



## A framework for classroom observations in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education

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### Abstract

This article presents a framework for implementing classroom observations in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education. It is an effort to provide a comprehensive six step framework that aids EFL student-teachers (ST) in carrying out classroom observations independently, while simultaneously minimizing potential interpersonal conflicts with other participants involved. The aim of this paper is to provide ST and educators in EFL teacher education a workable framework for the independent implementation of classroom observations, allowing classroom observations to make a more valuable contribution to overall professional growth.

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*Keywords:* Classroom observations; language teaching; teacher education; professional development

### 1. Introduction

In all subject fields of teacher education, classroom observations are a significant component for the professional growth of student-teachers (ST) during teacher training. Classroom observations provide ST the possibility to observe, document and learn about classroom life. Effective experiences from observations during teacher training ease the transition from teacher education into the reality of daily teaching. The ability to critically and effectively observe in classrooms is a learned skill but crucial to becoming a teaching professional and a life-long learner. It is often difficult, however, for ST to observe EFL classroom activity through lenses that actually allow them to grow as teaching professionals. One reason is that EFL classrooms are incredibly complex places. Richards and Farrell (2005) describe language lessons as “dynamic and, to some extent, unpredictable events. They involve many different participants and often several different things are happening simultaneously. Classroom events sometimes unfold very quickly, so taking note of multiple events in real time is often impossible” (p. 88); consequently, filtering out something worth observing for their professional growth remains challenging for ST.

Another reason classroom observations remain difficult is the effect of the ST’s own cognition. Borg (2003) describes teacher cognition as the “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe and think” (p. 81). This unobservable cognitive dimension includes the processing cycle teachers experience as they detach from their student role and emerge into professionally qualified teachers. On an affective level, for many teachers the notion of classroom observations often conjures up negative feelings of evaluation. Richards and Farrell (2005) also report that “observation tends to be

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identified with evaluation, and consequently it is often regarded as a threatening or negative experience” (p. 85). This must not be the case as only some observations are meant to be evaluative in teacher education, while others are for teacher development or a better understanding of classroom dynamics. In fact, nonevaluative observations should occur more frequently in teacher education than evaluative observations as these are the types welcomed by teachers and foster personal as well as professional growth for ST. Hence, in order for more nonevaluative observations to occur, and for these to be fruitful, a transparent process of observation for both the observed and observer from the initial purpose to the end product must be developed.

## **2. A framework for classroom observations in EFL teacher education**

The presented framework serves to act as a roadmap, guiding ST through six steps for implementing and participating in productive and less threatening classroom observations. It differs from other observation schemes (e.g. COLT by Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) in that it does not preconceive what ST should observe in the classroom by providing items for time or event sampling, rather it focuses primarily on the sociocultural process of internalization as the ST externally observe classroom interactivity (emotions) and internalize this knowledge by amalgamating it with existent knowledge schemata (thinking). This relates closely to the Vygotskian notion that one cannot separate emotions from thinking, an area in language teacher education also explored by Johnson (2013). However, by applying this framework, ST can begin to disengage from the tumult of interaction in the classroom, as well as the emotions these conjure based on current or prior experiences, and focus more clearly on the concrete activities that can be observed for professional growth. Thus, this framework is meant to serve ST’s cognitive dimension in particular as it cognitively and systematically prepares them for conducting, reflecting and internalizing their classroom observations for professional growth.

