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Peer-coaching Based Professional Development: A Sample of a School of Foreign Languages

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of lecturers about the effectiveness of the implementation of the peer-coaching practice conducted at the school of foreign languages of a foundation university. The lecturers who took part in the peer coaching practice in the academic year 2019-2020 acted as the participants in this case study. The qualitative data was collected via interviews and document analysis. Content analysis and descriptive analysis methods were used in the process of data analysis. The findings from the analysis showed that peer-coaching practice consisted of lesson observations, pre and post-observation meetings, and reflection stages. It was concluded that peer-coaching contributed to the instructional and classroom management skills of the lecturers as well as improving relations between colleagues and solidarity in the school. It was also concluded that providing sufficient time and resources and training lecturers about effective communication were essential for the peer-coaching practice to be effective.

Keywords

peer-coaching, lecturer, professional development, higher education, school of foreign languages, case study

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Introduction

Many organizations invest in human resources to increase their profitability and competitiveness. One of these investments is education. However, it may be burdensome for organizations to train the staff out of the organization. Therefore, recruiting people who know how to learn and who can turn this knowledge into value for the organization is getting more and more critical for all workplaces.

The case is not different for educational institutions. Therefore, it is crucial to develop effective learning and teaching practices of the instructors. Thus, providing professional development activities to teachers and keeping their competencies up-to-date are important (Aydın, 2013). One of the methods that is used in contemporary professional development practices is peer-coaching. Peer coaching allows teachers to observe each other's teaching, share ideas to improve their teaching and reflect on their teaching process (Kohler et al., 1995). Peer coaching has a powerful influence on change as it uses the social context for learning and development (Parker, et al., 2015). Peer-coaching practices also contribute to instructional skills (Hendry & Oliver, 2012; Hsieh et al., 2021; Kuru Gönen, 2016; Sullivan, et al., 2012; Sider, 2019), engagement (Jao, 2013; Lofthouse and Hall, 2014), personal development and self-confidence (Margarita et al, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Lofthouse & Hall, 2014) and motivation (Hendry & Oliver, 2012; Murphy, 2012).

Although peer-coaching has garnered attention especially after Joyce and Showers' 1980 review of staff development (Joyce and Showers, 1996) and has been used in areas such as nursing (Steinert, 2020) and education (Lofthouse and Hall, 2014; Jao, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Sider, 2019; Sullivan, et al., 2012) in western countries, it is a relatively new concept in Turkey, so limited number of studies have been conducted on peer-coaching focusing on teaching skills of teachers (Bozok, Yıldırım & Demirtaş, 2011; Göker, 2006; Kasapoğlu, 2002; Kuru-Gönen, 2016; Şen, 2008; Yalçın-Arslan & İlin, 2013) and students' learning (Dölek & Hamzadayı, 2015; Gür, 2015; Yava & Sütçü, 2016).

One of the areas where peer coaching is rarely studied is with faculty in higher education in Turkey. This research addresses a gap in the literature by considering how peer coaching is implemented in higher education as well as determining the obstacles experienced while implementing peer coaching and benefits of implementation. Thus, the views of the practitioners are so important

and assure the first step of iterative improvement through peer coaching in the professional development.

Research questions

Our purpose was to reveal lecturers' in-depth feelings and thoughts regarding the effectiveness of a professional development practice based on peer coaching in the school of foreign languages of a foundation university. In this context, we sought to answer these research questions:

1. What types of peer-coaching practices are applied in the school of foreign languages?
2. How does peer coaching affect the professional development of lecturers?
3. What are the problems encountered in the peer-coaching practice?
4. What are the expectations of the lecturers for peer-coaching activities?
5. What are the qualities that a coach should have?
6. What are the metaphorical opinions of lecturers on peer-coaching practices and colleagues?

Literature Review

Peer coaching is a form of teaching practice in which two or more professional peers boost their professional development through cooperation, sharing, reflection, and feedback and, consequently, improve the learning performance of their students (Murray et al., 2009; Robbins, 1991). Thus it is considered as an effective method in teaching as a result of the collaborative and reciprocal process among teachers (Charteris and Smardon, 2014) and non-hierarchical relations among peers (Netolicky, 2016).

Peer coaching, which emerged as a professional development technique in the 1980s to encourage teachers to use new curriculum and teaching techniques (Kraus, 1998; Wong & Nicotera, 2006) has four basic principles (Showers & Joyce, 1996): (1) all teachers within the institution should agree to implement the change and to support each other in the implementation, (2) developing the curriculum and the instruction should be the focus of the practice, (3) it should be clarified that the observed teacher is the "coach" and the observing teacher is the "coached" teacher, (4) it should be clarified that the main benefit of coaching practice is from the collaboration during the process.

