really positive for me because after I observed my peers, I pushed myself to be more creative and active in the class. (GD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After I observed lots of classes, I started to look everything more critically to develop more creative</li> </ul>

	Improve critical thinking		ideas for my learners, such as games, which I hadn't used in my classes before. (GD)
<b>Collecting New Ideas</b>	Giving a chance to observe other classes		<p>I have collected lots of beneficial ideas, even the use of body language was something that I inspired. (GD)</p> <p>Even if the techniques we use are the same, observing other classes helps you think different options, as well. (GD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think observing people contributes your teaching because you know every single teacher has a different style of teaching even, they teach the same thing and as an observer I took the best parts of each lesson and created a combination of all. (GD)</li> </ul>
<b>Deeper Understanding</b>	Leading a deeper understanding	Realizing their own actions	<p>While giving feedback, you focused on the details, as well. You started to think about your own teaching practice and actions. (GD)</p> <p>In a discussion with your peer, you realized some points and you started to think deeper and learn something from this experience. (GD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Today, while sharing my ideas in detail about my peer's lesson, I also felt that I'm also kind of</li> </ul>
	Being able to collect different ideas Observing different applications	Being able to realize personal mistakes	



		learning how to create a more constructive teaching for my learners through discussion. (RJ)
<b>Value</b>	Feeling more	I felt valuable when I saw my peer applied what I had offered previous week. (GD)
	valuable	I have realized that all of my colleagues tried to use the
	Seeing the value	feedback we gave each other, and it is a great thing to hear
	of their	that in here, too. (GD)
	feedback	It felt happy to see the improvement of my colleague when
Working	she applied my suggestions in her lesson. (RJ)	
collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that it got people close to each toher, you don't only talk about your lesson, but also the problems that you face about any issue. (RJ)</li> </ul>	

#### 4.2.3. As PDU Head

Professional Development Unit head was asked to evaluate POT process regarding comparison of instructors' attitudes and teaching practices before and after POT, outcomes of giving and getting feedback on instructors, the results of working collaboratively and the possible strengths and weaknesses of PDU about the current POT process. The data was gathered through a written interview sent via e-mail to the PDU head.

First of all, when she was asked to explain the change on the attitudes and behaviours of instructors toward previous and current POT applications, she stated that

there was a huge improvement on the instructors' ideas and actions in terms of realizing the effectiveness of POT. She declared that even though the participant instructors of the study were not willing to attend previous POT activities before, they raised an awareness and they became more conscious by attending the current POT process even though they were offered by the coordinator and PDU head to be a part of this. She added that instructors' prejudgements about observing and being observed were erased during this process because they realized that this process didn't include upsetting negative comments as they expected, but it led to a more constructive criticism toward teaching practices of instructors.

Moreover, she emphasized the effects of feedback based on her observations and discussions with participant instructors and she stated that instructors started to break their ice among especially taking feedback because during our official observations, they were not okay with getting feedback and they thought getting feedback only means being criticized in a negative way. She pointed out that instructors clearly changed their minds about feedback and used it only as a development tool to be more critical for the development of learning and teaching environment.

Additionally, she had the idea that working collaboratively affected the instructors' teaching practices and working environment positively. She stated that in the observations that she attended, instructors tried to apply similar activities and they had developed themselves enough to realize their own weaknesses and reflect upon them and they saw the uniqueness of sharing by showing each other new techniques or allocation of the ideas.

Regarding the strengths and weaknesses of PDU during this process, she explained her opinions, as well. As strengths, she stated that, at the end of POT process,

the institution was able to see possible effects of a minor-scale POT process on instructors' professional development and the quality of teaching with the opportunity that PDU reinforced. She emphasised that as a pre-planned process, at least participant teachers had a chance to create awareness on the usability of POT and this might be used as a sample for the following POT application in the institution. When she was asked to explain the weaknesses of the PDU, initially she stated that it would have been better if they had had a chance to give participant instructors fewer teaching hours and more time to discuss for post-discussions. Also, as a weakness, she stated that the observation cycles could have been applied for a longer period time and instructors might have been given a longer and more detailed training process about how to attend POT as an observee and an observer. She stated that weekly lesson plans of the participant instructors could have been arranged more flexibly according to the observations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1. Discussion of the Findings**

Professional development of the teachers offers lots of opportunities for the improvement of the teaching environment and the teachers' own understanding towards their teaching practices and their several needs (Craft,2000). POT has the potential to be one of the activities that assist the process of professional development of instructors, and the more it is applied in various contexts, the more valid data regarding the effectiveness of POT on various components such as professional development, reformation of teaching practices or enhancement of teachers' needs are gathered.

