



## The Impact of Peer Observation on EFL Teacher's Professional Development

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### Abstract

This paper examined the attitudes and perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Morocco about peer observation. It also investigated the effects of peer observation on the professional growth of educators. Peer observation is an effective method that educators can utilize to enhance and refine their instructional practices and strategies. The study aims to enhance comprehension of the effects of peer observation as a primary method for facilitating teachers' professional development. The study's primary findings indicated that educators have positive attitudes toward the practice of peer observation. The findings demonstrated the importance of conducting classroom observations as a means of fostering professional development and promoting collaborative growth and support. The study contributes to the existing literature on peer observation and has the potential to serve as a foundation for future investigations about this subject matter. The study is relevant to educators, researchers, and policymakers interested in improving teaching practices and student performance.

**Keywords:** collaborative development, classroom observation, peer observation, teacher professional development, teacher performance

### Introduction

Teacher professional development has attracted significant attention in the field of education due to its important role in enhancing the process of instruction and learning. Providing continuous training opportunities for teachers is essential to support their professional growth and positively affect students' learning outcomes. Quality education requires quality teachers, and to achieve educational objectives, teachers are expected to engage in professional activities that advance their pedagogical knowledge, deepen their understanding of classroom dynamics, and assess their teaching practices for improvement (OECD, 2009). Therefore,

reflective practices in general and peer observation, in particular, have emerged as an effective dynamic strategy to enhance collaborative learning, encourage reflective teaching practices, and contribute to the ongoing improvement of teachers' skills and practice (Tosriadi et al., 2018).

Peer observation entails educators undertaking observations of their peers or being observed by fellow educators, allowing for the exchange of constructive criticism along with useful insights (Richards & Farrell, 2005). This method can result in the development of innovative instructional strategies and techniques. This process has the potential to affect instructors' professional development and education quality. Teachers who engage in professional development and hone their skill sets produce better educational outcomes.

In Morocco, the Ministry of Education emphasizes the importance of professional development for its staff, especially teachers, in its official documents. These documents include the National Charter for Education and Training (NCET, 1999) and the Framework Law 51–17 (2019), which is binding for all stakeholders. The NCET emphasizes the provision of high-quality and continuous training, both in pre-service training and in-service education, equipping teachers with appropriate pedagogical tools, and conducting accurate evaluations of their pedagogical performance. Likewise, the new Framework Law 51-17 also places a high emphasis on teachers' pre-service and in-service training, mainly through Article 18, which highlights the importance of “developing collaborative educational, learning, and training programs and projects on a contractual basis” and the need for “establishing local and regional education and training networks to connect the various components of the system at its various levels.” In addition, the law concentrates on establishing an observatory to ensure that emerging professions, training, and labor market demands are aligned. Within this framework, EFL teachers engage in a series of in-class observations throughout their training and tenure as educators. Teacher professional development includes structured and unstructured activities. Structured activities are formally provided by the educational authorities with pre-defined agendas such as in-service education and training. While unstructured activities are pursued informally as a result of teachers' own initiatives and self-commitment to their own personal and professional improvement. Informally trained teachers are frequently seen using models like communities of practice (CoPs) and school-based activities like peer coaching and action research (Ouardani, 2020).

This practice is an important component of the formal training curriculum for aspiring pre-service teachers. To successfully progress through the practical training phase, students preparing to become English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are required to actively

engage in classroom observations conducted in diverse educational settings. In the context of teacher education, individuals through the program are fully immersed in an educational hands-on experience. This practical experience, as educational supervisors require it, also extends to in-service training, providing teachers with the opportunity to observe and collaborate with their peers actively. It is important to highlight that the current body of literature on teacher professional development in the Moroccan educational context lacks a comprehensive analysis of the specific aspect related to peer observation and its resulting significance. To fill this gap, the present study examines the transformative effects of peer observation on the professional development paths of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in Morocco. Moreover, this study attempts to investigate the attitudes and perspectives of educators toward the implementation of peer observation.

### **Research Questions**

To achieve these objectives, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer observation enhance Moroccan EFL teacher's professional development?
2. What are teachers' attitudes toward peer observation as a strategy for professional development?