In general, peer coaching is conducted as a cyclical process including pre-observation, observation and post-observation stages (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Pre-observation meetings aim to explain the process before the observation, to learn the teacher's expectations from the observation, and to determine the focus (Sullivan, 2012) and the recording methods (Flether, 2018) of the observation. Observation is the phase in which the observation takes place using correct techniques and materials (Sullivan, 2012). Post-observation is the process of discussing the observed lesson and giving feedback (Morency, 1998) and determining the points to be focused in the next cycle of coaching practices (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005). It's important to have the post-meeting immediately after the observation for accuracy (Fletcher, 2018). Another component of peer observation is the reflection in the light of feedback. Reflection is the frameworks for individuals to make an effort to improve themselves by establishing a relationship between current situation, past experiences and future possibilities (Law, Ireland, & Hussain, 2007). Reflection can be considered as a process that enables teachers to share their experiences and ideas about the process (Sullivan, 2012). Yee (2016) emphasizes that open and honest communication is important for participants become willing to help each other, to behave unbiased to and to be willing to grow professionally for peer coaching to be effective.

Peer coaching is effective as it provides insight about the teaching practices (Jao, 2013; Vacilotto & Cumming, 2007; Yee, 2016). Teachers are more interested in engaging professional development if they believe the activities contribute to students' learning outcomes (Sider, 2019) and peer coaching affects students' learning outcomes positively (Kohler et al., 1997; Gutierez & Kim, 2018; Hsieh et al., 2021; Yee, 2016). Peer coaching also provides tailored professional learning opportunities for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Ma, Xin & Du, 2018). The realization of the benefits of peer coaching results in teachers' interest in participating in peer coaching for professional development (Zwart et al., 2008).

Despite its benefits, some problems may also occur during peer coaching. Teachers may have difficulties in allocating the necessary time to work together in hectic programs (Huston & Weaver, 2007; Jao, 2013). Also, giving negative feedback instead of being constructive (Erdem & İlğan, 2011; Sider, 2019) and absence of coaching training can affect the perception of the participants negatively (Wong & Nicotera, 2003; Sider, 2019). In the process of peer-coaching, teachers need space to interview comfortably. However, finding a suitable space for pre and post-observation meetings could be a problem as teachers use common workplaces in many schools (Jao, 2013). Another problem is competition. Especially when a weaker and a stronger teacher work together, competition affects the process negatively (Erdem & İlğan, 2011). Final issue is

that observations may cause anxiety for the teachers especially at the beginning of the practice (Jao, 2013).

Methodology

The holistic single case study design, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study to examine the views of lecturers about the effectiveness of the implementation of the peer-coaching practice conducted at the school of foreign languages of a foundation university. A single unit of analysis such as an individual, institution or school is used in a holistic structure in the single case design (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016), so we geared this study as a single case study to analyze the in-depth feelings and opinions of lecturers regarding the effectiveness of a professional development practice based on peer coaching in the school of foreign languages of a foundation university.

Participants and the Milieu

In this study, five lecturers having participated in the peer-coaching practice applied at the school of foreign languages of a foundation university in the Mediterranean region of Turkey were selected among those who expressed interest and based on purposeful sampling to ensure representation of education level and years of teaching experience. In order to keep the personal information of the participants confidential, codes such as L1, L2 were used. The demographic information about the participants of the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Information about the Participants of the Study

Participant	Degree	Continuous education	Total experience	Experience in the institution
L1	BA	Master's	13 years	4 years
L2	BA	Master's	4 years	2 years
L3	BA	Master's	7 years	1,5 years
L4	BA	None	10 years	6 months
L5	BA	None	2 years	1,5 years

L1 is a female aged between 31-35 years old. After completing her undergraduate degree in the field of Literature, she got the Certificate of Teaching English. She still continues her graduate education and a certificate program. L1,

whose total experience is 13 years, has been working at the school of foreign languages for 4 years.

L2 is a female aged between 25-30 years old. L2 earned her undergraduate degree in the field of English Language Teaching and continues her graduate education in the same field. L2, whose total experience is 4 years, has been working at the school of foreign languages for 2 years.

L3 is a female aged between 25-30 years old. L3 earned her undergraduate degree in the field of English Language Teaching and continues her graduate education in the same field. L3, whose total experience is 7 years, has been working at the school of foreign languages for 1,5 years.