With the aim of creating another example for the evaluation of the effectiveness of POT process in a higher education institution, the current study was conducted. 4 EFL instructors' ideas related to the contribution of POT process into their teaching practices as an observer and as an observee, and Professional Development Unit head's ideas related to the process were investigated. As a case study, the instructors and Professional Development Unit head shared their ideas through post observation discussions, reflective journals and group discussions at the end of cyclic observation procedure which included 24 peer observations that ended in 6 weeks.

In the literature, it is emphasized that POT has a positive effect on the improvement of teachers' professional development regarding some topics such as creating consciousness (Borg,2015), active participation to encourage personal awareness (Cosh,1998), or giving and taking constructive feedback (Peel, 2005). Besides these points, through POT, teachers may find a chance to create a collegial spirit and share their educational practices with their peers or transform them into their classes within an equal environment (Yiend et al., 2014). In addition to the professional development perspective of POT, it aims the improvement of teaching (Gosling,2015) in long term through sharing teaching practices and new techniques among peers (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015) or creating consciousness on their own teaching practices (Bennett & Barp, 2008).

The results of the study supported the effectiveness of POT in terms of professional development of instructors and the enhancement of teaching environment. The findings regarding to the first question revealed that instructors accepted and used POT as a positive tool that assisted them to improve their and their peers' teaching practices regarding most of the aspects given under the themes of engaging learners, learning lesson structure, teaching techniques and resources and material. Through their

comments about active involvement of the students, the nature of the learning environment, variety of the activities, giving instructions to the students, and use of smart board, instructors tried to draw attention on the teaching practices for a better student learning while giving feedback to their peers. These findings are in line with the results of the studies of Bell (2005), Hendry & Oliver (2012) and Bennett & Barp (2008). As Bell (2005) mentioned POT as a developmental activity that enables teachers to develop their classroom practices, Hendry & Oliver's (2012) findings also presented the improvement of teaching practices as a primary aim of POT. Bennett and Barp (2008) emphasized the feature of POT to enhance learning and teaching practices to boost a healthier student learning.

The current study also examined the evaluation of a POT process from the perspectives of participant instructors as both observees and observers, and Professional Development Unit head as a stakeholder. As an observee and observer, participant instructors mainly declared that they had experienced a positive process in terms of developing themselves professionally and socially from various perspectives. Creating awareness, realizing strengths and weaknesses, changing attitude and application of new techniques, raising confidence, and feeling more comfortable while getting feedback were mainly emerged themes while investigating the participants' ideas as being an observee related to the POT process. Similar to Chester's (2012) study in which he emphasized the importance of sharing to have a better understanding as an aim of POT, instructors in this study also realized the importance and the significance of discussion among peers through feedback sessions, and they stated that they felt more relaxed while getting feedback. Even though some studies revealed negative impact of being observed by an outsider (Cosh, 1999; Norrish, 1996), the findings of this study offer similar results with the studies of Wang & Seth (1997), Lomas and

Kinchin (2006), and Blasé and Blasé (2006) and being an observee in the process of POT gave a chance to instructors to develop themselves in terms of raising confidence, decreasing anxiety and feeling less stressed. Apart from these evidences, as Martin & Double (2005) emphasized in their study, the idea of the effectiveness of POT to raise awareness regarding to their strengths and weaknesses is also supported through the findings of the current study.