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Peer Observation: A Theoretical Framework***

Peer observation is considered a significant factor in the field of teaching as it enhances teachers' teaching practices and effective professional development (Vincent, 2018). Various scholarly works view peer observation as a powerful tool that fosters collaborative growth in teaching skills and practices among educators (Tosriadi, 2018; Ivarsson, 2019; Ahmad, 2020). It is one of the strategies used to assess the effectiveness of the educational system and can help to improve it by giving constructive feedback (Doroh et al., 2023). Similarly, Todd (2017) added that "classroom observation is perhaps one of the most common forms of collaborative professional development." (p.7) The significance of peer observation is related to being an effective method for promoting collaboration and shared learning among teachers. (Van den Berg et al., 2006).

Within academic literature, Social Constructivism is a foundational theory in education that posits that knowledge is not passively acquired by individuals; instead, it is actively constructed through social interactions and experiences (Schunk, 2012). Thus, when EFL

teachers engage in collaborative observation, discussion, and feedback, they play an active role in constructing knowledge about effective instructional routines.

In this context, classroom observation emerged as a pivotal factor in the field of teaching, recognized for its capacity to enhance educators' instructional practices and promote effective professional development (Vincent, 2018). It serves as a robust tool, fostering collaborative growth in teaching skills and practices among educators (Tosriadi, 2018; Ivarsson, 2019; Ahmad, 2020). When teachers collaboratively observe and reflect upon teaching practices, they contribute to the development of a collective knowledge base that can benefit the entire teaching community (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2005).

Through peer observation, teachers engage in dynamic continuous developmental formative training through the process of peer observation, in which they try out different strategies in their classrooms and receive feedback on their practices from others, usually supervisors and colleagues (Richards et al., 2005). Hence, the timely and constructive feedback given by observers is vital for the success of peer observation. It is essential that feedback is specific and actionable, and highlights both the strengths and areas for improvement (Grossman & McDonald, 2008).

One of the main objectives of peer observation is to encourage the exchange of ideas, share innovative practices, and provide valuable feedback. Danielson et al. (2009) argued that peer observation promotes reflective teaching methods by encouraging teachers to analyze their teaching strategies compared to their peers; ultimately improving their instructional approaches. These observations involve purposeful dialogue between the observing teachers and those being observed, enabling the exchange of ideas, strategies, and experiences. This collaborative environment nurtures a sense of professional community and promotes the spread of effective teaching practices. According to Henderson and Hurd (2013), educators often learn new instructional methods through peer observations, which they can incorporate into their teaching. Exposure to diverse teaching approaches enhances students' instructional repertoire and drives pedagogical innovation.

Most importantly, to ensure effective peer observation, individuals should possess a combination of experience, expertise, and interpersonal skills (Murphy, 2018). Improper selection of the observer can negatively impact the potential for valuable insights and productive conversations (Scrivener & Smith, 2019). Therefore, choosing appropriate peers for a classroom observation, with the guidance of educational supervisors, is fundamental for the effectiveness of the whole process that depends largely on the quality of the observer's ideas and insights.

### ***Teacher Professional Development***

In educational settings, teachers' professional development is regarded as a key element of educational improvement, ensuring that teachers continually enhance their skills and adapt innovative strategies. Studies conducted on teacher professional development such as Richards et al., (2005) stated that:

Strategies for teacher development often involve documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices, examining beliefs, values, and principals; conversation with peers on core issues; and collaborating with peers on classroom projects. (p. 4)

Teacher development can take several forms. Being part of a collaborative learning community is an efficient strategy for enhancing teachers' professional development. These shared environments provide a platform for teachers to exchange insights, experiences, and best practices (Goddard, 2002). Research indicates that collaborative learning fosters reflective practices, encourages peer support, and promotes a culture of continuous improvement (Little, 1990). Additionally, teacher development is largely dependent on teachers' engagement with innovative pedagogical techniques that energize their teaching practices. Exposure to new teaching methods through workshops, seminars, and online resources stimulates creativity and expands instructional strategies (Hargreaves, 2003).

Another form of teacher development is incorporating action research and reflection, which deepens teachers' professional development. Engaging educators in research-based inquiries in their teaching practices promotes a culture of evidence-based decision-making (Sagor, 2000). This process encourages critical thinking and guides teachers in improving their teaching approaches, in addition to the use of technology in the classroom, which facilitates the teaching and learning process.

### ***Peer Observation and the Moroccan Context***

In recent years, the Moroccan Ministry of National Education has emphasized the importance of English proficiency in global communication and economic advancement to enrich the country's economic position, as well as its cultural and linguistic diversity. Noticeably, more attention has been paid to EFL teachers, as they play a prominent role in serving this goal.

