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**DEVELOPING EFL INSTRUCTORS' REFLECTIVE TEACHING THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH AND PEER OBSERVATION**

THESIS BY
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We **certify** that thesis under the title of “**DEVELOPING EFL INSTRUCTORS’ REFLECTIVE TEACHING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH AND PEER OBSERVATION**” is satisfactory for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts** in the Department of **English Language Teaching**.

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ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE OKUTMANLARININ YANSITICI ÖĞRETİMLERİNİN ORTAK EYLEM ARAŞTIRMASI VE AKRAN GÖZLEMLERİ YOLUYLA GELİŞTİRİLMESİ

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Bu çalışma özellikle ortak eylem araştırması ve akran gözlemi programlarına katılmanın İngilizce okutmanlarının yansıtıcı öğretim uygulamalarına katkısı ile ilgilidir. Bir çok profesyonel gelişim programı eğitimcilerin kendi sınıf uygulamalarını analiz etmesi gerektiğine dikkati çekmeye başlamıştır ki bu da yansıtıcı öğretim konusuna yakından bakmayı kaçınılmaz kılmıştır. Bu düşünceyle, okutmanlara kendi öğretim ortamlarından bağımsız mesleki gelişim aktiviteleri sunmaktansa, onların şuan ki öğretim ortamları ile doğrudan ilgisi olan bir program önerdik. Çalışmaya bir bay ve beş bayan İngilizce okutmanı katıldı. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, yansıtma formları, işbirlikçi günlükler ve araştırmacının alan notları yoluyla toplanan veriler içerik analizinden geçirildi ve “öz yansıtma,” “öz farkındalık,” ve “kendini geliştirme” kategorileri altında incelendi. Sonuçlar bu araçların okutmanları kendi doğal ortamlarında belirli durumlar üzerinde düşüncelerine teşvik ederek yansıtıcı düşüncelerine katkı sağladığını ve “hem geçmişin bir penceresi hem de geleceğe açılan bir kapı” (Larrivee, 2006, p.21) işlevini gördüğünü ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yansıtıcı Öğretim, Ortak Eylem Araştırması, Akran Gözlemi, İşbirlikçi Günlükler

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING EFL INSTRUCTORS' REFLECTIVE TEACHING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH AND PEER OBSERVATION

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This study is specifically concerned with the contributions of involving in collaborative action research and peer observation program to EFL instructors' reflective practice. The fact that many teacher development programs have started to highlight the importance of educators' analyzing their classroom practices and making necessary changes in their teaching has made it inevitable to look closely on reflective teaching. To this end, rather than providing instructors with professional development activities isolated from their everyday teaching practices, we suggested a program which has direct relation to their present teaching contexts. One male, six female EFL instructors participated in the study. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the reflections forms, the collaborative journals and the researcher's field notes were exposed to content analysis and they were analyzed under the categories of self-reflection, self-awareness and self-development. Results revealed that these tools contributed to the reflective practice of instructors by encouraging them to think about certain situations in their natural setting to offer "both a window of the past and a gateway to the future" (Larrivee, 2006, p.21).

Key words: Reflective Teaching, Collaborative Action Research, Peer Observation,
Collaborative Journals

ABBREVIATIONS

AR : Action Research

CAR : Collaborative Action Research

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

STT : Student Talking Time

TTT : Teacher Talking Time

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Structure for Production of Reflective Writing.....	20
Table 2. Elif’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	38
Table 3. Elif’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	39
Table 4. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	40
Table 5. Elif’s Reflective Notes 1.....	40
Table 6. Elif’s Reflective Forms 2.....	41
Table 7. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	41
Table 8. Elif’s Problem-Solving Notes.....	42
Table 9. Elif’s Reflective Forms 3.....	43
Table 10. Elif’s Action Plan Notes.....	43
Table 11. Elif’s Action Research Results.....	44
Table 12. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	44
Table 13. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	46
Table 14. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	46
Table 15. Elif’s Post Study Interview Statements.....	46
Table 16. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	46
Table 17. Melike’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	48
Table 18. Melike’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	48
Table 19. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	49
Table 20. Melike’s Reflective Forms 1.....	50
Table 21. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	50
Table 22. Melike’s Problem-Solving Notes.....	51
Table 23. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	51
Table 24. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	52
Table 25. Melike’s Reflection Forms 2.....	52
Table 26. Melike’s Reflection Form 3.....	53
Table 27. Melike’s Action Research Results.....	53
Table 28. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	53
Table 29. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	54
Table 30. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	54

Table 31. Hajar’s Pre-Study Interview Statement	56
Table 32. Hajar’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	56
Table 33. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	57
Table 34. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	57
Table 35. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	58
Table 36. Hajar’s Reflection Form 1	58
Table 37. Action Plan of Hajar	59
Table 38. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	59
Table 39. Hajar’s Action Research Results.....	60
Table 40. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	60
Table 41. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	62
Table 42. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements	62
Table 43. Dilara’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	62
Table 44. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements	63
Table 45. Dilara’s Post Study Interview Statements	63
Table 46. Dilara’s Reflection Form	64
Table 47. Dilara’s Problem Solving Plan.....	64
Table 48. Dilara’s Reflection Form 2	65
Table 49. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements	65
Table 50. Dilara’s Action Research Results.....	66
Table 51. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements	66
Table 52. Ekrem’s Pre-Study Interview Statements	68
Table 53. Ekrem’s Pre-Study Interview Statements	68
Table 54. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements	69
Table 55. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements	69
Table 56. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements	70
Table 57. Ekrem’s Problem-Solving Notes.....	70
Table 58. Ekrem’s Reflection Form Entry 1	71
Table 59. Ekrem’s Action Research Results.....	71
Table 60. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements	72
Table 61. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements	72

Table 62. Tuğçe’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	74
Table 63. Tuğçe’s Pre-Study Interview Statements.....	74
Table 64. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	75
Table 65. Tuğçe’s Reflection Form 1	75
Table 66. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	76
Table 67. Tuğçe’s Problem Solving Notes.....	76
Table 68. Tuğçe’s Reflection Form 2	76
Table 69. Tuğçe’s Action Research Results.....	77
Table 70. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements.....	77

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Progressive Problem Solving with Action Research.....	14
Figure 2. Peer Observation of Teaching: Framework of Purposes and Processes	22
Figure 3. Peer Observation Cycle of Team 1	32
Figure 4. Peer Observation Cycle of Team 2.....	33
Figure 5. Peer Observation Process 1	34
Figure 6. Collaborative Action Research Process	35
Figure 7. Summary of the study.....	37
Figure 8. Elif's Journal Entry-2	47
Figure 9. Melike's Journal Entry-3.....	55
Figure 10. Dilara's Journal Entry 2	67
Figure 11. Ekrem's Journal Entry 2.....	73
Figure 12. Tuğçe's Journal Entry 2	78

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER	i
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ÖZET	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xi

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background to the Study.....	3
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3. Aim of the Study	6
1.4. Research Questions	7
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6. Definitions of the Terms	7

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
2.1. Reflective Teaching	9
2.1.1. Reflection ‘in’ and ‘on’ ‘for’ ‘within’ practice.....	11
2.1.1.1. Reflection-in-action.....	11
2.1.1.2. Reflection-on-action.....	12
2.1.1.3. Reflection-for-action	12
2.1.1.4. Reflection-within.....	12
2.2. Methods of Reflections	13
2.2.1. Action Research	13
2.2.1.1. Collaborative Action Research.....	15
2.2.1.2. The Process of Collaborative Action Research	17

2.2.2. Reflective Journal Writing	19
2.2.3. Peer Observation	21

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY	25
3.1. Research Questions	25
3.2. Participants	25
3.3. Research Design	25
3.4. Data Collection Instruments	26
3.4.1. Interviews	27
3.4.2. Pre-observation Forms	27
3.4.3. Observation Forms	28
3.4.4. Post-observation and Reflection Forms	28
3.4.5. Collaborative Journal	28
3.4.6. Researcher’s Field Notes	29
3.5. Data Analysis	30
3.6. Procedures	31

CHAPTER IV

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	38
4.1. Elif	38
4.1.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Elif’s Professional Development	38
4.1.1.1. Before the Study	38
4.1.1.2. After the Study	39
4.1.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Elif’s Reflective Thought	42
4.1.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Elif’s Reflective Teaching	46
4.2. Melike	47
4.2.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Melike’s Professional Development	48
4.2.1.1. Before the Study	48

4.2.1.2. After the Study.....	49
4.2.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Melike’s Reflective Thought	50
4.2.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Melike’s Reflective Teaching.....	53
4.3. Hajar.....	56
4.3.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Hajar’s Professional Development.....	56
4.3.1.1. Before the Study	55
4.3.1.2. After the Study.....	57
4.3.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Hajar’s Reflective Thought	58
4.3.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Hajar’s Reflective Teaching.....	60
4.4. Dilara.....	62
4.4.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Dilara’s Professional Development.....	62
4.4.1.1. Before the Study	62
4.4.1.2. After the Study.....	62
4.4.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Dilara’s Reflective Teaching.....	64
4.4.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Dilara’s Reflective Teaching.....	66
4.5. Ekrem.....	67
4.5.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Ekrem’s Professional Development.....	67
4.5.1.1. Before the Study	67
4.5.1.2. After the Study.....	68
4.5.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Ekrem’s Reflective Teaching.....	69

4.5.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals’ to Ekrem’s Reflective Teaching.....	71
4.6. Tuğçe.....	73
4.6.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Tuğçe’s Professional Development.....	73
4.6.1.1. Before the Study	73
4.6.1.2. After the Study.....	74
4.6.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Tuğçe’s Reflective Teaching.....	76
4.6.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Tuğçe’s Reflective Teaching.....	77
CHAPTER V	
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	79
5.1. Summary of the Study.....	79
5.2. Summary of the Main Findings.....	80
5.3. Implications and Recommendations for Future Studies	84
5.4. Limitations of the Study.....	86
6. REFERENCES	87
7. APPENDICES.....	93
7.1. Appendix 1: The Schedule.....	93
7.2. Appendix 2: Pre-Study Interview Questions	95
7.3. Appendix 3: Peer Observation Forms.....	96
7.4. Appendix 4: Action Research Forms	105
7.5. Appendix 5: Collaborative Journal Topics.....	109
7.6. Appendix 6: Post-Study Interview Questions	111

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

“Begin with the end in mind.” (Covey, 1989, p. 46)

In his influential work, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey defines beginning with the end in mind as starting each day or task with “a clear understanding of your destination” (1989, p.46). This definition actually goes along with both specifying one’s targets and taking action to put them into practice in a planned manner. According to Covey, “If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster” (1989, p.46).

Only when we discover our values and life goals can we achieve the best results in our life. Florida Department of Education puts forward that “If educators are to successfully prepare students for the future, they must be prepared for the future themselves” (1998, p.1). According to them, schools and districts are also responsible for the development of their staff and they must be committed to offering the highest quality professional development opportunities for their teachers (ibid.).

With the explosive growth of technology, the knowledge and skill requirements of students are changing each passing day. Teachers, as it is the case with students, continually need to keep up with the new information and improve their teaching. Therefore, professional development is considered as “an essential mechanism for deepening teachers’ content knowledge and developing their teaching practices” (Smith & Desimone, 2003, p.119).

As Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) point out, teachers are required to learn to teach in ways that support “higher-order thinking and performance” and to be able to help students learn the more complex and analytical skills they need for the 21st century (p.1). In order to develop such skills, teachers need to have “ongoing access to technical skills, complex knowledge, sophisticated tools, and research-based techniques” (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft & Goe, 2011), to make sure that “they are- and continue to be- successful with all students” (ibid.).

Research shows that “only since the 1980s, teachers have been expected to continue to learn over the course of their careers as a consequence of changing economic, social, and educational developments” (Beijaard, Korthagen, & Verloop, 2007, Hargreaves, 2000, cited in Vries et al, 2013, p.79). Until then, the main form of professional development offered to teachers was staff development or in-service training, which usually consisted of one-shot

workshops or short-term courses (Scheerens, 2010, Villegas- Reimers, 2003, cited in S.de Vries et.al, 2013). Although those activities involved new information on teaching, they were usually unrelated to teachers' actual practices. Villegas (2003) states that:

Only in the past few years has the professional development of teachers been considered a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession (p.12).

As a consequence, such in-service activities have been challenged since the early 1990s and new approaches are argued in the relevant literature (Kedzior & Fifield, 2004, Varela 2012, Guskey, 1995). One of them comes from Varela who concludes that the in-service activities or events, that most schools provide turn teachers into passive learners and in this format teachers become novice learners, lectured on "how to do it right" but never shown how new strategies work in action (2012, p.17). Additionally, Kedzior and Fifield (2004) note that there can be no "one size fits all" approach to effective teacher professional development. Hence, it is crucial to pay attention to the needs of particular teachers in particular settings (Guskey, 1995, cited in Kedzior, 2004). As it is apparent from above, there has been a need for more powerful professional development activities.

With regard to this, Harwell (2003) draws attention to the importance of development activities that allow teachers to acquire and practice new skills over time and summarizes the characteristics of effective professional development and factors that contribute to its success as follows:

Context (or setting)

- Supports professional development and the changes it is intended to bring about
- Is characterized by a shared sense of need for change
- Its teaching professionals agree on answers to basic questions regarding the nature of learning and the teacher's role in the classroom
- Its teaching professionals consider learning a communal activity

Content

- Deepens teachers' subject matter knowledge
- Sharpens classroom skills
- Is up to date with respect to both subject matter and education in general
- Contributes new knowledge to the profession

- Increases the ability to monitor student work
- Addresses the identified gaps in student achievement
- Centers on subject matter, pedagogical weaknesses within the organization, measurement of student performance, and inquiry regarding locally relevant professional questions
- Focuses on (and is delivered using) proven instructional strategies

Process

- Is research-based
- Is based on sound educational practice such as contextual teaching
- Supports interaction among teachers
- Takes place over extended periods of time
- Provides opportunities for teachers to try new behaviors in safe environments and receive feedback from peers (p.8).

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) also highlight that, “the most useful professional development emphasizes active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection rather than abstract discussions” (cited in Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009, p.46). Thus, it seems obvious that rather than providing teachers with activities isolated from everyday classroom practices; professional development programs must have direct relation to educators’ present teaching contexts and help them make meaningful changes in their practices.

1.1. Background to the Study

As stated above, although the benefits of professional development programs are frequently highlighted in teacher development literature, the opportunities that practitioners receive are mostly limited to abstract discussions. Harwell (2003) states that:

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed the coming and going of many initiatives designed to achieve that end—through the restructuring of schools and programs and the development of standards, curricula, teaching materials, and, yes, standardized assessments. Yet, in spite of the billions of dollars spent, student performance has been affected very little. The main reason for that failure is that too little attention has been paid to what actually goes on in the classroom (p.1).

For the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, a research was conducted to explore teachers’ teaching methods by videotaping them in the classroom. The results showed

that “regardless of the structure of the school or the culture of the community, teachers continue to use very traditional teaching methods” (Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, and Serrano, 1999 as cited in Harwell, 2003, p.1-2). At this point, it becomes important to look for ways to support teacher education with more effective tools, as the traditional ones have not addressed the personal and professional needs of educators.

Regarding this, Bartlett (1990, cited in McCabe et.al 2009) claims that “initial teacher training involves more than skills and competencies, and that teachers need to be equipped with the tools that will enable them to analyze their own classroom practices and make adjustments to the teaching and learning environment”(p.2).

More recently, many teacher development programs have started to highlight the importance of educators’ analyzing their classroom practices and making necessary changes in their teaching. Accordingly, this has made it inevitable to look closely on reflective teaching.

According to Liakopoulou (2012) reflective teaching is “looking at what you do in the classroom and thinking about why you do it”(p.43). In his work *How We Think*, Dewey (1993, p.9) brings a broader stance by conceptualizing reflection as “more than simply the recall of past events but the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends” (cited in Jones& Jones 2013, p.74). Dewey (1993) believes that for reflection to be a favorable practice it must meet four criteria:

1. It must enable the learner to make connections between ideas, abstract relationships, and other experiences and ideas.
2. It must be systematic and intentional.
3. It must be a social activity, completed through interaction with others.
4. It must be viewed as a means of personal growth and continued improvement (p.9).

From the viewpoint of Dewey, reflective thought is “a systematic, disciplined, and rigorous way of thinking”. For him, thinking is widely a “natural process” and accordingly, reflective thinking needs to be taught and practices (ibid.).

Due to the fact that reflection has been recognized as a key component of teacher education (Jones& Jones, 2013), it is clear that reflective teaching deserves to be taught and employed as a professional development tool.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The School of Foreign Languages of Melikşah University provides its instructors with many professional development opportunities such as, ELT conferences, workshops and seminars, microteaching practices, and webinars. The instructors consider all of these development activities useful and they are mostly supportive of such kind of professional development programs. However, as a consequence of having limited time for such programs, workshops are the most common professional development program-taking place at Melikşah University. Yet when we take a look at the current literature, we can see that “workshop is the most criticized form” (Garet et al., 2001, p.920). Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love & Stiles (1998, pp. 42-43,) define workshops as in the following:

A workshop is a structured approach to professional development that occurs outside the teacher's own classroom. It generally involves a leader or leaders with special expertise and participants who attend sessions at scheduled times-often after school, on the weekend, or during the summer (cited in Garet et al. 2001, p.920).

They further explain that, “although traditional forms of professional development are quite common, they are widely criticized as being ineffective in providing teachers with sufficient time, activities, and content necessary for increasing teacher's knowledge and fostering meaningful changes in their classroom practice (ibid.).

As Liston & Zeichner put forward (1996), “There are numerous institutional constraints that increase the complexity of teachers’ work such as the lack of time, high teacher-pupil ratios, and pressure to cover a required and broadly defined curriculum” (p.12). Above-mentioned constraints are also true for the instructors of Melikşah University and similarly, they do not have time to reflect on their teaching. Despite having a considerable amount of knowledge about reflective teaching, they are sometimes unable to transfer that knowledge into their teaching. They feel “a necessity to act quickly in this fast-paced and constraining classroom environment” (Liston & Zeichner, 1996, 12, cited in Özmen, 2007, p.3).

It is now a worldwide requirement in many higher education institutions that all academic staff undergo a peer observation of teaching each academic year (Byrne & Brown & Cahllen, 2010). Despite being quite popular in the world, it is not possible to say that peer observation programs are being implemented widely in Turkey including Melikşah University.

