

## **The Supervisory Process of EFL Teachers: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

Supervision is an essential part of language teachers' professional experiences. The literature on language teacher supervision from the past few decades consists largely of descriptions of supervisory approaches (Bailey, 2009) and analysis of the supervisory discourse (Hooton, 2008; Wajnryb, 1994; 1995; 1998; Wallace & Woolger, 1991). This study makes a unique contribution to this field, as it offers a detailed account of what happened before, during, and after a supervisor visited her native-English-speaking (NES) supervisee who co-taught with a non-native-English-speaking (NNES) teacher in an elementary school English classroom in Taiwan. Data suggest that the supervisor's comments were a wake-up call for the NNES teacher, who therefore started to play a more active role in team teaching. However, the supervisor's visits and suggestions did not create a lasting impact on helping her NES supervisee to improve her teaching. Practical implications as well as future research directions are offered to conclude the paper.

**Keywords:** language teacher supervision, supervisory process, team teaching, professional development

### **Introduction**

Supervision is a fundamental part of teachers' careers. As Gebhard (1984) once commented, it is likely that most teachers "have experienced teacher supervision, at one time or another, either as a supervisor, as a teacher being supervised, or as an outside observer" (p. 501). Writing in the context of general education, Daresh (2001) defines supervision as "a process of overseeing the ability of people to meet the goals of the organization in which they work" (p. 25). In language teacher education, supervision has been defined as "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" (Gebhard, 1990, p. 1). However, few language teacher education studies investigated the supervision process, where "the social and the individual planes of human psychological activity are interwoven" (Donato, 2000, p.45).

To enrich our understanding of teacher supervision, this study examined what happened before, during, and after a supervisor's visit to her NES supervisee who practiced team teaching with a NNES teacher in an elementary school English classroom in Taiwan through the lens of sociocultural theory.

### **Sociocultural theory and language teacher supervision**

Sociocultural theory begins as a theory of human development. Vygotsky (1986) argues that a child's development cannot be fully understood by studying the individual alone. Rather, the external social world in which the child's life has developed must be examined closely. In this view, learning is seen as embedded within social activities and occurring as a child interacts with the objects, events, and people in the social environment (Vygotsky, 1986). Moreover, development should not be portrayed as a smooth and linear process with predetermined stages. Instead, it is "a much more dynamic, socially mediated process" that takes place "as a direct result of participation in social activities that are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways" (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, pp. 309-310).

In recent years, the sociocultural framework has been applied to the research on teacher learning (Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). According to Johnson and Golombek (2003), sociocultural theory is not just a theory of learning as commonly understood; it is a theory of higher cognitive development, capable of providing adequate explanation for the process of teacher learning. As aforementioned, at the core of this theory is the idea that development depends on interaction with others and the surrounding environment (Cross & Gearon, 2004). In terms of teacher development, this means that the interactions which teachers have with the people, objects, and events in their external environment will help to shape their thinking and behaviors.

A core concept in the sociocultural paradigm is internalization, defined as "the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediation controlled by individual learners (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p. 731). Development occurs when "a person's cognitive structure is changed, and as a result of this restructuring his/her activity is changed as well" (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, p. 310). Internalization does not simply involve the replacement of old skills. Rather, fundamental restructuring of teacher's knowledge is required to become self-regulated.

A related concept is that of *affordance*, defined by van Lier (2000) as a "reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment" (p. 252). What becomes an affordance "depends on what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it" (van Lier, 2000, p. 252). Van Lier (2000) used a leaf to illustrate how it can offer different affordances to different organisms: "crawling on for a tree frog, cutting for an ant, food for a caterpillar, shade for a spider, medicine for a shaman, and so on" (p. 252). Bailey (2006) further explained this concept in the context of supervision. She stated that a supervisor can represent many affordances: "an unwelcome visitor, a spy from the administration, or a source of ideas and possible support" (p. 44). Various teachers will perceive supervisors differently and make different uses of the supervisors' input and expertise.

## Roles and types of supervision

A supervisor is “anyone who has...the duty of monitoring and improving the quality of teaching done by other colleagues in an educational setting” (Wallace, 1991, p. 107). Teacher supervisors may play many roles. According to Bailey (2009), some supervisors are senior staff with responsibility of guiding junior colleagues. Others may hold positions as program directors, coordinators, or consultants, and do not have concurrent teaching responsibilities.

Supervision may also take various forms. Gebhard (1984) devised five models of language teacher supervision (also see Gebhard, 1990). These models are *direct supervision*, *alternative supervision*, *non-directive supervision*, *collaborative supervision*, and *creative supervision* (see Table 1 for a brief summary). Likewise, Wallace (1991) suggests that language teacher supervision can be divided into two broad categories — the *prescriptive approach* and the *collaborative approach*. In the first approach, the supervisor is seen as an authority figure who judges the supervisee’s teaching skills. On the other hand, in the collaborative approach, supervisor is seen as the teacher’s colleague who listens attentively and attempts to help the teacher develop autonomy. Wallace (1991) further argues that a more collaborative approach should be the goal of supervision for both affective and long-term development reasons (also see Ali, 2007; Chamberlin, 2000; Stoller, 1996).