To be an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Morocco, proficiency in the English language and comprehensive training are prerequisites. Typically, this training program comprises two distinct components: theoretical and practical training. Following the completion

of the theoretical phase, teacher trainees are assigned to various public schools for practical training purposes. During these school visits, trainee teachers use a predetermined checklist to observe the instructional practices of the host teachers across multiple sessions. Subsequently, they undertake their teaching sessions and are subjected to observation by their peers. Following each instructional session, trainee teachers meet in a debriefing session to discuss their pedagogical practices and offer constructive feedback to one another. This pedagogical approach fosters a culture of collaboration among EFL educators in Morocco (El Ouahabi and Hachimi, 2017). The process of systematic observation, reflective discourse, and ongoing discussion of pedagogical techniques cultivates a sense of collaborative learning. Moroccan EFL educators hone the collective knowledge derived from these shared learning experiences to nurture a cohesive learning environment that addresses common challenges, facilitates the exchange of insights, and collectively enhances their teaching practices, thereby advancing their professional growth.

Peer observation as an emerging practice among EFL Moroccan teachers offers several persuasive outcomes for the teaching and learning processes. This greatly facilitates the exchange of instructional strategies related primarily to the local context (Haddou, 2019). EFL teachers from diverse environments can benefit from observing their colleagues' methods and adapting these strategies to their classrooms. Beck et al., (2014) stated that in the process of peer observation “teachers embrace the work and effort it takes to retool a lesson after receiving feedback. An environment that respects deliberate practices energizes them. Because the observations are informative and supportive, rather than evaluate, practice is common.” (p. 4) This exposure to diverse approaches enriches their instructional methods and enhances their performance in meeting students' learning needs.

All in all, peer observation plays a pivotal role in motivating Moroccan EFL teachers to embrace reflective practices, fine-tune their instructional strategies, and engage in innovative teaching approaches. The feedback received from these observations serves as a guide, aiding educators in making well-informed decisions about their teaching methodologies. This, in turn, contributes to the overall efficacy of EFL instruction and makes a significant contribution to the delivery of quality education.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

The present study aims to investigate the impact of peer observation on EFL Moroccan teachers' professional development. To this end, a mixed-methods approach is used, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This approach allows for a

comprehensive understanding of the study, as "the qualitative data provide a detailed understanding of the problem, while the quantitative data provide a more general understanding of the problem" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 8).

The study focuses on the attitudes of EFL Moroccan teachers towards peer observation and the challenges they face while conducting classroom observations. By comparing and triangulating the quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers aim to fully understand the impact of peer observation on teachers' professional development and provide well-comprehensive results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thus, this study contributes to the existing literature on EFL teacher professional development in Morocco, which has been a topic of interest in recent years. The use of a mixed-methods approach is in line with the growing recognition of its value in scholarly inquiry, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena.

## **Research Procedures**

### ***Participants and Settings***

The study involves a sample of 65 Moroccan EFL practitioner teachers from diverse public high schools in the Fes-Meknes Regional Academy (Fez-Meknes AREF). Among the participants, 33 (50.8%) are female teachers and 32 (49.2%) are male teachers. Of the participants, 46.2% are between 25-30 and 30-35 years old, 32.3% are between 35-40 years old, 10.8% are between 20-25 years old, and 10.7% are above 40 years old. In terms of teaching experience, 44.6% of the participants have been teaching for 6 to 9 years, 27.7% have been teaching for 4 to 6 years, 15.1% have more than 10 years of teaching experience, and 12.6% are novice teachers who have been practicing teaching for a year to three years. The participants are mainly from Fez (27.7%), Moulay Yacoub province (20%), Meknes (15.4%), Taounate (13.9%), Sefrou (12.3%), and El Hajeb province (10.7%).

### ***Survey Instruments***

According to Dörnyei (2003), questionnaires offer a flexible, efficient, and user-friendly method for researchers to collect data on demographics and practices. Within the framework of this study, the researchers adopted a comprehensive background questionnaire to gather data related to the participants' gender, age, peer observation experience, perceived benefits, and overall attitudes and perceptions of the impact of peer observation on their professional development. In addition, the survey included a free-response question at the end, encouraging respondents to provide examples of peer observation experiences that went beyond their duties as teachers. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and

percentages, are employed to summarize quantitative data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27) is used to support and manage the study outcomes.