L4 is a female aged between 35-40 years old. After completing her undergraduate education in the field of Literature, she got the Certificate of Teaching English. L4, whose total experience is 10 years, has been working at the school of foreign languages for 6 months.

L5 is a female aged between 25-30 years old. After completing her undergraduate education in the field of Literature, she got the Certificate of Teaching English. L5 has been teaching English at the school of foreign languages for 1.5 years.

The study was carried out in the school of foreign languages of a foundation university. The number of students in the English preparatory program in the academic year 2019-2020 was 75, and the total number of lecturers was 8. The mission of the institution was defined as to provide effective language education to students by training them as self-confident students who can communicate effectively. In this context, increasing the quality of education was the priority of the university. In the scope of professional development, lecturers were supported to continue graduate education. During the period of the study, four of the lecturers continued their graduate education. Also, lecturers were encouraged to attend conferences, seminars and in-house trainings. In addition, peer-coaching practice was conducted to support the professional development of the lecturers and to increase professional dialogue and cooperation among the staff. For peer-coaching, a two-stage action plan was carried out. First, instructors were given training on peer-coaching. The training aimed to answer the questions (a) What is peer-coaching? (b) How is peer-coaching applied? (c) What factors should be considered during observation? (d) Which forms should be used in peer-coaching? and (e) What issues should be considered during pre and post-observation meetings? As the second stage, the lecturers were asked to fill in the "Needs Analysis Form" in order to determine their weak professional areas. In the

light of the collected data, priority areas for the professional development of lecturers were determined and a peer-coaching plan was performed.

Data collection

This study was carried out to investigate the effectiveness of the peer-coaching practice in a school of foreign languages. The data was obtained through interviews and document analysis over a nine-month period (February 2020 to October 2020). Individual interviews were held with peer coaches using a semi-structured interview form which was developed by the researchers. Nine open-ended questions were used in these interviews:

1. What practices do you do within the scope of peer coaching practice?
2. What is the effect of peer coaching on your teaching skills?
3. What is the effect of peer coaching on your classroom management skills?
4. What is the effect of peer coaching on your relationship with your colleagues?
5. What problems did you encounter during peer coaching practice?
6. What are your expectations / suggestions for following peer coaching practices?
7. What qualities should a coach have?
8. Can you describe peer-coaching practice with a metaphor?
9. Can you describe your colleague you worked with during peer coaching practice with a metaphor?

In order to understand the perceptions of participants towards peer-coaching practice and to be able to interpret their views, metaphorical questions were also included in the study beacuse metaphors are useful cognitive devices that reveal the subconscious attributed to the phenomenon (Jensen, 2006).

The interviews were held individually in the place where the participants felt comfortable, and the answers of the participants were recorded audibly and then transcribed. The answers of the participants who did not allow audio recording were noted in detail by the researchers and organized after the interview. The interviews lasted 30-60 minutes.

In addition, document analysis was used for the purpose of data triangulation in the study. In this context, the "needs analysis form" and "lesson observation form" and "self-evaluation form" that the lecturers used during the peer coaching practice were examined.

Data analysis

In this study, descriptive and content analyses were used to analyze the data. In the descriptive analysis process, first of all, a thematic framework was created based on the conceptual structure of the research and the research questions. According to this thematic framework, the data were compiled; codes that commonly used in the transcripts were identified, grouped and categorized. Then, the data were coded with inductive content analysis and the final themes reflective of the implementation process, benefits and problems were identified based on the relationships between the codes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Validity- reliability and ethical considerations

In qualitative research, validity is related to the accuracy of the findings. One of the ways to increase the reliability in qualitative research is member checking. For this, the researchers share their notes with the participants to confirm that their views are expressed accurately (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2017). In this context, the research findings were shared with three participants and they confirmed that the findings accurately reflect their own views. In addition, the themes and codes created by the researchers were cross-checked with an expert within the field of educational management and the consistency between themes and codes was measured according to the reliability analysis suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994). As a result of the analysis, the rate of similarity in the whole study was determined as 96.16%.

The study was carried out with the permission of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board of Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, dated 05.10.2020, decision number 2020/02 and decision number 19214183-806.0104-E.782 from the university where the data was collected. Before the interview, the participants were reminded that the results of the study would only be used for scientific purposes, that the answers would not be shared with third parties, that the participation was on a voluntary basis, and that they could withdraw from the study if they wished. Then, each participant signed the informed consent form. At the same time, encodings such as L1, L2 were used in the study in order to protect the privacy of the participants.

Findings

The following themes and codes emerged from the data analysis and were used to answer the research questions.