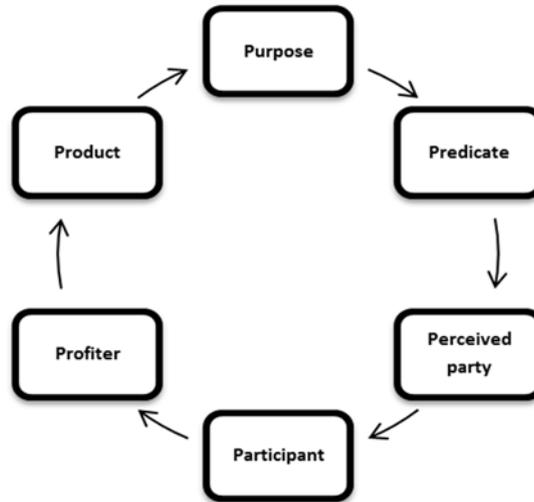
In other words, it is meant to increase ST’s consciousness and critical thinking during this important component of their teacher training and ultimately improve their chances of reaping greater rewards from classroom observations. It additionally includes suggestions that could reduce tensions between observers and observed participants, as resentment occasionally arises when the former provide feedback to the latter despite helpful intentions (Fanselow, 1988). Tensions in observation are not uncommon as teachers’ feel exposed when others observe them in their teaching arenas. Richards and Farrell (2005) underscore the need for transparent procedures for both the observer and the observed: “Because observation involves an intrusion into a colleague’s classroom, procedures for carrying out observations need to be carefully negotiated between the participating parties” (p. 94). It is my belief that interpersonal conflicts about classroom observations can be reduced if all the participants are working with the same framework like the one presented here.

Although this observation instrument has yet to undergo rigorous testing, initial feedback from undergraduate students studying in EFL teacher training programs at two separate European universities (in Denmark and Germany) suggests that it increases ST awareness about the effectiveness of classroom observations, especially when introduced shortly before their initial classroom observations during their teacher training.

### *2.1. 6P framework for EFL classroom observations*

In detail, the 6P framework includes recommendations for pre-, while- and post-observation steps, outlining how ST should contemplate the (1) purpose, (2) predicate, (3) perceived parties, (4) participants, (5) profitters and (6) products of their classroom observations. A further element of this framework is that it is self-monitoring. It suggests that the process of classroom observations is cyclical

as the end product of an observation reflects back onto its initial purpose (Graphic 1). This cycle allows the observer to regulate whether or not the initial purpose of the observation is found again in its product. As a result, ST conducting observations can ensure that what they gain from the observation includes purposeful results that can foster their development as teachers.



**Graphic 1.** The cyclical nature of classroom observations in the 6P framework

Zacharias (2012) suggests three pedagogical reasons for observing in EFL teacher education that are supportive for ST during pre-service phases of their education. Her suggestions include: (1) observing to learn, (2) observing to describe and (3) observing to evaluate. In this paper, I would like to elaborate on these three purposes and expand on them for the subsequent framework. I have also reformulated these purposes from verb phrases into nouns in order to separate them from the actions that lead to the products. Table 1 illustrates how the initial step for deciding for which purpose one conducts observations is followed by five interlinking and consecutive steps. These steps all connect in that the decisions about Step 1 should be made before Step 2 and so forth. These steps are also divided into three main temporal categories represented on the left of Table 1: pre-observation, while-observation and post-observation steps. Therefore, the table should be interpreted from the top-down.

**Table 1.** The 6P framework for classroom observations in EFL teacher education

Pre-observation	1	<b>Purpose</b>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Understanding</i>	<i>Improvement</i>
	2	<b>Predicate</b>	Learn	Document	Evaluate
	3	<b>Perceived parties</b>	From capable others	What is happening	People or activities
While-observation	4	<b>Participants</b>	Expert (observed)-novice (observer)	Peer (observed)-peer (observer)/self (observed and observer)	Expert (observed)-expert (observer)/novice (observed)-expert (observer)
	5	<b>Profiter</b>	Observer	Observed and observer	Observed

Post-observation	6	<b>Product</b>	Developing as teaching professionals	Understanding classroom dynamics	Improving teaching and learning
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### 2.1.1. Observing for development

The first step ST should take as part of their pre-observation planning is to consider *why* they would like to observe a particular classroom. I have delineated the *purposes* in the 6P framework into three types: (1) development, (2) understanding and (3) improvement. That is, before they conduct a classroom observation, ST should pose the question: ‘What is the purpose of my observation?’ At any point where ST reflect on such questions, they should be supported by teacher educators with signposts that guide them in their decision-making process. For instance, deciding for which purpose they want to observe, it may be beneficial for teacher educators to first suggest observations for development (i.e. watching others), before observing to understand, and then for personal improvement. In this paper, development refers exclusively to professional development, involving gaining a greater understanding about what it means to be a good EFL teacher. It is understood, however, that becoming a teaching professional is not a process that begins and ends with teacher training.

