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Exploring experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives on post-observation feedback sessions

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'Unfortunately, for many teachers […] observation is about as welcome as a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.'

Watson-Davis (2009, p.5)

'The post-observation conference […] usually carries the potential of being an agonizing experience for [teachers and supervisors].'

Shrigley and Walker (1981, p.560)

'Teacher evaluation – a term that brings fear, anticipation, stress, anxiety, or even boredom to the hearts of teachers and administrators everywhere.'

Danielson and McGreal (2000, back cover)

'I've got friends who were good teachers who left teaching because they really couldn't stand the audacity of someone observing. Something as little as that.'

Anonymous supervisor

'It's a stressful experience. You know that your job hangs in the balance and it's obviously an identity thing as well and you're being judged and no one likes being judged. And obviously it's an intrusion into your own personal space because my classroom is, as far as I'm concerned, is my personal space.'

Anonymous teacher

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Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the study

> *Language institute in the Arabian Peninsula*. An observation today. Oh
> God. It's really a stressful time in a classroom. And to make it worse, the
> feedback session that follows is the most nerve-wracking part of the
> process. It doesn't matter if the observation is for an appraisal or
> professional development – the feeling is that *there is judgment*. 'You did
> something well, but you also did something badly.' No one likes to hear
> the second part. No one. So, there is tension in the air during feedback
> sessions. Sometimes they are cordial enough so that both parties leave
> amicably. Other times tension rises to the point that the two are squaring
> off as though it's a duel. One or both may go on the attack, go on the
> defensive or tip-toe around each other with nothing to say but polite
> words with a look in their eyes as though their weapons can be drawn at
> any given moment.
>
> This is bad enough for me as the observer. I bet the teacher is feeling
> even worse.

That is what it was like handling feedback sessions with experienced teachers as a supervisor at
an English language institute in the Arabian Peninsula a number of years ago. The institute

offered general English courses focusing on students developing their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The students were adult learners and levels ranged from beginner to advanced. A large number of instructors, mostly of local origin, were employed while enrollment could reach several thousand.

From the teachers' perspective, one instructor I observed and met for feedback sessions remembers how terrified he was because I was going to see how he taught in only one hour out of over a thousand hours of teaching in a year. He thought he was a good teacher but may have a bad day while being observed which could affect his career. He was also a wreck waiting for our feedback session. All he wanted to know was how well he did. It was the same as getting the results of a test: Look at the grade and pay no attention to the questions you missed. Although the observation focused on evaluation, the report also included suggestions on teaching techniques he could try to use in class. He says his mind was on the score and only the score during the meeting and hardly noticed any information I said about professional development.

I also had a feedback session with an instructor who had been teaching English for over a decade. She looked angry and was fully prepared to defend any of her actions in class. Looking back, the teacher says that she was incensed because she had a difficult time trying to understand why she needed to be observed and receive feedback – again. 'I had been observed many times,' she says. 'What else was the management supposed to tell me after they had watched me teach so many times before?' She also questioned the source of the feedback: I

had been the supervisor for less than a year at that institute while she had taught there for years. In that situation, who would you trust the most about knowing what to do in the classroom? Who do you think should be giving feedback?

Blumberg (1974, p.2) calls tension between supervisors and teachers a 'cold war'. If you put them at a negotiating table, supervisors would say that if teachers listened to supervisors, things would get better. Teachers, on the other hand, would argue that supervisors do not give useful information to teachers, so it would be better if they left them alone (ibid.). The challenge is to ease the tension on both sides so that feedback sessions can be productive – and that there is no cold war.

1.2 Contentious

Observations and post-observation feedback sessions with English language teachers have been contentious in the TESOL community for a number of years. There is a considerable amount of criticism about the observation-feedback process, ranging from the lack of quality and trust to the absence of standardization and guarantees of objectivity (Bailey, 2006; Donaghue and Howard, 2015; King, 2015). As Kennedy (2010, p.1) claims, no other profession 'is subjected to more assessments with less effect than is the teaching profession'.

However, some researchers hold that even though there are flaws in the process, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. It is argued that the observation-feedback process is an essential method of developing and improving teaching and learning in classrooms

(Shannon, 2003, cited in King, 2015, p.170; Watson-Davis, 2009). Riera (2011) claims that it is also an important tool for identifying the needs of each teacher's professional development. In addition, although disapproval of observations and feedback sessions never seems to wane, they continue to take place throughout schools, universities and language institutes on a regular basis worldwide.

1.3   Literature available

Until now, a significant amount of literature has been written about observations while less attention has been given to post-observation feedback sessions. Howard (2015, p.195) contends that 'the majority of texts focus on observation, while discussion about feedback is generally limited, if it has been covered at all'. A good portion of literature written on feedback sessions concentrates on methods for carrying them out but with a limited amount concerning what actually happens during feedback sessions themselves (Copland, 2012). Furthermore, published work about observations and feedback often focuses on pre-service and novice teachers whereas, as King (2015) holds, there is a short supply of information concentrating on experienced teachers.

1.4   Purpose of the study

In light of the limited literature focusing on feedback sessions and experienced teachers involved in the observation-feedback process and the difficulties conveyed above, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the views of both experienced teachers and supervisors concerning the challenges they face during feedback sessions.

Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter begins with background information on classroom observations and the role of supervisors. The chapter then focuses on previous research concerning important issues related to post-observation feedback sessions. It starts with difficulties experienced teachers face during feedback sessions followed by the directive approach – the traditional approach supervisors can follow to carry out feedback sessions – and how it contributes to difficulties teachers encounter. Next, other approaches, called non-directive approaches which are expected to alleviate problems in feedback sessions, are examined followed by a continuing problem in which the directive approach is still being used worldwide. The final issues discussed include the pitfalls of the majority of supervisors not being trained in conducting observations and feedback sessions and that when non-directive approaches are actually applied, the overuse of mitigation can easily occur.

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Observations

According to Bailey (2001, p.114), observation is defined in a broad sense as 'the purposeful examination of teaching and/or learning events through the systematic process of data collection and analysis'. Although researchers have divided observations into types differently, these four categories may suffice for this dissertation:

- Training: Predominantly for pre-service trainees focusing on specific teaching skills (Malderez, 2003), e.g. in teacher training programs such as Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) administered in many countries by Cambridge University

- Formative: Primarily related to in-service teachers with the aim of developing and improving their teaching skills (Donaghue and Howard, 2015; Malderez, 2003)

- Summative: Evaluating the performance of trainees focusing on their progress of learning or in-service teachers concerning adhering to particular standards, renewing a contract, getting a raise, etc. (Donaghue and Howard, 2015; Malderez, 2003)

- Research: Collecting and analyzing data by a researcher to help support a particular theory which may become published and available to the public (Malderez, 2003)

In addition to types of observations, a significant amount of literature has concentrated on different aspects of carrying them out. For example, one can look into how observations can be scheduled, such as surprise, announced or invited observations, or how data can be collected in class, such as producing field notes, checking particular items on checklists or videotaping lessons (Bailey, 2006).

Since this dissertation focuses on experienced teachers, formative and summative observations mentioned above pertain to this project. In the TESOL community, some schools have their observations concentrate on professional development (formative) and evaluations (summative), but it is common to apply both at the same time (Copland, 2010; Sheal, 1989). In

that context, the supervisor takes on the role of being a 'helper' and an 'assessor' (Farr, 2011, p.19) by assisting a teacher developing teaching skills while assessing the teacher's ability to teach. Of importance here is that this dissertation will not concentrate significantly on whether observations are based on evaluation, professional development or both but primarily on what takes place during post-observation feedback sessions.

2.1.2 Supervisor

Before discussing difficulties that may occur during post-observation feedback sessions between supervisors and teachers, the overall role of a supervisor should be addressed. Supervisors' responsibilities have gained more attention in recent years. Part of this comes from an increased demand for teacher supervision while the teaching and learning of English has grown significantly worldwide over the last half-century (Bailey, 2006). Supervisors in the international TESOL community may be needed at universities, schools or language institutes for several reasons. They may provide further development for in-service teachers – known as continuing professional development – manage quality control of teaching or make sure students as customers 'get what they pay for' from companies running schools that view English as a saleable product in the market (Bailey, 2006, p.3).

Although there are different, and often inconsistent, definitions of what a supervisor is in general education at large, researchers in the TESOL community have been fairly consistent and specific in describing the role of a supervisor. For example, Wallace (1991, p.107) suggests that a supervisor takes on 'the duty of monitoring and improving the quality of teaching done by

other colleagues in a given educational situation'. Gebhard (1990, p.1) claims that carrying out

teacher supervision 'is an ongoing process of teacher education in which the supervisor

observes what goes on in the teacher's classroom with an eye toward the goal of improved

instruction'. Common elements in Wallace's (1991) and Gebhard's (1990) definitions are that

supervisors observe and contribute to the improvement of teaching.

There are two caveats about viewing the role of a supervisor in this fashion, however. First,

although improving teaching is a major part of supervising teachers, the observation-feedback

process often includes decision making regarding renewing contracts, giving warnings or letting

teachers go (Bailey, 2006). Second, it is common that being a 'supervisor' is one of numerous

responsibilities required to fill certain administrative positions in language schools. For

example, the one who observes classes may also recruit teachers, schedule teachers and

classes, work on curriculum development, manage exams, etc., and might be an academic

coordinator or director of courses. However, throughout the rest of the dissertation, the title

'supervisor' will be used to identify the administrator who is involved in observations and

feedback sessions.

2.2 Feedback sessions

2.2.1 Experienced teachers' difficulties

According to Riera (2011, p.60), feedback sessions are the 'single-most-important influence on

the quality of any observation experience'. However, even if feedback sessions are the most

important junctures in the observation-feedback process, teachers may encounter a number of

difficulties. Although pre-service and novice teachers might be apprehensive about feedback they have to receive, they may also be eager and open to improving their teaching and expect to be advised on what to change (Copland, 2008; Donaghue and Howard, 2015). Experienced teachers, on the other hand, often find feedback sessions more arduous.

For example, experienced teachers are uncomfortable with the observation-feedback process because it feels as though this is an intrusion into their private domain. Iyer-O'Sullivan (2015) points out that many 'long serving teachers resent the observation procedure because the classroom has become their territory and comfort zone'. Not only do they hold their classrooms as personal space but feel that they are much more knowledgeable about the dynamics of a class than observers. Consequently, supervisors may not know enough about the contexts in which instructors teach to be able to evaluate accurately or assist teachers developing their skills effectively (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986; King, 2015).

Another aspect of feedback sessions that can be problematic for experienced teachers is the feeling of being judged (Sheal, 1989; Williams, 1989). The pressure teachers face while being evaluated is immense. Not only do they have to deal with potential criticism, but depending on organizations they work for, they may keep or lose their jobs (Wajnryb, 1992). Teachers may also feel judged when an observation-feedback process focuses only on professional development (Abdul Rehman and Al-Bargi, 2014; Zepeda and Ponticell, 1998). When I was a supervisor in the Arabian Peninsula, I tried to increase informal observations focusing on

professional development and reduce appraisals. However, experienced teachers continued to be apprehensive even when the sessions focused on development.