**Table 1. Gebhard’s (1984) Supervision Models**

<b>Model</b>	<b>General description</b>
Directive supervision	The supervisor’s role is to direct and inform the teacher, model teaching behaviors, and evaluate the teacher’s mastery of defined behaviors.
Alternative supervision	The supervisor’s role is to suggest a variety of alternatives. The purpose of offering alternatives is to widen the scope of what a teacher will consider doing.
Non-directive supervision	The supervisor listens attentively and non-judgmentally as teachers describe their work and reflect on their teaching.
Collaborative supervision	The supervisor actively works with the teacher and attempts to establish a sharing relationship.
Creative supervision	This model allows a combination of different models as supervisors see the need to switch roles during supervision.

## Previous research on language teacher supervision

Because of the paramount role feedback plays in supervising teachers (Oprandy, 1999; Roberts, 1998), much research about language teacher supervision has focused on the discourse of post-observation conference (Bailey, 2006; Hooton, 2008; Wajnryb, 1994;

1995; 1998; Wallace & Woolger, 1991). Wallace and Woolger (1991) suggest that such discourse can literally become a monologue in which “the supervisor ‘sorts out’ the trainee’s problems, the latter dutifully taking notes” (p. 321). As Bailey (2006) states, the post-observation conference is often an awkward event for supervisors because they must sometimes deliver negative feedback to teachers. Such events are examples of unequal power discourse and can be face-threatening for both the supervisor and supervisee (Bailey, 2006). Another line of research on the supervisory discourse focuses on how supervisors mitigate their criticisms during post-observation conferences. For example, Wajnryb (1994; 1995; 1998) found that supervisors used different syntactic (e.g., tense shift) and semantic (e.g., hesitations and false starts) strategies to soften their speech for the observed teachers.

An examination of the literature on language teacher supervision reveals that there is a paucity of studies looking at the supervisory process and the impact of supervision on teaching. In other words, what goes on during supervision and what happens afterwards is rarely reported and analyzed. The current study intends to address this research gap. As supervision is a fundamental part of every teacher’s career, research on the supervisory process can further our understanding of how teachers develop.

### **The current study**

The current study is a case study that focuses on the process and impact of supervision. It was part of a larger project that examined Taiwanese and foreign English teachers’ collaboration and professional development in team teaching.

### **The Hsinchu Program**

This study was conducted in Hsinchu City in Taiwan, known as the Silicon Valley of the island nation. Since 2001, the city has recruited native-English-speaking teachers to co-teach English with local teachers in all the elementary schools in the city. The Hsinchu City Bureau of Education is responsible for directing and evaluating the entire project (referred to as the Hsinchu Program hereafter). During 2001 to 2007, a private institute was selected every year to run the program after the City Council approved its annual budget. In other words, during those six years, while the Bureau of Education supervised the project, it was the appointed company (referred to as the foreign-teacher company hereafter) that recruited and managed the foreign teachers. From 2005 to 2007, the foreign-teacher company was the Royal Academy (pseudonym). [1] The company hired Dr. Lee as their foreign-teacher consultant and supervisor. Dr. Lee, a non-native speaker of English, holds a Ph.D. degree in TESOL and is a full-time professor at a university in Taiwan. She played a key role in recruiting and managing the foreign teachers in the Hsinchu Program. One of her duties was to observe each foreign teacher’s class at least once a semester and provide feedback to the teacher. She was also responsible for organizing workshops and conducting interviews to recruit new teachers.

### **Smile Elementary School (SES)**

SES, a school that has been in existence for 50 years, is located in the east end of Hsinchu City. It is also close to the Hsinchu Science Park. Many parents in this region are well educated and have a high socioeconomic status. In SES, all the students, from

the first to the sixth grades, have two periods of English class per week. This is quite unusual, as students in the first two grades in all the other public elementary schools in the city usually have just one period of English lesson per week.

When this study was conducted in 2006, SES had four local English teachers (Ming-chun, Li-an, Wen-li, and Yu-che) and two foreign teachers (Carol and Judy). Ming-chun served as the head teacher [2] in the 2006 school year; she also had this position in 2003 and 2004. The participants of this study were Li-an and Judy (see later for more information about these two teachers). Li-an co-taught two Grade 6 classes with Judy, with each class for one period per week; she also had a solo lesson with each of these two classes and all the Grade 2 classes every week. As for Judy, she co-taught all the Grades 2 and 4 classes with the homeroom teachers. In addition to co-teaching with Li-an, she also co-taught two Grade 6 classes with Yu-che and three with Ming-chun.

### **The participants**

Li-an and Judy were the focal participants of this study. Li-an, in her late 20s, is a native of Hsinchu in Taiwan. She graduated from the English Department of a prestigious public university in Taiwan and did her master's degree in education at a teachers' college. Her master thesis was about the qualifications of English teachers. After completing her one-year practicum, she was hired as a full-time teacher at SES. In her first year at SES, she was a homeroom teacher, and she also taught English to her own class. In the following years, she worked as a lower-grade homeroom teacher and a subject teacher for various subjects, including Physical Education, Social Studies, and Computer Studies. She always wanted to be an English teacher, but there was no vacancy. Just before the 2006 school year began, two English teachers left SES. Li-an asked her school if she could teach English, and the school administration agreed.