Peer Coaching Practices

The activities conducted within the scope of peer coaching were identified as observation, meetings and reflections. Table 2 displays the details about these activities.

*Table 2.*

Peer-coaching Activities

Codes	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Observation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reflection	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

As seen in Table 2, lesson observations, pre and post-observation meetings and reflection are the main activities of peer coaching. Participants stated that the lesson observations were conducted in a planned and organized structure, and these observations were based on the principle of mutual professional contribution, rather than evaluation or inspection. L1 mentioned "*Lecturers in our institution make mutual observations of the lessons. These lesson observations are carried out in accordance with the previously determined subjects. Before and after the observations, lecturers also have feedback meetings*". In addition, it was emphasized that feedback was given through pre and post-observation meetings, and peer coaches could share their ideas and made suggestions each other's classes. L4 stated this situation "*We have pre meetings about the student profile and lesson. Since I tell my colleague how I plan and apply my lesson in advance, I think it is beneficial for her to identify the points that she should pay attention to and to give me feedback after the observation*". The last activity during the peer-coaching practice was self-evaluation before and after peer-coaching activities. L3 expressed "*With needs analysis, we determined individual goals that aim to recognize our strengths and weaknesses and strengthen our weaknesses that can improve our teaching skills and teaching quality*".

The Effects of Peer-coaching Practice on Instructional and Class Management Skills

The theme of "*effect of peer coaching on lecturers' instructional and classroom management skills*" resulted from the interpretation of the data regarding research question about the effect of peer-coaching practices on the

professional development of lecturers. Details of the data are presented in Figure 1.
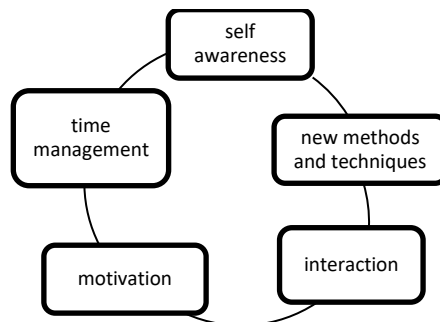
Figure 1. The Effect of Peer-coaching on Instructional and Classroom Management Skills

As seen in Figure 1, peer coaching had a positive effect on the awareness of instructional and classroom management skills of the lecturers. About this topic, L1 stated "*It is very normal for us to think that we are doing the things in a proper and effective way. At this point, a third eye that will mirror us both provides us with motivation about what our good sides are and sheds light on our aspects that can be improved. In other words, these studies play a big role in the formation and development of our self-awareness about our teaching skills*". Likewise, L3 said "*The feedback given at the end of observations made me realize my weak and strong points in my teaching*" and L5 stated "*The observations we carry out affect both the observed teacher and the observer in a positive way. When considered from both angles, I noticed my weaknesses as well as my strengths; learning how to improve myself.*"

In addition, lesson observations and interviews with colleagues during peer coaching contributed to the use of different instructional and classroom management techniques. L2 stated that due to lesson observations made during the peer-coaching, her knowledge about instructional techniques and her tendency to use different techniques increased saying "*Not only when I was observed but also when I was an observer, it contributed a lot to me. For example, I applied a technique or method I saw during observation in my own lessons. In this way, I used different activities in my classroom*". L5, who had stated that showing too much tolerance caused problems in her instruction and class management before the peer coaching, said "*With this practice, I've learnt various instructional and classroom management techniques.*"

It was also found out that peer coaching contributed student-teacher and student-student interaction in the classroom. Regarding this issue, L1 said "*The lesson observations and the activities I learned when I attended the lessons of different teachers encouraged me to use pair work and group work activities more frequently in the classroom and the interaction among the students, and their interaction with me increased, as well.*" L2 stated in the reflection reports that the careful use of the teacher talking time, giving clear instructions and praising students contributed to the interaction between students and lecturer. L5 also emphasized the positive effect of peer-coaching on the interaction saying "*The knowledge and experience I have gained from peer-coaching activities increase and improve the interaction with my students.*"

Another effect of the peer-coaching was on time management skills. Regarding this issue, the participants said the following:

"*In fact, the more I observed, the more I realized how much I actually talked during the lesson. Afterwards, I made sure to reduce my own talking time. This situation started to help me stick to the lesson plan more easily and manage the lesson more effectively* ". (L1)

"*I saw more clearly how I should use time.*" (L4)

The last effect of the peer-coaching was the increase in motivation. L1 stated that realizing her good practices contributed her motivation saying "*Seeing that my work is actually successful makes me feel more motivated.*" and L2 said "*Obviously, I realized that I am good at classroom management. This increased my motivation considerably*".