Teachers feeling they are being judged can be detrimental to teaching and learning. According to Rowe (1973, cited in Gebhard, 1984, p.503), when teachers sense they are being judged, they are afraid to try new teaching techniques because they do not have the 'right to be wrong'. Therefore, it is better for them to follow what supervisors want which can discourage them from reflecting deeply on their teaching and hinder their development.

Another problem that occurs during feedback sessions is that experienced teachers can become defensive. Randall and Thornton (2001) claim that there is a correlation between the level of experience and the probability of them becoming defensive. One reason experienced teachers become protective is that their teaching techniques are deeply embedded beliefs because they have been using them for many years (Cruikshanks, 2012). Once entrenched, it may be difficult for someone to let go of their beliefs and replace them with something foreign (ibid.). In addition, after building on their knowledge of instruction through years of experience, they may not always agree with their supervisors' views regarding their performances (Brandt, 2008; Freeman, 1982). Furthermore, they may not accept that suggestions provided by supervisors will work in the classroom in the future.

One more difficulty worth discussing is how teachers' performances can generate feedback sessions that have little or no value. Since teachers know the importance of being observed,

they often conduct artificial performances, or 'put-on-the-best-show', which is not how

instructors teach on a daily basis (Wang and Day, 2002, cited in Howard, 2012, p.370). One

teacher says that to perform and get a high score, 'I had certainly jammed all the required skills

into the lesson' (Zepeda and Ponticell, 1998, p.78). Howard (2011, p.132) asserts that

experienced teachers can 'produce a one-off methodologically acceptable lesson on demand,

and it is as likely that 'bad' teachers are as able to do this as 'good' ones'. If these kinds of

performances are typical during annual or biannual observations, information delivered or

shared in feedback sessions would not be related to what is really happening in teachers'

classrooms.

As was shown in the introduction, supervisors also have difficulties dealing with feedback

sessions. However, a shift in approaches for conducting feedback sessions will now be

examined followed by supervisors' difficulties in which some are related to the failure of the

newly developed approaches.

2.2.2   Approaches

Directive approach

As noted previously, there is limited literature on what takes place in feedback sessions;

however, approaches to conduct supervision and feedback have been discussed (Hyland and

Lo, 2006). The directive approach is known as the traditional method (Farr, 2011) and is mostly

a top-down technique (Montgomery, 2002). Gebhard (1984, p.502) posits that a supervisor

following this approach will 'direct and inform the teacher, model teaching behaviors, and

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evaluate the teacher's mastery of defined behaviors'. In this manner, the supervisor's responsibility is to transmit information to the teacher on how to teach in a specific way. This prescriptive method (Farr, 2011) offers teachers 'prepackaged techniques' (Chamberlain, 2000, p.353) that are supposed to be applied in any classroom. Montgomery (2002, p.30) also holds that this approach can be called a 'tell and sell method': Not only does the supervisor have to divulge to the teacher the results of appraisal and what needs to be changed (tell) but also has to convince the teacher to accept the evaluation and make the changes (sell). To apply this approach, the supervisor has to be perceived as the source of expertise, maintain an authoritative position and do most of the talking during a feedback session (Wallace, 1991).

Academics support the application of the directive approach in specific situations. Freeman (1982, p.26-27) suggests that since pre-service and novice teachers need to learn 'what' to teach before 'how' and 'why' to teach it, training directly from a supervisor is beneficial. The results of Copeland's (1982) study show that pre-service and novice teachers prefer the use of the directive approach. In addition, Randall and Thornton (2001) point out that the approach may be appropriate for certain situations with experienced teachers such as dealing with serious or technical issues.

The directive approach has received a significant amount of criticism, however, and can be linked to a number of the difficulties experienced teachers encounter during feedback sessions discussed earlier. For example, there are pitfalls concerning prescriptive information delivered from supervisors to teachers on how to teach (Gebhard, 1990). General models of teaching

designed for 'one-size-fits-all' are often difficult for teachers to implement because the situations in classrooms are continuously diverse (Edge and Richards, 1998; Tudor, 2001). With teachers constantly working within fluid contexts and supervisors providing 'one-size-fits-all' teaching techniques, teachers often disagree with supervisors in feedback sessions regarding their performances or making changes in the future (Gebhard, 1984). According to Freeman (1982, p.22), this can 'lead to friction between the observer and the teacher'.

Another drawback stems from the supervisor's authoritarian role. As Gebhard (1984) claims, the supervisor's role can make teachers feel inferior to and threatened by their supervisors. Gebhard (1984) also argues that while feeling vulnerable and being judged whether they are performing up to supervisors' expectations, teachers often want to defend themselves. Given the combination of the authoritarian role and prescriptive suggestions, teachers often feel that they are discouraged from experimenting with new techniques, taking part in self-reflection and making decisions independently (Donaghue, 2015).

Non-directive approaches

New approaches emerged in the seventies and eighties that moved away from the top-down, authoritarian and prescriptive method and provided a more democratic environment so that supervisors and teachers could communicate collaboratively to discuss what occurred during observations (Farr, 2011). They also aim at having teachers become more analytical and reflective about their own practices (ibid.). Although different names are given by academics to identify the directive approach and the other approaches grouped together, the directive

approach and non-directive approaches will be used to identify the two categories throughout the rest of the dissertation.

Freeman (1982) and Gebhard (1984) produced lists of methods that included non-directive approaches. Since their lists overlap, the one below focusing on non-directive approaches combines information from their lists and is adapted to this dissertation.

Alternatives approach. Supervisors offer different techniques that could be used instead of what took place in the lesson observed and supervisors should be neutral so teachers can make their own choices (Freeman, 1982). Additionally, the supervisor should not be judgmental or threatening so that the teacher 'can lower his/her defenses' (Freeman, 1982, p.23). Therefore, teachers can strengthen their reflective skills, feel less stressful during feedback sessions and make decisions independently (Freeman, 1982; Gebhard, 1984).

Collaborative approach. This method was derived from clinical supervision which emerged in the sixties (Smyth, 1991) and was further developed and supported by Goldhammer (1969) and Cogan (1973). This approach focuses on supervisors and teachers sharing ideas and working together to make pedagogical changes (Gebhard, 1984). Rather than transmitting information directly to teachers, supervisors start with questions such as 'What do you think of the lesson? How did it go? Did you meet your objective?' (ibid., p.506). This method reduces the supervisor's authoritarian role, is less judgmental and removes prescriptive, prepackaged suggestions.

Counseling approach. Rogers (1961), who helped establish the client-centered approach in psychology, holds that experience is the main source of learning. Getting to know one's experience is a catalyst for growth and expanding on knowledge (ibid.). Therefore, supervisors' primary task during feedback sessions should be to listen to teachers and show understanding of what they are saying (Gebhard, 1984). Supervisors may offer suggestions to develop teaching methods, but advice can be accepted or rejected by teachers (Farr, 2011). Furthermore, while teachers are mostly in control of their growth and development, they can be less defensive, feel free to try new teaching techniques and work more autonomously (Gebhard, 1984).

Creative approach. Supervisors are free to choose which approach to apply or combine approaches depending on teachers' needs (Gebhard, 1984). As mentioned above, Freeman (1982) holds that teachers' stages of development can play a part in choosing an approach. For example, when teachers start teaching, the direct approach may work because they need to learn 'what' to teach. After they become more experienced, the alternatives approach may be appropriate since the teachers should learn 'how' to teach 'what' they teach. Once teachers are more fully developed, they may need to learn 'why' they teach 'what' and 'how' they teach, so applying the counseling approach can be applied (ibid.).

Since Freeman (1982) and Gebhard (1984) provided a range of approaches to handling post-observation feedback sessions, further non-directive approaches have been developed. However, new non-directive methods – like the humanistic (Randall, 2015), critical incident

(Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2015) and reflective conversation (Brandt, 2008; Chick, 2015) approaches –

carry with them the same core elements of those listed above, such as collaboration, reflection

and non-prescriptive techniques. Therefore, they can be considered as slight variations of the

non-directive approaches listed by Freeman (1982) and Gebhard (1984). What is important

here is that the characteristics of the non-directive approaches should help alleviate the

difficulties experienced teachers face during feedback sessions. However, although the features

of the non-directive approaches are promising, many of the difficulties in feedback sessions

remain today. The causes of these ongoing problems will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Directive approach remains strong

One of the reasons why experienced teachers continue to encounter difficulties during

feedback sessions is that many supervisors in the TESOL community still follow the directive

approach (Donaghue, 2015; Farr, 2011; Hyland and Lo, 2006; Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2015).

Researchers have come up with several reasons why. First, supervisors' schedules can influence

how they conduct feedback sessions (Murdoch, 2000; Pajak and Seyfarth, 1983). According to

Guditus (1982, cited in Smyth, 1988, p.137), supervisors are 'already hard pressed for time' so

are likely to stick to basic, traditional methods rather than try something different. Second,

hierarchies in schools may have an impact. An underlying power relationship between

administration and teachers can motivate supervisors to maintain control during feedback

sessions (Smyth, 1988). Third, old habits are hard to break. Waite (1992, p.369) holds that the

'power differential is endemic to supervisor-teacher relations' so it keeps reappearing in

feedback sessions. According to Garman (1984, cited in Smyth, 1991, p.327), applying the

directive approach is a 'ritual so deeply embedded in the culture of the school that we have become resigned to the inevitable'. In addition, if supervisors have experienced being observed and receiving feedback by traditional methods, it is likely that they will do the same. Borg (2006) and Lortie (1975) assert that teachers' learning experiences can heavily influence how they teach, therefore the same may happen to supervisors when giving feedback.

Another reason why the directive approach is widespread has been explained in business terms (Morey, 2003). Following the dramatic increase in demand for learning English worldwide, teaching English has become a marketable commodity in the private sector. To increase profits, institutes pay close attention to efficiency while using their resources' (ibid.). One way to do so is to empower management which replaces 'the wisdom, experience and self-monitoring' of teachers (Kydd, 1997, pp.116-117). In other words, market-driven institutes would rather have feedback sessions remain simple by having supervisors evaluate and transmit improvements in teaching rather than have supervisors and teachers work together to continue the development of teaching over time.

Another reason the directive approach is still pervasive is related to how supervisors learn to conduct feedback sessions which is discussed in the next section.