Judy is a black South African in her early 40s. In her home country, she worked as a secretary for several years before working as a part-time English tutor for a middle-school remedial program. In 2004, she was recruited by the well-known Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program and worked as a public school English teacher in Japan. She left the program two years later before joining the Hsinchu Program in the fall of 2006.

Although there was no specific guideline on how the two teachers should collaborate, the foreign teacher was expected to be the main teacher while the local teacher would work as the assisting teacher in their co-teaching lessons.

### **The fieldwork**

The fieldwork for this study was conducted by the first author of this study, who was under the second author's supervision for her dissertation project. Before the fieldwork officially began, the first author explained the research project to each participant, answered any concerns they might have, and gained formal permission to collect data from teachers and the school administration. When the first author was at the research site, she presented herself as an observer and information solicitor.

## **Data collection**

As mentioned earlier, this study was part of a larger project which focused on Taiwanese and foreign English teachers' collaboration and professional development in team teaching. Data collection began in late August of 2006 and ended in early February of 2007. [3] Data were collected via various qualitative methods. A semi-structured interview (see Appendix A for the interview protocol) was conducted in September, 2006. The purpose of this interview was to obtain basic background information about the participants and to understand their initial views on team teaching. Before the semester ended in January, 2007, the participants were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix B) to describe their roles and experiences of team teaching in the past semester. Along with the open-ended questionnaire, each participant was also given a written prompt for the teacher narrative in which they needed to write about their most memorable incident in team teaching during the semester and what they learned from this incident (Appendix C). After the open-ended questionnaire and teacher narrative were collected, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each individual teacher to help clarify the points made in the two written documents as well as to further probe into the teachers' experiences in team teaching in the past semester (see Appendix D for the interview protocol for each teacher; partly adopted from Anstrom, 2002).

In order to get to know the school culture and teachers better, the first author conducted intensive observation (by observing Li-an and Judy in two to four classes per week) in the first month of the fieldwork. After the first month, the participating teachers were observed at least once a week (see Appendix E for the actual dates and time the first author visited SES during the data collection period). Fieldnotes were taken whenever possible, and a researcher journal was kept. Multiple documents related to English teaching from Li-an and Judy (e.g., lesson plans and worksheets), the school website, and the website of the Education Bureau of Hsinchu City were also collected.

In sum, data were collected via multiple methods, including interviews, questionnaires, teacher narratives, classroom observations, fieldnotes, researcher journal, and archival data examination.

## **Data analysis**

The first author transcribed all the interviews within hours after the interviews were conducted. Data analysis was a recursive process, following the guidelines provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Throughout the process of data collection, the two authors constantly discussed their interpretations of the data. The first formal data analysis took place before the end of the first semester. To get the questions ready for the end-of-semester interview (Appendix D), the first author first printed out all the available data and then carefully read them in a line-by-line fashion. During the reading process, she wrote the emerging themes on the margin of the hard copy and highlighted the important parts. She then drafted the interview questions, discussed with the second author, and finalized the interview questions.

Data analysis continued after all the data were collected in February, 2007. All the data were printed on A4-size papers, read in a line-by-line fashion, and important themes were noted on the margins. This process was repeated three times, each with a two-week interval. The current study will mainly focus on the data pertaining to the supervisory process and the impact of the supervision.

## **Findings**

### ***Before the first supervisory visit***

Judy arrived in Taiwan in early September, a couple of days after the new school year had started. Soon after Judy began to teach, it was obvious that she was an introverted person with limited teaching skills. Many of her observed lessons contained many drills, and the only teaching aid she used was flashcards. She also had the habit of turning her back to her students in the middle of a lesson to write silently and slowly on the blackboard. Her heavy South African black accent was confusing for many teachers and students. [4] What made her even more incomprehensible was her low voice. Soon in SES, the Grade 6 students started to imitate her pronunciation of words and made fun of her pronunciation when she was teaching. As the head teacher, Ming-chun was under a lot of pressure because many parents of the Grade 2 students complained about Judy's accent and demanded that the school find another foreign teacher. Among the administrative staff of SES, discussions on whether to replace Judy started to emerge soon after Judy started working in the school.

As an experienced teacher, Li-an soon detected her partner's problems. She said on one occasion that she felt very helpless because she did not know how to help Judy (fieldnotes, 2006/09/21). Even though she was frustrated, Li-an reserved her criticisms. She once commented in a casual conversation that her view of the foreign teacher's qualifications had changed since the semester began (researcher journal, 2006/09/07). She said that one of the important conclusions of her master's thesis was that it is very important for teachers to have a formal certificate. After working with Judy for a week, Li-an felt that at the real teaching sites, good teaching skills should come first before a teacher certificate when it comes to the recruitment of foreign teachers. She explained that before Judy arrived in Taiwan and started teaching at her school, the company had sent a substitute teacher with very good teaching skills. However, he could not be hired as a formal teacher because he did not have a teaching certificate. Although Li-an did not criticize Judy directly, her change of view towards the qualifications of English teachers reflects her struggle with working with a certified teacher who has limited teaching skills.