Having realized the need for ongoing development activities, which will take place during the regular school day within the process of classroom instruction, the researcher designed a professional development program to explore the effectiveness of collaborative action research, peer observation and collaborative journal keeping as reflective tools. As current scheduling at Melikşah University does not provide extra time for stopping and thinking about their teaching, it has been observed that instructors are missing the opportunities to learn from each other and gain insight into their teaching.

Since peer observation and action research are considered to potentially foster reflection in educators, the researcher suggested utilizing them as needed professional developmental activities for the instructors of Meliksah University and designed a program in which instructors would work collaboratively to develop their reflective practices.

1.3. Aim of the Study

It is a well-known fact that most teachers one way or another think about their teaching either at the beginning or at the end of a teaching period. They talk to their colleagues about their classes and exchange ideas. However, there is a misunderstanding about reflective teaching. Many people think that it is simply remembering past events. Yet reflective teaching means more than “fleeting thoughts” before, during, or after a lesson (Farrell, 2012). It basically means examining what you do in the classroom and trying to figure out why you do it. By thinking about the objectives of the lessons and seeing if the teaching practices are consistent with these objectives, educators are able to analyze and evaluate their practice and also explore ways to improve them.

In the context of developing practitioners, Alger (2006) suggests, “reflection could be fostered through activities such as action research, case studies, microteaching and reflective writing assignments” (cited in McCabe et al. 2009, p.2)

With regard to this, the present study aims to investigate the experiences of a group of six EFL instructors who were engaged in a twelve-week professional development program including collaborative action research and a peer observation program. In an attempt to facilitate instructors’ reflective teaching, they were encouraged to take part in the peer observation program, which includes observing each other’s teaching, having meetings and discussions about the observations and reflecting on their practices. With an aim to encourage more reflective thought, they were also stimulated to write collaborative journals

along with the peer observations. It was hoped that these reflective tools would support the instructors' reflective practices in the Melikşah University context.

1.4. Research Questions

This study is an attempt to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the contributions of peer observation as a reflective tool to EFL instructors' professional development?
2. What are the contributions of being involved in a collaborative action research cycle to EFL instructors' reflective thought?
3. Does involvement in a collaborative journal writing foster reflective thought?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Bozak, Yıldırım & Demirtaş (2011, p.67) noted that the "Turkey National Ministry of Education (2007) let teachers apply coaching and permitted peer observation in order to improve teachers' professional capabilities". Although some teachers within school activities have unofficially applied this method, it has not been implemented officially in the education system of Turkey (ibid.).

As peer observation and action research are gaining their recognition as effective professional development activities, it was thought important to investigate the instructors' perceptions, reactions and changes after joining such programs. By doing so, it would be possible to learn how these tools could be practiced effectively in a Turkish university context and to what extent they would enhance instructors' professional growth.

Another significance of this study is that by participating in collaborative action research, instructors could increase their repertoire of teaching by cooperating with their peers and, at the same time, it would nurture their reflective teaching culture.

Because the data received from the study is directly related to reflective thinking, this practice might help instructors gain insights into their teaching. In addition to this, the present study is expected to reveal the concerns and obstacles encountered during this professional development program. Owing to this, it would be possible to make recommendations for future planning of such kind of reflective teaching programs at Melikşah University.

1.6. Definitions of the Terms

Professional Development: Professional development is defined as "activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (OECD, 2009, p.19). The terms "teacher development" and "professional development" are used

to refer to the activities, which help teachers have and maintain a high standard teaching throughout their career.

Reflective Teaching: The term refers to one's critically analyzing and evaluating his or her teaching in order to develop it. Ajayi (2011) defines critical reflection as "an educational imagination that allows candidates to look at themselves and their situations with new eyes, and in the process, become conscious of the multiple ways they can interpret, critique, challenge, confront, and reconstruct teaching" (p.170).

Action Research: Action research is related to the ideas of "reflective practice" and "the teacher as researcher" (Burns, 2010, p.2). According to Burns, "action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts" (2010, p.2). In this study, action research is defined as the process of educators looking closely at their teaching to see an area which could be better done and working on it with an aim to develop new ideas and alternatives (ibid.).

Collaborative Action Research (CAR): Sagor (1992) suggests, "collaborative action research involves people who want to do something to improve their situation" (p.7). In this type of research, teachers work within groups rather than as individuals to share common problems, and "work cooperatively as a research community to examine their existing assumptions, values, beliefs within the sociopolitical cultures of the institutions in which they work" (Burns 1999, p.13).

Peer Observation: Peer observation refers to "a teacher or other observer closely watching and monitoring a language lesson or a part of a lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning, or classroom interaction" (Richards & Farrell, 2005 p.85). In this study, peer observation is approached in a reflective context where "it is not carried out in order to judge the teaching of others, but to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness about one's own teaching" (Cosh, 1998, p. 25).

Collaborative Journals: Collaborative journaling creates a ground where teachers and/or learners discuss some problems or difficulties and listen to one another sincerely and sympathetically (Brinton et al. 1993; Gebhard, 2005a; Gebhard & Nagamine, 2005; Porter et al. 1990; Schneider, 1991, cited in Nagamine 2007). After reading the problems or difficulties addressed in a collaborative journal, the participants work in cooperation to decide which action might be taken to solve those problems and change the current situation.

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Reflective Teaching

Reflection and reflective teaching have been investigated extensively in the literature (Schön, 1983, Dewey, 1933, Rodgers, 2002, Lee 2005, cited in Sempowicz, 2012). Besides being well argued in the literature, reflective practice has also become a requirement for various fields of professional practice and education. Despite having considerable attention in the literature and gaining acceptance of its merits, it is difficult to say that teachers have an overall understanding of it. This situation brings up the questions of “What is reflection and why reflective teaching is important?”

Richards (1991) defines reflection or critical reflection as “an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose” (p.1). He further explains the reflection as “a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action” (ibid.). As seen from the definitions, reflection means looking back and taking into account the things happened in a particular time and reviewing them with the purpose of improving them.

At this point, it can be said that reflection is a necessity for educators if they pursue professional growth. There are many reasons for educators to be reflective on their teaching. Larrivee (2006, p.1) draws attention to the growing diversity among today’s students and suggests, “a teacher has to accommodate and adjust to this greater range of differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, developmental levels, motivation to learn, and achievement.” According to them, to be able to answer “this vast array of students’ needs” calls for teachers who are reflective.

As cited in Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010, p.44.) it is possible for teachers “to diagnose and understand their classroom contexts and students’ learning better, put their students’ learning at the heart of the teaching-learning process, develop a rationale for their teaching and take informed specific actions and make sound decisions in the classroom.” In other words, central to the reflective teaching process is “the questioning of personal beliefs/ values, and assumptions”(Minott, 2011, p.133).

It seems clear that as well as being a cognitive process, reflection enables teachers to

examine their experiences and make informed decisions of their practices. It can also help them to take control of their teaching by breaking the routines. As stressed by Larrivee (2006), although having a regular way of teaching helps educators achieve particular goals, “if teachers become slaves to routine they eventually come to feel powerless to influence their future careers” (p.1).

Liakopoulou (2012) states, “a basic condition for each teacher developing personal theory about teaching and utilizing knowledge in practice and perceiving and managing the complexity of the teaching process, is ability to analyze the teaching process and to reflect on it” (p.42). In addition, Ajayi (2011) defines critical reflection as “an educational imagination that allows candidates to look at themselves and their situations with new eyes, and in the process, become conscious of the multiple ways they can interpret, critique, challenge, confront, and reconstruct teaching” (p.170).

Larrivee (2006, p.4) bring together the definitions of reflective practices of the past two decades as follows:

Reflective practice is:

- A dialogue of thinking and doing through which one becomes more skilled (Schön, 1987).
- A process that helps teachers think about what happened, why it happened, and what else could have been done to reach their goals (Cruikshank & Applegate, 1981).
- An inquiry approach that involves a personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2001).
- The practice of analyzing one’s actions, decisions, or products by focusing on one’s process for achieving them (Killion & Todnem, 1991).
- A critical, questioning orientation and a deep commitment to the discovery and analysis of information concerning the quality of a professional’s designed action (Bright, 1996).
- A willingness to accept responsibility for one’s professional practice (Ross, 1990).
- A systematic and comprehensive data-gathering process enriched by dialogue and collaborative effort (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

- The use of higher-level thinking, such as critical inquiry and metacognition, which allow one to move beyond a focus on isolated facts or data to perceive a broader context for understanding behavior and events (Hatton & Smith, 1995).
- The capacity to think creatively, imaginatively and, eventually, self-critically about classroom practice (Lasley, 1992).
- An ongoing process of examining and refining practice, variously focused on the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, societal, and/or ethical contexts associated with professional work (Cole & Knowles, 2000).

Taking into account the above stated definitions; we can conclude that reflection is truly not simply thinking about the past events, but examining to make them better. Teachers are expected to consider the potential influence of reflective practice on their teaching as well as trying to get the qualifications of a reflective practitioner.

2.1.1. Reflection ‘in’ and ‘on’ ‘for’ ‘within’ practice

Much of the literature around reflective practice identifies two types of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. This distinction was initially made by Schön in 1983 and took its place in many reflection definitions. However when we investigate the more recent literature, we can see that Schön was followed by Killion and Todnem (1991) with their concept of reflection-for-action and York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, and Montie (2001) with their addition of reflection-within (cited in Larrivee 2006, p.16). Larrivee thinks that these four different directions can guide reflection since one can reflect in the present (in), reflect back (on), reflect forward (for action) or reflect within (2006).

2.1.1.1. Reflection-in-action

Finlay (2008, p.3) explains that with reflection-in-action, professionals are seen as examining their experiences and responses as they occur. To put it in another way it is thinking while doing. Schön (1983) argued that:

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation, which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings, which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment, which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (p.68).

As it is obvious from his statements, reflection-in-action requires practitioners take time to think about the situations happening in their classes, in the course of teaching, to build new understandings regarding their teaching.

2.1.1.2. Reflection-on-action

In the case of reflection-on-action, “professionals are understood consciously to review, describe, analyze and evaluate their past practice with a view to gaining insight to improve future practice” (Finlay 2008, p.3). It can simply be described as thinking after the event takes place. In Schön’s view (1983), “we reflect *on* action, thinking back on what we have done” with the intention of finding out “how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome” (p.26). Thus, it can be explained as planning the things, which will be covered before the lesson and considering the things occurred during the instruction after the lesson in order to shape future actions.

2.1.1.3. Reflection-for-action

Killion and Todnem (1991) put forward that reflection-for-action is “the desired outcome of both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.” They further explain that “reflection is not so much for the purpose of revisiting the past or becoming aware of our metacognitive processes, but to guide future action” (cited in Larrivee, 2006, p.17). Apparently, reflection-for-action means examining the past actions with the intention of altering them for the better. According to Larrivee (2006, p.17), teachers consult this kind of reflection when they already realized that they need to alter something, such as relationships with a student, or a task structure to enhance participation. As it can be seen, teachers depart from dissatisfaction in their learning environment and look for ways to achieve more desirable outcomes.

2.1.1.4. Reflection-within

Larrivee (2006, p.17) suggests that in this form of reflection, “teachers might question what is preventing them from taking action or keeping their perspective limited.” These questions might be:

What were my intentions when I did that?

What triggered such an emotionally charged response?

Am I considering alternative explanations for what happened with Maria? (ibid.).

In other words, it is looking critically at one’s own teaching to see the idea behind his actions and analyzing them in detail.

2.2. Methods of Reflections

According to Surgenor (2011), “teaching changes from one context to the next and the skills teachers develop in one tutorial session may be markedly different from those required in another, or while demonstrating, or in a lecturing environment” (p.4). For him, qualified academics persistently reflect on their practices, critically analyze and assess their work since there is no ‘teaching template’ (ibid.). There are a couple of methods to help teachers reflect on their teaching as described below.

2.2.1. Action Research

In recent years, there has been a growing popularity among teachers towards implementing action research (AR) in their classrooms. As many language teachers show great interest in AR, it becomes more important to take a look what makes it so prevalent and what does it offer to the reflective teachers.

Burns (2010, p.1) states that “language teachers all around the world want to be effective teachers who provide the best learning opportunities for their students”.

She claims “action research can be a very valuable way to extend our teaching skills and gain more understanding of our students and ourselves.”

According to this methodology, teachers take the role of researchers. They begin to explore their own teaching context and reflect on it. Dick (2002) puts forward that; it is a natural way of acting and researching at the same time. We do something. We check if it worked as expected. If it didn't, we analyze what happened and what we might do differently. If necessary we repeat the process.

Act-> review->act->review...

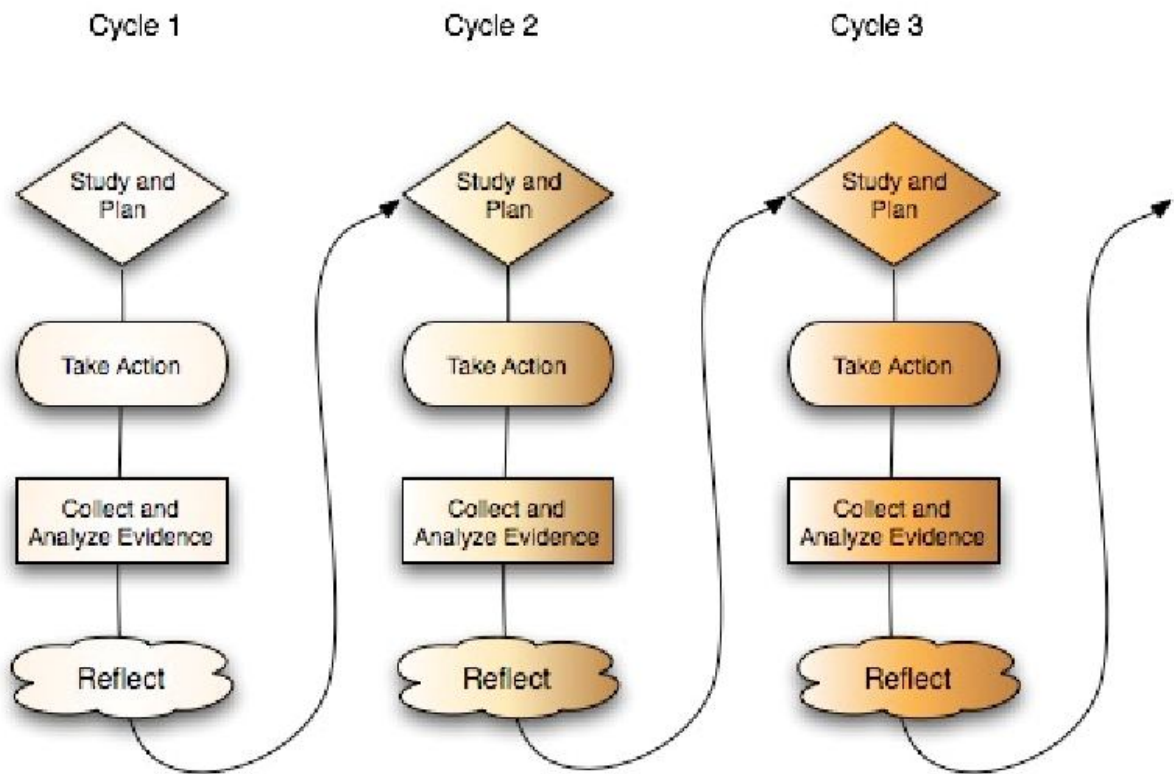


Figure 1. Progressive Problem Solving with Action Research (Riel, 2010)

Each process requires an action and reflection. While reflecting, the central point is to review what happened previously and then plan what to do next.

Dick (1993) defines action research as “a methodology,” having two-way aims of ‘action’, and ‘research’ (para. 2).

Action to bring about a change in some community or organization or program,

Research to increase understanding on the part of the researcher or the client, or both (and often some wider community).

Similarly, Dick notes that some characteristics of action research support the action while some supporting the research. There are also some stand for the "and" -- they help the action and the research fit together (1993, para. 6).

Taking into consideration the individual context within which teachers work, AR can be an advantage in overcoming difficulties teachers face or each classroom with its students, curriculum, and atmosphere. In this sense, AR can be a great help for teachers as it provides

solutions to the problems from an insider's point of view. As cited in Ferrance (2000), it is based on the following assumptions:

- Teachers and principals work best on problems they have identified for themselves.
- Teachers and principals become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently
- Teachers and principals help each other by working collaboratively
- Working with colleagues help teachers and principals in their professional development (Watts, 1985, p.118).

Apparently, collaboration between teachers and principals generates commitment. Dick puts forward that “when deciders and doers are different, this may result in lack of enthusiasm on the part of the doers” (Dick, 2002, para. 7). On the contrary, AR's main focus is to remove the gap between deciders and doers.

Mostly, the starting point of AR is thought as seeking for a solution to a problem in class. However, the process can also result in understanding one's practice better. In this case, as well as having a traditional research attitude by assisting practitioners with the factors influencing their teaching, it also holds “a flexible and situation-sensitive methodology, which provides rigor, authenticity, and the right to vote” (Maksimovic & Bandur 2013, p.610).

Despite having popularity, AR can be misunderstood from some aspects. Researchers highlight that is important to know what AR is not. Ferrance emphasizes “action research is not a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us” (2000, p. 2). It should not be considered as a problem solving process, either. It is rather “a quest for knowledge about how to improve” (Ferrance, 2000, p. 2). As it seems clear, AR looks for ways not only for teachers to learn about how they teach, but also how to make it better to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

2.2.1.1. Collaborative Action Research

Collaborative action research is currently perceived as “a powerful way of teacher professional development and translating theory into practice, also in the context of formative assessment” (Cooper & Cowie, 2010; Torrance & Pryor, 2001 cited in J.T.M. Gulikers et al. 2013, p.118). Mitchell, Reilly and Logue (2009) explain that:

Action research comprises many different approaches, practices, and traditions, such as cooperative inquiry (Reason & Bradbury 2001), participatory action research (Center

for Participatory Action Research, 2008), action learning (Kramer, 2007) and within this framework, teachers themselves are involved in researching the relationship between their theories of learning, instruction, and teaching, and their practices in the classroom (p.7).

Action research takes collaborative form when it is carried out in cooperation with “colleagues, or with students, or with university faculty, or with parents, or a combination of partners” (Pine, 2009, p.49). Caro-Bruce (2000) defines it as “a process in which participants systematically examine their own educational practice using the techniques of research, for the purpose of increasing learning of students, their teachers, and other interested parties.”

Burns in *Collaborative Action Research for English Teachers* also highlights that collaborative action research offers a chance to teachers to share common problems and be in contact with the others “as a research community to explore their present values within the sociopolitical cultures of the institutions in which they work” (1999, p. 13). She further explains, “policies and practices within the organization are more likely to be opened up to change when such changes are brought about through group process and collective pressures” (ibid.). To this respect, it is possible to say, “collaborative action research is potentially more empowering than action research conducted individually as it offers a strong framework for whole school-change” (ibid.).