Moreover, as an observer, the instructors' ideas revealed similar results about their ideas toward POT process. Creativity, collection of new ideas, deeper understanding and value were the basic positive themes in which they stated as constructive outcomes of POT that they gained as an observer. These findings conform with the Bell (2001), Tenenberg (2016), and Atkinson & Bolt's (2010) studies in which they found POT as an important tool for the improvement of creativity, innovation, and use of new ideas in the classes. Apart from these findings, POT was stated as a process which enabled participants to have a deeper understanding in terms of their actions. As Shortland (2004) mentioned in her study, instructors started to have deeper insight to promote personal and professional development. As an addition outcome, instructors mentioned that they felt valuable in a non-threatening environment, and it leaded a more collegial spirit among them. As Bandura (1997) stated, they started to understand the importance feeling valuable in an inspiring environment in which they could improve their teaching practices freely. These findings are also harmonies with the studies of Bell (2005), Barrett & O'Neill (2007) and Pololi et al. (2002) in which they declared the process of POT as a pleasant activity that promotes self-confidence and empowering.

However, opposing to the studies that Gosling (2005) and Peel (2005) resulted in the effectiveness of POT on giving constructive feedback that promotes professional

development and health teaching environment, the significance of giving constructive feedback was not supported within the current study. The findings showed that as an observer, giving feedback was the hardest part of POT for the instructor participants and they stated that their anxiety level and stress increased. As a result, giving feedback as an observer was not effective enough for their professional development during this study. This might be accepted as a challenging mission of POT for instructors while they couldn't feel comfortable in giving feedback. As O'Sullivan et al. (1988) and Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond (2005) mentioned in their studies, giving feedback could be especially challenging since instructors' experience on giving feedback and the training that they had taken before observation started were limited. Because of this reason, even though instructors were able to conduct constructive discussions for their observee partners, they could not build a flexible environment for themselves while giving feedback.

The current study also explored as a stakeholder how PDU head evaluate the POT process that was applied in the institution as a small-scale case study to see possible effects of POT on instructors and teaching environment. For the purpose of forming a shared responsibility among stakeholders such as heads, coordinators or policy makers, and instructors, it is accepted as a crucial point of POT to determine the needs of institutions and instructors at the same time (Craft,2000). The findings of the interview with the PDU head also provided a detailed insight from the perspective of a stakeholder and the findings revealed that in terms of raising awareness and conscious on the ideas about POT of the instructors, a peak was occurred toward positive way. This positive peak could be observed during their in-class teaching practices by the PDU head, as well. In addition, as Çağlar (2013) and Wingrove et al. (2018) stated in their findings, the findings of the current study also allow to support that POT helped

instructors to create a collegial spirit and respectful cooperation to find out better ways for themselves and teaching practices. Apart from these findings, PDU also raised awareness on its responsibilities toward the professional development activities of instructors.

Consequently, it can be concluded that based on the evaluation of participant instructors and PDU head, POT process conducted in the current institution obviously showed a positive impact on the instructor's professional development and is proved as an effective and encouraging tool. Its contribution to their teaching, its practicality, and the applicability were assessed to have a deeper insight that may present possible effects and implications regarding its' future implementation in the current institution. The findings of the study showed a great correlation with the results of other studies of Donnelly (2007), Bell & Cooper (2013), Trotman (2015), or Santos' (2017) studies in which they also concluded POT as a constructive and fruitful professional development tool that enabled instructors to learn from this process as an observee and observer.

## **5.2. Conclusion Remarks and Pedagogical Implications**

The aim of this qualitative study was to investigate how POT might be conducted in a higher education institution, how instructors may benefit from it, how their teaching practices may improve. In doing so, the ideas and suggestions of the instructors and professional development unit head were also collected regarding this whole process as a professional development tool and a piloting project of large-scale POT process. The results of the study revealed significant arguments regarding to the aforementioned points.