In the first month of their cooperation, Li-an positioned herself as Judy's assistant who helped her to deliver her lessons. As she said in the background interview (2006/09/07), "When we co-teach, I really respect my co-teacher's idea of conducting the lesson because I believe she has her reasons to teach the lesson in this way. My role is to assist her." She then gave an example, "For example, in today's class, the writing activity was taking too long, and I reminded Judy that it was time to move on to the next activity." She continued, "So when I teach with the foreign teacher, I feel I should totally

support what she wants to teach. My role in the classroom is to try to discipline the students and help the slower learners.”

### ***The first supervisory visit***

Because of the mounting complaints about Judy in SES, Dr. Lee soon paid Judy a visit in late September, less than one month after school began. The visit started with a classroom observation in a Grade 6 class Judy co-taught with Li-an. On the way to the classroom, Judy looked extremely nervous. Li-an tried to calm her down and asked her what she was going to teach. Dr. Lee arrived at the classroom with a clerk from the foreign-teacher company, and the lesson began.

Judy began the lesson by playing the crisscross game. [5] She added a little variation to the game by asking some questions beyond the textbook content, for example, “What time is it now?” and “What did you do last weekend?” She then briefly reviewed the vocabulary in the textbook (in a drill manner) and moved on to the pronunciation practice on the next page. She invited students to give her examples with the long [e] sound. Students were quite cooperative, and Judy was able to elicit many words from them. After the pronunciation practice was over, she asked a few volunteers to read a short story from the textbook. She finished the lesson by asking students to complete some written exercises. During the entire lesson, Judy looked confident and spoke with a louder voice than usual.

After the lesson was over, Dr. Lee immediately told Judy that she did a good job. In the post-observation conference, Dr. Lee first told Judy that she thought Judy’s accent “is not that bad,” but they had to take parents’ concern into account (fieldnotes, 2006/09/26). Both Dr. Lee and Ming-chun [6] suggested that Judy could listen to the textbook CD to see how the keywords are pronounced in standard American English and modify her pronunciation a little bit, to which Judy seemed to agree. Then Dr. Lee moved on to the teaching techniques. She told Judy that she could think about what to do with the content of the book by doing different activities, like strip stories, pair reading (instead of choral reading all the time), and an information gap activity. She also told Judy that she is very fortunate to have these advanced students in SES, and that she should try to extend her teaching beyond the textbook, for example, by asking students to make sentences with the keywords. Dr. Lee also stressed the importance of hearing individual voices in class. She then suggested teaching these very capable students extra materials, like social and classroom language. She thought that Judy used too many drill-based practices and encouraged her to put students into groups so that she could hear more individual voices. During the teacher conference, Judy was very attentive, and she jotted down some words on her notebook. Dr. Lee ended the meeting by saying, “It would be a waste to let you go. You are a teacher with a lot of potential.”

Li-an also attended the 40-minute post-observation conference. While most of Dr. Lee’s comments were addressed to Judy, she did make a few suggestions to Li-an. She said that Li-an speaks English with “very beautiful pronunciation” and that she should play a more active role when co-teaching with Judy (fieldnotes, 2006/09/26). Dr. Lee encouraged Judy to do more role play with Li-an when they taught together. She also stated that they should make their teaching more related to students’ lives.



### ***After the first supervisory visit***

As her partner Li-an described afterwards, Judy's performance on September 26 was the best since the semester began (fieldnotes, 2006/09/28). To see how Judy would respond to Dr. Lee's suggestions, the first author paid the two teachers a visit two days later. The focus of the lesson was on accepting and rejecting someone's invitation. At one point in the lesson, Judy told students that if they did not want to say "Sure, that sounds like fun" to accept an invitation, they could also say, "Sure, that sounds good/great." She seemed to be taking in Dr. Lee's suggestion by extending the lesson beyond the textbook content. However, she did not elaborate on the different ways of accepting an invitation and ended the instruction rather abruptly. Based on data collected from multiple observations, it seems difficult for Judy to quit the habit of asking students to do choral reading and drills. It was found on multiple occasions that she still conducted most of the lesson by using these two techniques for that day as well as for most of the remaining semester.

Dr. Lee's visit was a wake-up call for Li-an. Before Dr. Lee's visit, Li-an was not an active teacher in her co-teaching lessons with Judy. Like her self-description in the background interview (2006/09/07), when she taught with Judy, she often walked around the classroom to help the slower students and helped her partner to discipline the class. After Dr. Lee's visit, some changes were observed in Li-an's teaching. For example, Li-an took a more active role in the co-teaching lesson when the two teachers were observed again on October 3, a week after Dr. Lee's visit. This class was usually quite a cooperative and well-behaved class; some students in this class were also advanced learners with a strong interest in learning English. On that particular day, the class did not respond to Judy well—they looked very tired and did not follow Judy's drills (fieldnotes, 2006/10/03). To get the students' attention, Judy led the drills again by raising her voice, but it did not work at all. Then Li-an stepped in. She asked Judy if she could ask students to stand up and answer questions. Judy agreed, so Li-an walked to the stage. She told students that whoever answered a question could sit down, and the winning team (i.e., the first group that had all the students sit down) could get five points. Although what Li-an did was a simple move, it did wake up the students, and Judy was able to continue with her teaching. This was the first time Li-an stepped up and took control of the whole class while co-teaching with Judy.