It is important to know the characteristics of collaborative action research in order to carry it out successfully. Bryant (1995, p.10) summarizes them as follows:

Collaborative Action Research is:

- A systematic learning process, which improves education by change.
- Collaborative in nature whereby educators work together to improve their practices in empowering relationships.
- A method of developing reflection about teaching.
- The establishment of self-critical communities of educators that encourage each other to examine their teaching practices.
- A cycle that requires educators to test their ideas about education.
- Open-minded and flexible to adapt to the working realities of educators.
- A commitment to action with an emphasis on the particular therefore is practical in nature. The questions are down-to-earth and relevant.

- A critical analysis of working contexts.
- Keeping a personal journal about teaching as a part of the reflective process.
- A justification of teaching practices.
- Where the researcher works from the community perspective in building theory and analytic models from people's "real life" or actual experience. Action research reflects the richness and diversity of what other people have said or done.

Collaborative action research is not:

- The usual thing teachers do when thinking about teaching. It is much more systematic and collaborative.
- Simply problem solving. It involves problem posing, and searches for questions beneath the questions that are typically asked about educational practices. The analogy of peeling an onion applies to collaborative action research in that layers are "peeled away" one by one in the search for better teaching practices.
- "Done to" people. Educators both initiate and control the process, focusing on their own work with the help of others.
- Hierarchical, but instead is democratic. Partners in a collaborative action research project possess equal ownership and influence.
- A way to implement predetermined answers to educational questions. Collaborative action research explores, discovers, and works to create contextually specific solutions to educational problems as the process evolves. This research process is 'open' in that it is flexible to adapt to the "messiness" of the classroom or school.
- An end in itself. The process and the means to the end are equally important.

2.2.1.2. The Process of Collaborative Action Research

Burns (1999, p.35) lists phases of collaborative action research as follows:

- 1- exploring
- 2- identifying
- 3- planning
- 4- collecting data
- 5- analyzing/ reflecting
- 6- hypothesizing/speculating
- 7- intervening

8- observing

9- reporting

10- presenting

Another framework comes from a handout prepared for the Animating Democracy Initiative (n.d.) listing the four phases of developing collaborative inquiry process as follows:

1. Forming a collaborative inquiry group
 - Engaging a diverse group of community members
 - Developing the inquiry project
 - Framing the research question
 - Designing the research project
 - Establishing collective leadership
 - Reflecting on group processes
2. Creating the conditions for group learning
 - Agreeing on a constitution for collaboration
 - Repeating cycles of action and reflection to generate learning
3. Acting on the inquiry question
 - Putting plans and designs into practice
 - Keeping reflective records
 - Respecting ownership of group ideas
 - Questioning honestly
 - Practicing dialogue and reflection
4. Making meaning (capturing and interpreting the group's experiences)
 - Understanding the experience
 - Selecting a method for interpreting diverse experiences
 - Avoiding common assumptions and questioning dominant values
 - Checking validity by considering multiple perspectives and methods
 - Celebrating meaningful collaboration
 - Communicating to the public arena (p.2).

This cycle is maintained by reviewing the participants, the situations for better group learning and so on.

2.2.2. Reflective Journal Writing

Much has been written about journal writing and its effectiveness in teachers' professional development. Before moving on to the reflective journals, it would be essential to describe reflective writing. Surgenor (2011) states, "Reflective writing is evidence of reflective thinking." According to him, in academic context reflective writing usually involves:

- Looking back at something (often an event i.e. something that happened, but could also be an idea or object)
- Analyzing the event or idea (thinking in depth and from different perspectives, and trying to explain, often with reference to a model or theory from your subject)
- Thinking carefully about what the event or idea for you and your ongoing progress as a learner and/ or practicing professional (p. 15).

As it might be clear from the statements, reflective writing is not just recalling a past event and writing about it. It requires a 'deep thinking' about one's actions and analyzing them to understand the reasons behind them and as well as their consequences.

When we take a look at the relevant literature, we can encounter with a great deal of study pointing the benefits of reflective writing. To illustrate, Brock, Yu and Wong (1992, p.19) compile some of the claimed benefits of reflective writing as follows:

- Identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners;
- Generating questions and hypothesis about teaching and learning processes;
- Enhancing awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns;
- Providing teachers and learners a tool for reflection;
- Providing a first-hand account of teaching and learning experiences;
- Providing an on-going record of classroom events and teacher and learner reflections;
- Enabling the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging from the diaries;
- Promoting the development of reflective teaching (Allwright, 1983; Bailey, 1990; Brown, 1985; Nunan, 1989; and Richards, 1990).

Larrivee (2006) emphasize that keeping a record of incidents and feelings can offer "both a window of the past and a gateway to the future" (p.21). They further claim that reflective writing can serve as a tool for achieving the following items:

- Looking more objectively at classroom behaviors
- Naming issues and posing questions
- Recording critical incidents
- Identifying cause and effect relationships
- Discovering habits of thought and behavior
- Working through internal conflicts
- Seeing patterns of unsuccessful strategies over time
- Tracing life themes (2006, p.21)

Maughan and Webb (2001, cited in Surgenor, 2011) claim, “While reflective thinking and writing can be an unstructured process, the individual is commonly required to demonstrate some editorial skills in the presentation and structure of the final diary/journal” (p. 16). According to their suggested structure, there are three parts: description, interpretation and outcome as displayed below (Table 2.1).

Table 1. Structure for Production of Reflective Writing (Maughan& Webb 2001, cited in Surgenor, 2011, p.16)

<u>Description</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
What happened? What is being examined?	What is most important or interesting about the event? How can it be explained? How does it compare to other similar events?	What have I learned from this? What does this mean for my future?

There is evidence that reflective journals can also be effective when kept collaboratively. Brock, Yu and Wong (1992) note in their study, “collaborative diary keeping gave teachers a sense of encouragement, a forum in which to relate experiences and pose questions, and an opportunity to gain an insight perspective on other teachers’ experiences” (p.23). Collaborative journals are thought to serve as a source of teaching ideas and suggestions: and in some sense it gives teachers a way to observe one another’s teaching from a “safe distance” (Brock et al., cited in Nagamine 2007, p.91).

2.2.3. Peer Observation

At many institutions of higher education, peer observation of teaching has increasingly become one of the standard expectations for academic staff and faculty members. Being indicated as an effective device in enhancing teaching performance in many studies (Joyce & Showers 1982; Sparks 1986; Loucks-Horsley 1990 and Singh & Shiffette in 1996, cited in Siu-ting 2005), it has gained its popularity among professional development activities.

Peer observation generally appear in the form of faculty fellows review an instructor's performance through classroom observation as well as investigation of instructional materials and course design (Kohut, Burnap, Yon 2007, p.19).

Peer observation can be carried out both formal and informal ways for many purposes such as training and development or reasons for performance. Bell (2002) provides a framework of purposes and processes as in Figure 2 below.

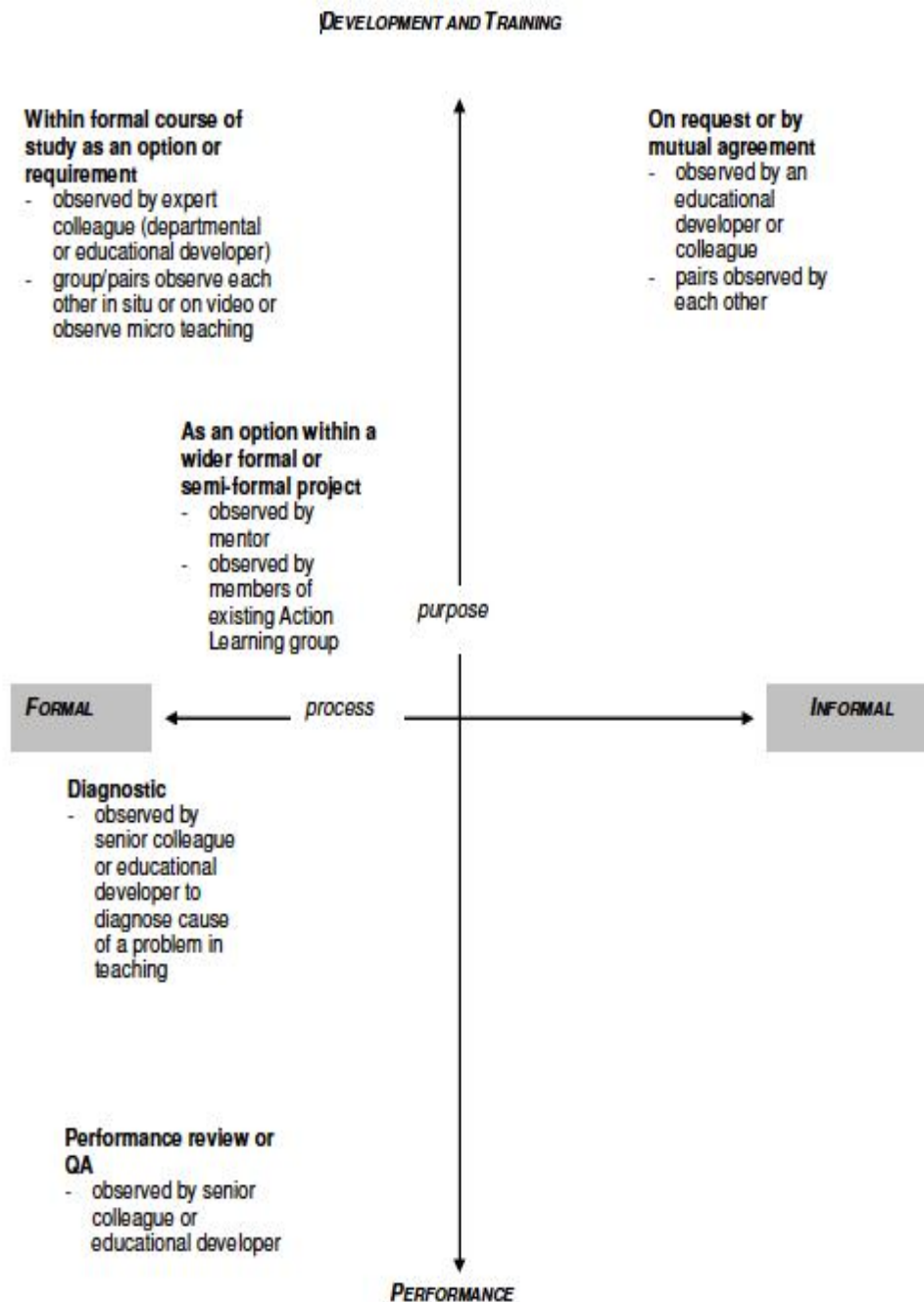


Figure 2. Peer Observation of Teaching: Framework of Purposes and Processes (Bell, 2002, p.2)

Blackwell and McClean (1996) state “peer observation of teaching can help to bring discussion of teaching – which is often a hidden practice – into the public domain” (cited in

Bovill, 2008, p.3). They further explain that this discussion of teaching can result both in learning about their own teaching practices and learning about and from peers' teaching (ibid.). As it can be seen, this process has dual benefits for the practitioners.

Since peer observations are processes, which are carried out in pairs or groups, it is highly essential to determine pairs sensitively. For Bovill (2008, p.5), if an individual is permitted to choose their own peer, this can provide many benefits. Braskamp and Ory (1994) argue, "Trust and credibility are vital concerns in the process" (cited in Kohut et.al. 2007, p. 24). According to Bovill (2008, p.5), it is important for both parties to have mutual respect and trust and be comfortable giving and receiving feedback. Shortland (2010, p.297) suggests "Peer observation partners should not be 'critical' or 'friends' in stand-alone terms, but rather act as 'critical friends". Carroll and O'Loughlin (2013, p. 8) suggest that elementarily, institutions should therefore encourage academics to "self-select their peers, or provide a 'matchmaking service' for participants". By doing so, it could be possible to "reduce perceived barriers to participation by limiting the level of fear and uncertainty inherent in being peer observed" (ibid.).

Herein, considering the importance of 'peer' in the process, it is fundamental to determine how peers will be identified. Bovill (2008) listed four suggestions as follows:

- Individuals could identify their own peer observer
- Peer pairings could be allocated by the Head of School
- Use could be made of an existing mentoring system-although consideration would need to be given about whether this was a reciprocal pairing where a mentor would also receive feedback from mentee
- A circular system could operate where peers observers are allocated to observe the person next to them alphabetically or randomly i.e. A would observe B would observe C, would observe A (p.5).

As for the stages of the peer observation, the process usually includes three main stages: Pre-observation conference, teaching observation, and post-observation conference or debriefing conference. Costa and Garmston (1990) explain them as follows:

- The pre- observation conference: The visiting teacher meets with the inviting teacher to discuss what will be observed and what questions will be answered. The approximate time is 20 minutes.

- The observation or classroom visit: The visiting teacher spends about 30-40 minutes making observations and taking notes related to the questions agreed upon.
- The post-observation conference or the debriefing conference: The visiting teacher spends about 40-50 minutes sharing his or her observations, asking questions, and making constructive suggestions (cited in Adams, 2005, p.42).

These conferences play a key role in achieving the desired outcomes at the end of the program. Needless to say, it is highly important for practitioners to follow these protocols to maximize the benefits they expect to gain from this process.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate whether participating in a collaborative action research cycle involving peer observation of teaching and collaborative journaling program help language instructors to be reflective about their teaching. It will also investigate the attitudes of the instructors towards these professional development tools before, during and after the study. In this chapter, the participants, the instruments, the setting and the data collection procedures are presented.

3.1. Research Questions

The following research questions are central to the study:

1. What are the contributions of peer observation as a reflective tool to EFL instructors' professional development?
2. What are the contributions of being involved in a collaborative action research cycle to EFL instructors' reflective thought?
3. Does involvement in a collaborative journal writing foster reflective thought?

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 5 female and 1 male, totally six non-native EFL Instructors working at The School of Foreign Languages of Meliksah University. At the time of the study, they were all teaching English to young adults from different departments. Since teacher development is believed to be self-initiated (Yumru, 2000), this group of teachers were asked individually by the researcher if they would be interested in taking part in a teacher development program where they would work collaboratively, observe their peers and be observed by them. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from one year to ten years. Due to confidentiality issues, participants were given pseudonyms and their identities will remain anonymous.

3.3. Research Design

This study was conducted at The School of Foreign Languages of Melikşah University. The ultimate goal of the study was to promote reflective thought and better understand the conceptions that non-native instructors of Melikşah University have in relation to their use of reflective teaching practices, specifically, peer observation of teaching and collaborative journal writing in an action research context.

Among the three reflective tools mentioned above, collaborative action research was decided as the main context for the study as it would provide a diverse database for training materials, curricula, and theoretical discussions (Valesky & Etheridge, 1922, as cited in N. Mitchell et.al. 2009, p.18).

The researcher developed a twelve-week professional development program by integrating peer observation of teaching with action research. Since the main purpose of the study was to foster reflection, after reviewing the literature around reflective teaching, the aforementioned tools were carefully posed in the timetable to be implemented on a weekly basis (Appendix 1). However as pointed out by Maxwell (1996, p.215), in qualitative studies, the researcher may need to reconsider or modify any design decision during the study in response to new developments or changes in some other aspect of the design. Similarly, the researcher, to get more in-depth and relevant data, made some slight modifications during the study. The modifications included: changing the weeks of the observations or extending the allocated time for some of the reflective writings.

A flexible approach was followed all along the study to see the real flow of these kinds of professional development activities. Hence, the sequence of the journal writing and peer observations was changed from time to time. Maxwell (1996) highlights that; “qualitative studies simply require a broader and less restrictive concept of ‘design’ than the traditional ones as described before” (p.215).

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Since this study aims to support EFL instructors’ reflective teaching, subsequent to a detailed literature review, the researcher decided to use a couple of reflective teaching tools together to see how effective they are in achieving reflective thought.

For this study, the researcher collected data from:

1. Pre-study Interviews
2. Pre-observation Forms
3. Observation Forms
4. Post-observation Forms
5. Post-study Interviews
6. Collaborative Journals
7. Researcher’s Field Notes

The data obtained from these tools were analyzed in order to see whether collaborative action research including a peer observation program helps instructors to be reflective about their teaching and to learn language instructors' attitudes after using these reflective tools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using content analysis together with the reflection forms.

3.4.1. Interviews

Interviewing is a popular way of gathering qualitative research data because it is perceived as 'talking,' and talking is natural (Griffiee, 2005, p.36). Having the opportunity of working at the same institution with the participants, the researcher decided to have interviews rather than surveys.

Semi-structured interviews were planned and carried out at interviewees' convenience. The reason for choosing to use a semi-structured interview was to have the opportunity to ask for clarification during the interview. In light of the presentation by Valenzuela and Shrivastava (CAED, 2002), a room with the least distraction was selected and the purpose of the interviews was explained to the participants. After addressing the terms of confidentiality, the format of the interview was clarified. Then, they were enlightened as to how long the interview would take and allowed to ask about any uncertainties regarding the procedure. Participants could leave anytime they wanted.

Following the request of recording the interview, the interviews were carried out individually. The researcher addressed six questions in total and tried to remain as neutral as possible (ibid.).

By carrying out these interviews, the researcher aimed to know their previous experiences related to peer observation programs and what their expectations were for this program. It was also intended to gain insight about their concerns regarding to the program (Appendix 2).

3.4.2. Pre-observation Forms

When the pairing process was completed, the instructors were handed pre-observation forms. These forms included a number of items such as the name of the instructor and the observer instructor, the date of the observation, the number of the students and the focus of the session.

Instructors were also supposed to write their objectives for the session both for

themselves and for their students. With an attempt to help them feel comfortable about the observations, they were encouraged to decide what sort of teaching was going to be observed and they were expected to state areas on which they would welcome some feedback. To ensure the instructors and the classes behave in a normal fashion (UTDC 2004), observers were encouraged to attend the whole class. Instructors had the opportunity to note down their other potential difficulties or areas of concerns regarding to their classes on these forms as well.

3.4.3. Observation Forms

Instructors were expected to fill in the peer-observation form immediately after the session they observed. The purpose of the form was to keep a fresh record of the things and provide the observee with reliable feedback afterwards.

There were four points to be put on the paper. Firstly, they were expected to write what, in their opinions, went well in the session and why. Secondly, they would state what, in their opinion, could be improved or developed and how might this be achieved. Thirdly, they were to comment on the areas in which the instructor invited feedback. And lastly, they were expected to express any other comments or suggestions for the development of their colleagues.