2.2.4   Untrained supervisors

Another important reason why the non-directive approaches are not being used often enough to help improve feedback sessions and alleviate the difficulties of experienced teachers is that

the overwhelming majority of supervisors in the TESOL community are not trained in observation and feedback (Bailey, 2006; Sheal, 1989). During my TESOL career, I have met over a dozen supervisors with experience giving feedback in post-observation conferences and none of them have been trained. In addition, when I asked some of them if their colleagues were trained, each one said they were not. Common practice is promoting teachers to a supervisory position, expecting them to know what to do based on the quality of their teaching (Bailey, 2006; Donaghue and Howard, 2015).

Supervisors not educated on how to carry out feedback sessions is linked to the rampant use of the directive approach examined above. Concurrent with Borg (2006) and Lortie's (1975) theory noted above, without knowledge of techniques provided by different approaches, novice supervisors may have to imitate those who observed them when they were teachers which may be the directive approach. In addition, supervisors may depend on social skills and tactics (Wajnryb, 1995). One strategy is to minimize mitigation, control the conversation and be domineering – critical features of the directive approach – so that they can cover up their insecurities of lacking knowledge and credentials (ibid.).

If supervisors do not wish to use the directive approach and would rather use non-directive approaches, how can they without any exposure to alternative methods? How can they improve on feedback sessions without necessary knowledge? The following shows how difficult it can be for an untrained supervisor. Freeman (1982) and Gebhard (1984) suggest that different approaches can be used for different teachers. However, a supervisor would need to

consider each teacher's 'stage of development, learner style, previous experience, intellectual skills, motivation, interests, anxiety, expectations, and different classroom realities' (Farr, 2011, p.23). This is such a complex endeavor that it is difficult to imagine doing so without some form of training.

Furthermore, as it is common to promote teachers based on their teaching expertise but without training them for observation and feedback, it may be easier to be subjective rather than objective because the only information they can draw on comes from their own teaching experience (Sheal, 1989). From the teachers' perspective, trust in a supervisor may be diminished because the supervisor does not have the credentials necessary to carry out observations and feedback procedures professionally (Abdul Rehman and Al-Bargi, 2014). In addition, teachers often claim that feedback is generally of low quality (Donaghue, 2015) and does not contain useful information (Cruikshanks, 2012).

2.2.5   High degree of mitigation

Although the directive approach is still being used by many supervisors, researchers have found common flaws even when they try to make their sessions more collaborative and reflective. For example, pragmatics plays an important role in having a feedback session run smoothly and Wajnryb (1998) suggests that critical feedback is a face-threatening act. Face is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987, p.61) as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' whereas according to Wajnryb (1994, glossary, p.i), a face-threatening act is a 'communicative act which runs contrary to the face needs of speaker or hearer'. As mentioned

above, experienced teachers receiving feedback often become defensive to avoid humiliation, i.e., to save face. On the other hand, supervisors who are sensitive to the face needs of teachers may be disinclined to present negative feedback (Wajnryb, 1995). Therefore, they deliver a high degree of mitigation to help soften criticism considerably (Wajnryb, 1994) which may reach a point that messages delivered from supervisors to teachers are not clear which Wajnryb (1998, p.531) calls pragmatic ambivalence. For example, a supervisor might say in a feedback session, 'I noticed you trying to use some of X's suggestions' (Wajnryb, 1998, p.533). The teacher might interpret this as:

    a. A neutral statement in which the meaning of the words delivered is literal

    b. A complement about the teacher trying to use the suggestions

    c. Criticism for trying but failing to apply the suggestions

    d. Both praise for trying and criticism for failing to apply the suggestions

Without any clarification, the teacher may not have understood what the supervisor was trying to say and if the supervisor had wanted the teacher to work on applying suggestions, it might never happen because of the ambivalence.

Discussed in this chapter were difficulties in feedback sessions, their causes and that they continue today. The following chapter will provide the intention and methods applied in this study.

Chapter 3   Methodology

The aim of this study and methods used to reach its goals are presented in Chapter 3.

Methodology of the project discussed includes the research approach, participants involved,

procedures followed and how data was analyzed. Limitations of the study and pertinent ethical

issues are also discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research questions

As can be seen in Literature Review, feedback sessions can be challenging to both experienced

teachers and supervisors. Different approaches have been proposed to help make sessions less

stressful and more effective, but difficulties continue in the TESOL community today. Although

literature concerning observations and techniques on how to manage feedback sessions is

available, published work focusing on what actually takes place during feedback sessions is

limited. Consequently, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are experienced teachers' perspectives on receiving feedback after being

   observed?

2. What are supervisors' perspectives on giving feedback to experienced teachers after

   observations?

3.2 Approach

To carry out this research project, I chose to apply the qualitative approach. Unlike handling

numerical data that leads to statistical findings when using the quantitative approach (Dörnyei,

2007), the qualitative approach is 'exploratory' (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018, p.104) which suits the needs of acquiring perspectives of experienced teachers and supervisors concerning feedback sessions. In this fashion, the research process has been open-ended in which no predetermined hypotheses have been tested with the aim of trying to understand the complex situations experienced teachers and supervisors experience (Dörnyei, 2007). By applying the qualitative approach, possible theories and/or topics that require further research may emerge (Miles et al., 2014).

To help strengthen the study's validity, respondent triangulation (Bush, 2007) was implemented. McFee (1992, p.216) claims that the 'reality' of a situation in a study can be better understood by utilizing more than one viewpoint. Experienced teachers and supervisors carry out different responsibilities in feedback sessions. Therefore, they experience sessions differently which may generate dissimilar perspectives. By interviewing and then analyzing what was said by those who have different viewpoints, a clearer and richer picture of what takes place in feedback sessions may emerge.

3.3 Sampling

As Punch (2014) points out, there is a wide variety of sampling techniques for selecting participants while applying the qualitative approach. The one I chose was maximum variation sampling (Miles et al., 2014). By applying this method, I was hoping to be able to see whether particular patterns are consistent among diverse participants (ibid.). Therefore, teachers and supervisors involved in the research project were not chosen from one particular geographical

area or institute. As seen in the table below (Table 3.3), the participants worked in different

parts of the world, types of schools and working environments and had different educational

backgrounds and years of experience. Due to applying the qualitative approach, the sampling

was not large: It contained three experienced teachers and three supervisors.

Table 3.3 Participants' information

	Name (Alias)	Country of Origin	Employment during feedback sessions	Years of experience*	Age	Qualifications
Teachers	Catherine	Italy	Language institute in Italy	4	28	MA TESOL
	Nur	Kuwait	Vocational college in Kuwait	9	29	MA TESOL, MA ESP
	Bill	United States	Language organization in Saudi Arabia	14	47	MA History
Supervisors	Ann	United Kingdom	Language colleges in UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Oman	22	62	PhD TESOL and Applied Linguistics
	Udaina	Malaysia	Language institute, college and university in Malyasia	9	41	MA TESOL
	George	Ireland	Private and public schools and university in England	34	61	PhD Modern Foreign Language in Learning and Teaching

*Teachers: Total number of years of teaching
 Supervisors: Total number of years in positions observing and giving feedback

However, there were certain criteria established and applied while choosing participants in this research project. Although there is no set number of years to determine what is an 'experienced teacher' in the TESOL community, I chose three years. I believe that by entering their fourth year, teachers are likely well equipped with teaching skills, techniques and strategies and confident in what they are doing. There are a number of factors that can contribute to the criteria of supervisors. Most supervisors have been teachers, have trained pre-service and novice teachers and have worked with experienced teachers, so they have a variety of experience with observations and feedback sessions. Since there is no magic number, I chose three years of experience observing and giving feedback to pre-service, novice and experienced teachers.

3.4 Procedures

The method of collecting data was through interviews with the participants. The interviews were either face-to-face or through Skype depending on the participants' locations. Each of the initial and all but one of the follow-up interviews were audiotaped. (Skype was not available for that one follow-up interview, so it was not audiotaped. Instead, notes were taken during a telephone conversation. Quotes planned to be used were sent by email to this participant who confirmed that the quotes were accurate.) The interviews were semi-structured (Dörnyei, 2007). Although a set of questions was prepared in advance and a number of them were used, I allowed myself to ask follow-up questions (Appendices A, B). In other words, I would often ask

further questions to facilitate participants offering more 'depth and breadth' of sharing their experiences and opinions (ibid., p.136).

To help refine the questions, I piloted an interview several days before the interviews began. One example of modifying questions was how I asked about the difficulties one might face during feedback sessions. I asked the teacher about having 'bad experiences' in feedback sessions. The teacher asked me what the question meant and after I explained it, the teacher felt uncomfortable to answer. I discovered it would be more appropriate to ask whether they encountered any difficulties while involved in sessions.

To help strengthen the validity and reliability of comparing responses from teachers and supervisors, a number of the prepared questions were the same. For example, the question 'Did you face any difficulties during feedback sessions?' was the same for both teachers and supervisors. However, some questions were prepared specifically for supervisors and others for teachers. For example, 'Have you ever been trained to conduct observations? Feedback sessions?' was only for supervisors. Another step was added to procedures while the project was in process. During data analysis, more questions surfaced and clarification of some statements made by participants was required. As a result, I contacted the three teachers and two of the supervisors to ask further questions and/or for clarification (Appendices C, D, E, F, G).

For the scope of this dissertation, fillers such as 'uh', 'um' or 'you know' (Laserna et al., 2014, p.328) have been removed from the quotes in Findings and Discussion and from extracts taken from interviews (Appendix H). However, certain fillers that are idiomatic such as 'be verb + like' remain because it may distort the meaning if they are removed. For example, if 'be like' is taken from 'He'd be like 'Come to my office,'' it may be difficult to understand the real meaning. Additionally, single words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs removed from a quote are marked as […] whereas --- represents a speaker pausing while speaking.

3.5 Data analysis

As Miles et al. (2014, p.9) posit, researchers can work with words from interviews following the qualitative approach to 'compare, contrast, analyze, and construct patterns out of them'. However, a number of academics in the TESOL community have offered different methods to analyze qualitative data (Punch, 2014). Below is an outline of steps taken to analyze data in this research project that is adapted from different sources.

The first step is to transcribe data. Since the data was collected through interviews, this requires typing the audio recording into text form (Dörnyei, 2007). After transcribing, the text is read several times so that general ideas of what was said in the interviews are grasped. This should be accompanied by taking notes in the margins of the transcriptions or in a journal so that general thoughts about the data can begin to be formed (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018). The next step is coding in which pieces of information relevant to the aim of the research project are labelled (Cohen et al., 2018; Punch, 2014). Coding can be related to information that

is expected due to previously read literature or unexpected since it was not read or conceived after the study began (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018). Codes can then be put into categories by merging them if they have similar traits, left on their own if they have unique characteristics or removed if the information is not relevant to the study (Cohen et al., 2018). In this stage, themes and patterns are recognized which will be pertinent to the findings discussed later in the dissertation. The final step is to interpret the meaning of the themes, patterns and unexpected data recognized during the coding stage (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018).