When they first started to cooperate, Li-an did not seem to know what to do as Judy wrote silently and slowly on the board. She would often watch Judy write and wait until her partner finished. It was found that after the teacher conference with Dr. Lee, Li-an started to talk to the students or lead some activities whenever Judy turned to the board. In the October 3 class, while Judy was writing slowly on the blackboard, Li-an went to the front of the classroom, did some actions, and asked students to guess what she was doing to fill in the silence (fieldnotes, 2006/10/03). In another class, she tried to get students to pay attention to Judy by telling them that Judy was writing important test information on the blackboard (fieldnotes, 2006/10/19).

On the questionnaire that Li-an completed at the end of the first semester, she talked about her change of role in her co-teaching classes with Judy. She wrote (in English), "In the beginning, I presumed myself in team teaching as a supporter, who supported the

foreign teacher when she needs me. Gradually, I found that I only focused on maintaining discipline and couldn't help students step further in learning English." She continued, "Now, I should be an active supporter in team teaching. When the foreign teacher couldn't handle the class, I have to be able to bring some activities for students to practice."

Although Li-an modified the way she cooperated with Judy, she stated that she made the change too late. In the follow-up interview on December 21, she was asked to evaluate her team-teaching experience in the past semester. She stated that her experience was not very successful and went on to talk about how successful team teaching should be—"When I was completing your questionnaire, I was thinking about what I have done this semester. I think successful team teaching means very good cooperation between the two teachers. The Chinese co-teacher should not just assist from the side." She continued, "I think I should have made some changes earlier. Dr. Lee reminded me that I could play a more active role, but I think I made the change too late." She thought that the meeting with Dr. Lee in late September was very thought provoking. In her words, "She provoked some of my thoughts. My previous thinking was that the foreign teacher should have the total control." She further explained, "Because of the talk with Dr. Lee, I realized that I should change my way of thinking. I now think it's possible that I do 20 or even 30% of the teaching in class. I should plan for this" (interview, 2006/12/21).

### ***Another supervisory visit and follow-up actions***

The discussion of whether to replace Judy seemed to die off at SES in the month following Dr. Lee's first visit. However, the complaints from Grade 2 parents and homeroom teachers did not stop. Judy's Taiwanese co-teachers also noticed that Judy's performance was inconsistent. By the second month of the first semester, Judy's Grade 6 students became quite impatient with the way Judy conducted a lesson. In a conversation in mid-October, Li-an commented that she felt her sixth graders had lost their confidence in Judy, and she was worried about how she could help Judy to teach for the rest of the school year (fieldnotes, 2006/10/19).

In early December, Ming-chun finally filed a formal complaint about Judy to the foreign-teacher company, demanding that Judy be replaced in the second semester. Ming-chun commented that she noticed Judy tried to teach harder after learning about the complaint. However, Ming-chun commented that working with Judy was exhausting; she stated, "Judy will move one step when I lash my whip once" (fieldnotes, 2006/12/08). On the other hand, Ming-chun learned that the homeroom teachers did not really want to have a new foreign teacher, since they told her that they had become familiar with Judy and knew how to help her in class. The foreign-teacher company did not immediately respond to Ming-chun's request.

Instead, the company arranged for Dr. Lee to visit Judy's class again in mid-December. Dr. Lee's main comment was that Judy had not improved and that she was disappointed. Because Judy's performance was not satisfactory, in late December the company sent Judy to a three-day observation tour at different schools in Hsinchu. Such an arrangement was quite unusual, as new foreign teachers were supposed to observe

just one class when they first began to teach. When foreign teachers were absent because of the observation arrangement, the foreign-teacher company had to arrange substitute teachers to teach at their schools and pay for the wages of the substitute teachers. In other words, having Judy absent for three days so that she could learn from observing other teachers was quite a costly arrangement for the company. Such an arrangement, however, seemed to be of some help to Judy's teaching. According to Li-an's observation, Judy seemed more confident on the stage when she came back from her observation of other foreign teachers or her in-service training provided by the foreign-teacher company. After coming back from these professional development activities, Judy would also add more variation to her teaching for roughly a week or so before going back to her usual teaching routine of drilling students.

### ***Leaving without notice***

In late December, the foreign-teacher company arranged a Canadian teacher named Jack to visit SES and left the decision of whether to replace Judy with Jack to the teachers of SES. According to Li-an, the English teachers of SES decided not to hire Jack because "he looks like someone difficult to work with" (MSN, 2007/01/03). Ming-chun also did an informal survey with all the homeroom teachers who worked with Judy. Most of them did not like the idea of having to adjust to another foreign teacher all over again. As mentioned earlier, the way that Judy conducted the class was more or less fixed, and the homeroom teachers had developed their own pattern of co-teaching with her. So a final decision was made—Judy would stay at SES in the second semester.