### ***Interview Protocol***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 EFL high school teachers to confirm and combine the data obtained from the questionnaire. By using open-ended questions, participants are given more space to express their thoughts and ideas in depth. This method encourages participants to elaborate on various aspects of their experiences, particularly their practices, challenges, and perceptions regarding their experiences with peer observation and how it affects their professional development. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of how these experiences impact their professional growth and development. At its core, the semi-structured interviews allowed for a richer exploration of the teachers' thoughts and experiences, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of peer observation's impact on their professional journeys.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

The primary method of data gathering involved the distribution of survey questionnaires to teachers and supervisors, who formed the primary population of Data collection for this study took place at the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year, specifically during the first two weeks of September. This cross-sectional study included carefully crafted questions designed to elicit responses that would provide insights into the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding peer observation. A pilot study was conducted with ten teachers and two supervisors to ensure clarity and consistency. This step was crucial in minimizing potential misunderstandings and ensuring the accuracy of the collected data.

Following the questionnaire administration, a purposeful sampling was made to select ten participants who could provide valuable insights directly relevant to the research objectives. The interviews were structured in a way that allowed participants to share in-depth perspectives, experiences, and narratives, thereby complementing the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires. The interviews served to enrich and contextualize the numerical findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon.

### ***Results***

The questionnaire data revealed that 96.9% of respondents stated that they had participated in peer observation before. While a very small number of the respondents (3.1%) claimed that they have never been involved in class observation, as respondent One said: “I



never had the chance to observe another teacher, even during the time of my training, the school where we were sent to observe a teacher there it turned out that the teacher didn't want to accept observers in her class, and they couldn't find a substitute school for us.”

Concerning the frequency of participation, as Table One shows, the majority (67.7%) of participants indicated that they engage in peer observation once a year. When asked how often teachers engage in peer observation respondent Two stated that “usually the supervisor who takes the initiative to ask some of the teachers each year to conduct a demo lesson. The first one is during the first term and the other one is during the second term, and sometimes more than two as it depends on teachers’ initiatives and availability.”

**Table 1**

*Participation in Peer Observation Frequency*

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
2-3 times a year	19	29.2
4 or more times a year	2	3.1
Once a year	44	67.7
Total	65	100.0%

Interestingly, a great number of participants (49,23%) believe that teachers should be engaged in peer observation twice a year, more than (38,46%) would like to be part of it as much as possible, and only (12.31 %) think that once a year would be enough.

**Motivations for Engaging in Peer Observation**

**Table 2**

*Reasons Contributing to Engagement in Peer Observation*

	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
To improve teaching skills and practices	12	18.5%
To provide and receive feedback from colleagues	10	15.3%
To share ideas and foster a sense of collaboration	10	15.3%
To assess classroom management	6	9.4%
All the above	27	41,5%
Total	65	100.0%

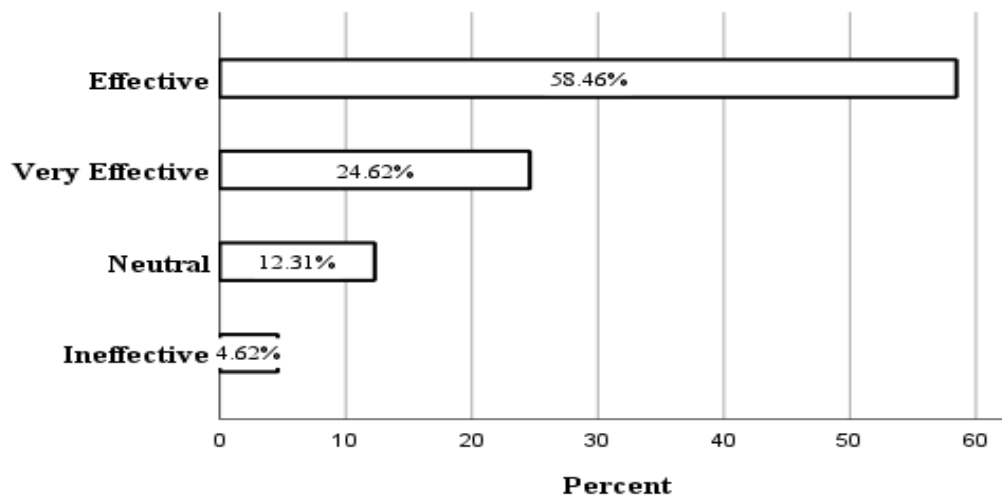
The above-stated results demonstrated that the reasons behind participating in peer observation are primarily to improve teaching skills and practices, provide and receive feedback, share

insights and ideas to foster a sense of collaboration, and assess classroom management. Respondent Three added: “As a teacher, peer observation helps me work on my self-confidence and enhances my self-esteem; it also helps you to stay updated in the field and to get inspired by other teachers.”