3.6 Limitations

Although applying the qualitative approach has a number of strengths, it does have some limitations. Data analysis in this approach can be labelled 'subjective interpretation' (Haverkamp, 2005, p.147). Since there is no 'standardized instrumentation' in use, the researcher 'is essentially the main instrument in the study' (Miles et al., 2014, p.9). In addition, researchers may be biased if influenced by their own experience, knowledge and beliefs (Haverkamp, 2007; Miles et al., 2014). However, several tactics are used in this study to help contain the limitations. First, certain safeguards mentioned previously, such as respondent triangulation, criteria for selecting participants and duplicating particular questions for experienced teachers and supervisors, have been implemented in the study. Second, my experience and knowledge of both receiving and giving feedback should influence my analysis as little as possible by keeping an open mind and remaining as objective as I am able.

In addition to data analysis, data collection also has limitations. Even though both teachers and supervisors were included in the sampling, there is only a total of six participants. Considering the size of the TESOL community worldwide, this sampling is very small. In addition, by applying maximum variation sampling, different contexts in which each participant worked in will have different influences on how they perceived feedback sessions. However, since this project is exploratory, data collected may be linked to previous research, surface unexpectedly and/or indicate that further research is needed.

3.7 Ethics

To conduct my research project and maintain ethical standards, certain procedures were applied. First, each participant received and read an information sheet containing a description of my project (Appendix I). Second, they read and signed a consent form for the interview (Appendix J). Third, I asked them to let me record the interview before turning on the recording device. Finally, as promised to the participants, aliases are used to replace their real names so that they are anonymous. In addition, the audio recordings have been stored in a safe place to also help secure their anonymity.

The aim and methods of the research were explained in this section. The following two chapters will focus on the findings and analysis of those findings.

Chapter 4 Findings

In this chapter, findings derived from data collection are provided. As presented in Methodology, the research questions focus on experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives concerning feedback sessions. To answer those questions, i.e., to understand their perspectives, the findings are divided into three categories: difficulties, positive experiences and solutions for feedback sessions given by the participants. Since experienced teachers and supervisors were interviewed, those three categories are applied to the teachers and the supervisors. However, positive experiences and solutions from the supervisors were merged. The reason is that they were not trained to carry out feedback sessions, so they had to develop their own methods that would work for them which became their own solutions.

4.1 Teachers

4.1.1 Difficulties during feedback seasons

Participants Nur and Bill had similar difficult experiences during feedback sessions. At that time, Nur was teaching general English, English for Academic Purposes and English for Specific Purposes at a vocational college in Kuwait and worked there for three years. She was observed several times each semester focusing on professional development. She had three different supervisors; however, this dissertation concentrates on the first and third supervisors because the first and second supervisors used similar techniques while conducting feedback sessions. Bill, on the other hand, worked 10 years for a contracting company that provided teachers and curricula for Saudi Arabia's military in which he taught general English. Formal observations and

feedback sessions happened once a year and were evaluations with information provided on what to change while teaching. He had two different supervisors while working there.

Nur's and Bill's first supervisors applied very similar methods during feedback sessions. For example, both were authoritative and domineering. They started and continued throughout the feedback sessions focusing on teaching methods that needed to be changed. No time was spent on the teachers' effective teaching techniques during the sessions. In addition, their supervisors did not encourage Nur and Bill to discuss with them their performances or changes for the future. Nur explains:

Basically, I'd walk into his office and he'd tell me to have a seat […] then he'd be like 'Okay, here are the problems with today's lesson.' And he'd go 'This is the problem, this is how to fix it. This is the problem, this is how to fix it.' And I couldn't get a word in to explain why I was doing, doing the problem. Which to me was not a problem, but I didn't have a chance to explain that it wasn't a problem to me.

According to Bill, the sessions were about 'what you did wrong as opposed to keep up the good work. […] For the first three-and-a-half years I was there, the only feedback we got was criticism, criticism, criticism'. Bill also adds that 'we had to hold our tongues' and not negotiate with the supervisor on what he considered necessary to be changed.

The two supervisors did not consider the context Nur and Bill were working in as important, so their comments on teaching methods were prescriptive. Nur says that her supervisor would have wanted to say, 'I've worked here for years. Do as I say. Do what we're all doing.'

Both teachers felt very uncomfortable in these feedback sessions. Bill says he felt threatened because the annual evaluations meant that teachers may or may not get a raise or possibly fired. He claims that over a half-dozen teachers were fired under the first supervisor, therefore you would 'make it or break it' and that 'everything was hinged upon that one hour' of observation each year. Although observations and feedback for Nur focused on development, she also felt that her beliefs in teaching were threatened because they affected 'what I wanted to do, what the plans I had for the students, the plans I had to move the curriculum forward'. She also felt she was being judged because the message from her supervisor was 'either you fix the idea I have of what a good language teacher in this department should be or you're not a good teacher'.

Due to the techniques they used while conducting feedback sessions, the two supervisors' methods can be identified as the directive approach. They transmitted prescriptive teaching methods directly to the teachers and were authoritative. Communication between the teachers and the supervisors was kept to a minimum and the relationship was not democratic. The primary goal of the meetings was for the teachers to do what the supervisors told them to do.

Catherine faced a different difficulty. She was teaching at an English language institute in Italy and was observed several times by the same supervisor for evaluation and professional development. The supervisor began the sessions by asking Catherine how she thought the lessons went and then asked for opinions about the techniques that she used during the lessons. Catherine was uncomfortable with that method for several reasons:

> I struggle with things that are not said directly. I struggle when people don't get to the point because I find that a waste of time. […] He kept asking me questions to elicit from me which I thought was […] condescending.

In addition to time and feeling patronized by continuously asking her questions, she had a difficult time understanding the supervisor's objectives.

> He was asking me questions to get something out of me and it wasn't clear where it was going, what I was supposed to be learning. […] I would have preferred if he had just told me what he was after […] in more of a top-down way.

Catherine's dislike of being asked many questions and not understanding what the supervisor was trying to accomplish corresponds with Wajnryb's (1994) theory of high mitigation to help cushion a potential face-threatening act. It is common that non-directive approaches include asking questions instead of delivering methods directly to teachers. However, from Catherine's

perspective, the approach applied in her feedback sessions was a waste of time, condescending and made the goals of the meeting unclear.

4.1.2 Positive feedback sessions

While still teaching at the same places, Nur and Bill had positive experiences during feedback sessions while working with different supervisors. Nur's third supervisor carried out feedback sessions much differently. Instead of going straight into issues she needed to change, he asked her what she would like to talk about regarding the lesson. To Nur, this was 'a chance at the beginning to explain my point of view, why I did things'. According to Nur, during that part of the session, the supervisor often mentioned 'I like how you did this' so he was supporting the positive aspects of her lesson while she was discussing them herself. If he thought that some changes could be made, he did not order Nur to do so. According to Nur:

> He never said, 'This is an issue.' He'd be like 'Why did you do this?' So, I'd explain. Sometimes he would be like 'Oh, okay. I get it. It's fine.' Other times he'd be like […] 'Have you considered doing this?' It was never 'This is a problem. You have to fix it.'

This supervisor took it a step further: It was up to Nur to decide whether to apply the supervisor's suggestions. She says he believed that 'You're free to do whatever you want. He said, 'It would be good to have these views because the world is changing and we're old so we don't realize that. You're closer to the students' age, so you probably know what's acceptable.''

These feedback sessions were based on core elements of non-directive approaches. For example, there was more collaboration and communication between Nur and the supervisor and she was allowed to make decisions independently which encouraged her to reflect more on her teaching techniques. Nur says she did not feel threatened or judged and that the sessions were 'encouraging' and 'supportive'.

Bill says his second supervisor generated a more comfortable atmosphere and teachers felt more 'confident' and less 'threatened'. The supervisor was more 'collegial' by working more closely with the teachers. Unlike the first supervisor, he consulted with the teachers to schedule observations, provided the teachers with the company's teaching standards and policies they needed to adhere to and observation reports did not become official unless teachers agreed to their contents. If teachers did not agree, they could request a second observation.

However, the feedback sessions themselves were primarily based on the directive approach. Although the supervisor started by asking how teachers felt about their lessons, his conclusions regarding the positive and negative aspects of the lessons were finalized. Bill described the form as 'all filled out, boxes were checked, notes were made, a number was there in the right-hand corner giving you an immediate idea of how you did […]'. Although the supervisor listened to teachers' input regarding negative feedback, his position did not change. This method falls in line with transmitting prescriptive methods which are core elements of the directive approach.

4.1.3 Teachers' solutions for feedback sessions

When Nur and Bill were asked about what they thought were the best methods to use during feedback sessions, their answers coincided closely with the techniques applied by their supervisors who produced the positive experiences described above. For example, Bill mapped out a feedback session similar to the way he described his second supervisor's techniques. He says that one should start by asking teachers what they think of the lessons followed by presenting positive and negative aspects of how lessons were taught then ending the session by repeating good aspects of the teachers' performances. As Bill describes it, 'You did great with this, I think we need to work a little bit here and here, but I'm seeing a lot of great work.'

Catherine did not experience different feedback sessions in Italy other than the one presented above. However, when asked about better methods to carry out feedback sessions, she mostly focused on techniques being more direct than those used by her supervisor who asked questions to elicit responses. She says that as a teacher, she would 'welcome a few, I'd say three, four good points, three, four bad points […] the negatives and the positives'. Although she characterizes the directive approach by emphasizing transmitting prescriptive teaching techniques to be used in feedback sessions, she does include some elements linked to non-directive approaches outside the feedback session. For example, she says that teachers should be involved in deciding what supervisors should focus on during observations and when observations should take place.

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Nur's solution follows non-directive approaches whereas Bill's and Catherine's correspond to the directive approach.

4.1.4   Artificial performance and defensiveness

Before presenting the supervisors' perspectives, it is worth looking into the teachers' behavior regarding artificial performance and defensiveness. As discussed in Literature Review, artificial performance is when teachers teach differently during observations than they do regularly in order to get better results. Bill's observations focused mostly on evaluation so his performance was critical. Although his first supervisor did not provide guidelines teachers could follow, Bill says that they 'shared tips and ideas with each other' and he tried to follow the recommendations. His second supervisor provided guidelines and as Bill says, to get a good appraisal, they influenced 'how we taught that formal lesson'. Catherine, on the other hand, did not fake her performances because she believed that her job was secure and explains that 'I didn't respect the observer's methods and solutions, so I didn't follow his suggestions'. Nur also did not conduct artificial performances for her supervisors because she did not want to deviate from her own lesson plans and the observations were for development, not appraisal. Regarding her third supervisor, she felt no need to act out something different because he respected her decisions on how to teach.