On January 19, the last official school day of the first semester, many teachers and staff of SES, including Judy, had lunch together in a restaurant. At that lunch meeting, Judy talked about her plan to return to South Africa for winter vacation. Nothing unusual was noticed.

Time quickly went by, and it was time for school to begin again. Judy did not go to SES. The teachers at SES were confused and worried about her safety. Ming-chun went to Judy's rental apartment (which was a few minutes away from SES) and asked the landlord to open the door of Judy's room. Judy was not there, and the room looked very clean. Ming-chun immediately called the foreign-teacher company for help. Before noon, the company sent a new teacher to take over Judy's position. SES signed the contract with the new teacher immediately. No one really knew what happened to Judy.

### **Discussion**

In the written version of his plenary address at TESOL '86, Roger Bowers (1986) wrote about the importance of observational research in the field of English language teaching (ELT) in these words, "I take substantial comfort from the growing interest in observational research. For perhaps in the argument between theory and practice, it is observational research which is the intermediary." He continued, "In twenty years' time the major advances in our understanding of ELT will...be seen as coming not from the psycholinguistic end of our profession...but from this sociologically inspired sphere of investigation—the scientific study of what actually and beneficially happens in classrooms" (pp. 407-408).

It has been more than twenty years since Bowers made this comment about observational research. However, as stated earlier, an examination of the literature of language teacher supervision reveals that many published works have focused on classifying different supervisory approaches and/or advocating a certain way to supervise teachers (e.g., Ali, 2007; Gebhard, 1984; Stoller, 1996; Wallace, 1991). The few empirical studies available on language teacher supervision either analyzed transcripts of post-observation conference exchanges between supervisors and teachers (e.g., Wajnryb, 1994; 1995; 1998; what Bailey [2006] refers to as the “microanalysis of supervisory discourse”) or devised questionnaires to inquire teachers about their perceptions on different aspects of the supervisory process (e.g., Chamberlin, 2000; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). Rarely do we have a close-up view of the supervisory process. This study makes a unique contribution to the field by providing a detailed portrayal of what happened before, during, and after a supervisor’s visits. By doing so, it also offers valuable insights into the dynamic, interactive process of language teacher supervision and learning.

Although much recent research has emphasized a more collaborative approach to language teacher supervision (e.g., Ali, 2007; Bailey, 2009; Stoller, 1996), prescriptive supervision is not hard to locate in the contemporary school system. This case study is one of the examples, in which Dr. Lee, the foreign-teacher consultant, played the role of an authority figure who offered prescriptive comments on how Judy could improve her teaching. More importantly, a decision on Judy’s employment was made based on Dr. Lee’s appraisal of the observed lessons. Moreover, her supervision belongs to the alternative model (Gebhard, 1984) in which the supervisor, Dr. Lee, made suggestions to widen the scope of what a supervisee can consider doing in the classroom.

Unfortunately, Dr. Lee’s supervision did not seem to create a lasting effect on Judy’s teaching. Data indicate that although Judy seemed to try out different techniques she learned from the post-observation conference with Dr. Lee, she did not make enough efforts to systematically incorporate them into her daily teaching routine. As mentioned earlier, another measure taken to help improve Judy’s teaching was a three-day observation tour. However, this tour also failed to trigger any fundamental changes in Judy’s teaching. On the contrary, Dr. Lee’s comment that Li-an should play a more active role in her co-teaching lessons with Judy was found to have a significant impact on Li-an’s conceptualization of team teaching. Li-an described Dr. Lee’s comments as “thought-provoking” (interview, 2006/12/21). After the post-observation conference, Li-an tried to play a more active role when she co-taught with Judy.

Judy and Li-an’s different reactions to Dr. Lee’s comments illustrate the concept of affordance. Judy was primarily concerned with making enough efforts to save her job, and for her, Dr. Lee represented a job gatekeeper. On the contrary, Li-an seemed eager to learn how to help her partner and improve the quality of their co-teaching lessons. As can be seen from the data, Dr. Lee represented different affordances to Judy and Li-an, and the two teachers were found to make different uses of Dr. Lee’s input and expertise.

In the case of Judy, Dr. Lee’s supervision and the observation tour failed to help her move from others-regulated to self-regulated. In other words, internalization did not take place. Compared to Li-an, Judy lacked sufficient experience and knowledge about

teaching English in Taiwan, making it more difficult for her to quickly transfer and internalize others' suggestions to her teaching. Data also indicate that Judy was a struggling teacher who was battling not only with concerns on her motivation and teaching skills, but also with doubts on her accent, an issue highly related to an individual's linguistic and cultural identity (Marx, 2002). The measures taken to help Judy might help her pick up a few useful teaching tips to be applied immediately. However, they did not help Judy restructure her knowledge to become self-regulated, partly because these measures did not address the threats to Judy's identity that doubts on her accent imposed. Nor did they tackle the incongruence between Judy and her co-teachers' expectations on how they should collaborate. To help struggling teachers like Judy, more scaffolding, where "the more knowledgeable person assumes the responsibility of offering the learner support to facilitate learning" (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p. 508), needs to be provided to induce fundamental and substantial changes in their teaching. More open communication between the supervisor, the supervisee, and other stakeholders (for example, the supervisee's other colleagues) as well as culture- and identity-sensitive supervision are also needed.