For ST, however, developing a professional mind often begins the first time they find themselves in the back of a classroom having to observe a lesson no longer through the lens of a student, but through the lens of an aspiring teacher. Thus, in order to develop as professionals, ST need to learn to observe not *what* teachers are teaching, but *how* they teach the material. At this point, supervisors can introduce structured observation schemes in order to guide ST’s attention to relevant aspects for professional growth. These can take the form of established observation schemes, but they can also include customized observation schemes, developed by the ST themselves. In terms of professional growth, it is important that ST are conscious of how to observe experienced teachers’ classroom conduct (Zacharias, 2012). Gebhard (2009) points out that “understanding what experienced teachers do and the professional discourses they use is an essential aspect of developing professional expertise” (p. 252). This may involve watching general teacher behaviours such as body language, position in the classroom, use of voice, appearance, classroom management, etc. More specifically for the EFL classroom, items such as teacher talk, including error corrective feedback techniques, first language (L1) and second language (L2) use in the classroom, teacher questions, teaching subskills, etc. can be observed for professional development purposes. Zacharias (2012) suggests that novice teachers can “observe a more senior teacher [...] and learn from the way she structures her lesson or how she uses feedback, for example” (p. 135). Fanselow (1988) brings the benefits of observing others for learning purposes to the point nicely:

When we observe others to gain self-knowledge and self-insight and when we generate our own alternative based on what we see others do, we construct own knowledge and engage in the type of learning Freire has advocated [consisting of acts of cognition, not transfers of information]. (p. 116)

The next P in the pre-observation planning is the *predicate*. By considering the predicate of the observation, ST recognize early on which activity should guide their observation. The predicate refers to the primary activity that is guided by the purpose of the observation. If the purpose of the observation is professional development, then this is predicated on *observing in order to learn* about being a good EFL teacher. This then refers to the principal mind-set the observer should have while conducting any observation. It is helpful to enter into this second step by premeditating on the question: ‘How can I

learn from the person I am observing?’ In theoretical terms, the ST are still in the process of gathering declarative knowledge by observing and analysing experienced others, however the purpose of observing for development is to take that further step toward gaining procedural knowledge about *how* to teach. In this step, it is important to anchor the mind-set that while observing for development purposes the observer must not evaluate the quality of the teaching, but rather be looking for instances that can enhance their own professional development as future EFL teachers.

The third step in the pre-observation planning is to consider *who* needs to be observed. That is, who are the *perceived parties*? This P also relates to the second in that there must be a receiving object to the predicating action. In other words, the observer must watch someone or something in order to obtain information. This may sound trivial, but it refers to the actual observables in the classroom. Watching skilled and experienced teachers helps ST acquire information that is related to teaching and learning in general, also called “action-system knowledge” (Zacharias, 2012, p. 134). This relates back to the principle mind-set of the ST mentioned earlier and the ‘how’ question while observing other capable teachers. However, mere unfocused watching of the teacher is not enough to actually learn something. The observables for development are the teacher’s actions worth noticing for the purpose of gaining a greater understanding about how to become a teaching professional.

Noticing behaviours that could lead to learning is one of the most difficult steps in classroom observations for ST (Weyland, 2013). The selection of teacher behaviours that are valued as important is sometimes difficult as ST often seek to observe the more interesting, but difficult high-inference variables, meaning items that include a high level assumption about teacher behaviours or actions. Unobservable teacher behaviours include, for example: decision making, engagement, problems and teaching principles (Richards & Farrell, 2005). For purposeful observations, ST need background knowledge about low-inference, more observable items, so that they may notice and recognize characteristics of good teaching from which they can learn. For example, EFL ST should be informed about different types of error feedback such as repetitions, recasts, explicit correction, metalinguistic feedback, elicitations and clarification requests (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) as well as their implications for learning in order to interpret theoretically how these may affect their own future actions.