The Effects of Peer-coaching Practice on Relationships between Colleagues

It was identified that peer coaching affected relationship among colleagues both in a positive and negative way. The effects of peer-coaching practice on relationships between colleagues are given in Table 3.

Table 3.

The Effects of Peer-coaching Practice on Relationships between Colleagues

Theme	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Intimacy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solidarity	✓		✓	✓	✓
Communication problems	✓	✓		✓	✓

As seen in Table 3, it was detected peer-coaching had a positive effect on relations among colleagues in terms of getting closer and helping each other while sometimes communication problems may occur. Participants' views on how peer-coaching contributed to the intimacy are as follows:

"*Working together continuously for a specific purpose and the useful feedback we give each other has improved our relationships and brought us closer."* (L1)

"*I had the opportunity to get to know my colleagues not only professionally but also personally. In short, I had colleagues with whom I got closer. I can express myself more easily to them now.* " (L2)

"*The meetings and suggestions made after the observation enabled us to be more sincere with my colleagues and allowed us to see the points we had not noticed before*." (L3)

"*I think we share our thoughts with each other more comfortably*." (L4)

The solidarity and cooperation among lecturers were also affected positively through peer coaching. In this regard, L1 stated, "*Actually, thanks to these studies, we started to make decisions and find solutions regarding the problems experienced together. I think that we can find easier solutions by asking the opinions and experiences of our colleagues in any problem we face*". L5 also expressed "*We have increased efforts to help our colleagues and to improve our weak or problematic aspects.*"

On the other hand, it was found out that peer coaching could lead to communication-related problems. Lecturer 1 stated the issue of discouraging comments of her peer coaches "*I've heard discouraging comments as well as constructive ones. Sometimes it can be hard to hear bad or negative things.*" In addition Lecturer 2 emphasized taking feedback personally "*Sometimes teachers can personalize the feedback very much and it may cause problems.*" while L4 focused on not paying attention to feedback at all "*Those who are not open to improvement may misunderstand the feedback or they may not take the practice seriously."*

Problems Encountered during Peer-coaching Practice

The problems encountered during peer-coaching practice are given in Table 4.

Table 4.

The Problems Encountered during Peer-coaching Practice

Theme	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Expertise	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Communication	✓	✓		✓	✓
Lack of Time		✓	✓	✓	
Stress and anxiety		✓		✓	✓
Attitude	✓			✓	✓

As seen in Table 4, it was detected that problems due to insufficient expertise, communication, lack of time, stress and anxiety, and attitude emerged during the peer-coaching. Insufficient expertise was identified as the most frequently emphasized problem. Regarding this issue, L1 said "*Sometimes behaviors and ideas that do not match the information in the field can cause problems among colleagues.*" while L2 emphasized lack of knowledge saying "*I think a certain amount of knowledge is needed in order for post-observation meetings to be efficient. I can say some of the post-observation meetings were meaningless for me. This may even be the thing I had difficulty the most.*" and L3 stated "*Sometimes I realize the suggestions of my colleagues or problems they noticed in my lessons are not parallel to the approaches in the field, and it causes me to confuse and question my own teaching vision.*"

Another problem encountered in the peer-coaching practice was communication-related issues. In this regard, L1 said "*Comments in post-observation meetings that can be misunderstood. I've heard discouraging comments as well as constructive ones. Sometimes it can be hard to hear bad or negative things.*" while L5 emphasized the importance of establishing an effective communication for efficient peer-coaching practice saying "*It is important to explain our weak or problematic aspects regarding the observations and to be able to appreciate our positive aspects as well as finding solutions and recommendations for our weaknesses.*"

It was also detected that lecturers' attitude during peer-coaching practice could lead to problems. In this regard, L1 stated "*Sometimes some of my*

colleagues do not take these practices seriously; I feel that they do the practice involuntarily. I often feel it when I give or receive feedback ". In addition, L4 emphasized a problem occurred because of the behavior of the coach during one of the observations saying "*I thought that interrupting my lesson and attempting to teach the students was an act that caused agitation and broke my credibility*". L5 also highlighted the attitude problems saying "*As a result of our observations, we explain our missing or problematic aspects and find solutions and recommendations; coaches should have the ability to appreciate our positive aspects as well as the weaknesses.*"

The fourth problem encountered in peer-coaching practice was stress and anxiety. In this context, L2 said "*Trying to cope with these activities in a hectic schedule created some stress on me.*" and L5 stated "*One of the problems I encounter while carrying out these activities may be that I experience anxiety and stress during observations. Being too excited at the beginning of the work caused the learning environment not to preserve its natural flow*."