3.4.4. Post-observation and Reflection Forms

Each pair held a post-observation meeting to reflect and go over the class. Then they completed the post observation form following the discussion. They were expected to answer three questions regarding their observation process and reflect on their practice.

In the first question, they were asked to write about the most important points that emerged from their discussion with the observer instructor. In the second question, they were expected to share what changes they would like to make about the particular aspect of their teaching or to their teaching more generally, as a result of the discussion and reflection upon it. And finally, they were asked to write about the helpfulness of the observer's comments and how could these comments be more helpful in the future.

With the help of this form, the researcher hoped to ensure that instructors reevaluate process and think critically about it once more (Appendix 3).

3.4.5. Collaborative Journal

Richardson and Placier (2001) put forward that teachers co-construct their understanding of innovations by informally collaborating and learning from each other as they reflect on their experiences (cited in Asare, 2012, p.448). The idea of giving another opportunity to the

instructors to work collaboratively with and learn from each other supported the researcher in incorporating collaborative journals into this study.

After providing the instructors with a brief tutorial about the collaborative journals, they were scheduled to take place in the second, fourth and the sixth weeks of the program. Instructors were to write about one important the event at their convenience and then pass the file to the other participants. They were in charge of following their journals and making sure everybody wrote in them. When the journal was returned back to them, they were supposed to read all the comments and carefully consider them.

Two topics that were thought would foster reflection were chosen as the main topic for the journals. The first topic was about “departing from a lesson plan” (Bailey& Curtis& Nunan, 2001, p.38).

Instructors were asked to think of an occasion when a student’s contribution caused them to depart from their lesson plan. They were expected to explain what the contribution was and why they chose this course of action and what the result was (Appendix 4). This situation was chosen with the hope that by leading them to recall such cases when they had to make in-class decisions, it would presumably raise instructors’ awareness of reflection-in-action.

The second topic was reflecting on a recent teaching practice or experience in the classroom. They were going to think of one of their incidents, positive or negative, that caused them to stop and think and then ask the following questions:

What happened before this incident?

What happened after it?

Why was this incident important?

What does this incident tell me about myself as a teacher? Farwell (2007)

Each instructor kept his or her journal entries in a file and at the end of the study; the researcher took a copy of their journals to analyze their content.

3.4.6. Researcher’s Field Notes

In the present study, the researcher utilized field notes, which were kept throughout the study. These notes were written both descriptive and reflective methods. Although these notes did not constitute the whole data, by means of the observations of the natural setting and the feelings of the participants, it was aimed to supplement the interview data. According to Eisenhardt & Davis and Bingham (2009), to have useful field notes, it is important to make a

note of whatever impressions occur, as it is generally difficult to know what will and what will not be useful in the future (p.15). For this reason, the social setting of the study, behaviors of the participants and events along with their date, time and place were observed and noted down by the researcher. Doing so helped the researcher create a preliminary analysis opportunity and led to better decisions in shaping the research. Furthermore, while analyzing the data later on, they served as a supplementary source for having further contextual understanding of how instructors adapt and implement reflective teaching in their practices.

3.5. Data Analysis

A large number of approaches are used for analyzing qualitative data. In this study, we mainly used content analysis. As part of the content analysis, we made reference to categorization. As Spiggle (1994, p.493) put forward, “categorization is the process of classifying or labeling units of data.” According to Spiggle (1994, p.493) “the essence of categorization is identifying a chunk or unit of data (e.g., a passage of text of any length) as belonging to, representing, or being an example of some more general phenomenon.”

Similarly, in the present study, data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were initially transcribed and translated from Turkish to English verbatim. Then, they were reviewed according to the content of the research questions. Thereafter, all the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, reflection forms and the researcher’s field notes were sorted into categories as: self-reflection, self-awareness and self-development during the process of coding. Cosh (1998, p.25) was also taken as reference while defining these categories. According Cosh (1998):

In a reflective context, peer observation is not carried out in order to judge the teaching of others, but to encourage *self-reflection* and *self-awareness* about our own teaching. The focus is on the *teacher’s own development*, rather than on any presumed ability to develop the teaching of one’s peers or colleagues (p.25).

Since the focus of our study is to explore peer observation, collaborative action research and collaborative journaling in a reflective context, it seemed appropriate to analyze the data under these “more general phenomenon” (Spiggle 1994, p.493). Together with the journals, observation and reflection forms were also subjected to content analysis under the same categories.

3.6. Procedures

Upon completing the design of the study, a detailed description of the program was presented to the director of the School of Foreign Languages of Meliksah University and permission was requested to conduct the research with the participation of six instructors. The administrators of the department were also informed about the method, duration and participants of the program. It was observed that the school administration was as much interested in the study as the participant instructors were and the researcher was assured that any necessary help would be provided when needed.

After requesting permission from the school administration for conducting the study, the researcher started the program on the 6th of November 2013 at the School of Foreign Languages of Meliksah University. Since the participants had already been informed about the study at the beginning of the education year, they were invited to have a short interview about the study they were about to enter.

The last week of the first quarter was chosen as the first week of the study. The reason for this selection was that the instructors were about to finish the first quarter and the researcher would have two weeks ahead to offer necessary pre-study training sessions before the second quarter began. It was hoped that during this break, the instructors could concentrate more on the program and they would have plenty of time to read, think and share.

All of the semi-structured interviews were scheduled for the same day for all the participants and conducted in a classroom at Meliksah University. The reason for these interviews was to get their feelings and concerns regarding the program they were going to enter soon.

Following the interviews, the pre-study training sessions took place for two weeks. The research group came together for about an hour each week and watched related videos to their study, read articles and had discussions about the articles. These training sessions could possibly be done just in one meeting but the researcher intentionally divided it into two parts to provide instructors with enough time to read the articles, think about the peer observation process and ask the questions they have in their minds.

Participants started writing in their journals in the second week of the program. They were initially asked to write their description of reflection prior to the second training session.

Then an article from *Pursuing Professional Development: The Self as a Source* by Bailey, Curtis & Nunan (2001) was shared with the instructors and they were asked to hold a small discussion about reflective teaching after reading it. With the help of the article, the concepts of reflection in-action and reflection on-action were highlighted. Each instructor shared their own understanding of reflection and noted them in their journals at the end of the meeting.

In the third week of the program, the researcher observed that they had a good understanding of the program and they were both ready to observe each other's classes and provide feedback. Most importantly they looked eager to start and explore their own teaching context. Hence, the researcher sent all the participants an e-mail asking for their number 1 and number 2 preferences for partnership. It was aimed to pair them on a voluntary basis to make them feel comfortable. Instructors replied to the e-mail including two names they want to be paired with and the researcher formed their groups accordingly. Luckily there was not anybody uneasy about his or her partner.

It was decided to carry out observations in teams of three. In this method, each colleague was observed twice. After the first observations, the cycle was reversed to provide instructors with different colleagues to observe and to be observed by. Another reason for reversing the cycle was to keep them from overpraising their partners with the aim of getting positive feedback from them in return. Figure 3 and 4 below show the teams and the observation model.

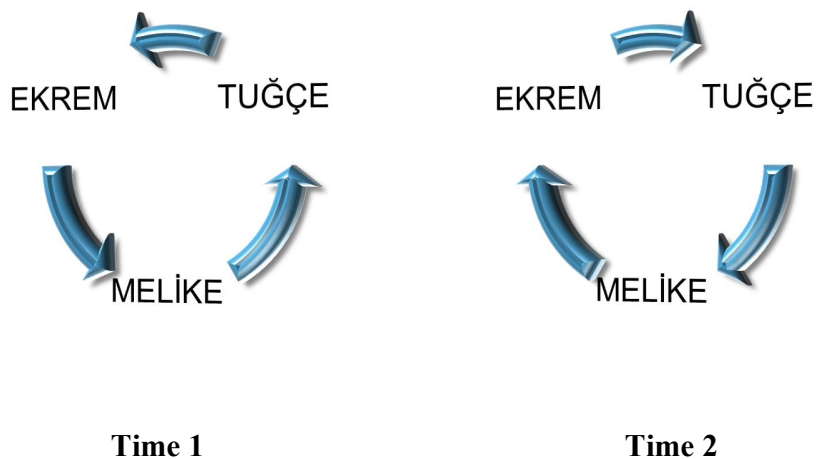


Figure 3. Peer Observation Cycle of Team 1

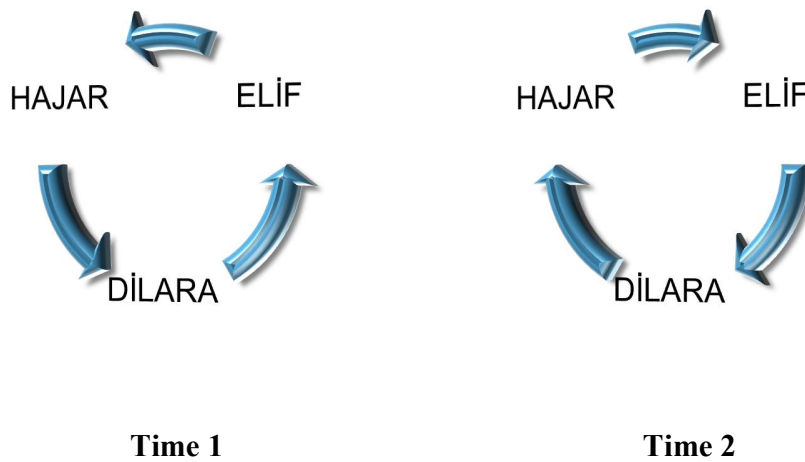


Figure 4. Peer Observation Cycle of Team 2

Before observations, instructors made their second journal entries. They were asked to remember a moment they had to depart from their lesson plan and write it down to share them with their colleagues. Each participant noted his or her experience and then passed the journal to the other participants to get their comments on this occasion. Here it was aimed to help them look back and recall some moments from their teaching and think about them and their consequences.

In the fourth and fifth weeks of the program, the first peer observation cycle was carried out. To clarify the time, date and place of the observations and also to define the focus and conduct of the observation, participants held pre-observation meetings. Then, they observed their partners lessons with the help of the checklists provided by the researcher. Following the visitations, they had their post-observation meetings to give feedback on each other's teaching and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the instructors. Throughout this procedure, instructors followed the protocols they had studied in the pre-study trainings. Below a figure is presented to show the first peer observation process.

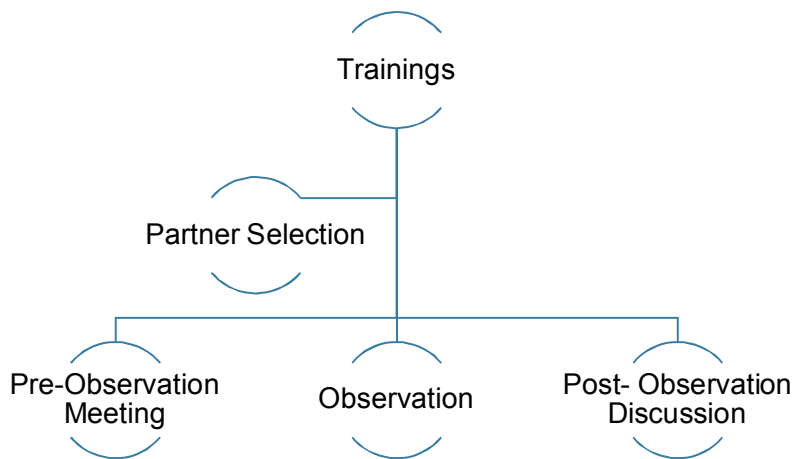


Figure 5. Peer Observation Process 1

After the peer observation, it was time for the collaborative action research to begin. Participants held their weekly meeting and carried out a discussion about their areas to be improved. They decided to work on a common problem of theirs and concluded that they all had a problem about their Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and Student Talking Time (STT). All the participants agreed that they were talking much more than the students and they were not comfortable about with this situation.

The seventh week was planned for the third collaborative journal entry. Before taking action for their problem, they were encouraged to reflect on a recent teaching practice. They were expected to recall an event that made them stop and think about their teaching. They wrote down what they did before, during and after that incident and shared those experiences with their friends.

In the eighth week, they came together to work on the abovementioned problem. The researcher reviewed the related sources and collected some useful information about ways to reduce TTT while increasing STT. The instructors were provided with a Power Point presentation about some tips that can be used while putting all those methods into practice. After viewing the PPT, they were invited to have a short discussion about their teaching methods. Each participant took the floor and shared their experiences on the same issue. After getting each other's opinion, they defined their strong, average and weak points in regards TTT and STT. Later on, they continued working on their weak sides with the collaboration of their friends.

In the ninth week of the program, the second peer observation program was carried out to make their self-reflection. This time, they visited each other's classes to focus only on their own

teaching and take notes on them. During these observations, they also recorded the lesson they were observing with the help of a camera. These recordings were given to the person being observed to help him or her make self-reflections about their practice.

After taking their recordings, each instructor measured their TTT and STT using a timekeeper. They took into account their friends' lessons and the methods they used in their classes and reflected on both of them. With those good methods or bad ones in mind, they analyzed the effectiveness of those attempts and then they prepared their second action plans in the light of those reflections.

In the tenth week, they put their new action plans into practice. This time, they taught according to their new lesson plans and recorded themselves to see the difference between time 1 and time 2. They once more measured their talking time and students' talking time respectively and reflected on them again. Below a figure showing the collaborative action research process is displayed.

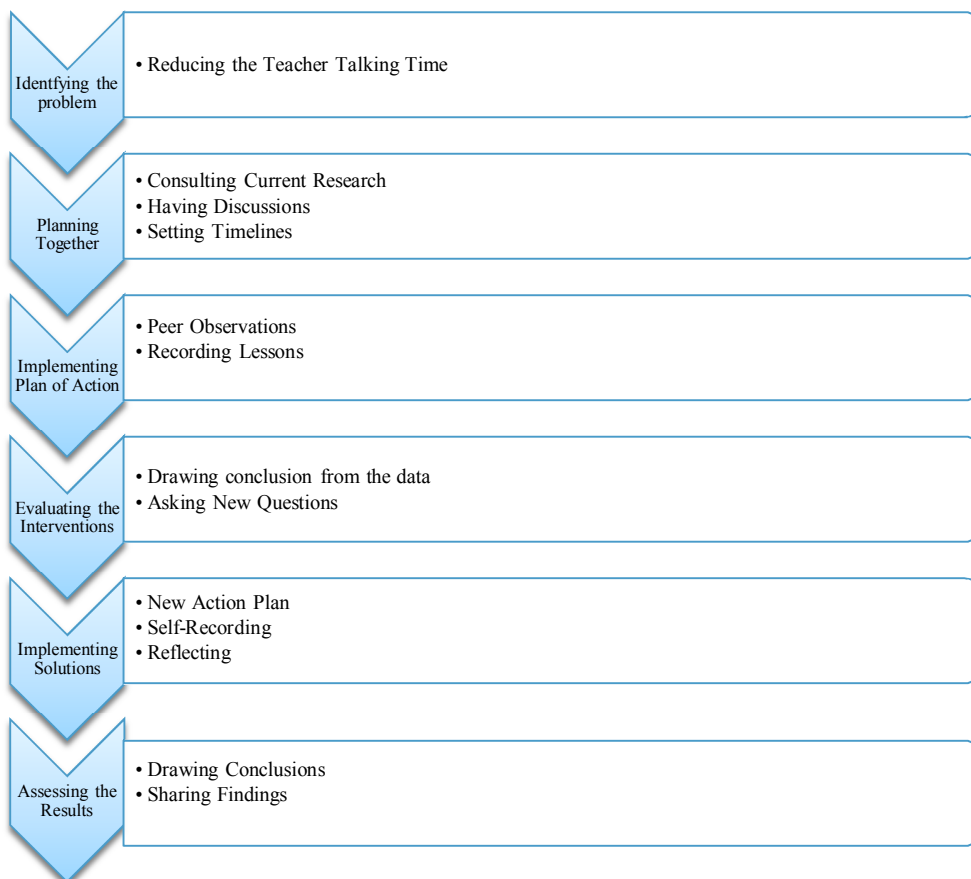


Figure 6. Collaborative Action Research Process

At the end of the twelfth week, all the participants were interviewed to get their reflections about the program. Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes and they were mostly asked about their experiences and feelings they had throughout the study (Appendix 5).

To sum up, the participants of the present study went through several cycles to nurture their reflective teaching as well as to find solutions to their current problems.

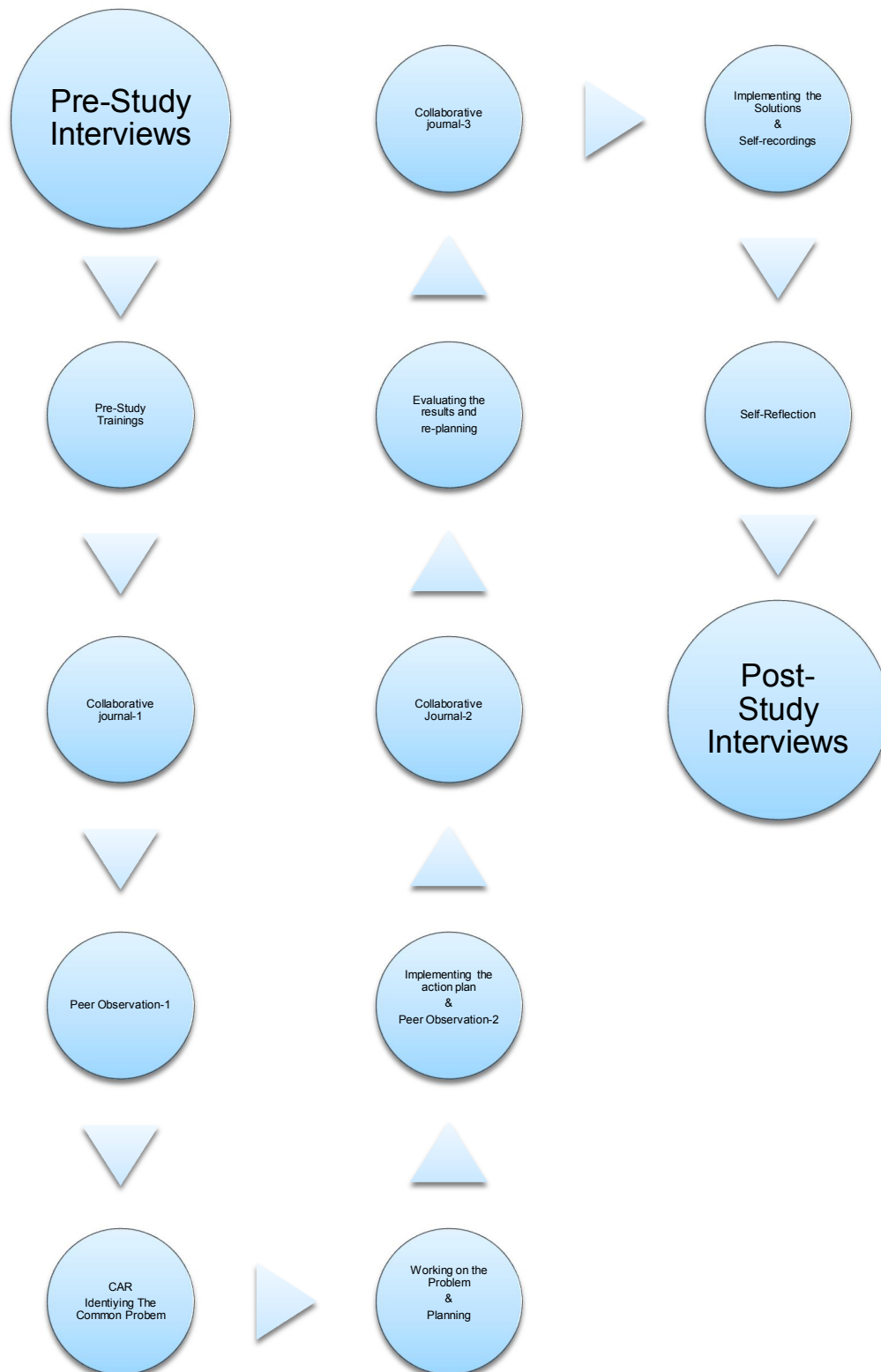


Figure 7. Summary of the study

CHAPTER IV

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The present study was conducted at Melikşah University to explore the effectiveness of peer observation of teaching and collaborative journaling as reflective tools within the context of collaborative action research. With the participation of six EFL instructors, the study lasted for twelve weeks. Qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, observation and reflection forms are presented in the following six sections together with the field notes of the researcher.