Other observables in EFL teaching include broad categories such as teacher behaviour and teacher talk, but ones that can be divided into more observable items like: timing, activities and questioning techniques (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The observer should plan ahead of time about what they would like to learn from the more capable teacher. In sum, characteristics of good teaching are of course numerous, and ST should reflect on what they believe valuable to learn from more capable others before entering the classroom for observation.

This leads to the fourth P in the model: *participants*. This is the first while-observation step ST should take. While observing for professional development, the ST conducting the observation should *always* take the role of the novice, considering the observed as the expert no matter which social, educational or power relationships may exist (e.g. native speaker–nonnative speaker, male–female, third year university student–teacher with ten years of experience). One reason for clarifying these roles is to reduce any possible tensions between the observed and the observer. For instance, Malderez (2009) suggests that conflicts may arise in EFL teacher education when ideologies about traditional and communicative language teaching methods differ. She goes on to recommend that during a ST’s experience at school expert-novice roles need to be clear or support for the ST will be less effective.

Ambiguity about roles during classroom observations may result in the ST assuming the less appropriate role of observing expert, tending to the purpose of improvement, thus dwelling on aspects of the teacher’s behaviours or teaching approach that differ from their own. This may lead to unsolicited remarks or criticism about the observed lesson. If the ST has understood the predicate and perceived

parties, then evaluative comments about the lessons should not occur. This is beside the point that some experienced teachers may benefit from ideas about language learning and teaching that ST could offer, nevertheless, it is neither the role of the novice observer nor the proper arena to provide this. Therefore, a mutual understanding between the observed expert and the observer novice about the purpose of the observation must be reached before any observations begin.

When the expert knows that the purpose of the observation is development, he or she can confidently assume the expert role and become a valuable resource for learning for the novice, instead of having the feeling of being evaluated. This means for the experts that they too need to be provided with opportunities to prepare for their new roles and given practical suggestions for offering constructive feedback like those suggested by Fanselow (1988, pp. 116-117). In the case of classroom observations for professional development, it must be clear that the novice is there to *learn* (the predicate) from a more capable other (the perceived party) in order to develop professionally from the observation.

This then points to the fifth P of the framework, that is, the *profiter*. In this framework the profiter is the person receiving the most benefit from the observation in terms of professional growth, and it is the participant who has the most potential to yield valuable knowledge about learning about language learning or teaching as a result. This may include reflecting on potential issues or needs the ST have before the observation in order to focus the observation on a particular observable item. Nonetheless, consciousness about personal teaching issues during the observation leads to greater awareness and thus a greater opportunity for attaching new knowledge to already existing knowledge. If the previous four steps are followed, then the benefits for the profiter should be easier to obtain and almost automatic, as previous understandings of the reason, leading action, observable item and participant roles help construct the scaffold that prepares the way for profitability. Helpful for this step is when the profitters consider how observing others aids them in seeing their own teaching differently (Fanselow, 1988).

Whether profit has been made can be found in the *product* of the observation. This final step of the observation takes place after the observation in either an analysis of the developed observation scheme, self-reflection on observation or in a discussion with the observed teacher, mentor or peer afterwards. As Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize, “observation as a component of teacher development [...] involves discussions and reflection in order to arrive at a valid understanding of the meaning of the events observed” (p. 87). In terms of professional development, the observer/profiter of the observation should return to the activity predicating the observation and ask him or herself: ‘What have I learned from the person I have observed?’ and ‘How has what I have learned helped me with my own professional development?’ In a discussion with others, the observer may want to describe significant moments during the observation, and then answer questions about how these could lead to their own professional development, essentially using the others in the discussion as a sounding board. In the case that the observer carries out a discussion with the observed, the observer could ask some ‘why’ questions about the lesson without being evaluative or negative. For example, it is important to avoid questions like: ‘Why didn’t you help that student?’ or ‘Why didn’t you use a video projector instead of an overhead projector?’. The observer should be sure that he or she does not ask questions about things the observed teacher has little or no control over, or put the observed teacher on the spot.