Finally, time-related problems were identified in peer-coaching practice. Lecturer 2 focused the hardship of doing many things in a limited time "*It was tiring for me that there were too many things to do in a short time.*" and Lecturer 3 emphasized that it would be hard to allocate time to have a meeting immediately after the observations "*Sometimes the meeting held to give feedback after observations were postponed due to the workload and the observation became difficult to remember. This case reduced the efficiency of the work unfortunately.*"

Qualities of a Good Coach

The qualities of a good coach are given in Table 5.

Table 5.

Qualities of a good coach

Theme	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Strong communication skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constructive personality features		✓	✓	✓	✓
Critical thinking skills	✓	✓	✓		✓
Professional knowledge and experience	✓	✓			✓

As seen in Table 5, it was found out that a good peer coach should have strong communication skills, constructive personality traits, professional

knowledge and experience, and critical thinking skills. The comments of the participants about the most emphasized feature-communication skills- are as follows:

"First of all, communication skills must be developed in order for the post-observation discussions to be effective." (L1)

"Good communication skills, effective use of the language to speak are definitely required" (L2)

"If we assume that the main goal of the professional development practices is to increase the success of the institution by providing the students with a better quality of language teaching, it should be noted that the success of the students is directly affected by the motivation of the staff, constructive criticism and supporting the professional development of the staff."(L3)

"It is important that they can express themselves correctly." (L4)

"They should have the ability to appreciate our strong points. Thus, we can keep motivated while improving ourselves." (L5)

Secondly, to have constructive personality traits were emphasized as important traits of a peer coach. Regarding this issue, L2 said "*I can say it is important not to be biased*" and L3 emphasized the importance of empathy saying "*They must empathize so that they can look at things from the perspective of their colleagues, as well.*" L4 also stated "*They shouldn't be egocentric, so the practice could help everyone.*"

The third feature that peer coaches should have was identified as critical thinking skills. Regarding this issue, L1 said "*It is important that they have a perspective to identify which points in observations and interviews should be prioritized.*" and L2 stated "*It is important to understand which points to focus on*". L3 also mentioned "*The lecturer who will act as a peer coach must be someone who has critical thinking skills, who can empathize so that they can look at events from the perspective of their colleagues and make more constructive criticism.*"

The last characteristic of a good peer coach was identified professional knowledge and experience. Regarding this subject, L1 said "*They must have professional knowledge to interpret the lesson they observe.*" and L2 stated the importance of the expertise required in the field saying "*They should have the knowledge about the field*". L5 also says "*I think that besides their teaching*

experience, they should have undergraduate and graduate degrees in English Language Teaching. In this way, I think they can have a lot of different academic knowledge and help their colleagues more while coaching."

Metaphors for Peer-coaching Practice

Metaphors used by the participants for the peer-coaching practice are given in Table 6.

Table 6.

Metaphors for Peer-coaching Practice

Metaphor	Image	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
mirror	awareness	✓				
operating system	awareness		✓			
Super Mario game	improvement and cooperation			✓		
turn into a butterfly	improvement				✓	
canvas	awareness, improvement, cooperation					✓

As seen in Table 6, all participants used positive metaphors regarding peer-coaching. Three participants associated the peer-coaching with "awareness". In this regard, L1 said, "*In fact, whether we are observers or the ones observed, we mirror our own lessons and teaching skills with these studies. We realize who we are in the class.*" and L2 mentioned "*In this process, we are constantly trying to heal ourselves when we find a vulnerability or weakness in line with the interpretation of ourselves*". Likewise, L5 emphasized the contribution of this practice to her self-awareness saying "*We notice our weak aspects and correct them with new and useful techniques*".

Three participants associated the peer-coaching with "improvement and change". In this regard, L2 emphasized improvement saying *"Operating systems are improved and updated after every bug. In this process, we constantly question ourselves and try to heal when we find a vulnerability or weakness in line with the interpretation of the other"*. Likewise L4 said "*The feedback you receive and the methods you apply make you develop and independent like turning into a butterfly from a caterpillar*" and L5 stated "*We improve ourselves by noticing our weak aspects and correcting them with new and useful techniques as if we try to reach*

the most beautiful painting by constantly developing and advancing in the infinity of the canvas".

Finally, two participants associated peer-coaching with "cooperation". Regarding this issue, L3 emphasized the importance of getting different perspectives and recommendations from colleagues saying "*There are places where we fail, and for this we need suggestions and different perspectives of our colleagues.*" and L5 said "*During this practice, my colleagues also help me to progress and improve by adding their experiences in a useful way*"

Metaphors for the Coaches in the Practice

Metaphors used by the participants for the peer coaches that participants worked with during the peer-coaching practice are given in Table 7.