### *Peer Observation Effectiveness*

**Figure 1**

*Peer Observation Effectiveness*

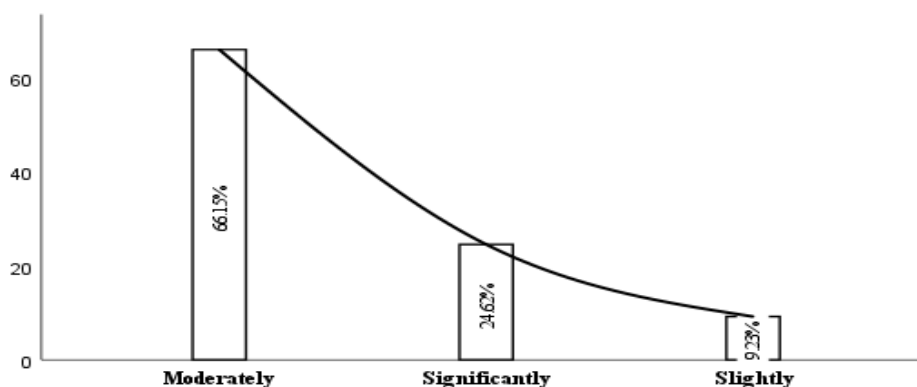


As demonstrated above (figure 1), most teachers rated their experience with peer observation as very effective (83.08%). Additionally, 55.4 percent strongly agree, and 44.6 percent agree with the statement that peer observation is an effective strategy for teachers' professional development and describe its contribution as moderate, significant, and slight (Figure 2). As well, they agree that it greatly encourages collaborative professional development. However, only 4.62 % describe peer observation as ineffective, while 35.4 % believe that observing another class does not necessarily reflect a teacher's real teaching practices, and 64.66% disagree with that. Respondent Four explained: “Of course, observing a class does not reflect all the teaching practices, but we cannot deny its importance in providing a chance to discuss and evaluate different teaching aspects effectively.”

Additionally, concerning teachers' perception of the contribution of peer observation to their professional development. The data revealed that a majority of teachers (66.1%) perceived peer or class observation as contributing moderately to their professional development. Interestingly, 24.6% of teachers find it to have a significant impact, while 9.23% attribute only a slight contribution to their professional growth. This was confirmed by the interviewed teachers who acknowledged the significant role of peer observation and the feedback received from colleagues in their professional development. This indicates, overall, that teachers are aware of the value of peer or class observation in enhancing their professional development, with a significant portion considering it to be a meaningful aspect of their growth as educators.

**Figure 2**

*Contribution to professional development*



**Feelings and Attitudes Towards Peer Observation**

Despite holding positive feelings while being observed by the majority of respondents (79.9%), other participants (17%) stated that they feel inconclusive and uncomfortable when they are observed. This can be explained as Respondent Five put it: “I find it hard to be observed by others while I’m teaching, people can be very judgmental sometimes. But if you know well the teacher or supervisor who is observing you, things get easier.” This can also be related to teachers' attitudes that they have toward post-lesson feedback and discussion.

**Table 3**

*Teachers’ Feelings While Being Observed*

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Confident, Motivated, and Encouraged	52	79,9%
Inconclusive and uncomfortable	11	17%
Depends on the setting and circumstances	2	3.1%
Total	65	100.0%

Similarly, a percentage of 15.4 % believe that when observing, comments and feedback should only be on merits and strengths, not on weaknesses and flaws as might the teacher be discouraged and disappointed. Whereas (84,6 %) disagree with the statement. Other teachers (15.4 %) believe that peer observation is meant only for novice teachers as it would help them gain confidence in the classroom. However, the majority (84.6%) declared that class observation should be for all teachers not only for novice ones.

### ***Challenges and Drawbacks***

In most of the teachers' responses, when they were asked about the challenges and drawbacks they face when they participate in class observation, they agreed that the main challenges are time (36.5%) and flexibility (45.1%), as they are teachers who do not like to be observed and they are not flexible towards the time and the settings. Respondent Six confirmed: "There is a lack of time and a lack of desire or motivation from some teachers. Not all teachers like to be involved in peer observation; some teachers don't like to be criticized or receive feedback on their teaching."