4.1. Elif

Elif has been teaching English at Melikşah University for five years. Besides her teaching position at this institution, she is also the head of the Testing Unit. To improve herself and the qualities of the Unit, she has been taking part in several workshops and seminars. In addition to these developmental activities, this study offered her the opportunity to focus on her own learning and teaching.

4.1.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Elif's Professional Development

4.1.1.1. Before the Study

As stated before, the first data collection instrument was the pre-study interview. The interview was comprised of six questions regarding the participants' reasons of interest, expectations, and concerns about the program.

Elif's answers were examined by using content analysis and grouped under categories of self-reflection, self-awareness and self-development.

Table 2. Elif's Pre-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-development</u>
I am going to observe my peers and I want to learn new things from them. I am sure my friends are using different and good techniques, methods. In addition to that, I think it's the best kind of observation because they are your friends and there is less stress, less pressure and the process is less formal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning from colleagues• Learning new methods and techniques in a less formal and stressful atmosphere

Elif stated that she had never participated in such a professional development program including peer observation before. From her answers displayed in Table 1, we can conclude that Elif had positive feelings towards taking part in peer observation. She was hoping to learn from her friends in a less formal and correspondingly a stress-free atmosphere. Field notes revealed that although she had 5 years of experience in teaching, she seemed quite enthusiastic to learn from her colleagues including inexperienced instructors.

As for her expectations for the study, Elif expressed the following thoughts.

Table 3. Elif’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
There will be another eye on my teaching, so I will learn my shortcomings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding shortcomings as a teacher

It was apparent from her expressions that Elif was seeking for ways to improve her teaching with the help of her colleagues. As well as seeing her weak points as a teacher, she was also expecting to witness some good methods and techniques of her friends being present in their classes.

Elif’s only concern about this program was her workload. At the time of this study, she was the coordinator of the Testing Unit and busy with examination preparations. However, she was still willing to participate, as she was sure of its positive outcomes.

As it has been mentioned before, in pursuit of the interviews, participant instructors were given two-sectioned training program. Since they had little or no idea about peer observation or reflection, it seemed necessary to help them become familiar with the activities beforehand. As such, they read some articles and watched related videos together to reflect on them. In her reflection form, Elif noted that she did not find the process complicated or stressful. Briefly stated, her perception of the procedure was favorable prior to the study.

4.1.1.2. After the Study

After finalizing the study, as stated earlier, the participants were interviewed to get their feelings and ideas about the program they had just completed. Elif sincerely gave voice to her

feelings at the end of the study by stating that she wasn't expecting to find that much pleasure in this activity before they started. She expressed that it was really beneficial for her. According to Elif, peer observation was a highly effective tool to foster professional development. She acknowledged the value of peer observation by stating the following:

Table 4. Elif's Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-development</u>
I had always wanted to experience visiting my peers' classes and believed its usefulness but never got a chance before. Now I realize that it's not only useful but also enjoyable. Because you start to explore and find out a lot of new things. I am planning to maintain this process. I already have some names in my mind to continue with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring and finding out new things as well as taking pleasure in it.

Elif's statements above about maintaining this activity indicate that she was happy with the process and found it worth continuing systematically. By looking at her well-prepared observation forms and lesson plans, the researcher's field notes also point out her focused manner throughout the program.

Following the first peer observation cycle, Elif wrote down the most important points that emerged from their discussion with her observer as:

Table 5. Elif's Reflective Notes 1

Elif:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
My observer said that I should have tried more to encourage students to participate in some way because they were reluctant to speak and, answer the questions I asked. Also, as a positive feedback, we talked about my clarity in terms of my tone of voice, language level and pronunciation while teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of her shortcoming in encouraging students to speak • Being aware of her strengths in her language, pronunciation and use of voice.

This entry proves that peer observation also helped Elif notice her strengths as a teacher. These discussions apparently have led her think about her teaching and reflect on it. Her following entry points to her reflection:

Table 6. Elif’s Reflective Forms 2

Elif:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
The observer’s feedback helped me think more about the reason why my students were quieter than they are supposed to be. My conclusion was that maybe I did not give them enough thinking time, especially to the weaker students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing her teaching context • Drawing conclusions and self-reflecting

This reflection entry makes it clear that her friend has helped her think about her teaching and functioned like a mirror to make her realize her weakness in terms of student participation. In her interview, Elif stressed that the instructors mostly disregard stopping to think about what they are doing because of their heavy workload. However in this program, they somehow had to cease and share their ideas with their friends.

Table 7. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
While observing your friend, you naturally think about your teaching. You start to think ‘Yes, I could do the same!’ or, ‘I never do this and I fortunately don’t do this.’ Yes sometimes I thought in that way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about her teaching style and considering its strong and weak points.

In this wording, Elif connoted that there were times when she found herself thinking about her own class while carrying out her visitations. This indicates that peer observation nurtured her reflective thought.

Elif illustrated one of her experiences as below:

After I observed one of my colleagues, I started to aim at being a more patient teacher. Yes, I needed to be a more patient teacher towards silence in class. I was not patient enough to wait for students’ answers. Another thing I realized was that I was not

forcing students sufficiently. I mean I am a kind of teacher who thinks that if they want to do something, they do; if they do not, there is no point in forcing them to do. I have such a policy. However, when I got the feedback from my peer about the need for trying a bit more, I noticed that it was so true. I was too at ease.

This narrative refers that engaging in a peer observation process does not only help participants gain new teaching techniques from each other, but it also creates a chance to make self-reflection and helps them be aware of their teaching.

4.1.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Elif’s Reflective Thought

Following the identification of the problem, Elif joined in a problem-solving program. She worked on some tips to reduce her teacher talking time and increase her students’ talking time within her research team. In her action research forms she listed her areas that she felt comfortable with, she felt OK with and she needed to improve to decrease her TTT as given below:

Table 8. Elif’s Problem-Solving Notes

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Elif	Increasing student self-confidence Using Visual aids	Checking understanding by asking questions Lesson plans Eliciting-Inductive Teaching	Giving Instructions-Problems with explaining the instructions Allowing silence Peer Feedback

While preparing her action plan, Elif went through her post-observation discussion forms and focused on her observer’s comments. In her reflection form, Elif mentioned her intended area to be improved as follow:

Table 9. Elif's Reflective Forms 3

Elif:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
According to the feedback I got from my colleague, and as I came to understand later, I am not trying hard enough to involve the students who are not willing to participate. In fact, that area of development will make me think about my Teacher Talking Time and find ways to reduce it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making self-criticism• Planning future actions

These sentences of Elif expose her self-reflection. She wants to change this situation with the cooperation of her colleagues. For this reason, she worked on a lesson plan considering the tips she learnt from the discussions that took place in the collaborative action research meetings. In her lesson plan, she paid much more attention to the TTT vs. STT. Before inviting Hajar to observe her lesson, she visited Dilara's class to see how she was dealing with the same issue. Comprising the things in her mind, she did her lesson according to her action plan and Hajar was there to see to what extent she was successful.

Before Elif completed her action plan, she pointed out the most important aspects of her action plan as follows:

Table 10. Elif's Action Plan Notes

Elif:	<u>Self-development</u>
I am going to try to use a technique or different techniques to make the most of participation in class including the students who do not want to. I would like to use a technique to make the reluctant students to be engaged in more such as drawing a dice to choose the person to answer the question rather than letting them free to volunteer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pursuing self-improvement by looking for new techniques

After defining the problem and working on its solution, it was time for Elif to be observed. This time Hajar was in Elif’s classroom to both observe and record her lesson. The idea here was to keep a record of Elif’s performance so that she would be able to see her lesson and reflect on it.

Elif took her recording, reflected on it and then prepared a new lesson to apply her acquired information based on both the feedback she received and her peer observation. This time she recorded her lesson with the help of a camera and compared two of her lessons in terms of TTT & STT ratio.

While measuring the TTT & STT, a chronometer was used. Individual speaking time of the students was added to their pair work and group work talking time as otherwise it would be difficult for her to distinguish who was speaking and to whom while listening to the records. TTT & STT were measured separately with the help of the researcher and then analyzed by Elif. Table 11 shows Elif’s TTT & STT ratio as time 1 and time 2.

Table 11. Elif’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	11 min. 31 sec.	8 min. 58 sec.
Time 2	9 min. 20 sec.	11 min. 20 sec.

This situation made her think that although there was a short time between these two lessons, she could manage to decrease her teacher talking time while increasing her students’ talking time. She made her further reflection on the action research process in her follow up interview as:

Table 12. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-development</u>
Although it is possible to make some research about our problems related to our teaching or read something about them, it is far more effective to explore solutions to them in our context, within our realness with our own students. I saw that this might bring more permanent solutions to our problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring solutions to our problems in our unique context. • Getting more consistent solutions

Elif had no experience in action research prior to this program. She stated that during this process unlike the other type of professional development activities, they were active from beginning to the end. It is noticeable in the field notes that Elif’s approach towards Collaborative Action Research (CAR) was positive. She displayed her understanding of CAR as working collaboratively on a problem and she expressed that:

Table 13. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
There were times that we thought ‘Yeah that could be done in that situation, too.’ For this reason, I think we always need a second or even the third eye on our teaching to broaden our perspective or correct our misapplications. One somehow believes rightness of himself or herself but it is much more powerful to hear something different from the others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration supports self-reflection • Hearing good or bad practices from a friend is more effective

Elif stated that she did not have enough time to meet her expectations in increasing her STT but she had an idea about how to deal with this problem later on. When she was asked to reflect on her action research experience, she interpreted:

Table 14. Elif’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
When I consider the two recordings of my lessons, I can see that in the second recording I have managed to reduce my Teacher Talking Time and this indicates that if I focus on my problem and do something intending its solution, I can change it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming aware of herself in overcoming her problems • Gaining an insight about problem-solving process

4.1.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Elif's Reflective Teaching

Field notes revealed that over the course of this professional development program, Elif actively participated in the collaborative journaling activity. In this process, she kept a journal of her teaching practices and delivered it to her peers to get their remarks on the same issue. In her follow-up interview she mentioned that sometimes she had to scan a larger period of time and she highlighted it was helpful in this respect.

Table 15. Elif's Post Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
While we were trying to remember a recent incident from our classes we did a scanning. It helped me to think about my experiences and figure out my actions and their results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking back and thinking about the events took place in the classes • Considering the consequences of the events

From her statements regarding her feelings about reading the comments written by her colleagues, we can conclude that this activity triggered her interest. In her interview, she told that it was a nice experience and shared her feelings as follows:

Table 16. Elif's Post-Study Interview Statements

Elif:	<u>Self-development</u>
You wonder about the things your friends are going to write in your journal. You want to know whether you did the right thing or not and ultimately reconsider your situation from the viewpoint of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing basis for development • Looking from a new perspective

For Elif, it is very natural for the instructors to forget about their good practices as well as their shortcomings. With this regard, keeping a journal is also essential to keep a record of decent points of their teaching. The field notes of the researcher revealed that Elif provided further explanation in the inexperienced teachers' journals in proportion to the experienced teachers. This could indicate that she believed in the importance of supporting the novice teachers in their new career and preventing them from experiencing some unwanted situations.

Below is one of Elif's journal entry, in which she reflected on a recent teaching practice or experience in her classroom, positive or negative, that caused her to stop and think.

One day one of my students came and told me that he wanted to participate in class but I did not wait for him to get ready to talk. Before the incident happened, I was comfortable with my teaching in terms of teacher talk vs. student talk. When this occurred, I thought that I was underestimating their ability to express themselves and being impatient to wait them to speak. Then, I decided to be more at the back of the stage and give them more time to think after I ask a question. It really worked and the students who were hesitant to raise their hands got more active. I think it was an incident that let me see my fault as a teacher.

Instructor 1:

That's great because we do sometimes forget that students need to talk. However, as the pacing bound us, we try to make it shorter which is not good. Students should talk even if that is going to take longer.

Instructor 2:

I sometimes hurry my students up during my teaching, too. Indeed I give them some time to think about their answers but when I notice that they take advantage of it and start talking about something irrelevant or being busy with something else but the task, that is the end of the time assigned to them to think.

Figure 8. Elif's Journal Entry-2

4.2. Melike

Melike is a brand new ELT instructor who graduated with a good GPA (Grade Point Average) from the Middle East Technical University. In her pre-study interview, she emphasized that she was at the beginning of her teaching career, and for this reason, she stated that she needed a great deal of practical knowledge in ELT rather than theoretical information. Apparently, this provided a basis for her participation in the study. When Melike's pre-study interview was analyzed, it would not be wrong to say that she was really excited to take action.

4.2.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Melike’s Professional Development

4.2.1.1. Before the Study

Same as the data analysis in Elif’s case, Melike’s pre-study interview answers were examined and categorized under three sections: self-reflection, self-awareness and self-development. Melike’s pre-study statements implied that she was willing to improve her professional capabilities as an English instructor as reflected in Table 17.

Table 17. Melike’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
I am a new teacher and I believe that it will help me see my weaknesses as a teacher in the classroom so that I can learn the lessons from my mistakes and thereby be a better teacher in time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing the shortcomings as a teacher

As indicated in the above statements, Melike was expecting to be aware of her weaknesses as a new teacher as well as developing herself in the profession. She stated many times that she had the intention of learning about teaching from her experienced colleagues in her present teaching context.

Table 18. Melike’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-Development</u>
This will be very helpful and I am hoping that I will learn about teaching a lot and this will make such a significant contribution to my teaching career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving her teaching practice • Growing professionally

The only concern Melike had was about being inexperienced in the profession. Field notes indicated that this situation was leading her to have some concerns regarding the presence of her peers in her class. She was a bit nervous about performing poorly as a result of her anxiety.

4.2.1.2. After the Study

Melike's follow-up interview revealed that she was happy to take a part in this program. Although she had participated in many professional development activities including workshops, seminars and conferences before, this was her first experience in which she participated actively. The most effective point of peer observation for her was observing someone else's class. However, the researcher's field notes showed that she panicked from time to time. She thought she could not show her real performance when she was being observed. In spite of the fact that she knew that her friends were observing for themselves, there were times that she was not able to forget about their presence in her class. She stated her feelings about the peer observation process and reflected as in the following:

Table 19. Melike's Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
At times I observed my friends, I noticed many points that I had missed until that time. I asked myself why I wasn't doing the same things in my classes. As I witnessed something effective in my friends' classes, it made me think that I could do the same things because I saw that they worked well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Realizing good practices in others' classes• Thinking about her teaching and questioning herself• Making self-criticism

As shown above, Melike was ready to make any effort to improve her teaching from many aspects. The researcher observed her rigor in her actions all along the study. She was paying attention to every single feedback she got from her peers and took action for them. In her reflection form, Melike wrote down that she noticed her weakness in giving clear instructions. She was hoping to change this situation to improve her teaching.

Table 20. Melike’s Reflective Forms 1

Melike:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
One of the problems during my teaching was unclear instruction. Therefore, my observation will be based on how to make the instructions clearer and easier for my students to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Realizing a weak point in her instruction

In this reflection entry, Melike drew attention to her observation plan. When she visited Ekrem, she kept in mind her weak point and tried to figure out whether Ekrem was using good strategies that she could use in her classes, too.

After completing their peer observation program, Melike expressed her satisfaction from the peer observation process as:

Table 21. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-development</u>
There is a great deal of strategies I learnt from observations. I definitely think peer observation is an effective activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It supported her self confidence• She got constructive feedback

Field notes promoted the idea that Melike received mostly positive and constructive criticism unlike her concerns at the beginning of the program. This obviously resulted in building her self-reliance in her. In sum, the peer observation program has helped Melike’s professional development as well as supported her reflective thought.

4.2.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Melike’s Reflective Thought

As stated earlier, it was important for Melike to get the idea of experienced teachers about teaching. She was of the opinion that there weren’t any perfect teachers. According to Melike, any teacher could encounter a problem with an unexpected situation in his or her class with regard to their students’ profile, which is composed of different cultures and characters.

When we take a look at Melike’s problem solving process, we can see that she developed some strategies to give clearer instructions while paying attention to her Teacher Talking Time. She listed her strong points and intended areas for improvement as follow:

Table 22. Melike’s Problem-Solving Notes

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Melike	Eliciting answers Using body language and gestures Using “why” and “how” questions Modeling	Asking one or more people from the class to repeat the instructions.	Making instructions simple and concise to avoid explaining them multiple times. Making all students participate Tolerating silence

From Melike’s point of view, it was necessary for educators to get together and act collaboratively on their problems. Referring her experiences from this study, she uttered that it was not always easy for them to realize their good or bad practices. However during this program, they managed to see their weak points with the help of their peers and then worked on the problems cooperatively. For her, the process was really helpful.