Again, it is important to remember the purpose of the observation set out at the beginning and remain in the mind-frame of observing to learn and not observing to evaluate. It is during this reflection stage that the observer can compare the product of the observation with the initial purpose, thereby coming around full circle and monitoring whether the observation has fulfilled its objective or not. It may be the case that the observer finds the product and the purpose are not comparable. If the observer feels that he or she has not learned something, then it is important to reflect on why this may be the case. It is important for observers to be reflective about their own actions at this time and consider whether perhaps

the observation scheme they used needs adjusting, the observable item they chose to observe was in fact unobservable or they need to improve on their ability to find those observable moments. In addition, ST may find there are some experienced teachers they cannot learn from for whatever reasons. These are all probable causes for an unproductive observation. More important is that these causes are identified and the proper steps are taken to improve the situation for subsequent observations.

### 2.1.2. Observing for understanding

The second column in the 6P framework involves observing for *understanding*. This is the first P of this observation type. To understand classroom dynamics from a nonparticipant observer's perspective is a highly effective way to grow as a professional as it allows ST to experience classroom life without being directly involved. Here the purpose of the observation is to "help narrow the gap between one's imagined view of teaching and what actually occurs in the classroom" (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 94). Predicating this purpose is the activity of documenting classroom happenings. Thus, the second P in the framework is *document*. I have purposely avoided using the term "describe", because it is important in all three types of observations to describe what one sees. Documenting, however, provides a better impression of the objective action the observer should be carrying out during the observation. I stated earlier that the ideas presented here are oriented toward teacher-education and are not research-based. However, this type of observation resembles most closely observations done in second language acquisition research, in particular in action-based research. In action-based research one aim of the classroom observation is, according to Burns (2010), "seeing things that are before our eyes in ways we haven't consciously noticed before [and] about becoming 'strangers' in our own classrooms" (p. 57). It is the activity of distancing oneself from one's own actions and seeing things through someone else's eyes.

In order to achieve this, ST main activity should entail objectively documenting what is happening in the classroom by either watching video recordings from their own lessons or by observing peers during peer-learning activities. Burns (2010) suggests looking for "critical incidents" (p. 60). However, this may be too vague for ST who do not have much experience with a group or teaching. According to McKay (2006), there are four central items that one can observe in the classroom: settings, systems, people and behaviour. Obviously these are very broad and complex categories, meaning observers must consider in their pre-observation planning which subcriteria, or subcriterion even, of these categories they would like to specifically observe. For example, under setting, an observer can focus on what McKay (2006) refers to as activities, suggesting guiding questions such as: "Do certain activities take place in one place as opposed to another? Is there, for example, a particular place for less structured activities?" (p. 80). She also refers to particular roles within settings, posing questions like: "Does certain space designate a specific role? Do students sitting in particular positions in the classroom have any specific roles?" (McKay, 2006, p. 80). By looking at the classroom dynamics through the lens of a stranger, observers should be able to document such items objectively. In regards to systems, McKay alludes to rituals and other ways classrooms are run. She refers to how books may be distributed in the classroom, but these may also involve how homework is handed back, how classroom chores are distributed and conducted or how teachers are greeted. According to McKay, the more formal the systems, the more structured the classroom usually is.

Furthermore, if an observer chooses to observe people, it is the task of the observer to document the roles and interactions of the people in the classroom. By watching which roles students in the classroom assume and with whom they interact or do not interact through the lens of an outsider, the observer can identify things such as peer groups, class leaders (McKay, 2006) or group outsiders. This information

can lead to a better understanding about why certain people work well, or do not work so well, with particular people during group work, for example.

Finally, observing what is happening in the classroom also includes watching peoples' behaviour. This might be the most complex category, and when documenting teachers' behaviours, it overlaps with observing for professional development. I suggest that the focus during observing for understanding should primarily be on the students and their actions in the classroom. This may include items that involve the teacher, but do not involve the teacher as the primary focus. Important observable features in the language classroom include, for example, students' reactions to teacher questions, L1 and L2 usage, uptake on error correction, use of body language, etc. The list here is long and the observer should be well-informed before the observation about which student behaviours are worth observing for a better understanding of classroom dynamics and could lead to professional growth. Always recommended is a consultation with the observed party beforehand to discuss which student behaviours he or she would like the observer to document.