Also presented in Literature Review, experienced teachers may get defensive while receiving negative feedback. Similar to what she says regarding artificial performance, Catherine explains that since she did not want to follow his suggestions, 'I just sat and listened'. Bill's job was

threatened under the first supervisor, therefore instead of acting defensively, he remained

passive. Regarding the second supervisor, Bill says because he could reschedule an observation

if he did not like the results and that the supervisor 'had made our lives so much more

comfortable' compared to the first supervisor, he did not feel like arguing. Nur, on the other

hand, became defensive with her first supervisor during the initial sessions because he

transmitted authoritatively what to change in the classroom and she 'tried to explain why I did

specific things'. However, 'he wasn't listening', so she stopped and just listened to what he had

to say.

Artificial performance and defensiveness related to the three teachers will be discussed further

in the next chapter.

4.2 Supervisors

4.2.1 Difficulties during feedback sessions

The three supervisors interviewed worked in different regions. Udaina observed and carried out

feedback sessions for nine years at a language institute, college and university in Malaysia, her

country of origin. George, originally from Ireland, has been involved in the observation-

feedback process in schools and universities for 34 years in the UK. Both Udaina and George

have worked with teachers not only teaching English but other languages as well. Ann, who is

from the UK, spent 22 years conducting observations and feedback sessions at language

colleges in different Middle Eastern countries. Unlike the three teachers who shared their

experiences from one school they worked for, the supervisors provided their experiences from a variety of places they had worked.

One difficulty while conducting feedback sessions with experienced teachers mentioned by the supervisors is teachers becoming defensive. Udaina claims that she worked with experienced teachers open to negative feedback but others had a very difficult time handling it:

> It was very difficult for them to accept […] negative feedback. They just refuse or deny that 'this is not me, this is not what you've seen'. […] I think the most difficult part is when the experienced teachers do not accept the comments and they try to argue that 'no, I didn't do that'.

George remembers one teacher who did not argue with him verbally but expressed resistance through body language. George says the teacher did not say ''Who are you to be telling me' or anything, but I'm quietly confident that that's what was in the back of his head. […] [He was] silently dismissive'.

Another difficulty was related to years of experience. Udaina often felt that teachers with more experience than her did not seem to 'respect' what she had to say about their lessons. George had a similar experience which made him feel uncomfortable early in his career:

What was difficult was that they had more years of experience than I had. [...] I was

really concerned that they might be thinking 'Who are you to tell us anything?' [...] 'Who

are you to advise us or tell us what to do?'

Ann and George express criticism of different aspects of the directive approach. For example,

both look negatively on supervisors delivering teaching strategies directly and authoritatively to

teachers who must implement them in class. Ann claims the 'lack of say [teachers] have in what

goes on' in the classroom negatively affects the outcome of feedback sessions. They also view

transmission-based feedback as degrading and threatening. As George says, this form of

feedback 'can be quite damaging. Hearing 'You did this wrong, you did this wrong' several

times, it 'puts you in your place' and can lower your self-confidence considerably'. Ann also says

it is demeaning when '[a teacher] is a professional, they've been doing something for years and

you're coming along and say, 'Have you thought of trying this? Have you thought of trying

that?''. She also emphasizes how threatening it can be 'when they know there is so much at

stake, as they often did in the Middle East, since an observation could lead to loss of job and

house'.

Ann and George also express an aversion to prescriptive, one-size-fits-all, teaching techniques

delivered to the teachers, especially since supervisors are not fully knowledgeable of the

context in which teachers operate. Ann explains:

But any teaching based on a snapshot of the lesson is not good, really, because there's

nothing --- you don't know the teachers, you don't know the students, the context; you

don't know the learners who've got problems, what those problems are, how the

teacher's going to deal with them. […] You can't just spot-in and make judgments on

people.

One more difficulty expressed by the supervisors was the lack of training. None of the three

received training before observing and carrying out feedback sessions. As a result, they needed

to learn on their own how to deal with it. George says that he learned from 'the good and the

bad' as he figured things out through trial and error along the way.

4.2.2   Positive feedback sessions and solutions

Through experience, George discovered what he thought worked well in managing feedback

sessions. His methods focused a great deal on the role of the teachers during meetings. For

example, he found that by telling teachers what to do in the classroom (e.g. negative feedback),

they did not seem to retain the information he delivered. According to George:

The way my practice had evolved up to that point was that I had concluded if I were to

do more talking than the experienced, practicing teacher, then I was probably doing a

really bad job. […] I wanted them to dominate. I would guide the discussion with a

question here and there, a comment here and there, but they would dominate the

conversation. So, it was almost a practice of eliciting answers.

Phrases George would use to elicit responses included 'Talk me through' that part of the lesson, […] 'Why did you…?', […] and 'Are there other possible ways…?'. George claims that by allowing the teachers to do most of the talking while he was a facilitator, the teachers identified areas they needed to work on most of the time. He says that there were 'very few experienced teachers that I have worked with who have not been able to identify the issues for themselves'. Furthermore, George found that teachers ended up being able to make decisions autonomously because 'they know the context better than me and they are actually giving me suggestions [on what to do in class]'. He also holds that by applying this strategy, feedback sessions have been less stressful.

Ann had concerns as a supervisor about how stressful feedback sessions were and that they seemed ineffective. To try and remedy these problems, she made a number of changes in and outside the feedback sessions. Outside the sessions, supervisors and teachers worked together a great deal. For example, supervisors were team leaders, so they and the teachers taught the same or similar classes, therefore supervisors and teachers in each group could discuss and share ideas about teaching techniques. In addition, supervisors could get to know the teachers better which is vital to Ann:

> […] what works with one teacher will not work with another. […] it's knowing something
> about the teacher […]. You can't do it if you don't know something about the

background. You can't learn something about the background and beliefs unless you spend time with them.

Ann also allowed teachers to choose what aspects of a lesson to be observed and the day for the observation to take place as well.

Regarding the feedback sessions, Ann tried to make them informal, such as 'go for a coffee' and 'discuss' the lesson rather than focusing on feedback. Just like George, Ann had the teachers do most of the talking while having them 'talk me through the stages of the lesson'. Along the way, she would ask why a teacher applied a technique and often discovered that by receiving the rationale behind the action, she could accept what the teacher did. If not, she could help guide the teacher to come up with alternatives. Ann also holds that by discussing lessons instead of offering feedback, teachers generally identified areas to work on themselves and were capable of making their own decisions regarding teaching strategies.

According to Ann, getting to know the teachers, having supervisors and teachers learn jointly and allowing teachers to speak a great deal helped reduce tension during feedback sessions.

George's and Ann's methods are in line with non-directive approaches. They moved away from an authoritative role and transmitting prescriptive teaching techniques. In both cases, teachers were allowed to do a considerable amount of talking and make decisions independently. These features correlate with what Gebhard (1984) describes as the collaborative approach. From

Ann's perspective, the relationship between supervisors and teachers, such as teaming up, emphasizes collaboration outside feedback sessions as well.

Udaina's methods applied during feedback sessions were similar to Bill's second supervisor's approach discussed above. She would start by presenting positive aspects of their teaching during the lesson. She then asked them about the lesson's negative aspects to discover whether they were aware of any problems. After that she delivered negative feedback 'by telling them 'Okay, see this is what I noticed, so do you think you can improve this in your next lesson?' […] I would say, [from the boxes checked] 'These are missing, so let me see this in the next [lesson]''.

As mentioned above, her teachers often became defensive and denied what she said occurred. To deal with denial, Udaina often videotaped lessons observed so that there could be an agreement between her and the teachers on what took place. She says that helped because she and the experienced teachers could view the tape together and see what actually happened and the teachers could not deny what took place. Udaina also shares what she thought might help improve on the feedback sessions in the future. For example, she says that two supervisors observing experienced teachers together and seeing 'how my comments could actually match with the other person' could help teachers view the observations as more credible. In addition, she believes that teachers need to view observations and feedback sessions as a benefit instead of an attack because there is always room for improvement and 'the person who is observing you is just trying to help you'.

The fundamental aspects of Udaina's methods when conducting feedback sessions were aligned with the directive approach. Her primary aim was to provide particular teaching techniques that needed to be changed. In addition, teachers' input was not emphasized and their awareness of the importance of supervisors' suggestions needed to be raised.

In this chapter, experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives were presented through their difficulties, positive experiences and solutions. Themes and patterns that have derived from their perspectives will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5   Discussion

In this chapter, experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives are arranged based on themes and patterns discovered during data analysis. Themes and patterns were often formed with a combination of teachers' and supervisors' perspectives. However, differences in the two groups' perspectives and jobs they held influenced some themes, patterns and conclusions and that will be acknowledged when it occurs. Furthermore, due to the scope of the dissertation, not all themes and patterns can be included; instead, the ones considered most important are discussed.

The chapter begins by linking particular findings to previous research presented in Literature Review. Findings which were not expected due to what was covered in Literature Review are

then provided. Next, findings that contradict each other are also discussed. Although expected, unexpected and inconsistent findings occurred, implications regarding the future of feedback sessions and further research are discussed at the end of the chapter.

5.1   Findings linked to previous research

5.1.1   The directive approach can be detrimental

Instructors Nur and Bill and all three of the supervisors have experienced receiving or giving feedback in post-observation meetings while the directive approach was applied at one time or another. Both teachers, Nur and Bill, and two out of the three supervisors, Ann and George – 80% of those who experienced the approach – have commented negatively on some of the directive approach's core elements. One characteristic they believe has negative effects is that supervisors deliver teaching methods to be used in the classroom to teachers directly. In this fashion, information is transmitted from supervisors to teachers and teachers have little to say, cannot negotiate and must accept what supervisors tell them. The participants' view of this method is in line with research that identifies it as a top-down approach (Montgomery, 2002). In addition, this authoritative behavior associated with transmitting information by supervisors rather than discussing issues can be threatening and degrading to teachers. This is consistent with Gebhard's (1984) conclusion in which the one-way form of communication in feedback sessions can be intimidating and make teachers feel degraded.

Another negative component is that the teaching methods transmitted are prescriptive. The participants found this to be counterproductive because supervisors are not connecting the

methods they deliver to the contexts in which the teachers teach. Their view of prescriptive methods is in line with research that shows 'one-size-fits-all' techniques for teaching are problematic because classes are dynamic and always in flux (Edge and Richards, 1998; Tudor, 2001).

5.1.2 Non-directive approaches can be advantageous

Instructor Nur and supervisors Ann and George offered support to a number of aspects of non-directive approaches. One of the key elements is collaboration in feedback sessions. To the three participants, it is important for communication between the supervisor and teacher to be interactive. This can allow the teacher to speak more than in what one would expect from the directive approach and maybe much more than the supervisor. By doing this, the instructor's knowledge becomes more valuable and prescriptive methods delivered from supervisors are reduced. Their view of collaboration during feedback sessions corresponds with the primary elements of non-directive approaches researchers discuss (Farr, 2011; Gebhard, 1984).

Another characteristic of non-directive approaches participants mentioned is that teachers are allowed to make decisions independently. Empowering teachers to work more autonomously is supported by Freeman (1982) and Gebhard (1984). Furthermore, the three participants shared that non-directive approaches are less stressful which is in line with Gebhard's research (1984).