The impact of Dr. Lee's comments on Li-an is worth reiterating and pondering. Li-an's changes suggest that in certain social contexts or cultures where authority's voice is greatly valued, an authority figure's appraisal on a teacher's teaching performance may have great influence on helping teachers to develop. In these contexts, supervisors can therefore play a more positive role by helping the supervisee construct zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as "the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else and/or cultural artifacts" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 16). Contrary to the findings from western contexts where authority figures are less valued (e.g., Wallace, 1991), a prescriptive approach to supervision where the supervisor delivers prescriptive comments can be an efficient and effective means to foster teacher learning in certain social contexts. Further research is needed to pinpoint ways for teacher educators to appropriately use their expertise or authority image to help practitioners teach more effectively.

As can be seen from this study, Dr. Lee's observation did not seem to help Judy improve much. If observation is to be a facilitative experience, it needs to be carefully planned and implemented (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The planning should involve more than establishing when and where to observe whom. In the literature of peer observation, teachers are advised to systematically collect classroom data (e.g., in the form of checklists or fieldnotes; see Gebhard, 1999; Richards & Farrell, 2005) and collaboratively analyze the data afterwards. After the observation is over, teachers should be given the opportunity to reflect on what was observed together. Such reflection can take various forms, such as formal or informal conversations about what was observed.

On the individual level, another step to enhance teachers' professional development is to increase their awareness of how they teach. Awareness is "the capacity to recognize and monitor the attention one is giving or has given to something" (Freeman, 1989, p. 33). Without heightened awareness, teachers cannot make informed decisions about

their work. Or, as Bailey (2006) puts it, achieving awareness is “the first step for teachers in making a change” (p. 37). To raise their awareness of how they teach, teachers can consider engaging in self-observation or self-monitoring, defined as “a systematic approach to the observation, evaluation, and management of one’s own behavior in order to achieve a better understanding and control over the behavior” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 34). According to Richards (1990), self-observation involves the teacher “making a record of a lesson, either in the form of a written account or an audio or video recording of a lesson, and using the information obtained as a source of feedback on his or her teaching” (p. 118). Richards and Farrell (2005) comment that when given a chance to see a video recording of a lesson, teachers “are often surprised, and sometimes even shocked, at the gap between their subjective perceptions and ‘objective’ reality” (p. 36). Self-monitoring can therefore help teachers better understand the problems in their current teaching practices and devise ways of addressing the problems.

### **Conclusion**

Framed in the sociocultural framework, this study contributes to the literature of language teacher supervision by offering a detailed account of what happens before, during, and after a supervisor’s visits to her supervisee’s classroom. The prescriptive supervision did not help Judy to become self-regulated, as it failed to create a lasting impact on her teaching and address threats to Judy’s linguistic and cultural identity. In contrast, Dr. Lee’s supervision afforded Li-an an opportunity to change the way she collaborated with Judy. To help generate more insights on the supervision practice in specific and language teacher development in general, it is hoped that more ethnographic studies on language teacher supervision will be conducted.

### **Notes**

[1] All names are pseudonyms in this study.

[2] The English head teacher of each school is responsible for coordinating the English program. An important responsibility of a head teacher is to help foreign teachers adapt to the local school culture. Also, he/she needs to serve as the bridge between foreign teachers, local English teachers, other teachers in the school, school administrators, and the Bureau of Education.

[3] The original plan was to follow Li-an and Judy for an entire school year. However, Judy left Taiwan without any notice during the winter break (see later for more information).

[4] Standard American pronunciation is the one practiced at most schools in Taiwan.

[5] This was a game that Judy often played in her class. To play the game, Judy would first ask all the students in a vertical row to stand up. She then asked students in that row some questions. Students had to raise their hands if they knew the answers. Li-an often helped by picking a student to answer a question; the student who answered the question correctly could sit down. Judy kept asking questions until there was only one student left standing. Then all the students who sat in the same horizontal row had to

stand up and play the game. Teachers can keep playing the game for as long as they feel appropriate.

[6] Ming-chun did not observe Judy's lesson because she also had to teach during that period. She came to join the post-observation conference to learn about Dr. Lee's comments on Judy's performance.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Background Interview Protocol**

#### **Personal information**

1. Name
2. Tell me about yourself (Probe: age, background, schooling, how you ended up at this school, etc.)
3. Tell me about your previous teaching experience
4. Your team-teaching partner is
5. Please tell me the classes you team teach with

#### **Team teaching**

1. Please define team teaching in your own words.
2. What will you have to do to help your students to learn English well via team teaching?
3. How will your previous teaching experience (if any) help with teaching?
4. What role do you expect yourself and your co-teacher to play in team teaching?
5. As a teacher, what skills (e.g., classroom management) do you need to improve on? How can you improve on these aspects? Will team teaching help you improve on these aspects? How and why?
6. Teachers need different kinds of knowledge (e.g., pedagogical knowledge and knowledge about students and context) to function well both inside and outside the classroom. In what areas do you feel your knowledge is lacking or inadequate? How can you gain knowledge about these areas? Will team teaching help you gain knowledge about these areas? How and why?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Questionnaire on Team Teaching**

Direction: Please respond to the following questions as clearly as possible. All information will be used for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you.