The next P in the framework is the first while-observation step of *participants*. In order for this type of observation to be most effective, I recommend that the participants in this observation are either the self, through the use of audio-visual equipment, or peers. In regards to the former, Burns (2010) defines self-observation as the "observation of your own behaviours, thoughts, actions, ways of communicating as a teacher" (p. 58). Experience shows, however, that this might be an ineffective mode for ST, as they often have difficulties simultaneously monitoring their behaviour as well as the behaviour and actions of the students. Furthermore, while observing themselves for the first time, ST often evaluate themselves, rating their own actions as being 'good' or 'bad', or look at what they are wearing, or at their body language. Although being critical of our own behaviours is an important part of professional growth, it is not the aim of this type of observation. Therefore, if the observed and the observer are one and the same person, I would recommend that ST try observing the events in the classroom through the lens of a stranger, and in particular watching how students react, interact and behave in the presence of the teacher, or how groups interact amongst each other. These all relate to the items decided on in pre-observation steps.

The other participant roles suitable for this type of observation are peer-observations. Richards and Farrell (2005) define peer observation as "a teacher or other observer closely watching and monitoring a language lesson or part of a lesson in order to gain an *understanding* of some aspect of teaching, learning, or classroom interaction" (p. 85; my emphasis). Richard's definition underscores the purpose I set out earlier for this type of observation, suggesting that the main activity of such observations should be to documenting in order to understand classroom dynamics. According to Zacharias (2012, p. 134), peer observations are can be effective for three reasons: (1) they provide the observer an opportunity to see how others deal with problems teachers face on a daily basis, (2) observers can learn effective (or new) strategies they themselves have not seen or tried, (3) peer observations can cause the observer to reflect on their own teaching practice. Although Zacharias is suggesting these from a research-oriented perspective, I submit that these are deeply relevant for professional growth in language teacher education. In addition, any objective documentation of classroom happenings can be helpful information for the observed peer, as well, making peer observations "useful for both the observer and the observed teacher" (Zacharias, 2012, p. 134). This leads nicely to the fifth P in this observation: *profiteers*.

Peer observations can be beneficial for both the observed and the observer if information is shared between the participants. According to Richards and Farrell (2005),

Observing another teacher may also trigger reflections about one's own teaching. For the teacher being observed, the observer can provide an 'objective' point of view of the lesson and can collect information about the lesson that the teacher who is teaching the lesson might not otherwise be able to gather. (p. 86)

In order for both participants to profit equally, consultations before the lesson are recommended. In pre-observation consultations, the observed teacher can suggest on which items he or she would like to have the observer focus, while the observer may suggest items he or she would like to focus on for their own professional growth. Zacharias (2012) suggests a general account, meaning the observer writes down "whatever is going on when you are teaching" (p. 134). However, it must be emphasized that the peer-peer roles mean that the observation is *not* evaluative, meaning the observer should not be documenting the quality of the teaching, but rather objectively documenting what is happening in the classroom. It is important before and during this step that the roles of the participants in peer observations are clear in order to reduce any tensions about the goals of observation. The observed should at no time feel nervous each time the observer's pen hits paper, as is often the case when observed participants feel evaluated. It is exactly these reasons that have led me to recommend peer-peer observations, as expert-observers and novice-observed constellations almost automatically result in a certain level of evaluation. Collaborative peers, on the other hand, are capable of mutually sharing knowledge and ideas on an equal plane and within because of cognitive proximity and common experiences.