The study carried out provided evidence of the effectiveness of use of peer observation of teaching at higher education institutions in which English is taught as a foreign language. Based on the findings of the study, some implications regarding to



designing and delivering can be offered about how to apply a POT process in a similar context to provide a moderate climate for instructors to develop themselves. During the POT process, it was found that instructors were highly motivated to take part in observation processes when they were given a scheduled planned and the themes they were asked to focus. In the previous system, while they were just told to conduct peer observations without any tools, they weren't willing enough to observe their peers to learn something, and this peer observation process hadn't been found as effective by the institution. Therefore, it can be suggested that POT process should be set within a more planned way with the use of appropriate tools created through a discussion with the participation of instructors and stakeholders concerning the needs of institution and teachers' professional development. Moreover, based on the researcher's personal observations and PDU head's sharing, this new systematic way of POT implication attracted instructors' attention and raised their willingness to participate in professional development activities that include collaboration and mutual development of instructors and institution. These observations regarding the systematic features of POT involving pre-observation, post observation discussion and use of an observation tool was also supported through the Donnelly (2007) and Clark's et al. (2010) studies. As Donnelly (2007) stated, 'POT scheme needs to have a clear structure with agreed purposes, procedures and outcomes, involving suitable preparation, follow-through, and rules of confidentiality.', instructors felt more powerful within a dynamic interaction that enables them to be creative, passionate and educated.

Even though this study offers an effective way of using POT in a higher education institution, there are some concerns which still needs to be adapted contextually and reformed for the quality of POT outcomes. The first concern is the training of the instructors regarding their capability of building a constructive criticism

through feedback sessions. As O'Sullivan et al. (1998) and Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond (2005) emphasized in their studies, participant instructors should be supported with enough training and related education before they start being a part of the peer observation. At that point, to conduct a detailed pre-training, PDUs or teacher trainers are supposed to take necessary precautions and as a solution, they need to offer regular trainings on how to conduct observations or give feedback in a constructive feedback. Otherwise, participant instructors may feel unconfident about giving or taking feedback, which occasionally faced during the implementation of this study. Instructors stated that they didn't feel really secure while giving feedback to their peers since the trainings that they had taken before the observations started did not spend enough time on how to give feedback. These observations are in line with the suggestions of Gosling (2009) and Siddiqui et al. (2007), who support the importance of pre-training on the components of peer observations.

Another feature of POT that needs to be adapted is planning of the duration of the POT process. While it should be kept longer and carried out not only in one semester, instructors' working conditions should also be taken into consideration. Aiming to get more accurate results regarding the positive change of teaching practices and effective responses for the evaluation of the process should not lead us to burden instructors with too much demand in a very short time. For instance, for the current institution, even though every step was applied smoothly and evaluated in detailed, it would be better to use POT through a year in order to support instructors' professional development through an evolving and constructive way by offering them a more flexible observation cycle opportunity and more time to give and take feedback. Additionally, participant instructors may have a bigger chance to observe their peers' progress more in an extended time. Similarly, as Çağlar (2013) stated, even though

duration should be set considering the needs and appropriate features of POT, the conditions of the institution and instructors should also be considered while arranging observation cycles.

Additionally, the study offers some valuable implications for the stakeholders who are principals, coordinators, Professional Development Units, and managers, as well. Use of POT as a professional development tool in an institution serves positive outcomes not only for instructors' own, but also for the spirit of institution and gaining a long-term qualified teaching. To this end, authorities should answer the needs of instructors and arrange their weekly plans in order to give them enough opportunity to observe their peers without any concerns such as timing, confidentiality, or fear of being criticized. Additionally, instructors' positive feelings would raise toward their institution if they were supported to create a collegial spirit which can only be provided with the regulations of stakeholders.

### **5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies**

The current study has several limitations.

The main limitation of the study is about its' sample size. Even if the study was designed as a case study, the sample size (4 instructors and 1 unit head) was very small and it might cause some reliability questions and narrow the scope of generalization of the study. Future studies may include more participants to be able to obtain more significant results that are open to generalizability.

Random and voluntary choice of the peers who take part in peer observation action is stated as a necessity of POT. The second limitation of the study was not having a random sampling and the participant instructors who were asked to take part in this study were offered by the coordinator and PDU head. As a result, this might be accepted as an ambiguity for the voluntariness rule of peer observation of teaching for the current

study. Hence, it can be suggested to have a random and voluntary sampling of the participant instructors' for POT process which may affect the results more positively.

The duration of the training session which is seen as a compulsory rule for the effectiveness of POT was limited in the current study. As another limitation, this situation may refrain instructors from showing an effective performance during discussions or personal reflections. Only two weeks were given for the training of teachers related to implication of POT and their questions related to how to give feedback before the lessons and observations started. It is strongly suggested for the further studies that the training sessions should be done within a longer period of time and in a systematic way.