5.1.3 High degree of mitigation

Although only one participant addressed a high degree of mitigation, it is worth discussing since it has caught the attention of researchers. Catherine's primary criticism about attending feedback sessions was about a supervisor who asked too many questions to elicit her responses regarding her performance and potential changes in the future. She found this condescending, a waste of time and unclear as to what goal the supervisor was trying to reach. Her disapproval is consistent with Wajnryb's (1994, 1998) findings that show the pitfalls of high forms of mitigation carried out by supervisors in feedback sessions.

5.1.4 Untrained supervisors

The supervisors speaking of their lack of training is in line with studies that show most of the supervisors in the TESOL community have not been trained to carry out feedback sessions (Bailey, 2006; Sheal, 1989). To strengthen this point further, Ann mentioned that at a TESOL conference, a presenter asked 20 supervisors if they had been trained to manage feedback sessions after observations. All 20 said that they had not. This data came from supervisors interviewed only because the most valid information concerning this point had to come directly from them, not the teachers. Therefore, this is derived only from the supervisors' perspectives.

5.2 Unexpected findings

Although a significant portion of the findings are in line with research discussed in Literature Review, some are not. Research highlights that it is common for teachers to conduct artificial performances to positively affect their appraisals (Howard, 2011; Howard 2012; Zepeda and

Ponticell, 1998) and become defensive when they are given negative feedback (Brandt, 2008; Cruikshanks, 2012; Freeman, 1982; Randall and Thornton, 2001). The findings show that the majority of the teachers in this study did not carry out artificial performances or become defensive. Bill was the only one who carried out artificial performances. Regarding resistance, Nur was the only one who became defensive and stopped doing so after initial sessions with one supervisor. Note that information regarding artificial performance came only from the teachers' perspectives because supervisors can never be sure if a performance is fake.

Since sampling of this study is small, further research on a broader scale may bring more acceptable results concerning these findings. In addition, the context of where the teachers were working probably had an impact on the results. For example, Bill needed to perform what his supervisors expected of him because his job was always on the line whereas Nur's and Catherine's jobs were not as threatened. Furthermore, although supervisors Udaina and George highlighted teachers' defensiveness, the teachers minimized the issue. These two perspectives coming from those who have different roles during feedback sessions may have influenced their input in the interviews which might be worth researching.

5.3 Contradictions in findings

In addition to unexpected findings, there are some that contradict each other. As mentioned above, there was strong input among the majority of the teachers and supervisors about the negative effects of applying the directive approach in feedback sessions. However, two teachers, Catherine and Bill, and one supervisor, Udaina – 50% of the participants – adhere to

core elements of the directive approach while expressing their opinions about making feedback sessions better. The most important feature they supported was transmitting prescriptive teaching methods to teachers in feedback sessions instead of communicating collaboratively.

Catherine and Bill share ideas on how to make the observation-feedback process more comfortable and less stressful. Catherine, for example, thinks it is beneficial for teachers to be involved in determining what aspect of a lesson should be observed and dealt with in a feedback session and deciding when an observation will take place. Bill believes that supervisors asking how teachers feel about their lessons is a good start and they should accompany sharing negative aspects of how a lesson is taught with positive aspects. However, regardless of these modifications Bill and Catherine propose, they still support supervisors telling teachers what they should change directly during feedback sessions.

Supervisor Udaina focuses less on easing tension and more on validating feedback supervisors give to teachers. From her own experience, she says that videotaping lessons helps reduce resistance to negative feedback from experienced teachers. She also suggests that two supervisors observing lessons would generate feedback that is more credible. In addition, she proposes that teachers should become aware that feedback from supervisors can assist teachers in improving their teaching methods. Yet just like Bill and Catherine, Udaina suggests making small adjustments while continuing to use the directive approach.

Although it is not clear why Udaina and Bill support the directive approach, we can refer to previous research in Literature Review to come up with possibilities. For example, Udaina may have worked in a working environment where using the directive approach was the norm (Garman, 1984, cited in Smyth, 1991, p.327), or since she was not trained, she may have followed the methods used by supervisors who observed her when she was a teacher (Borg, 2006; Lortie, 1975). This could also be related to Bill's support of the directive approach: He is following in the footsteps of the two supervisors he had while he was teaching in Saudi Arabia.

Another cause for supporting the directive approach may derive from Catherine's perspective concerning her feedback sessions. She says that collaborative methods such as supervisors eliciting responses from her are not beneficial and she prefers a more direct approach. Catherine also claims that her preference may come from the industrial area of Italy where she was brought up:

> I think [my preference] might be […] influenced by the way in which social conventions work in a certain culture. Perhaps not all of Italy, but [my area] for sure is very business oriented and you want to get to the point and you want to move on to the next order of business.

Catherine's explanation that her culture may have influenced her preference of approaches brings up contextual factors that need to be addressed concerning which methods are appropriate to use during feedback sessions. There is a wide range of contextual situations,

from culture and variations within cultures all the way down to educational programs, schools and classrooms. Due to the scope of this dissertation, we will touch on only two examples. According to Hyland and Lo (2006) and Fitch and Sanders (1994), cultural values and beliefs can have a strong influence on whether it is suitable to be direct, less direct or not direct between supervisors and teachers. Borg (2015), on the other hand, focuses on school systems. Concerning professional development for in-service teachers, he holds that learning activities, such as applying collaborative activities or transmission-based workshops, may be effective depending on different school systems. This may have the same influence on post-observation feedback as well and Bill's situation in Saudi Arabia may be a good example. Since the client of the organization he worked for was the military which had a say in how teachers were managed, the feedback sessions involved an authoritarian element in which prescriptive information was transmitted directly from supervisors to teachers.

The possibility of context influencing approaches used during feedback sessions is discussed further in the next section.

5.4 Implications

5.4.1 Training supervisors

As noted previously, most of the supervisors in the TESOL community have not been trained to conduct observations and feedback sessions. A number of issues discussed up to this point in the dissertation support that training may make a difference.

First, from previous research and data collected in this project, the directive approach can produce negative effects while non-directive approaches can generate positive outcomes during feedback sessions. However, it appears that choosing the most appropriate approach – ranging from directive and authoritative to more non-directive, collaborative and facilitative – may depend on context. Not only that, but complex features of individuals can also have an impact on what approach to use in a feedback session.

Therefore, it is important for supervisors to have a full understanding of different approaches and how they can be applied. In addition, they should learn how to gauge a situation, i.e., consider the context that they are operating in and/or the individual with whom they will be working. How can this be achieved? Training.

Although the idea of training supervisors appears sound, questions immediately surface. For example, is training throughout the TESOL community feasible? Some theories of professional development produced by academics have had a very difficult time gaining momentum recently. To try and reduce teacher educators transmitting prescriptive teaching techniques to teachers through workshops, seminars and training courses, new tactics emerged such as practitioner research. In this fashion, teachers are involved in 'systematic, intentional, and self-critical inquiry about one's work' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p.22). However, this trend never took hold in the TESOL community for several reasons, including teachers' lack of time, incentives, information and training (Borg, 2010; Dörnyei, 2007). For these obstacles to be

overcome, language institutes, schools and universities could have invested time and money in promoting practitioner research, but that has rarely occurred.

The same thing may happen to training supervisors. For example, as noted in Literature Review, teaching English is considered a commodity by many companies owning language institutes and while selling their product, efficiency is important to increasing their earnings (Morey, 2003). Companies may frown on adding training to their programs because it would add additional expenses which would cut into their profits.

5.4.2 Future research possibilities

Although this research project was exploratory and did not reveal groundbreaking results, I believe that it has raised a number of questions that can lead to further research. First, this project worked with a small sampling trying to gather teachers' and supervisors' perspectives on feedback sessions that follow observations. A larger study with a wider range of participants may help to confirm any of the perspectives provided in this study.

Second, even though the sampling was limited, the study came across different contexts which seemed to influence some of the participants' perspectives. For example, Catherine suggests that values and traditions of where she was brought up affected which approach she preferred. It is also likely that feedback at Bill's organization was influenced by the environment in which the organization operated. This leads to further research focusing on relationships between

approaches and contexts and whether particular approaches are more appropriate to apply in certain contexts.

Third, researchers have pointed out that supervisors should use different approaches for different teachers. The characteristics of each teacher are complex, therefore further research on pertinent characteristics may be required. In addition, how supervisors can be educated on interpreting teachers' characteristics may also need attention.

Fourth, although training supervisors appears to be rewarding, the possibility of it gaining momentum requires investigation. For example, it is important to find out whether language institutes, schools and universities are willing to invest in providing facilities and trainers or to enroll supervisors in training programs elsewhere. If it turns out that training supervisors becomes accepted in the TESOL community, research on how the training is carried out would also be important.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

Post-observation feedback sessions in the TESOL community have been and continue to be difficult for both teachers and supervisors. As was discussed in Literature Review, previous research reveals that the directive approach is one of the primary sources of difficulties during feedback sessions. Although there can be problems while applying non-directive approaches (e.g. pragmatic ambivalence), they are known to help reduce the difficulties during sessions.

Also disclosed is that problems in feedback sessions continue today because the directive approach is still being applied and that supervisors exacerbate the problems because they are not trained.

The aim of the study was to examine perspectives of experienced teachers and supervisors to explore what actually takes place during feedback sessions and what they believe can be done to improve on them. As expected in the findings, the directive approach was perceived negatively by the majority of the participants. However, half of them supported the use of the non-directive approaches while the other half supported the directive approach to improve feedback sessions. These findings led to a number of possibilities. First, the context in which people work can influence which approach they prefer for feedback sessions. Second, if context and a number of aspects of each individual need to be taken into consideration, supervisors may have to decide what approaches to use in different situations. To do so, training is necessary for them to become familiar with multiple approaches and how to assess situations so they can choose which methods to apply.

The results of this project lead to the need for further research. Since this study was exploratory and had a small sampling, it would be beneficial to focus more research on particular issues such as how approaches conducting feedback sessions are related to contextual situations and characteristics of individuals and the feasibility of training supervisors in the TESOL community.

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Teachers' semi-structured interview questions

1. How did you feel before attending feedback sessions?

2. Did you face any difficulties during feedback sessions?
   If yes, please describe the difficulties.

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did the supervisor do most of the talking?
   b. Did the supervisor focus mostly on negative feedback?
   c. Did the supervisor understand the context in which you taught?

3. How did you feel while the difficulties were taking place?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you feel threatened?
   b. Did you feel being judged?
   c. Did you feel offended?
   d. Did you feel the supervisor was being authoritative?

4. How did you deal with the difficulties?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you become defensive?
   b. Did you only listen to what the supervisor said?