Table 7.

Metaphors for Coaches in the Practice

Metaphor	Image	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Light Bulb	enlighten and explode	✓				
Engineer	feedback, remain up to date		✓			
Mario's brother	support, help			✓		
Snake	renew, support				✓	
Painting instructor	new, useful, help					✓

As seen in Table 7, four instructors used positive metaphors for the peer coaches they worked with while one participant used a negative one. When the comments of the participants about the coaches were examined, it was identified three participants emphasized "improvement and change" feature. In this context, L2 said "*Like the OS trying to remain up-to-date with updates, the coach also tries to cover our weaknesses giving feedback.*" L4 emphasized the importance of being open to change and development in peer-coaching saying "*Snakes change their skin once a year. We are also starting a new era by renewing ourselves every year thanks to peer-coaching.*" Likewise L5 said "*I can say my colleagues are trainers who always show new and useful drawing techniques while working on this endless canvas, helping to color the ugly parts and make it more pleasing and aesthetic, and at the same time appreciate the parts they find successful*".

Participants also emphasized "support" feature of their peer coach. The participants stated the following:

"*My colleagues are like Mario's brother Luigi and other family members, who supported him in places where he had difficulties with different powers. They supported me during the peer-coaching activities, participated in the observations, made comments, and helped me see the strengths and weaknesses of my teaching.*" (L3)

"*We are doing our best to achieve our goals in any way, even though we have limited resources, and we are trying to get better together by supporting each other in this regard.*" (L4)

"*Throughout these practices, my colleagues also help me progress and develop by adding their experience in a useful way, just like the painting instructors I mentioned.*" (L5)

One participant, though, emphasized the possibility that coaches could cause problems by using the metaphor "light bulb". In this regard, L1 says "*As long as it does not explode, they will shed light. However, the probability of an explosion when you don't expect it is quite high*".

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the implementation of peer coaching at a school of foreign languages in a foundation university in Turkey and seeks the effects of peer-coaching on teaching and classroom management skills, relationships and solidarity among colleagues, professional development of lecturers and obstacles during the implementation. The study provided insights into the experiences of five lecturers who partnered with each other during the peer coaching practice. The findings showed that peer-coaching could contribute to the professional development of the lecturers and provide opportunities for further research.

The results revealed that during the implementation, the pre and post observation meetings, observations, and self-evaluation were conducted. This practice is in line with the peer-coaching model suggested by Joyce & Showers (1982). The fact that participants were allowed to choose their own peer coaches throughout the practice resulted in a secure and friendly environment. As Sider (2019) also concluded in his study, this situation let participants feel free. However, it was also concluded that participants desire to be able to act more autonomously during peer-coaching. This result becomes more meaningful with

the research of Scott & Miner (2008), who state that with an effective and correct planning, peer-coaching practices could contribute to the freedom of faculty at the university and could be conducted without forcing them. Another conclusion was that peers' interactions with each other were limited to pre and post observation meetings. This situation could be improved in future practices and various professional dialogue opportunities could be provided for peer coaches. As Yee (2016) claimed peer coaching could provide to the professional development of teachers with casual conversations in staff rooms or other informal settings.

As for the expectations, participants anticipated to get intricate trainings about peer-coaching. This conclusion is supported by Sider's (2019) conclusion that peers' limited awareness about each other's classes or the system became distractions for peer coaching and the conclusion made by Ladyshewsky (2017) that providing training for teachers to maintain non-evaluative, collegial, and trusting coaching was essential for effective peer coaching.

For the effect of peer coaching on professional development, it was concluded that peer coaching contributed to lecturer's instructional and class management skills. All participants thought peer-coaching contributed to their teaching skills by increasing their self-awareness. This was in line with the results of previous researchers (Jao, 2013; Kuru- Gönen, 2016; Sider, 2019; Şen, 2008 and Vacilotto & Cumming, 2007) stating teachers had the opportunity to question their own actions through class observations and this situation contributed to their reflective thinking skills about their teaching processes. Furthermore, peer-coaching had a positive effect on teachers' ability to use different teaching techniques, efficient time use, interaction in the class and motivation. Similarly, Hanna (1988) and Alsakeh, Alabdulhadi & Alrwaished (2017) detected that peer-coaching supported the use of different teaching strategies by improving teachers' instructional competencies. Also, Kohler et al. (1997) found that peer-coaching supported the development of teachers' teaching skills and use of activities to increase students' participation. Murphy (2012) emphasized that peer-coaching had a positive effect on teachers' teaching motivation and self-efficacy, as well. Participants also indicated that peer-coaching contributed to their classroom management skills by raising the awareness of lecturers about class management, providing new methods through lesson observations and allowing them to reflect these methods in their own classes. Furthermore, peer-coaching strengthened the interaction and time management. As Kohler (1997), Murphy (2012) and Yalçın-Arslan & İlin (2013) emphasized, peer-coaching contributes to teachers' classroom management skills by supporting lesson design, creating a positive classroom atmosphere, student participation and interest, and time management.