Lastly, the number of the observations was another limitation of the study. The more observations could be conducted to obtain more data to investigate. However, as a result of unexpected holidays and exams two weeks of observation were cancelled, and total 6 weeks were available for instructors to observe each other and time constraints and lesson plans of teachers weren't available to conduct more than 2 observations in each week. The next studies may give more time for the observation cycles, and the duration of data collection might be longer in order to see instructors' progress better. Besides, instructors could have focused on different levels in a longer observation cycle to see on what type of aspects of teaching they focus on in a more frequent observation process.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Peer Observation Process Booklet

#### A RECIPROCAL PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING STUDY

Classroom observations are the most common evidences of the effectiveness of feedback. Observing lessons gives us a huge opportunity to understand the curriculum in a real environment and what learners face with on a daily basis. However, in many examples, this is poorly done and it becomes harder to observe real outcomes of these processes (Coe et al 2014). Schools are supposed to ensure that this observation process is vigorous, learnt clearly and shared and applied in an environment of trust and moderateness.

As Professional Development Unit, we have been applying observations during the modules. Moreover, to obtain deeper views, be capable of reflect on our own teachings and to be able to apply a more effective observation cycle, a new system is going to be established. With the purpose of managing to apply such a programme and piloting it, a 'Reciprocal Peer Observation of Teaching'(RPOT) group is going to be founded. As a trial and the evaluation of the planned system, the following procedures are going to be followed.

#### THE PROCESS

- a. Participants: 4 instructors chosen by the PDU and the Academic Coordinator at the end of the administrative observations and student reports.
- b. Duration: 6 Weeks (April 16<sup>th</sup>- June 4<sup>th</sup> )
- c. Steps : The process involves five steps:  
pre-observation briefing, peer observation ,short post observation discussions, post feedback journal, overall evaluation of the POT process within a group interview

**d. The Explanation of Each Step**

**1. PRE-OBSERVATION BRIEFING**

- a. Observed teacher gives a detailed lesson plan and chats with the observing teacher to confirm the objectives of the lesson.

**2. PEER OBSERVATION**

- a. Observing teacher takes notes to fill out the given handout during the lesson.

**3. SHORT POST OBSERVATION DISCUSSION**

- a. Observing teacher asks observed teacher how the lesson was.
- b. Observing teacher gives his/her feedback.

(This session will be audio-recorded.)

**4. POST FEEDBACK JOURNAL WRITING**

- a. Both teachers write their own reflections on the given feedback by using the prompting questions.

**5. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE POT PROCESS**

- a. Overall evaluation of the process is going to be examined through a group interview.



## Appendix B. First Formal Observation Themes Decided by the Stakeholders

Teaching characteristic
<p>1. <u>Organization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate selection of aims, objectives and content.</li><li>• Appropriate organization of content.</li><li>• Planning the use of resources and materials.</li></ul>
<p>2. <u>Presentation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Clear introduction</i></li><li>• <i>Continuity with other sessions and students' knowledge.</i></li><li>• <i>Clarity of aims and objectives.</i></li><li>• <i>Clarity of presentation and organization. Appropriate pace and timing.</i></li><li>• <i>Attempts to respond to student needs. Attitude to students (manner, style).</i></li><li>• <i>Ending the session.</i></li><li>• <i>Summary and reference to future work.</i></li></ul>
<p>3. <u>Teaching approach and aids</u></p> <p>General apparatus – Smart board, handouts, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choice of teaching/learning approach and its relevance to learner group.</li><li>• Methods used to check/evaluate learning. Choice and use of teaching activities.</li><li>• Effective use of question and answer. Encouragement of student interaction.</li></ul> <p>Management of the session, including opening and closure.</p>

- Feedback.
- Class management.
- Instructions to students.

4. Student response

- Level of participation.
- Level of attention and interest.
- Learning atmosphere.
- Student attitude and ability to carry out classwork.
- Awareness of individual needs.
- Were learning problems identified and overcome?