Table 23. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-Development</u>
Sometimes we might not find solutions to our problems on our own. We may need some other point of views. I think collaborative action research was effective in achieving this. It was like saying “ I came across with such a situation in my class and I did this. What would you do if you were in my position? Would you do the same or do something different?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on her problems in collaboration with her peers • Gaining different perspectives • Putting herself in someone else’s position

The CAR process apparently nurtured Melike’s reflective thought. Her statements in the follow-up interview put forward that CAR helped her notice some points she had ignored before.

Table 24. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
I had difficulty in giving clear instructions. In collaborative action research, one of my friends informed me about the same point. Although I was already aware of this situation, it made a different effect on me. I told myself that I had to work on it as soon as possible now that my friend also noticed it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about her teaching • Taking action for the insufficient areas ignored before

The expression displayed above reveals that although the instructors are aware of their weaknesses, they might have a tendency to ignore them. In this study, it has been observed that participants took action for their shortcomings right after the feedback they got from their peers. In this sense, it can be concluded that action research and peer feedback accelerates the problem solving process. The following table provides another example of Melike’s self-reflection.

Table 25. Melike’s Reflection Forms 2

Melike:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
Ekrem’s students’ level of proficiency is much higher than my students’. Voluntary system in turn taking is sometimes a waste of time in my class because my students are usually reluctant to participate. I had better choose who would take turns randomly in my own way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about her teaching context • Drawing conclusions and planning future practice

At the end of the study she managed to reduce her Teacher Talking Time while increasing her Student Talking Time. For Melike, the support of her friends played a significant role in achieving this change and gave her a bunch of useful ideas for her future practices. Her post-observation reflection form that she filled in at the end of her second peer observation forms gives evidence to this.

Table 26. Melike’s Reflection Form 3

Melike:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
Ekrem corrects students’ mistakes implicitly, which is what I often do as well. He asks students to check their answers in pairs and this reduces his TTT and forces them to ask questions, thereby increasing STT, which I have never tried before.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observing her peer and reflecting on her teaching

Table Table 27 shows the results of her action research about reducing her TTT in her Pre-Intermediate Speaking class.

Table 27. Melike’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	2 min. 38 sec.	6 min. 33 sec.
Time 2	1 min. 20 sec.	7 min. 08 sec.

4.2.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Melike’s Reflective Teaching

Being involved in a collaborative journal writing activity helped Melike look at her teaching from a critical perspective. In her follow up interview, she stressed that in the profession of teaching, there are times that one needs to consult a friend about a problem. Melike addressed the fact that they mostly need different points of views when they encounter a problem. After she completed this study, she expressed that collaborative journaling was effective in achieving this. She drew attention to this point by stating the following in Table 28:

Table 28. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
Different people provide different offers of solution. And you start to think that “Yes, I could do this!” or, “Yes, I unfortunately did not do this!” I mean you look yourself with a critical eye.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making self-criticism• Thinking about your actions

From Melike’s stance, it has been understood that collaborative journaling had another advantage in that she got the opportunity to write down her experience. To put it in a different way, she could better express herself in writing as mentioned in Table 29:

Table 29. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-Development</u>
<p>“Spoken words fly away, written words remain.”</p> <p>In this respect, reading a written incident is catchier. I thought I was able to reflect myself better in this way. Another advantage is that it can reach other people. If you speak, only people around you can listen. But if you write, it doesn’t go anywhere and other people can read them as well. It was beneficial for me to read my friend’s comments on my incident.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the chance to expressing her problems • Getting comments on her issues

Melike displayed her confirmation about the effectiveness of collaborative journaling as given in the table below.

Table 30. Melike’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Melike:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
<p>Collaborative Journaling helped me ask these questions to myself: “Am I fulfilling the requirements of my job? How would I react in case of such a problem? “ I mean I started to think about potential problems that I might face like my colleagues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking critically

As it is apparent from her answers, it seems clear that Melike benefited from this activity. When we refer to our field notes and her journal entries, it seems definite that she both contributed to her friends’ professional growth and her own reflective thought. Below, one of her reflective journals is presented with the comment of one of her friends.

I was teaching how to write a comparison-contrast paragraph to my B1 students. At that day, I suffered from a great sense of insecurity because I had not prepared enough for the lesson. I found a Power Point Presentation on the Internet at the last moment and attended the class. I started to explain things anyway. Since I did not work on the slides before the class, I just messed up my whole lesson. I was just reading the slides just as they were. I could not explain the points properly as I got panicked. Only a few students were listening to me at that time while others were got bored and busy with something else, which was unusual. Perhaps that they were also more reluctant than usual made my job harder, I don't know. It was the most terrible lesson that I'd had since the day I started teaching. I was the most boring teacher in the world! I cannot tell you how terrible I felt then. Since I am a perfectionist, who makes things harder, I am angry with myself for making such a mistake. Since that day, I have tried to attend the classes with some preparation before the class. I am one of the teachers who think that I must do my best for my students. I cannot ignore the mistakes that I have made and let them go.

Instructor 1:

I got into this kind of situation a few times in my teaching career. It happens! Being planned is one of the keys to success as a teacher. At that times when you are not prepared, you can even change your lesson plan and do something fun like a game or something that does not need preparation rather than trying to follow the lesson plan and losing students' interest.

Figure 9. Melike's Journal Entry-3

4.3. Hajar

Hajar has eight years of experience in teaching English. Previously, she has worked for a public high school in Morocco, which is her home country. She has been teaching at Melikşah University for a year. She had a similar experience to peer observation in Morocco. However, in that study, her peers had observed her and she had no chance of observing them. Differing from that experience, in this study Hajar observed her colleagues.

4.3.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Hajar's Professional Development

4.3.1.1. Before the Study

When Hajar was asked to join in this program, she accepted it with a great pleasure. The researcher observed her eagerness from the first day to the last. Field notes make it clear that her

favorite moments were the meetings. She was spreading her energy to everyone in the meeting and unconsciously motivating the team towards the given tasks.

Before we started the program, Hajar showed a great interest by asking about the start time of the study. In her interview she explained her reasons for joining this event as:

Table 31. Hajar’s Pre-Study Interview Statement

Hajar:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
I really want people to show me what I am doing. Because when I am doing it, I am doing unconsciously. That the people at the back, they are writing! They can notice everything.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting feedback from the peers on her teaching • Being aware of her actions

With this statement, she draws attention to the difficulty educators have in detecting their weak points during their teaching, as they are to follow a pacing and teach many hours in a row. With this regard, they need another eye on their teaching to help them be aware of their practices and help them find ways to improve them at the same time.

Hajar highlighted her expectations of the study as gaining knowledge from a colleague and being aware of her shortcomings. She made it clear that she was ready to observe and to be observed. Her nature, as far as the researcher has observed, was very suitable for this kind of professional development program because she was so in favor of sharing good practices and ideas. For her, this process meant learning from one another. She stated in the interview that:

Table 32. Hajar’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-development</u>
I want you please to come and join me, observe me and then I can observe you. Yes. Because we can teach each other. Being a teacher doesn't mean that you are perfect. No!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from a colleague • Having the chance of observing a friend for development

Hajar’s expressions showed that she had no particular concern about the study. The reason behind her being comfortable with joining in this program may result from her experience regarding observations. As she stated in her interview, her colleagues had observed her before coming to Turkey but she had never visited a friend’s classroom before. So, this was going to be

her first time in carrying out peer observations and she truly had a positive approach toward using this tool.

4.3.1.2. After the Study

Field notes proved that Hajar kept her interest in the study throughout the program and paid attention to every single task. As it was her first time she visiting her colleagues, she seemed happy to have this chance. In her interview, she stated the points indicated in Table 33.

Table 33. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
Before the observation, we were teaching and we didn’t know whether we were really teaching or not. Also we observed others and that was the most important part for me because I had never observed others so I did and it was really good. It really helped us to know what is going on because we did not know what was going on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained an insight into her teaching • Got the chance of observing peers • She learned about her teaching

Besides gaining an insight into her teaching, it appeared in her interview that she discovered her good practices with the help of her observer. She stated that she was not aware of the fact that she was encouraging students to speak more by asking them to read the instructions rather than expecting teacher to explain everything. When her observer highlighted this point, she stressed that while teaching, it was difficult for her to think about her actions.

Table 34. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
I felt really happy when Elif said when she attended my classes; she liked one of the strategies that I used. According to her observation, I'm never reading the instructions. (She was asking students to read them). I said I didn't know that on conscious ground. Because I know myself when I am teaching I am not aware of what I am doing (She laughs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realizing her strengths as a teacher • Seeing her good practices with the help of her friend

In her follow up interview, she mentioned the effectiveness of peer observation as a

reflective tool by stressing her gains from observing her partner. According to Hajar, in those visits, she always tended to think about her teaching. She began by looking at her friends' actions but drew conclusions about her own.

Table 35. Hajar's Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-development</u>
When I am observing someone I am not observing that person to find his mistakes no! I am observing that person to help myself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting her teaching and reflection on it to improve her teaching

In her reflection forms, Hajar mentioned some points that she cannot change in herself. Although she received some feedback from her friend about her pace in class, she accepted that it was not so easy for her. She noted down the following reflection:

Table 36. Hajar's Reflection Form 1

Hajar:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
During my last observation, Elif said that I had to work on using visual aids and also maintaining the appropriate pace, which I totally cannot avoid as I am used to give enough time to students, and the pacing is all the time in my second list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on her style • Thinking about her weaknesses

To sum up, the peer observation program was a fruitful process for Hajar and she was pleased to take part in this. While conducting peer observations, she got the chance to review her teaching and plan better teaching strategies to improve it.

4.3.2. Findings on The Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Hajar's Reflective Thought

In her problem-solving process, Hajar wanted to work on the two tips that they discussed in their action research meeting. She was thinking that she had some difficulties in letting silence in her classes. Instead of waiting for students to speak, sometimes she was filling the silence explaining things again and again. In her action plan, she reflected as in the Table 37.

Table 37. Action Plan of Hajar

After completing the study, Hajar mentioned that she learnt a lot from action research

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Hajar	Correction. I never correct students' mistakes. I let them do.	Using visual aids, because they help, as they feel comfortable to talk and do that as well.	Avoiding explaining things again and again. Allowing silence

process. She highlighted the role of her friends she worked with in her personal and professional gain. In her follow-up interview she stated the usefulness of the program and illustrated some of the strategies she gained.

Table 38. Hajar's Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-development</u>
I liked some of the strategies we studied like error correction. I noticed that for example Tuğçe mention that she corrects students' mistake and in one of the strategies we discussed, it says students need to correct themselves or to be corrected by their friends which is really a good strategy. You first give the chance to students to correct themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning new strategies• Exchanging ideas with the colleagues

As pointed out in Table 38, after visiting her friends' classes and doing two lessons in which she paid special attention to her TTT, she concluded that using some of those strategies helped her reduce her speaking time in class. However, she could not increase her STT. According to her, as she taught grammar in both periods, students did not participate as she expected. Her action research results are given in the table below.

Table 39. Hajar’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	5 min. 50 sec.	4 min. 26 sec.
Time 2	4 min. 14 sec.	4 min. 21 sec.

While she was reflecting about her action research, she stressed that she did not look for perfection in herself. For her, what really matters was student perfection. She found action research helpful in achieving better teaching practice. From her perspective, everyone in this team collaborated faithfully. She even made an offer during her interview. With her words: “Let’s do it again with the same members! I really would like to do it again!”

Table 40. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
I could just put a camera and observe myself. When I just go home and I could see the recording what was going on. That was really good I loved the idea of recording.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewing her teaching and exploring it to find the strong or weak points of it

As reflected in Table 40, Hajar stressed that action research was effective and the people that took part in it were not playing. She said that her friends were really serious while searching for solutions to their problems. To Hajar, after the program they were questioning every single thing, which was not the case before. With Hajar’s own words “I took my time and stopped 5 or 10 minutes for each task and reflected. It was so good for me.”

4.3.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Hajar’s Reflective Teaching

In her follow up interview, Hajar defined reflection as “to stop on certain situations and think whether you will keep using that strategies and methods or its time to get rid of them”. She expressed that teachers realize some strategies tha are not working anymore. According to her, “It’s time to change, so you reflect to change.”

Table 41. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
I don't have to wait for some unexpected situation to happen to me and to reflect on them. I reflected on my colleagues let's say unexpected situation and now I have already have an answer. I guess that Ekrem Hoca had written one of the students was trying to cheat him or I don't know trick him with a vocabulary and we all reflected on that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing experiences and making reflections on them

Hajar agreed that collaborative journal writing helped her professional development. She put herself in place of her colleagues and made reflections. As a result of the process she thought she gained different perspectives.

Table 42. Hajar’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Hajar:	<u>Self-Development</u>
Before writing or before reflecting on everything I was thinking “It could be me there!” What happened to Ekrem, Elif or Tuğçe could happen to me as well. So, instead of waiting what will happen to me, I have learnt 5 different things there.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning new approaches to teaching and gaining consciousness for the situations likely to happen

To sum up, from her expressions, we can conclude that Hajar found collaborative journaling effective in terms of her professional development. She gained different perspectives and reflected on her practices while reading others’ journal entries. From her point of view, it was a good opportunity for her to take part in this journaling activity and gain a reflective point of view.

4.4. Dilara

Dilara is also at the beginning of her career. Although it was her first year in teaching, she had participated in a peer observation program before. Besides this program, she attended a few professional development activities such as workshops and seminars. However, it was her first

experience with her students, in her everyday teaching context.

4.4.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Dilara’s Professional Development

4.4.1.1. Before the Study

In the pre-study interview, Dilara noted that in her practicum school, she carried out peer observations while they were studying inductive teaching. Her relevant experience made her to be willing to join in this research. And from her expressions we concluded that she was hoping to become a better English instructor by observing her experienced colleagues.

Table 43. Dilara’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Dilara:	<u>Self-development</u>
I want to improve myself as a teacher. As I have just started teaching, I need some improvements. And if I get some feedback from experienced teachers, it will help me be a better teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aiming to grow professionally• Getting feedback from the colleagues.

Dilara had a concern regarding the study. She was very afraid of being criticized sharply by her colleagues. Since it was her first year, it was not an unexpected concern. From our field notes, we can conclude that she was still really interested in this study and hoping to learn both about teaching English and her teaching style.

4.4.1.2. After the Study

Upon completing the study, like the other participants, she was asked about her feelings and take-away from the study. Dilara noted that she was glad to take part in this study and added that she gained self-confidence with the help of this program. She made a distinction between her prior developmental activities and this study by stating “When you attend a conference or seminar, you find those ideas really effective and you think that they are useful. However, you cannot apply them into your teaching because your students are different, your context is different.” According to Dilara, this program was beneficial in that, she learnt new methods and techniques that can be applied to her classes since she saw them successfully done in her friends’ classes.

Table 44. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Dilara:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
In this program, I realized that preparing a lesson plan has a key role in achieving good teaching practice. It affects your confidence. In this program, I gained self-confidence I think. Because before conducting peer observation, I was thinking that I was an unsuccessful teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gaining self-confidence• Realizing strong points of her teaching

She noted that as a result of the peer observation program, she started to reflect on her teaching. She became aware of her strengths and weaknesses as a new teacher. She began to think about the effectiveness of the strategies she used in her classes.

Table 45. Dilara’s Post Study Interview Statements

Dilara:	<u>Self-Reflection</u>
This process made me stop and think about my teaching. I asked myself “Am I giving clear instruction? Am I talking too much in the class? Are my students speaking English at the expected level or are they speaking in English?” Yes, definitely it made me think.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questioning her teaching style• Reflecting on it to meet her expected teaching outcomes

We can see from her reflection forms that Dilara paid attention to the feedback she got from her peer observation partner. The following Table 46 shows that she developed new strategies to change her present methods.

Table 46. Dilara’s Reflection Form

Dilara:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
<p>My observer reminded me that I use unclear instructions. She even gave some specific examples from my class. After I saw my sentences, I understood she was right. They included some difficult vocabulary items and complex grammar structures. So, I decided to write my instructions beforehand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about her practice • Reflecting on it to improve her teaching

4.4.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Dilara’s Reflective Teaching

At the end of program, Dilara was feeling more experienced about looking for solutions to her problems from her classes. Yet, she highlighted that it was not enough for her. It was clear that she was in favor of this kind of professional development activities and she was hoping to continue with some of them. Below her action plan table is presented.

Table 47. Dilara’s Problem Solving Plan

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Dilara	I think I am really good at asking open-ended questions. I always use personalized questions to make them speak.	I allow silence in my classroom. It does not disturb me.	Repeating the instructions Being well-prepared for the class Inductive Teaching

Dilara’s reflection forms showed that she wanted to improve her instruction and to achieve this; she was observing her peers to get some useful techniques. She wrote her feelings as given below.

Table 48. Dilara’s Reflection Form 2

Dilara:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
According to the feedback I got from my friend, I need to improve my instructions. In addition to that, I need to reduce my TTT and give chance to students to talk more. I don’t know how to do that because I teach grammar and students are not eager to communicate in the target language. I feel that I need to get prepared very well before the lesson to get them to speak. On the other hand, I have to learn some techniques to achieve this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking about her practice• Looking for ways to improve it

At the end of the problem-solving process and second peer observation cycle, she noted that she could decrease her TTT slightly as a result of her action plan. By putting the techniques into practice she learnt both from the meetings and peer observations, she was able to reduce her TTT to some extent.

Table 49. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Dilara:	<u>Self-development</u>
In the simplest term, after this action research process, I saw that it is possible to decrease TTT if we prepare a well-developed lesson plan. Moreover, I learned to be patient until students answer my questions. In one of my friend’s lesson, I concluded that I could slow down my instructions and simplify them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning new strategies• Observing her friends and reflecting on her teaching

In her follow up interview (Table 47), Dilara mentioned several times that she witnessed really good lessons. According to her, Elif was attending her classes well prepared and Hajar was quite good at waiting to get answer from the students. Seeing her friends maintaining good practices affected Dilara positively and she asked herself this question many times “Am I doing this? Am I doing this in this way?” Below, her grammar lesson TTT& STT change is displayed.

Table 50. Dilara’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	6 min. 55 sec.	1 min. 12 sec.
Time 2	4 min. 35 sec.	5 min. 11 sec.

4.4.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Dilara’s Reflective Teaching

In her follow up interview Dilara put forward a different gain from collaborative journaling process. She stated that she felt happy to see experienced instructors in difficult or awkward situations. As it was her first year in this position, she felt relieved by seeing others face obstacles.