5. Did you have positive experiences during feedback sessions?
   If yes, please describe your positive experiences.

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did the supervisor allow you to talk a significant amount of time?
   b. Did the supervisor have you discover difficulties during the lesson observed?
   c. Did the supervisor understand the context in which you taught?
   d. Did the supervisor allow you to make decisions concerning teaching methods?

6. How did you feel during the positive experiences?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you feel less threatened?

b. Did you feel less offended?
c. Did you feel that you were not being judged?
d. Did you feel that you and the supervisor were working together collaboratively?
e. Did you feel the meetings had a positive impact on your teaching methods?

7. During observations, did you perform the way you thought your supervisor wanted you to perform?

8. What do you think is the best way to conduct feedback sessions?

9. Do you have anything else to say about feedback sessions?

Supervisors' semi-structured interview questions

1. How did you feel before attending feedback sessions with experienced teachers?

2. Did you face any difficulties during feedback sessions?
   If yes, please describe the difficulties.

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did teachers disagree on what took place during lessons observed?
   b. Did teachers become defensive?
   c. Did teachers disregard comments on future teaching methods?
   d. Did you have a difficult time understanding the context in which teachers taught?

3. How did you feel while the difficulties were taking place?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you feel that feedback sessions should change?
   b. Did you feel that teachers needed to understand the benefits of feedback sessions?
   c. Did you feel concerned about the well-being of the teachers?
   d. Did you feel that feedback sessions were a waste of time?

4. How did you deal with the difficulties?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you change the way you conducted feedback sessions?
   b. Did you change anything before or after feedback sessions such as determining what to observe and/or scheduling observations and feedback sessions?

5. Did you have positive experiences during feedback sessions?
   If yes, please describe your positive experiences.

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you allow teachers to participate more in conversations regarding the lessons observed?
   b. Did you allow teachers to participate more in conversations regarding teaching methods that could be used in the future?
   c. Did you have teachers discover difficulties during the lessons observed?
   d. Did you have a good understanding of the contexts in which you observed?
   e. Did you allow teachers to make decisions concerning teaching methods?

6. How did you feel during the positive experiences?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. Did you feel less authoritative and domineering?
   b. Did you feel less judgmental?
   c. Did you feel that you and teachers were working together collaboratively?
   d. Did you feel the meetings had a positive impact on teachers teaching methods?
   e. Did you feel that teachers had positive feelings about the meetings?

7. Are there any changes you think ought to be made to make feedback sessions better?

8. Have you ever been trained to conduct observations? Feedback sessions?

9. Do you have anything else to say about feedback sessions?

Nur's follow-up interviews
Semi-structured interview questions

First follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the first follow-up interview was to get a clearer picture of the way in which Nur's first and third supervisors conducted feedback sessions.

1. Can you give me the sequence in which each supervisor carried out feedback sessions?

    Potential follow-up questions:
    a. What were the positive aspects of the supervisor's approach to conduct feedback sessions?
    b. What were the negative aspects of the supervisor's approach to conduct feedback sessions?
    c. How did you feel about the supervisor's approach to carry out feedback sessions?
    d. Were there positive effects coming from the supervisor's approach to carry out feedback sessions?
    e. Were there negative effects coming from the supervisor's approach to conduct feedback sessions?

Second follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the second follow-up interview was to clarify some particular aspects of her feedback sessions.

1. At the times in which you were observed, did you carry out artificial performances to meet the expectations of the first/third supervisor? Why or why not?

2. During the feedback sessions with each supervisor, did you become defensive? Why or why not?

Catherine's follow-up interviews
Semi-structured interview questions

First follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the first follow-up interview was to get a clearer picture of how her supervisor conducted feedback sessions.

1. During the first interview, we discussed how the supervisor started the feedback session but very little on what happened later in the session. Can you tell me more about what the rest of the feedback session was like?

   Potential follow-up questions:
   a. What were the positive aspects of his approach to conduct feedback sessions?
   b. What were the negative aspects of his approach to conduct feedback sessions?
   c. How did you feel about his approach to carry out feedback sessions?
   d. Do you know why you felt that way?

Second follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the second follow-up interview was to clarify some particular aspects of her feedback sessions.

1. At the times in which you were observed, did you carry out artificial performances to meet the expectations of your supervisor? Why or why not?

2. During the feedback sessions, did you become defensive? Why or why not?

Appendix E

Bill's follow-up interview
Semi-structured interview questions

Follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the follow-up interview was to clarify some particular aspects of his feedback sessions.

1. At the times in which you were observed, did you carry out artificial performances to meet the expectations of your supervisors? Why or why not?

2. During the feedback sessions, did you become defensive? Why or why not?

George's follow-up interview
Semi-structured interview questions

Follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the follow-up interview was to gather more information and clarify some particular aspects of his background and feedback sessions.

1. Have you experienced the directive approach in a feedback session as a supervisor or teacher?
   If yes, were the feedback sessions less stressful when you applied the methods you developed rather than the directive approach? Why?

2. Is transmitting prescriptive methods counterproductive because supervisors do not know the context in which teachers teach nearly as well as the teachers? Why or why not?

3. By applying your approach, are the students allowed to make decisions independently? If yes, how well did they do so?

4. When supervisors transmit teaching methods in an authoritative manner, do teachers feel degraded, inferior and/or threatened? Why or why not?

Appendix G

Ann's follow-up interviews
Semi-structured interview questions

First follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the first follow-up interview was to get a clearer picture of how Ann applied her methods of carrying out feedback sessions.

1. During the first interview, you presented how you discussed lessons observed with teachers instead of giving positive and negative feedback during feedback sessions. What did you do if teachers did not bring up serious matters to discuss?

Second follow-up interview
*Note that the main purpose of the second follow-up interview was to gather more information and clarify some particular aspects of her background and feedback sessions.

1. Have you experienced the directive approach in a feedback session as a supervisor or teacher?
   If yes, were the feedback sessions less stressful when you applied the methods you developed rather than the directive approach? Why?

2. Were you trained or not to carry out the observation-feedback process?

3. How were you able to develop your method of carrying out feedback sessions?

Extracts from interviews

Key:
P: Interviewer
N: Nur
A: Ann
---   Pause
[xxx] Unintelligible comment

*Note that fillers such as 'uh', 'um' or 'you know' have been removed from these extracts. Particular idiomatic fillers such as 'be verb + like' have not been removed because it may mislead the meaning. For example, if 'be like' is removed from 'He'd be like 'This is the problem,'' the meaning may be difficult to understand.

Extract 1: From teacher Nur's second interview

P: Let's start with the first supervisor in the first year. Could you give me the sequence on how the feedback took place?

N: Basically, I'd walk into his office and he'd tell me to have a seat, but then he didn't really welcome me or anything. He was distracted by other things and then he'd be like 'Okay, here are the problems with today's lesson.' And he'd go 'This is the problem, this is how to fix it. This is the problem, this is how to fix it'. And I couldn't get a word in to explain why I was doing, doing the problem. Which to me was not a problem, but I didn't have a chance to explain that it wasn't a problem to me. So, this is the problem, this is how you fix it. This is the problem, this is how you fix it. And then if I tried to say that 'Okay, well, I'm doing it because' --- just 'These are our students. It is our students. We've known them for years. I've worked here for years. Do as I say. Do what we're all doing.'

P: Did you feel like you should be defensive? I mean because you disagreed sometimes?

N: I actually felt that I was on the defensive the whole time because he was very aggressive. It's the aggressiveness and --- it's like he invited me into his office to give me orders. Not to negotiate the situation. He said, 'Come. This is what you have to do to fix this. Do it.'

P: Interesting. And, basically, 'Do as I say,' no matter what you said?

N: Yeah and I couldn't say anything anyway.

P: So, basically, he was transmitting the information to you?

N: Yes.

P: And it was prescriptive?

N: Yes.

P: And he was very authoritative?

N: Yes. Very aggressive and tone and just shows --- it felt like an attack.

P: Even though this was for professional development, you felt like you were being judged?

N: Yeah.

P: How so?

N: Well, basically, it's like you can't do anything out of the box. It's either you fit the mold that he has in his head of what works or you're not doing it right. And there is no wrong or right in teaching. It's language teaching, so you have to work with what you have. But for him, it was either you fix the idea I have of what a good language teacher in this department should be or you're not a good teacher.

P: That's really interesting because he was not appraising you for you to get a raise or something, but you still felt threatened because of this domineering supervisor?

N: Yes, I didn't feel like my job was threatened, but I felt my relationship with my colleagues is threatened because we're a department, we're a team. So, I felt like my ideas were threatened, what I wanted to do, what the plans I had for the students, the plans I had to move the curriculum forward. I'm an ESP major. I want the course to be more specific and more tailored and he's just there being like do the bare minimum and get on with it. So, do the bare minimum and get on with it isn't my style. But, no, that's what you've got to do.

P: Now, the second supervisor. What was his sequence in the feedback session.

N: The second guy was --- had the same mentality and kind of idea as the first guy. Same. But he was not aggressive at all. He was more like a parent figure. He was like 'I'm giving you advice, so you better take it. If you don't take it, you're going to have a hard time. Take the easy way out. Don't go against the tide. We're all doing this. It's the right thing to do. We've been doing it for years. It's been working.' It's like but there's a better way, an easier way to do it. 'No, but you don't need to do that because it's harder for us, the teachers.' I said yeah but it's your job. It's literally your job. You're here to take care of the students. It's just that they had the idea of teaching --- okay, it's their job but it's not something that we should really invest in to that degree.

P: And it was ---

N: Just keep doing what we're doing. What we've been doing for years. How are we supposed to progress? And he used to tell me to do what the first guy told me to do. You can see it was like a block of --- this is what we're teaching ---

P: Teach this way regardless of the variables in the room.

N: Yes.

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P: So, the dynamics, the students themselves don't matter?

N: Yes. Don't matter. The coursebook changed. Why are we doing the same teaching with a different coursebook that encourages the communicative style? But no. 'No, no, no. We've been teaching like this for years.'

P: So, basically, he had the same sequence? He didn't start by asking you anything ---

N: No.

P: He just immediately went into what to change?

N: He'd welcome me and ask, 'How are you? Okay, so this is what we have to talk about. These are the issues.' He didn't call them problems. He'd say these are the issues. But it's not an issue. We don't have to teach the same way. And it was very, like I think both of them had a negative connotation to everything. It's like this is literally something that is supposed to be positive and why are you making me feel like I'm dreading it when I'm walking to the office? You're wasting my time. You're telling me what to do. I have no voice, no opinion, nothing. It's like you're brushing me off. You're judging me [xxx].

P: But did he let you talk about it and he listened to you or not?

N: Yeah, but in the end, it's not something he would accepting. So, it was like 'Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know you're new here. You want to change things, but this is how it's been for years. Just stick to the situation.'

P: So, he let you talk about those issues, but it didn't matter?

N: Yeah, so I stopped talking again.

P: So, basically, again, transmitting?

N: Yeah.