Finally, the last P in this dimension is the *product*. The product of this type of observation is an improved understanding of classroom dynamics. Again, the product of the observation is discovered once the participants have analysed their results from observation schemes, self-reflected or engaged in post-observation discussions about the lesson. Possible general questions the participants could ask themselves at this stage include: 'What do we know now about the classroom dynamics that we did not know before the lesson?' or 'What have we discovered about classroom life that we were not aware of beforehand?'. More specific questions about the predetermined criterion or criteria may also be helpful at this stage. Participants can compare the product with the purpose that was set before the observation. If the participants find in their reflection that no new information has emerged from the observation, then adjustments to their approach should be made. Sometimes these adjustments are moderate, such as merely specifying more precisely an observed item. For instance, student behaviour such as 'attentiveness' could be specified with 'eye-contact with teacher' or 'raises hand in class'. In other instances, these adjustments are more acute and include finding another peer to work with or another learner group to observe.

### 2.1.3. Observing for improvement

The last dimension of classroom observation in teacher education involves the purpose: *improvement*. This is the type of observation that ST, experienced teachers, and teacher trainers often think of when considering observations in teacher education (Zacharias, 2012). Furthermore, it is also deemed the most threatening and frightening of the observation types (Richards & Farrell, 2005). For ST, these feelings may be the result of previous experiences during their studies or in other situations. It is predictable that ST will feel evaluated when others observe them teaching during training phases of their education. However, I hope that it has been made clear in the previous sections that not all observations involve being evaluated. In fact, I have emphasized that the participants must be conscientious about *not* evaluating during development and understanding observations.

In observations for improvement, the situation is markedly different. The leading activity of such an observation is to *evaluate*. Zacharias (2012) suggests also synonymous actions such as "monitor" or

“supervise”. The idea here is that in order to improve ST’s teaching, they must at some point during their training receive feedback about the actual quality of their teaching. This often includes suggestions about how they could improve their teaching behaviour, teacher talk, methodology, etc. This relates to the perceived parties of this type of observation: *people and activities*. The mind-set of the observer should not only be to evaluate to find everything wrong about the people or activities, but to evaluate through encouragement, meaning praising the observed for positive aspects in the lesson.

Finding items to observe can be discussed during the pre-observation phase collaboratively with the observer and the observed. By doing so, the problem mentioned by Richards and Farrell (2005) that evaluative observations are observer-centred, whereas the observed teacher has no voice in the evaluation can be avoided. In other words, it should be made clear to the observed person what the observer would like to observe, and the observed should also include items that he or she would like the observer to watch in order to improve. For example, EFL ST often find it difficult to manage time or provide clear task instructions. Therefore, it might be beneficial for the observer to take notes about how long actual sequences in the lesson take or the note the exact wording of task instructions for later evaluation. It is essential during this step that what is being evaluated is transparent for the observed person. This may include a highly structured set of a limited number of pre-determined criteria that both the observed and the observer have access to prior to the observation (Zacharias, 2012). Furthermore, in order for reliable evaluations to occur, the relationship between the participants of the observations for improvements must be made clear. This usually involves a *novice-expert* or an *expert-expert* constellation.

This constellation is supported again by Zacharias (2012) who suggests that observations for evaluation are often “conducted by those who are considered more experienced on those who are considered new in the field” (p. 135). This is especially the case in teacher education and differs from research-based observations for improvement whereby novice teachers could evaluate experienced teachers for data collection purposes. However, in teacher education it would be inadvisable to have novice ST evaluating experienced teachers during their practicums as the power relationship is too imbalanced in favour of the teacher, and any suggestions for improvement by novices would likely lead to resentment. Therefore, opposite to the observation for development, the participant relationship in improvement observations suggests that the novice always assumes the observed role, while the expert assumes the role of observer. These roles could be reversed; however, only upon the request of the expert, who then receives feedback from the novice observer. The other participant relationship plausible for this type of observation is the expert-expert constellation. This usually involves a situation when an experienced teacher invites another colleague into his or her class to evaluate his or her performance. However, it may also be the case that two equal ST peers would like to conduct a form of observation for improvement during their practicums. The term “expert” is then perceived more flexibly. Zacharias (2012) suggests for such situations that peers evaluate using a specific account, meaning the observer focuses on “specific things about your teaching that you feel need improvement” (p. 135). Nevertheless, the profiter of the observation remains the same regardless of how the constellations are formed. The main profiter of the observation for improvement should be the observed participant, and in most cases this is the novice ST.