5. General observations

- Was effective communication achieved?
- Was there good student-teacher rapport?
- Were the objectives achieved? Appropriateness of teaching/learning methods?

**Appendix C**

**Peer-Observation Themes**

ENGAGING LEARNER	LEARNING	LESSON STRUCTURE	TEACHING TECHNIQUES	RESOURCES AND MATERIALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Active Involvement</li> <li>b. Student Interest</li> <li>c. Feedback</li> <li>d. Critical Thinking Skills</li> <li>e. Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Nature of Learning Environment (Controlled/Relaxed)</li> <li>b. Appropriate for Objectives/Pacing</li> <li>c. Scaffolding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Organization</li> <li>b. Timing</li> <li>c. Sequencing</li> <li>d. Planning</li> <li>e. Transition</li> <li>f. Individual, Pair and Group Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Instructions</li> <li>b. Error Correction</li> <li>c. Connections</li> <li>d. Teacher Talking Time (TTT)</li> <li>e. Evaluative / Questioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use of Smart Board</li> <li>b. Use of Extra Materials</li> <li>c. Use of Course Book</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

## Pre-Observation Form

### PRE-OBSERVATION FORM

Name:	Date of Lesson:
Observer(s):	Type of Lesson:
Level:	Book:

#### 1. Aims of the lesson

As an outcome,

- Students will...

#### 2. Anticipated problems regarding this lesson and solutions:

Problems:

- 

Solutions:

- 

#### 3. Materials and aids:

- 

#### 4. Other Comments

**RECIPROCAL PEER OBSERVATION FORM**

The main purpose of this form serving a progressive change. As an observer during the planned peer-observation, you should use this form.

<b>Name of the observe:</b>	<b>Name of the observer:</b>
<b>Date of the observation:</b>	
<b>Number of Students:</b>	<b>Number of Observation:</b>
1. In what ways does the instructor engage learners in learning?	
2. In what ways does the instructor meet the needs of learning?	
3. How is the lesson structure planned?	
4. How are the instructor's teaching techniques applied?	
5. How does the instructor use resources and materials?	
6. Do you have any other comments for the observation?	



## Appendix F

## Post Observation Reflective Journals

The aim of this form is to reflect on your own observation as an observee and an observer. This will serve a useful record of the important features of the Peer-Observation of Teaching Project. With this purpose, please feel comfortable to reflect on how you feel and think about the given questions. The information you give and your names will remain confidential.

As an observee;	As an observer;
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What did you realize about your teaching?</li><li>2. What weaknesses of yours did you realize?</li><li>3. What strengths of yours did you realize?</li><li>4. How do you think the feedback you receive from your colleague was beneficial?</li><li>5. How do you think it will contribute to your prospective teaching?</li><li>6. Did you benefit previous feedback you received from your colleague in your current teaching?</li><li>7. How did you feel receiving feedback about your teaching?</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How did you feel giving feedback to your colleague about her teaching?</li><li>2. What strengths / weaknesses did you realize?</li><li>3. How do you think your observation of others will improve your own teaching?</li><li>4. How did giving feedback affect your own teaching?</li><li>5. Have you realized any difference in your colleagues teaching after giving feedback?</li></ol>

**THE PROJECT OF PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING****INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO THE HEAD OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
UNIT**

The aim of this interview to get basic information and the perception of the professional development unit towards the project of peer observation of teaching. This will serve a useful record of the important features of the Peer-Observation of Teaching Project.

With this purpose, please feel comfortable to reflect on how you feel and think about the given questions. The information you give and your names will remain confidential.

- 1.** Why do you want to establish a Professional Development Unit in your preparatory programme?
- 2.** How did you decide your principles as professional development unit?
- 3.** Why do you want to conduct a peer observation program as a professional development tool?
- 4.** What were the first reactions of the instructors who didn't attend the peer observation programme?
- 5.** How have the attitudes and classroom practices of the teachers who attended peer observation of teaching process changed?
- 6.** How did giving and taking feedback affect your instructors?
- 7.** How did working in a reciprocal and collaborative environment affect your instructors' behaviour and academic awareness?
- 8.** What strengths and weaknesses did you realize as professional development unit at the end of this project?