Table 51. Dilara’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Dilara:	Self-reflection
While writing you have enough time to think. I mean writing is more comfortable than speaking because you mention your weaknesses sometimes. And I wrote them in English and writing helped me express myself better I think. I wrote that I attended one of my classes without getting prepared. I felt a bit nervous about the feedbacks though.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking notes of her teaching practices and thinking about them• Sharing experiences with the others to get their comments

For Dilara, participating in was not an easy process because of her workload. She also experienced some anxiety regarding her journal entries about her shortcomings. However in the end, she thought that experienced instructors might get into trouble as well. This provided a kind of clear conscious in her.

Approximately two months ago I was too ill to prepare a lesson plan. So, for the first time, I just copied the answers from the teachers' book and I thought it would be enough. In class, I followed the activities of the book until my students ask the definition of a word. Unfortunately, I was not sure about the definition of the word. I gave an unclear answer and ignored that ambiguity in the class. They seemed understand nothing and I felt really bad. This incident was important for me as it reminded me how important to be prepared for the class. After this incident, I always paid attention to my class preparation.

Instructor 1:

It happened to me a few times, too. I can understand how bad you felt at the time. Preparation for the lesson is the key to a successful teacher. The more effort you made for your lessons, the better teacher you will be. You also will be less stressed during the year. Being prepared is not only helpful for you, but for your students as well.

Instructor 2:

Sometimes we learn lessons from our practices like you experienced that in that class. I would do the same thing and I would feel the same way. It happened to me a few times as well. Being prepared to our class is very important. One suggestion I would make in this case is that you could tell the students to look the word up in a dictionary.

Figure 10. Dilara's Journal Entry 2

4.5. Ekrem

Ekrem had been teaching English for a year when this study began. In his pre-study interview, he explained his reason for being interested in this study as "seeing variety of teaching techniques." As it is clear from this expression, he was mainly looking for opportunities to learn good practices from his peers.

4.5.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Ekrem's Professional Development

4.5.1.1. Before the Study

Before the study, Ekrem mentioned the difficulties of not being able to recognize one's own shortcomings while teaching. To this end, he did not want to miss the chance of observing and being observed. In Table 52, Ekrem's thoughts are given.

Table 52. Ekrem's Pre-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-development</u>
You know we sometimes cannot realize the mistakes or the things we do during our teaching. It will be really interesting to see what we're really doing in class and also create a chance for us to see a wide variety of teaching techniques and some other skills. Besides, it is a voluntary process and this chance came up and I thought why not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Becoming aware of his teaching style• Learning new skills and teaching techniques

Ekrem put forward that he is always looking for ways to develop himself and because he had a similar professional development program experience before, he was expecting to benefit from this program as well.

Table 53. Ekrem's Pre-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-Development</u>
I am always in favor of developing myself and this kind of peer observations I have seen benefits of this before and for my own refreshment, development, I think it will be useful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growing professionally

Ekrem was also thinking that there might be a few problems regarding their workload. But still he was eager to take part, as he trusted himself to manage his time efficiently.

4.5.1.2. After the Study

For Ekrem, this was a collaborative study and as a matter of fact, it was a sharing process. Before joining in this study, Ekrem had just completed his CELTA course. He had participated in a peer observation activity as part of that program, too. According to him, this time there was a difference regarding his feelings. In the previous one, there was a tutor joining their visitations. But in the present study, as there were no tutors or administrative authorities, he felt a lot more relaxed. Also this time he was teaching in his class, within the realness of his context.

Table 54. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
To speak specifically, I think this activity was really helpful to foster self-reflection in myself. Because we had the chance of seeing what we are really doing in our classes and we considered our strong and weak points. I think as a result of this study I even improved my self-confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking about his teaching• Building self-confidence in himself• Being aware of his strengths and weaknesses

Ekrem highlighted that it was a mutual learning activity. According to him, there could be things that each party can or cannot put into practice very well. At this respect, this program created a ground for sharing good practices and learning from each other.

Table 55. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-Development</u>
This program made me think that other people might not do something as good as me or I might not do something successfully as they do. And as we observe each other, we can discover these points and exchange ideas to help each other. And this process can continue by adding new things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exchanging ideas• Fostering self-awareness

4.5.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Ekrem’s Reflective Teaching

Ekrem made it clear that while being observed, instructors tend to pay attention to every single thing in their lesson plan and consequently, it becomes easier to detach from their shortcomings. On the other hand, when instructors are well prepared for that class, the observer instructor can learn new methods and strategies.

Table 56. Ekrem’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
<p>While observing my colleague, I gained self-confidence. I mean you see some points that your friend cannot achieve but you realize that you can do them successfully. Or you observe some practices that you previously thought impossible, being done easily. There are times that we do not trust ourselves in terms of applying some activities but we came to understand later that our friends are already putting them into practice and they work!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing his powerful sides in teaching • Observing good practices and concluding that they are also possible in his classes • Building self-confidence

After the first peer observation cycle was completed, Ekrem targeted the following areas to be improved. His main focus was going to be “giving instructions”. As he concluded, he was repeating his sentences again and again which resulted in too much TTT.

Table 57. Ekrem’s Problem-Solving Notes

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Ekrem	<p>Eliciting</p> <p>Checking understanding</p>	<p>Modeling</p> <p>Allowing silence</p> <p>Using visual aid</p>	<p>Avoiding giving too many instructions</p> <p>Using gestures</p>

In his problem-solving meetings, Ekrem noted in his reflection form that he realized his limited use of visuals by observing his friend. Another thing he wanted to change in himself was his use of voice and gestures. According to Ekrem, his friend was using them really successfully and he had better use the same strategies as well.

Table 58. Ekrem’s Reflection Form Entry 1

Ekrem:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
I am planning to form a more authentic atmosphere in my class so as to engage them in the lesson. While giving instructions, I am planning to use less talking time and make students involve in the activities more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Realizing his weak points• Planning to change

After putting those plans into practice, Ekrem compared two of his speaking classes’ TTT & STT with the help of the recordings. He expressed that the feedback he got from his friend and his self-reflections played a significant role in decreasing his TTT. Ekrem, unlike the other participants, could change his TTT & STT ratio to a great degree.

Table 59. Ekrem’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	10 min. 35 sec.	4 min. 46 sec.
Time 2	6 min. 19 sec.	8 min. 59 sec.

4.5.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals’ to Ekrem’s Reflective Teaching

Ekrem partially agreed that collaborative journaling has helped him grow professionally. From his point of view, this process had a drawback in that people writing comments might reflect on their bad experiences in a more positive way or if they don’t have similar problems, they can be superficial while writing. From this point of view he believed that unless they have such experience, the feedback they provide would not be real.

As for the reflection concept, he agreed that the process was more effective. For Ekrem, the biggest contribution of journaling activity was self-reflection.

Table 60. Ekrem's Post-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
It made us stop and look back. We needed to think about our actions and their results. So, I think it helped us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Remembering past teaching practicing and thinking about them

Ekrem stated that he gained self-confidence on more than one occasion. He asserted that it was possible for educators to accuse themselves of practicing poorly in some situations. However, while reading their friends' journals they realized that it could occur to anyone. Thus, he believed this process fostered his self-confidence.

Table 61. Ekrem's Post-Study Interview Statements

Ekrem:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
To illustrate, we can face a problem in our class and when we think about it, we could consider ourselves as bad teachers. As a consequence, we may lose our self-confidence. However, in this process we saw that it could be a problem of majority and could stem from different reasons. When we read other instructors' journals, we thought in this way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sharing experiences with the others and creating a sense of awareness towards his teaching

Below one of his journal entries is presented with comments from the other two instructors.

I planned two different activities for my grammar class. First one was a speaking activity during which students were supposed to choose a topic from the list related to a specific country and they were going to talk about it using present progressive tense. After I gave them the instructions, I was not happy with the way they were acting. They seemed reluctant and confused. Therefore, I spent more time with the instructions and told them to choose any other topic or trend to talk about. Initially, they began to take notes but the problem was that they needed a lot of new vocabulary. Consequently, they spent extra time on searching and asking about the vocabulary. I had thought that their speaking skills needed to be improved however; I was really upset about this situation. I was not sure afterwards whether I should have gone over it slightly or not.

Instructor 1:

Since speaking is one of the productive skills, it takes some time for students to improve. That's why it could be very demanding at times. In these cases, it sounds a better idea to give them a chance to take responsibility for their learning in order to encourage them to speak the target language. So, there is nothing wrong with what you did.

Instructor 2:

I see. We should always consider their competence level both in terms of receptive and productive skills while choosing activities for them even if it is a small exercise. In cases like yours, I have a whole class discussion to brainstorm ideas and remember some vocabulary.

Figure 11. Ekrem's Journal Entry 2

4.6. Tuğçe

Tuğçe has 10 years of English teaching experience. Previously, she worked for a primary school. During her work experience in primary school, she had never had such an opportunity to observe her friends. She added that she had been observed for administrative purposes many times, however this was going to be her first time collaborating with her peers for her professional growth.

4.6.1. Findings on the Contributions of Peer Observation as a Reflective Tool to Tuğçe's Professional Development

4.6.1.1. Before the Study

From Tuğçe's expressions during the pre-study interview, we observed that she was open to self-development even though she was the most experienced instructor among the other

participants in this study. Her statements given in Table 62 indicated that she would appreciate her friend’s feedback on her teaching.

Table 62. Tuğçe’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Tuğçe	<u>Self-development</u>
Because I thought it will improve my teaching skills when one of my colleagues is in my class and observing me and telling me about the problems and the things we should do in class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving teaching skills • Growing professionally

Like the other instructors, Tuğçe was aiming to develop her teaching by observing her peers and working together with them on her problems. According to Tuğçe, sharing experience was important for their professional growth.

Table 63. Tuğçe’s Pre-Study Interview Statements

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-development</u>
I think it will improve our teaching skills as we share our classroom experiences and what we have done in our classes. I want to join for the purpose of self-improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing experiences with the colleagues • Learning from the colleagues • Growing professionally

Tuğçe had no particular concern related to the program. She noted that she was relaxed and happy because of the team she was going to work with. In her first reflection form, Tuğçe just wrote that constructive feedback was crucial in peer observation.

4.6.1.2. After the Study

Following the peer observation program, the researcher asked Tuğçe about her experience and feelings regarding the process. Tuğçe expressed her pleasure about having participated in this activity. She highlighted that it was really helpful to get feedback from her friends on issues regarding her everyday practice. Tuğçe also stressed the differences between her previous professional development activities and the peer observation program. From Tuğçe’s point of view, in her previous professional development activities, teachers take notes of the new strategies but they may forget about them later. However in this process, as they actively

take part in the program, they immediately put good strategies into practice.

Table 64. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-development</u>
<p>This program helped me get rid of my shyness in the first place. In the first cycle of the observations, I felt really nervous. Yet in the second cycle, I was comfortable because I learned that presence of the observer couldn’t interfere my teaching. I thought so maybe because the process friendlier than the administrative observations. Because in administrative ones, you feel like they are trying to find out only your shortcomings and this makes you nervous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming her anxiety in terms of the observers • Feeling in a friendlier and a stress-free atmosphere

Tuğçe stated that she observed different styles and learned different techniques during her visitations. It was even enjoyable for her to witness good techniques and take note of them to use later in her classes. This entry indicated that she met her expectations in terms of learning new things from her colleagues.

Table 65. Tuğçe’s Reflection Form 1

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-development</u>
<p>While Ekrem was teaching there is/there are, he started from the neighborhood of students’ houses. He asked if there is a pharmacy near their house or a café. I found this approach really effective and took my note to use it too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering good strategies to be used in her class

Tuğçe also mentioned the fact that while teaching, it is not easy to be aware of their actions. They need another eye on their teaching sometimes. In her follow-up interview, she made the following comments:

Table 66. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
I didn’t know that I was giving the instructions over and over again. When Melike told me that I was repeating the same sentences many times I started to pay attention to it. Unfortunately it was true.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Realizing her shortcoming and thinking about it

4.6.2. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Action Research to Tuğçe’s Reflective Teaching

In the problem-solving process, Tuğçe brought together the feedbacks she got from her observers and she listed her points she wanted to work on as given below.

Table 67. Tuğçe’s Problem Solving Notes

Participant Name	Tips that I feel comfortable with:	Tips that I feel OK with:	Tips that I would like to work on and why:
Tuğçe	Using visual aids Being well-prepared for the lessons	Modeling Eliciting	Avoiding giving too many instructions

When we take a look at her reflection forms, we can see that Tuğçe believed that her colleague was right and she noted down “I realized that I try too much to tell students what to do during an activity. I must improve myself about this issue.” After completing the action research, Tuğçe reflected on the program by stating the role of her friends in the problem-solving process.

Table 68. Tuğçe’s Reflection Form 2

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-awareness</u>
When I looked at the checklist Melike filled for me, I noticed that I had missed many points. Her comments were important for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Realizing her weaknesses

At the end of the action research, Tuğçe’s TTT did not change at a considerable amount. She could only increase her STT a little bit. Table 69 show the results of her first and second

peer observation TTT & STT ratio.

Table 69. Tuğçe’s Action Research Results

	TTT	STT
Time 1	6 min. 55 sec.	4 min. 36 sec.
Time 2	6 min. 20 sec.	5 min. 27 sec.

4.6.3. The Findings on the Contribution of Collaborative Journals to Tuğçe’s Reflective Teaching

Tuğçe found collaborative journaling activity as a useful and fun process. Although it was a bit difficult for her to remember past events, the fact that they were supposed to write rather than speak, helped her to express herself better.

Table 70. Tuğçe’s Post-Study Interview Statements

Tuğçe:	<u>Self-reflection</u>
As I read the journals of my friends, I thought the same incident might come out in my classes too. Maybe this quarter, or the next. I thought my students and for this respect I found it effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account her teaching situations and reflecting on them.

For Tuğçe, it was a good opportunity to think about the situations from their classes and exchange ideas with her peers. If they were supposed to discuss about their experience instead of writing them down, they could not reflect their deep thinking as a consequence of their mood at that moment. One of the journals of her is presented below in Figure 12 including some comments from her friends.

Nearly two months ago, I was teaching general English to my faculty students. We studied present simple and present continuous tense. After revising the tenses, it was time for writing. I had planned to teach them some writing skills with the help of a paragraph named “Are women better drivers than men? Firstly, they were supposed to read the paragraph and then fill the notes about it. After completing the notes, they were going to write a short response. However, things did not go as I expected. They started to talk about women drivers and then it turned into a discussion after a while. They seemed enjoying the topic and they were using English willingly. Therefore, I did not want to stop them and decided to give the writing part as homework. I highlighted that they were responsible for s

tudying the structure from the book and adding the things we discussed in class to their paragraphs.

Instructor 1:

I think you did a good thing allowing students to talk and use the language. It is common that students have low level of motivation when they are asked to communicate in the target language. So, it is good to let them talk when there is an interesting topic to talk. Moreover, it is nice to give the writing part as homework in order to make up the parts you could not cover.

Instructor 2:

I think you did well. If I were you, I would do the same because I believe that communication should be our main focus. We should not worry about following the pacing.

Figure 12. Tuğçe’s Journal Entry 2

CHAPTER V

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 puts the main findings of this research together by pointing the key implications of the practitioners. It is presented in four main sections. In the first section, the purpose of the study is explained and a brief overview of the study is given including the research questions and the research methodology. In the second section, main findings regarding the contributions of peer observation, collaborative action research and collaborative journal writing are summarized and in the third section implications and recommendation for future practices are given. Lastly, final thoughts emerged from the program and our understanding of the reflective practice is provided.

5.1. Summary of the Study

In this study, we aimed to examine the contributions of three professional development tools to EFL instructors' reflective practice. The following research questions formed a basis to our research:

1- What are the contributions of peer observation as a reflective tool to EFL instructors' professional development?

2- What are the contributions of being involved in a collaborative action research cycle to EFL instructors' reflective thought?

3- Does involvement in a collaborative journal writing foster reflective thought?

With an attempt to find answers to these questions, we designed a professional development program. Collaborative action research was decided to be the context of the study and formed our research methodology. Peer observation of teaching along with the reflective writing activities were integrated into the program. To be able to get more accurate data, the duration of the program was determined as twelve weeks. Six participants were encouraged to take part in the program in which they were expected to join in weekly meetings and observe their friends as well as being observed by them.

Each participant undertook two-peer observation program and completed an action research throughout the program. They were also stimulated to collaborate in a reflective journal-writing program that took place three times all along the study.

Being defined as the facilitator, the researcher planned and attended every single meeting that took 30 to 50 minutes. After each meeting, the participants filled in their reflective forms

and the researcher took a copy of them. After getting them back, the instructors put all those reflection forms into their professional development files.

At the end of the program, the feelings and the ideas of the participant were obtained through post-study interviews. The interview statements were transcribed and exposed to content analysis. Three main categories were chosen and the results were analyzed to see their effect on reflective teaching. Findings are summarized and discussed in the next section.

5.2. Summary of the Main Findings

As stated in the previous chapters, the main focus of this program was to foster reflection in EFL instructors. Specifically we wanted to see to what extent they are effective in supporting reflective thought rather than exploring the effectiveness of action research and peer observation only as professional development tools.

Findings of the study were examined mainly from a “reflective approach where these kind of activities are carried out to foster self-reflection and self-awareness about our teaching rather than judging the others’ teaching” (Cosh, 1998, p. 25). These two aspects of the reflective approach were taken and one more category was identified as “self-development” forming as a natural outcome of the former two.

With these three categories in hand, we explored the reflection forms, pre and post study interview statements and reflective writings of the participants including our field notes. Results obtained from the study were brought together and grouped according to their relation to the research questions. We summarized the major findings on the perceptions and expectations of all participants before they started the program as given below:

- Learning new teaching techniques and methods from colleagues
- Developing themselves in a less formal and stressful atmosphere
- Improving their teaching styles
- Getting feedback from friends
- Exchanging ideas with people sharing the same context
- Growing professionally

These expectations of the instructors indicated that their main purpose was to improve their teaching. As mentioned earlier, they participated in the study on voluntary basis and they knew that this program would take their time. Yet, they had no hesitation to join in the activities.

This pointed out their willingness to acquire new knowledge and review their present teaching practice. As

While four of the participants had never participated in a peer observation program before, other two instructors had peer observation experience prior to this program. However, none of them had tried it with their students, in their teaching context. As we understood from their remarks, they were hoping to improve themselves in their own teaching context.

Upon completing the study, the following points emerged from their post-study interviews.