For the problems faced during peer coaching practice, it was concluded that time, expertise, communication and stress caused problems. Participants claimed it was hard to allocate enough time for peer coaching activities. Therefore, they demanded fewer observations. Alsakeh, Alabdulhadi & Alrwaished (2017) also found in their research that the participants had problems in finding enough time to meet with each other due to their workload. Considering that observations allow colleagues to learn from each other's experiences and collect data on the performance, reducing the number of observations would weaken the effectiveness of the practices. Instead, release time for the peer coaching activities as Sider (2019) stated could be provided by the administration. Another problem was the lack of knowledge of peer coaches. As Ladyshewiskly (2017) also indicated, it was important for peer coaches to have knowledge on questioning techniques and giving non-evaluative feedback. The last problem was the stress that participants felt especially during the first observations. Jao (2013) also concluded that worrying about what the other teacher would think about their teaching could cause stress at first but could go away after a while.

As for the relations with colleagues, it was revealed peer-coaching could have both positive and negative effects. During peer-coaching, the lecturers helped each other improve teaching skills, which led to solidarity within the institution. This result was in line with the conclusion made by Slater & Simmons (2001) that peer-coaching improved the relationships between teachers and decreased the feeling of loneliness. In addition, lecturers had the chance to get to know each other better and learn about their characteristics that they had not noticed before, which positively affected the sincerity among the lecturers and contributed to a more comfortable working environment and cooperation (Alsakeh, Alabdulhadi & Alrwaished, 2017). However, communication problems like negative criticism, taking comments personally and not taking the practice seriously sometimes emerged during peer-coaching practice and affected the relations among colleagues negatively. However, this result contradicted previous findings that peer-coaching positively affected the relationship, cooperation and solidarity among colleagues (Kasapoğlu, 2002; Jao, 2013; Slater & Simmons, 2001).

Another result of the study was that coaches should have certain personality traits and interpersonal skills besides their professional competencies. According to the results of the study, peer coaches should express themselves correctly, appreciate positive features of the other person, make constructive criticism and empathize. As Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond (2005) said, open, understandable and constructive discussions were required for peer-coaching to get desired level of benefit.

The metaphorical questions showed that participants usually had positive opinions of peer coaching. As a result of the metaphors, it was concluded that the peer-coaching process was associated with "change", "development" and "awareness". Thus, lecturers perceived peer-coaching as development-oriented practice that contributed to the awareness of their deficiencies and improved them. This result supported the conclusion that peer-coaching contributed to teachers' awareness of professional skills and teaching processes positively (Jao, 2013; Kuru-Gönen, 2016; Sider, 2019; Şen, 2008, Vacilotto & Cumming, 2007). As for the metaphors used for coaches, it was concluded coaches were associated with "improving" and "helping". Similarly, earlier studies (Hustone & Weaver, 2007; Kasapoğlu, 2002; Jao, 2013; Slater & Simmons, 2001) also associated peer-coaching with cooperation and solidarity. Finally, lecturers in this study perceived their colleagues as individuals who support them on the way they walk and helped them improve.

To sum up, it was concluded that this development-oriented peer-coaching practice was conducted in an environment of trust. It was also reckoned that improving professional dialogue among peers in formal and informal settings, providing training on effective communication and non-evaluative feedback, creating a trusting environment, and supporting peer coaches to allocate time for peer coaching are essential for the implication to be effective.

Limitations

The study has limitations as well. Since all the lecturers were female in the school of foreign languages where this research was conducted, we could not reflect the views of males. It is recommended that future research be conducted in larger institutions to gather different gender presentation. In addition, this study reported the results of an early practice of peer coaching. Further research could focus to compare the results of the early practice with the sequel. Finally, no formal coaching training was provided for the participants in this study as we aimed to investigate the current peer coaching practices. Further research could be designed as an action study and meticulous training could be given on peer coaching.

Acknowledgements

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