The profiter of observations for improvement is exclusively the *observed*. This is the only observation form in which the observed teacher is also the main profiter of the observation. This puts the observed teachers in the most vulnerable position as they are conscious that their activity and the activity of their students are the focus of the predicating action of the observer. At times, it is difficult for the observed/profiter to see the benefits of such observations for their professional growth during observed lesson. However, if the criteria of observed items are made transparent in the third step prior

to the observation, then the value of the observation during its process should be apparent. In addition, if the ST keeps in mind that the aim of the evaluation is for them to improve, then it can be viewed positively, and understood as a constructive step toward professional growth as an EFL teacher.

The actual benefits of the observation are again often discovered in the product. This is more so the case for observed/profitters in observations for improvements, as during these observations ST are engrossed in their own behaviour and their students' behaviour that they cannot evaluate their own actions or those of the students during the process. Once more, the product of the observation is often discovered during post-observation reflections with the other participants involved in the observation. At this point, it is important that the observed takes the time to self-reflect on the lesson, receive positive encouragement from the expert/observer, as well as contemplate collaboratively the quality of the lesson and how this can lead to improvement for subsequent lessons. Questions for reflecting and discussing in this step include: 'What did the observed do well and how can this be built upon?' or 'Why did the students react differently than expected? What caused them to do so?', or 'Why did a certain sequence not work out so well, and how can the observed improve this for next time?'. It is the job of the expert to recognize during such post-observation interactions where the novice's independent performance level is, meaning the knowledge level the novice can reach on his or her own, and how to help that novice reach an assisted performance level that he or she could not have achieved on his or her own. For example, upon reflecting on the observation, the observed may recall relevant moments, but be unable to explain why or how this occurred, it is then the job of the expert to elaborate on this moment and help the novice find explanations for it. This relates strongly to what Johnson (2009) advocates, stating that teacher education is no longer a process of translating theory into practice but "a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts" (p. 21). This co-constructed knowledge should then ultimately lead to improvements in teaching in subsequent lessons. The observation's purpose can be reflected on if this knowledge is transferred successfully in these following lessons, allowing the observed to compare the product of their observed lesson with its original purpose.

### **3. Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to outline a workable framework for EFL ST in implementing classroom observations. ST often find it difficult to focus and grow professionally from their classroom observations due to the complexity of classroom activity, influencing past experiences, and possible tensions between participating parties. This 6P framework serves as a roadmap for preparing, conducting, and reflecting on classroom observations while also avoiding interpersonal conflicts with participating parties. As Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize, "if observation is to be a positive experience [...] it needs to be carefully planned and implemented" (p. 88). Therefore, the aim of this framework is to help ST critically and carefully plan different types of observations with three varying purposes: development, understanding and improvement. Within this framework, each of these observations is pre-planned with clear actions and known observables. Furthermore, during observations, the particular roles of the actors are clarified as well as the participant or participants who should profit the most from particular observations. Finally, classroom observations are a cyclical process as the end product is uncovered post-observation and should reflect the initial purpose of the observation.

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## İngilizce öğretmen eğitiminde sınıf içi gözlemler için bir taslak önerisi

### Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmen eğitiminde sınıf içi gözlemlerin uygulanması için bir taslak sunuyor. Bu, öğretmen adayları öğrencilerin sınıf içi gözlemleri bağımsız bir şekilde yerine getirmelerinde ve aynı zamanda diğer katılımcılarla ortaya çıkacak muhtemel kişiler arası çatışmayı minimum düzeye indirmede yardımcı olacak 6 basamaklı kapsamlı bir taslak sağlamak için bir çabadır. Bu makalenin amacı, öğrencilere ve öğretmenlere yabancı dil öğretmen eğitiminde, sınıf içi gözlemlerin baştanbaşa profesyonel büyümeye daha değerli bir katkıda bulunmasına izin vererek sınıf içi gözlemlerin bağımsız uygulanması için uygulanabilir bir taslak sağlamaktır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Sınıf içi gözlemler, dil eğitimi, öğretmen eğitimi, profesyonel büyüme.

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