P: Prescriptive?

N: Uh-huh.

P: Authoritative?

N: Yeah.

P: Judgmental?

N: Yeah. Maybe he was less authoritarian. The thing is they weren't in a position of authority. That's what was to me strange.

P: Yeah, well, give somebody a little bit and they'll ---

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: Let's go to the third supervisor. What was the sequence --- how did it start, what was next ---

N: First of all, we would walk to the office, from the classroom to the office, together. He'd wait for me at the door of the class or at the end of the class. When the students finished their questions and I'm heading to the office now and we'd walk together. He would usually ask, 'My office or yours?' And it would be like yours because I don't want my students coming into my office, but it's nice of him to ask.

       And then he'd be like 'Yeah, so that was a good class. How did you feel about it? Is there anything you want to talk about --- that happened during the class, about the activities, you want to explain anything?' And usually, yeah, I did. So, I did, I did get a chance at the beginning to explain my point of view, why I did things. And that to him, obviously, cut down so much of what he wanted to say. It was like the shortcut. Explain to me what --- and then even if he asked why I did a specific thing and I explained it, sometimes he wouldn't even argue. 'Okay, I understand your point of view. I see why you're doing this. It's okay.' Even if he did disagree, in the end he told me, 'It's your choice. This is not part of your career plan or your job description [xxx]. You can still do whatever you want.

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You're still going to be promoted. You're still going to get a good evaluation because it's the students' evaluation that counts.' But it's ---

P: So, after he asked you how was your lesson, then he gave you some positive or negative points first?

N: Both.

P: Did he start with the positive?

N: Yes. Even while I was talking about the activities that 'I like how you did this. I like how you [xxx] with the students. I like how you did this.' So, you feel like, basically, this is the idea of observation that I have. It's supposed to be comfortable. It's supposed to be encouraging. It's supposed to be positive and should be getting feedback on how to be better, not how to be worse.

P: He brought up an issue, a point and said you might want to --- how did he give that to you?

N: He never said, 'This is an issue'. He'd be like 'Why did you do this?' So, I'd explain. Sometimes he would be like 'Oh, okay. I get it. It's fine.' Other times he'd be like 'Wouldn't it be better to do this?' for example. Or, 'Have you considered doing this?' It was never, 'This is a problem. You have to fix it.' It was never like that.

P: And he let you make the final choice whether to change it or not?

N: Yeah, yeah. The good thing about that situation was that I walked out of the office without giving him an answer. I didn't have to justify what I was doing. I didn't have to explain it. I didn't have to tell him what my decision was. The other two badgered me in the end. It was like 'Okay, so you are going to be doing this, right?' And I'd usually say yes that I'd do it just to save myself the --- But he would be like [xxx] and I'd be like 'Yeah, I'll think about it.' And sometimes his ideas were things I'd really consider because he didn't have that traditional view. It was 'Yeah, do what's best for the

students. I'm not in that classroom. I don't know what the students are like.' He had recently come back from a seven-year teaching gap because he was doing his PhD. So, he felt I knew more about the students and the atmosphere.

P: Now last time we talked, you said that this is probably the best model for giving feedback.

N: Yes.

P: And is this simply because from this guy it was democratic?

N: Yes. It looked a lot like the peer observations which we were voluntarily doing to self-develop, to improve as teachers. Me and my peers. And it felt like that guy was doing it so that the department would be better. So that the students would learn more. So that I could be a better teacher as opposed to just do as we say because it is the right thing to do [xxx] because that's my opinion. It's just an opinion. It's an opinion. You're not reading recent research, you're not --- I think his exposure to research doing the seven years of the PhD kind of, also, triggered that in him that there are more ways to do things and he would choose the best way according to what you have.

Extract 2: From supervisor Ann's first interview

P: I'd like to know a little from very positive experiences you've had in a feedback conference.

A: Very positive experiences --- well, mostly with, with teachers who want to --- yeah, I think because of the places I worked where I had the power to, I had, and that's most of them really because I was in, I was very lucky in the environment in the Middle East where they were prepared to try the things. It's almost what you did worked well then people would leave you and you could get on with it. My initial experiences out there before I started observing teachers were quite negative because we had this chancellor

who used to sit us there and say, 'I'd like you to think deep in your hearts of how you've let these students down' by because we had a 90% pass rate for this group of students and 10% fail and he would always focus on the ones who'd fail.

That was very negative, so we discovered that it was important to work as a group. So, you always had that group function type of thing. So, if you were a team leader, they were your friends rather than the people who worked for you. So, when you observed them you knew a lot about them, you knew, we shared techniques, we'd share ideas, but working with them rather than working for anybody which worked really well. So, it became more of a peer feedback session. And, also, the fact you were teaching too, so they could come watch you. That was really important.

P: So, the equal footing was before the feedback itself. You guys worked together. It was collaborative learning --- collaborative --- I always call it collaborative learning, meaning you guys worked together on a regular basis.

A: Doing the same stuff.

P: Sharing, creating, teaching strategies ---

A: And I taught the same courses that they did and so it wasn't like I was coming in and saying, 'You should be doing this' because I was teaching the same thing. Massive difference. Massive difference. And it was all working together because I'd get ideas from them, they'd get ideas from me. It was, it was, it worked. It really worked. It really was. It's just not this springy person from (xxx) which would have been threatening and I've never, fortunately I've always resisted that sort of thing and I'd always, if I was asked to go and observe, I'd just go and say (xxx) go and meet up and find out about you because it's not fair for me to come in. Like Scrivener says, 'No snapshot on the lives for any judgment to make.' But any teaching based on a snapshot of the lesson is not good, really, because there's nothing --- you don't know the teachers, you don't know the students, the context; you don't know the learners who've got problems, what those problems are, how the teacher's going to deal with them, and so ---

P: You're only getting 45 minutes out of a thousand hours, how much do you know the context? You don't know the students, you don't know the chemistry, all of those things.

A: You know nothing, yeah, [xxx] the one who always comes in late, so you ignore them because they always come in late. You're not every time they come in going to adapt your lesson to move to include this late person.

P: Fascinating. That was actually, that's actually --- you could classify that as a solution. Collegiality, before, during and after. And you even mentioned that you would actually observe them informally so that you would get to know what was going on, so that if you actually went in there and it was a, a necessary observation you knew more.

A: Yeah, you knew much more about the person and the context. You can't just spot-in and make judgments on people. You've got to know about their background. And that is what I don't understand about all these snap-in observations that people do the

        experienced teachers. I don't understand why people in those positions do, can't see that it is better --- you know, obviously with hindsight, it's easy, but that it never crosses their mind that to socialize to a greater or lesser extent collaboratively, to meet collaboratively. Community of practice again [xxx]. I can't understand why they can't see the benefits of that because you don't, you're not fighting resistance. You've just got a team there who are working for mutual benefit. So, it always worked for me.

Extract 3: From supervisor Ann's first interview

P: In the feedback session, how should that be carried out? I'm looking at, from your opinion?

A: In my opinion is, again, you involve the teacher, well, just like a friend. You wouldn't just say, 'Come to my living room!' You'd say, 'Where should we meet?' We'll meet here ---'

Give them the choice so that they have the choice about what to observe, they have a choice about when you come. You know, both of you know that it makes more sense having that feedback sooner rather than later. Because if you have a later feedback, that implies that somebody, not the teacher, has been sitting making a list, points which is more threatening. So, the sooner, the more informally you can have that feedback session, not informally, necessarily, but, yeah [xxx] the less threatening it is because you haven't been back to your office. If I say, 'Come a week on Tuesday,' they're almost certain you're going to have a list of points you're going to (xxx) them with.

P: And worry grows.

A: Yeah, and worry grows. So, if you do it straight away 'You know, that was really good and I really enjoyed that and da da da da' --- and you can just talk about like you would, like you would with anybody you know. No sort of structure: 'Well, that was really good and I really liked ---'

P: Do you prefer the one where you're asking questions mostly or just give some of the --- transmit information but then --- fifty-fifty --- because generally you've got --- Okay, there are many smaller versions, but you've got your traditional, directive supervision and then you have your collaborative, reflective supervision.

A: This is quite interesting because it's years since I've actually put into frame what I'm, what I --- but I'm more let's talk through the lesson then and just talk through it. Not you talk me through it which suggests you're going to get to a point and go 'Ha, ha, ha!' But lets' talk through how it went. So, you said what you liked and without what do you like, what don't you like, your wishes. Without any subjective language, really. So, that's the tricky part.

P: I'm not sure what you mean, though, when you say 'talk through the lesson'? Is it the supervisor sort of asking, 'Okay, how did it start, tell me how it went?' This and this. Or is it where the supervisor says, "Well, the first activity was interesting. This, this and this. What do you think?' Is that what it is?

A: It was interesting [xxx] just why did you do it, yeah, I'm really interested in the way you approached such and such. Can you tell me why you did it like that? And would you consider doing such and such or was it better? So, it's just a sort of talk me through the stages of the lesson and, but, hopefully, your relationship is such that you're not going to say, 'Well, I didn't really like it' because a teacher would have to be a complete idiot not to have some sort of rationale behind what they did. You never do anything in a classroom without having a reason. I mean the reason may not always be right, or within the context it may be incorrect, but they usually have a reason. It links to their beliefs and hopefully, previously, you know what sort of teaching beliefs they've got, depends on what country they come from again – US stroke Australia stroke UK environment that we were in and you knew that every nationality had a slightly different approach in the way they taught.

It's fascinating. Most of the teachers are focusing on the things that you've learned from that lesson. If you haven't learned anything, well, as I've said, you've learned what not to do and that is more challenging, but I find if you are working as a collaborative team, people are taking ideas and sharing material from the outset, especially if they are in the same level, the same sort of textbooks.

Information sheet

Exploring experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives on observation feedback sessions

Purpose of the research project
The purpose of this research project is to investigate perspectives from experienced instructors and supervisors in the TESOL community regarding post-observation feedback sessions. Although literature reveals that feedback sessions can be productive and generate positive results, it also discloses a variety of difficulties as well. In addition, literature mostly focuses on feedback given to pre-service and novice teachers rather than teachers that have years of experience. Therefore, sharing experiences and viewpoints by experienced instructors and supervisors who have been involved in feedback sessions is important to this project.

Researcher and methods
The research will be conducted by Peter Willems as part of an MA TESOL (Teacher Education) dissertation at the University of Leeds. The research will be carried out through interviews with both experienced teachers and supervisors which will take place in the second half of June 2018. Each interview will be recorded with the use of a mobile phone.

Confidentiality
Participants will remain anonymous in this research project and will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications in the future. In addition, participants have the right to withdraw consent at any time during the research.

Consent to take part in 'Exploring experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives on observation feedback sessions'

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated June 2018 explaining the above research project.	
I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymized form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by auditors from the XXXXXXXX or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of researcher	
Signature	
Date	