- Understanding shortcomings as a teacher
- Being aware of their strengths
- Gaining self-confidence in a stress-free atmosphere
- Making self-criticism
- Taking action for their insufficient areas
- Thinking about their teaching styles
- Planning future actions by reassessing their teaching
- Considering the consequences of their actions
- Making self-reflection through peer support
- Overcoming observer anxiety

As Harwell suggested (2003) professional development activities should support teachers with opportunities to “try new behavior in safe environments and receive feedback from peers” (p.8). Our study revealed that the peer observation program provided this stress-free atmosphere to the instructors giving them a chance to feel comfortable while applying new approaches to their teaching. As one of the participant stated, she overcame her “anxiety of observes”. As presented above, this process helped instructors make self-reflection through peer assistance. Dewey (1993) had mentioned the same concept claiming that these activities need to take place “in interaction with others” (p.9).

In this study, instructors tried to enrich their teaching skills by observing their colleagues. While conducting these observations, four of the instructors noticed that they gained self-confidence. They noted that they initially wanted to learn new methods in English teaching but as they progress in the program, they discovered that they had many strong practices. For this respect, we can conclude that peer observation served as an awareness-supporting mechanism. In their hectic working atmosphere, it was not always possible to find time to assess their teaching.

When they are asked to reflect on their teaching, they mostly focused on their weaknesses. However, this study showed them their strengths in teaching and respectively fostered motivation.

All of the participants valued the feedback they got from their observers. None of the instructors reported getting judgmental feedback. As a result of this situation they preferred to work on their weaknesses wholeheartedly. This indicated two concepts. Firstly pre-study trainings seem to have been successful in building the “trust” and “credibility”. Supporting Gosling (2000, cited in Gosling 2002), it is possible for peer observation to be successful when “the teacher being observed accepts, or even welcomes, the comments of the observer” (p.2). As such, the fact that participants have provided constructive criticism played a key function in creating a friendly learning atmosphere. Secondly, since they could manage to improve their targeted areas, we can deduce that the process caused meaningful changes in the instructors. As it is apparent from above, they did not just listen to their partners and then go back to their usual practices.

The last point that needs attention to is that this process truly fostered self-reflection by helping them see each other’s practices and review their own teaching. The statements like Melike provided “Ekrem asks students to check their answers in pairs and this reduces his TTT and forces them to ask questions, thereby increasing STT, which I have never tried before.” sets further evidence to the success of this program. It has been observed that by means of peer observations, all the participants got the chance to analyze their practice and reflecting on it for developmental purposes.

As for the results of the CAR, our findings demonstrate the following items:

- Pursuing self-development
- Exploring solutions to their problems
- Getting more permanent solutions to their problems
- Discovering good teaching strategies
- Working on the problems collaboratively
- Making self-criticism
- Questioning themselves
- Putting themselves into their peers’ place

As Atkinson and Bolt (2010) asserted “action research aids both individual and group learning” (p.4). Our study justified this claim. As a research team, every single participant benefited from the process of both visiting and being visited by their peers. Similarly, when they took a holistic look, they interpreted that their gain as a team during their problem solving process was notable, too. The main results of this action research revealed that through exploring their own teaching styles and conditions, they discovered many approaches to their teaching as well as finding solutions to them.

There is no doubt about the effectiveness of action research in teacher education. As Bryant (1995, p.10) defined it as “the establishment of self-critical communities of educators that encourage each other to examine their teaching practices” the instructors in this program investigated their teaching contexts and automatically stopped and thought about their role and effectiveness in student learning. Their cooperation in the problem-solving meetings and in recording activities proved that they stimulated one another to reassess their practices.

All of the instructors expressed their satisfaction and joy concerning the action research process. One of the reasons can be specified as doing something out of their routine. Although they were really busy with their schedules, all group members stated that they enjoyed the weekly meetings.

Another reason might be seeing themselves changing a situation caused problem to them. At the end of the study we saw that they somehow changed their TTT & STT ratio. These results made them think that if they focused on a certain aspect of their teaching, they could change it or get rid of it. This result reaffirmed Corey’ suggestion of “the consequences of our own teaching is more likely to change and improve our practice than is reading about what someone else has discovered of his teaching” (1953, p.70, cited in Ferrance 2000, p.7). Consequently, they were glad to have taken part in this research. One of them even offered to continue this process with the same group members till the end of the year.

The last developmental tool was reflective writing. In total, six instructors wrote 3 journal entries in 12 weeks and provided comments for 15 journal entries till the end of the program. Each time the researcher requested them to think about a specific teaching practice and then write their feelings and ideas about it. After writing it, they were supposed to pass it to the other members in the program.

The five participants found the journaling activity effective for their professional development. One of them, unlike the others thought that the process somewhat insufficient in that inexperienced instructors might not reflect rational comments. According to him, they would not have many experiences and write just superficial comments. The common findings are summarized below as:

- Gaining new perspectives
- Expressing their problems to friends and exploring solutions
- Getting comments on their actions
- Looking back and thinking about the events occurred during their teaching
- Thinking about their teaching style
- Reviewing their teaching and detecting strong or poor points
- Gaining consciousness for the situations likely to happen
- Taking notes of their practice

These results signaled the contributions of reflective journals' to the reflective thoughts of the instructors. As participants stated that they gained consciousness towards situations likely to happen, we can conclude that they also obtained different perspectives. Surgenor (2011) suggested the three elements in reflective writing as "looking back at something", "analyzing the event or idea", "and thinking carefully about it for your development" (p.15). When we take into consideration our results, we can see that our participants have experienced all these stages. They recalled some teaching practices, and then analyzed them to make necessary changes in order to achieve their expected learning outcomes.

As such, collaborative journaling has been affected the participants' reflective teaching by encouraging them to think about certain situations to offer "both a window of the past and a gateway to the future" (Larrivee, 2006, p.21).

5.3. Implications and Recommendations for Future Studies

In regard to the main findings presented above, we call for several recommendations for future studies. First of all, as this research offered important contributions on the reflection of instructors, these development tools may be proposed as items for the agenda of Professional Development Units of universities. Instructors participating in the study put forth that "real experience" was necessary in teacher development. Avoiding the underestimating the usefulness of the other developmental activities such as workshops and seminars, they stressed the need for

active involvement in their professional growth.

The key factor in getting participants' positive and favorable attitudes towards these tools was that they collaborated in their "natural setting". Our implication from this natural setting is that, although the instructors are equipped with many methods and good techniques, they still need to gain insight into their teaching to better answer the needs of students. It is a well-known fact that, the rapid changes in technology oblige educators to explore new ways to meet this need. Hence, teachers require looking for opportunities to inform themselves. And yet, no matter how good of education they get, they still need to see about self-development. Since no two classes are the same, they mostly have to change their strategies from one class to another. To be able to pick up the speed in their hectic schedules, they need to start exploring their context and proceed towards self-criticism and self-reflection in order to find solutions to their ongoing problems.

The positive outcomes of this present study reveal that collaboration among teachers plays a significant role in teacher reflection. As Cosh (1998) claimed, "teaching is an art, not a science" (p.26). Thus, it needs to be done with a "reflective view" (ibid.). What we suggest through this study is that institutions can carry out peer observation and action research to help their staff think about their practice and find ways to improve it. They do not have to use them for assessment or administrative purposes. We believe that if instructors hold the idea of going and observing friends for the sake of themselves, these practices will no longer be perceived as a burden or distress. By doing so, the instructor being observed will think that someone is there not to judge, but to think about his or her teaching style and practice.

We truly think that instructors benefited from the action research in many ways. Most importantly they reduced their TTT while increasing the STT to some extent. This shows that each institution can form similar action research teams to give teachers opportunity to learn from each other. In our opinion, starting from their natural setting would provide effective solutions.

We admit that scheduling such kind of meetings or even offering convenient places for the small groups may not be very easy. Still taking into account the benefits of them, we encourage administrations to spare some time from their general meetings to these kinds activities.

Learning from our experience in this study, we lastly suggest expanding these activities to a larger period of time. As we referred to earlier, effective professional development activities

need to take place “over extended periods of time” (Harwell, 2003, p.8).

5.4. Limitations of the Study

This study was intended to investigate the experiences of a group of EFL instructors who took part in a professional development program regarding their use of three reflective tools. However, participants were not selected randomly. On the contrary, the researcher offered them the opportunity to take part in the study individually as she knew them before. This might have caused a bias in the selection process, as the researcher was sure of their interest in this kind of professional development activities. Our suggestion for future practitioners would be selecting participants from different institutions. This could also resolve the trust and credibility issues as well as lessening observer anxiety.

The second limitation about the study was related to the duration of study. As almost all the participants highlighted in their post-study interviews, they needed to rush from time to time. This situation resulted mainly from the fact that last two weeks of the action research were also the last weeks of the semester. Not surprisingly, students lost their motivation towards lessons and this situation affected our action research findings. In the program, action research could have started at an earlier time period.

The last limitation was the observation forms. We used pre- observation, observation and post-observation forms in our peer review cycles. However, our participant instructors drew attention to the deficiency in our observation checklist. According to them, more points needed to be taken into consideration. Although we had provided them with an extra comments section, they noted that it would be better to see these further criteria among the items. Due to this reason, we suggest future researchers use a more extensive observation checklist.

6. REFERENCES

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. Appendix 1: The Schedule

Week	Task	Aim of the Task
Week 1 6 th of Nov.	Pre-Study Interviews	To investigate how participants feel about the program.
Week 2 13 th of Nov.	Pre-Study Training-1 <i>A video about peer observations</i> <i>An Article about peer observation as a reflective tool</i>	To introduce the program to the participants in detail and help them be effective observers and feedback providers.
Week 3 22 nd of Nov.	Pre-Study Training-2 <i>An Article: Reflective Teaching: Looking Closely</i> Reflective Journal Entry-1 <i>Defining reflection</i>	To ensure participants' understanding of the program and address their concerns.
Week 4 28 th of Nov.	Pre- Observation Meeting <i>Partner Selection</i>	To make sure that the participants have agreed on date, place, and the focus of the observation.
	Reflective Journal Entry-1 <i>Departing from a lesson plan</i>	To help them share their experiences and contribute to each other's teaching.
Week 5 5 th of Dec.	Peer Observations	To make observations according to the agreed process.

<p>Week 6 12th of Dec.</p>	<p>Post-Observation Meetings</p>	<p>To provide participants with feedback on their observations.</p>
	<p>Collaborative Journal Entry-2 <i>To reflect on a recent teaching practice</i></p>	<p>To help them share their experiences and contribute to each other's teaching.</p>
<p>Week 7 19th of Dec.</p>	<p>Collaborative Action Research <i>Defining a common problem</i></p>	<p>To define a common problem to work collaboratively on its solution.</p>
<p>Week 8 26th of Dec.</p>	<p>Looking for possible solutions to the problem <i>"How to Reduce the teacher talking time"</i></p>	<p>To find out solutions to their problems with the help of their colleagues.</p>
<p>Week 9 2nd of Jan.</p>	<p>Implementing the action plan into the peer observation process <i>Observing peers to make self-reflections</i></p>	<p>To reflect on their own teaching with the help of peer observations.</p>
<p>Week 10 9th of Jan.</p>	<p>Reflections and Planning</p>	<p>To reflect on their action plan and make necessary changes for the better teaching practices.</p>
<p>Week 11 16th of Jan.</p>	<p>Self-Recordings and Self-Reflections</p>	<p>To help them make self-reflections on their own teaching.</p>
<p>Week 12 28-31 of Jan.</p>	<p>Post-Study Interviews</p>	<p>To get their ideas and feelings about the program to assess its effectiveness.</p>

7.2. Appendix 2: Pre-Study Interview Questions

- 1- Why are you interested in participating in this program?
- 2- Have you ever participated in any kind of peer observation program before? If so, how was the process and how did it affect your teaching?
- 3-Do you have any concerns about this program?
- 4-What do you expect to gain from this process?

7.3. Appendix 3: Peer Observation Forms

PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Teacher: _____

Colleague: _____

Subject and Year: _____

Room: _____

Date: _____

Number of students: _____

Time: _____

Style of class (lecture, seminar, tutorial): _____

Description of students (prior experience/work skills/ language/other needs):

Teaching aim/s: (a broad statement about what you, the teacher, intend to achieve)

Learning outcomes for the class: (what you want students to learn)

Anticipated challenges (related to equipment, student prior knowledge, diversity, your skills etc)

Teaching skills I would like to get feedback on:

Student learning activities I would like feedback on:

How the observation data will be recorded:

Where my Colleague will sit:

Other information as required:

TEACHING OBSERVATION CHECKLIST 1

Teacher: _____ Observer: _____

Unit of study: _____

Topic: _____ Date/Time: _____ Room: _____

1. In what ways was the presentation clear and understandable?

2. What I observed that it made it appear to be an enjoyable and effective learning experience for students?

3. How did the teacher engage students in learning/understanding the material?

4. Technical matters

5. Other comments:

TEACHING OBSERVATION CHECKLIST 2

Component	Yes/No	Comment
Clarity		
Enunciation: audible/clear		
Word choice: simple/precise/straightforward		
Organisation		
Sequence		
Logical steps linked		
Main points highlighted through		
Examples sufficient to promote understanding		
Examples relevant for particular context		
Examples appropriate for audience		
Voice: repetition/paraphrasing		
Gestures: face/hands/body movement		
Media: computer/OHP/whiteboard handouts/video/ objects		
Feedback to and from students		
Other:		

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

TEACHING OBSERVATION CHECKLIST 2

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

	Yes	Partly	No	Comment
Link to other sessions				
Introduce the session				
Make the purpose clear				
Move clearly through stages				
Emphasise key points				
Summarise the session				
Maintain appropriate pace				
Engage student interest				
Ensure active learning				
Handle problems of inattention				
Ask students questions				
Respond to student questions				
Monitor student activity				
Variety of visual aids for a purpose				
Make the material relevant				
Use appropriate voice and body movements				
Check on student learning				
Convey enthusiasm				
Provide opportunities for students to take notes				
Provide adequate handouts				
Effective summary and close				
Other				

Peer Observation: The Teacher's Form - Form 1

The purpose of this form is primarily developmental. The form should be completed prior to the session to be observed and a copy provided for your observer before the session commences.

Teacher's name:..... Date:

Focus of session

No of students:..... Observer.....

Nature of Session: Lecture/Seminar/Tutorial/Laboratory/Other

1. What are your objectives for the session (both for yourself and for the students)?

2. Areas on which you would welcome some feedback

3. Other comments or issues.

Peer Observation: Observer's Feedback - Form 2

The purpose of this form is primarily developmental. Please read the teacher's preparation form (Form 1) before observing the session and completing this form.

This form itself should be completed immediately after the session to be observed. The lecturer should be provided with a copy of the completed form, preferably within the week, and the session discussed with the lecturer within a fortnight.

Observer's name:..... Date:.....

Name of Teacher..... Focus of Session:

1. What in your opinion went well in the session? Why?

2. What in your opinion could be improved or developed? How might this be achieved?

3. Please comment on areas in which the teacher invited feedback.

4. Any other comments or suggestions.

Peer Observation: Reflection & Discussion - Form 3

This form should be completed by the teacher following discussion of the observer's feedback form (Form 2) with the observer. A copy should be sent to the observer.

1. What did you feel were the most important points to emerge from your discussion with the observer?

2. What changes, if any, will you make as a result of the discussion and reflection upon it?

a) to the particular session

b) to your teaching more generally

3. How helpful were the observer's written and oral comments? How could they be more helpful in the future?

4. Any other comments about the observation.

7.4. Appendix 4: Action Research Forms

Reducing Teacher Talking Time (TTT) Form 1

Tips that I really feel comfortable with:

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Tips that I feel OK with:

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Tips that I would like to work on and why:

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Reducing Teacher Talking Time (TTT) Form 2

Please remember the discussion you have had with your observer after the first peer observation and state the areas that you need to improve/pay attention to by observing your colleague below.

Pre-Observation:

As a result of the discussion and reflection on the first observation, I am planning to observe my friend to think about:

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Post-Observation:

Task 1:

Check your notes from your observation and think about your teaching. What are the tips or techniques you already use in your classes and the things that you've never tried before?

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Task 2: Which practices can be implemented to your own teaching and which ones cannot?

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Task 3:

Now, prepare a lesson plan taking your friend's strong or weak points into account. Then it's time for you to try it! Do not forget to record your lesson and watch it carefully!

Reflection after implementation:

1-Write down the things you think went well in your lesson and the ones that you still want to work on (if there are any).

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2- How helpful was your visitation in planning your lesson:

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3-What changes, if any, did you achieve in your teaching regarding the first peer observation peer feedback?

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4- Do you think were you able to reduce your talking time in this process?

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7.5. Appendix 5: Collaborative Journal Topics

Departing From a Lesson Plan

If you have teaching experience, think of an occasion when a student’s contribution caused you to depart from your lesson plan. What was the contribution? Why did you choose this course of action? What was the result?

(If you do not have ant teaching experience, can you recall an occasion when you were aware of your teacher changing the lesson, based on student’s input?)

.....

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Other instructors’ ideas on this occasion:

Reflecting on a Recent Teaching Practice

First reflect on a recent teaching practice or experience in your classroom, positive or negative, that caused you to stop and think, and ask the following questions related to the experience:

- 1- What happened before this incident?
- 2- What happened after it?
- 3- Why was this incident important?
- 4- What does this incident tell you about yourself as a teacher?"

Farrell, T. S. C. (2007). *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice*. London: Continuum Press.

7.6. Appendix 6: Post-Study Interview Questions

<p>About the Program</p>	<p>1-How do you feel about the professional development program you participated? 2-What are the things that you think helped you grow professionally? 3-What would you suggest for this study to be more successful? 4-How useful were the videos, articles, or presentations used as a part of this study? In terms of the materials used in this study, what would you recommend for future practices? 5-Which of these professional tools would you like to maintain in the future? Why or why not? 6-What are your ideas about the meetings that we held throughout this study? What would you say about the atmosphere of the weekly meetings? 7-How helpful was this program to reflect on your teaching? Could you give an example?</p>
<p>About Peer Observation</p>	<p>8-How did this peer observation program help you grow professionally? 9-Did peer observation processes give you an opportunity to think reflectively? Can you exemplify? What was the biggest contribution of this program to your professional development? 10-How did you feel while observing your friends and being observed? 11-How do you feel about the feedback you received from your friends? What do you think about the feedback you provided? 12-What can you say about the partner selection process? Were you comfortable with your partners?</p>
<p>About Collaborative Journals</p>	<p>13- What are your ideas about collaborative journals? Do you think they made a contribution to your professional development? 14-How effective was this activity in helping you think about your teaching? 15-Did you experience any difficulty while writing your journals? 16-How did you feel while commenting on your friends' journals and while reading their comments on your journals? 17-How does writing on a journal about an event differ from only thinking about it? Can you explain the differences depending on your experiences?</p>