Interestingly, another challenge that was revealed while interviewing teachers is related to the personal feelings that a participant may have while being observed. Respondent Seven said: "The challenge was always with myself and the fear of failure to deliver the lesson effectively, whether in front of the teacher observer or supervisor." This emotional aspect may further complicate the process for some teachers. Moreover, only a minority of teachers (18.4%) reported not encountering any challenges during class observation. This highlights the diversity of experiences among teachers and suggests that while many grapple with issues related to time, flexibility, and personal emotions, some find the process more seamless and unproblematic.

### ***Discussion***

The study's findings show that the majority of EFL teachers in Morocco have participated in peer observation and they are aware of its impact and significance on their professional growth and development. "Peer observation is one of the most common forms of continuous professional development and a means to help teachers share best teaching practices among colleagues." (Sabat, 2020, p. 182). Therefore, these findings match up with what has been mentioned previously in different studies in the literature that peer observation is considered a rich method for teachers to develop professionally and reflect on their pedagogical practices (Miranda et al., 2021).

The study also indicates that teachers hold positive attitudes towards classroom observation, and they are motivated to be engaged in it more in the future. More importantly, peer observation facilitates collaborative learning and sharing of ideas and insights as it helps teachers improve their instructional practices and strategies.

The study's results reveal that peer observation enables teachers to gain confidence as it is confirmed in Volchenkova's study (2016), teachers who are more involved in classroom observation are more confident about their teaching practices. This confidence is assured when

teachers receive feedback, assistance, and support from their colleagues. In addition, observation conducted by peers may mitigate the supervisory or authoritative aspect of observation, allowing for greater power equality between participants (Day, 2013).

Despite the challenges teachers may face with peer observation related mainly to time, classroom management, and teachers' flexibility and availability. The study's outcomes demonstrate that the majority of teachers deal with such challenges positively and still hold positive attitudes toward the experience. Thus, the findings signify the importance of peer observation as an effective tool for teachers' professional development and performance enhancement.

## **Conclusion**

This study unequivocally shows that peer observation in the Moroccan EFL context has a fundamental role in enhancing teacher performance and professional development. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the effectiveness of peer observation as a means for teachers to share best practices and enhance their instructional skills. Furthermore, the study highlights the positive attitudes of teachers towards classroom observation, their motivation to engage in it further, and the collaborative learning opportunities it fosters. Through focusing on collaborative reflection and the exchange of pedagogical practices, Classroom observation can guarantee the continuous growth of Moroccan EFL teachers. As the Moroccan educational system seeks to improve EFL instruction and student outcomes, peer observation emerges as a dynamic approach that could empower EFL teachers to refine their practices and improve the quality of education.

While some challenges related to time, classroom management, and teachers' availability may arise in peer observation, the study reveals that the majority of teachers perceive these challenges positively and maintain favorable attitudes toward the experience. Consequently, the study underscores the pivotal role of peer observation as an effective tool for teachers' professional development and performance enhancement in the context of EFL teaching in Morocco.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the results derived from this study and the broader body of literature, several recommendations can be proposed regarding the integration of peer observation into the professional development of EFL teachers. Firstly, it is advisable for the Ministry of Education in Morocco, through educational supervision, to actively promote and incentivize peer observation among teachers by organizing seminars, workshops, and training programs. It is

imperative to establish explicit rules and frameworks to provide a standardized and established approach to the activity and ensure its effectiveness, objectivity, and consistency; observation-tailored models, instruments or rubrics should be used during peer observations. These instruments outline specific criteria for evaluating teaching practices, such as planning and preparing, classroom management, classroom strategies and routines, and reflective teaching (Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, 2012). Using observation instruments helps ensure that feedback is constructive, actionable, and aligned with teaching standards.

The provision of training for observers is necessary to guarantee the efficacy and constructive nature of observations. The integration of peer observation into professional development programs, such as teacher training programs and continued in-service education, is recommended. It is important to deal with the challenges that arise from peer observation, including time restrictions and classroom management issues.

Future research is needed to examine the long-term effects of peer observation on the professional development and performance of EFL teachers. Additionally, it should seek to evaluate the efficacy of different observation models, gain insight into teachers' perspectives and experiences, implement peer observation on a larger scale within the educational system of Morocco, investigate the relationship between peer observation and student learning outcomes, compare experiences and outcomes with those observed in other countries or educational settings, and explore the integration of technology in facilitating peer observation.

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