1. For you, what is team teaching? Use a metaphor (i.e., team teaching is like...) to discuss your ideas.
2. What is your role in team teaching?
3. What do you like about team teaching?
4. What don't you like about team teaching?
5. What are your strengths as a team teacher?
6. What are your weaknesses as a team teacher?
7. What have you learned from team teaching?
8. What have you contributed to your team?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Prompt for Teacher Narrative**

Direction: Please write about (a) the most memorable incident in team teaching during the past semester; and (b) what you learned from this incident. All the information you provide will be kept completely confidential. Thank you.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Protocol for Follow-up Semi-Structured Interview**

#### **Interview with Li-an**

1. How is team teaching different from any other previous teaching experience you had?
2. Please describe how you conduct your own classes (i.e., the Grade 6 classes you do not co-teach with Judy).
3. How would you describe your relationship with Judy?
4. You mentioned in our first interview that for you, getting to know your co-teacher well was an important requirement for you to cooperate well with her. Do you think that during the course of this semester, you have come to know Judy well enough for you to teach effectively with her?
5. You mentioned in our first interview that you would like to learn more about activities that you could use with the higher graders. Do you think you have gained knowledge in this aspect in the past semester? Who or what helped you learn? What is the role of team teaching in your learning?
6. You mentioned in our first interview that you wanted to gain cultural knowledge about the foreign culture and about how things are really expressed in English. Do you think you have gained knowledge in these aspects? Who or what provided you with this knowledge? What is the role of team teaching in your learning?
7. What are the challenges you face in team teaching?
8. What makes your team teaching experience successful or not so successful?
9. If you can choose, will you choose to participate in team teaching again? Why or why not?

#### **Interview with Judy**

1. On the questionnaire, you mentioned a few things you didn't like about team teaching (unconstructive criticisms, taking over your lesson because co-teachers think you have a "weak personality," and lack of communication). Can you please elaborate on each of these?
2. On the questionnaire, you mentioned that team teaching was like a two-way street where you give and take ideas. Could you please talk about the ideas you have given and taken from team teaching?
3. You mentioned in our first interview that you taught in South Africa for two years and in Japan's JET Program for another two years. Have you worked in other fields in the past?
4. How is team teaching in SES different from teaching in South Africa and Japan?
5. How would you describe your relationship with Li-an?
6. You mentioned in our first interview that you are a very soft person and that you would like to improve on your classroom management skills. Do you think you have

made some improvement in the past semester? Who or what helped you improve?  
 What is the role of team teaching in your improvement?

7. You mentioned in our first interview that you needed to gain more knowledge in the school culture and the Taiwanese culture in general. Do you think you have gained more knowledge in these aspects? Who or what provided you with this knowledge?  
 What is the role of team teaching in your learning?

8. I noticed that in your Grade 6 classes, you often used flashcards to lead the students to read; you also asked students to do a lot of choral reading. Are there reasons why you rely on flashcards and choral reading to conduct your lessons?

9. What are the challenges you face in team teaching?

10. What makes your team teaching experience successful or not so successful?

11. If you can choose, will you choose to participate in team teaching again? Why or why not?

## APPENDIX E

### Actual Observation Schedule at SES

#### 1. Classroom observation

Date	Time	Note
Sept.5	11:10-11:50	
Sept.7	8:40-9:20	
Sept.12	10:20-11:00, 11:10-11:50	10:20-11:00 – Li-an’s Grade 6 solo lesson
Sept.13	9:30-10:10	Li-an Grade 2 solo lesson
Sept.14	8:40-9:20	
Sept.19	11:10-11:50	
Sept.21	8:40-9:20	
Sept.26	11:10-11:50	Dr. Lee’s first visit
Sept.28	8:40-9:20	
Oct.3	11:10-11:50	
Oct.19	8:40-9:20, 9:30-10:10	9:30-10:10 – Li-an’s Grade 6 solo lesson
Oct.24	11:10-11:50	
Nov.2	9:30-10:10	
Nov.7	11:10-11:50	
Nov.14	11:10-11:50	
Nov.20	13:20-14:00	Judy’s Grade 6 co-teaching

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Note</b>
		lesson with Ming-chun
Nov.21	11:10-11:50	
Nov.28	11:10-11:50	
Dec.5	11:10-11:50	
Dec.8	10:20-11:00, 11:10-11:50	Judy's Grade 2 classes with homeroom teachers
Dec.26	11:10-11:50	
Jan.2	11:10-11:50	
Jan.11	8:40-9:20	
Jan.16	11:10-11:50	

2. Teacher meetings attended: Sept.5, Oct.2, Dec.22

3. School events attended: Nov.21 (Storytelling for Grade 2 students)

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