Allowing for Development in the EAP Post-observation Conference: Towards a flexible observation model

Lisa Robinson, BA (Hons)

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Abstract

Despite the emergence of specific English for Academic Purposes (EAP) qualifications in the UK and worldwide, EAP training remains 'largely ad hoc and informal' (Alexander, 2010:3). The post-observation conference (POC) is a valuable opportunity to address the development needs of EAP tutors. This dissertation explores to what extent the POC fulfils these needs by presenting a review of the relevant literature and a case study of the POC. The latter is based on the collection of six EAP tutor interviews. Analysis of the data suggests that the POCs described in this study are largely supervisory in approach, with a bias towards evaluation rather than development. Moreover, POC structure and discourse can influence this partiality and perpetuate an observer-driven event. I make recommendations for a flexible observation model which encourages a shared agenda to support tutors in taking responsibility for their own development and promotes collaboration and reflection, prerequisites for knowledge building.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education has become a lucrative business. The provision of educational services is a significant contributor to Gross Domestic Product (Ball, 2012), figures which are enhanced by the increasing number of international students entering British universities (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). At Postgraduate level, such students represent the majority cohort in many British universities; as an example, in 2011-2012[1] the University of Nottingham had almost twice as many EU and International students studying on Postgraduate taught courses than home students. Most higher education institutions provide EAP to support overseas students in developing their academic literacy, both prior to department entry and during their academic studies; however, there is very little formalised training for EAP tutors despite the intensity of their work and the academic and financial risks at stake for student, tutor and employer. The last decade has seen the introduction of a limited number of specific EAP qualifications in the UK and worldwide, but it is still fair to say that the majority of EAP tutors have experienced an ELT training and teaching background, with EAP training being described as 'largely ad hoc and informal' (Alexander, 2010:3).

The term English for Academic Purposes (EAP) was first coined in the mid-1970s and became more widely adopted in 1989 when SELMOUS (Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students) changed its name to BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) (Jordan, 2002). EAP developed within the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which distinguishes itself from more general English Language Teaching (ELT). EAP tutors typically come from an ELT background, yet the leap from ELT to EAP is considerable, with significant differences in approach and content;

[1] http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/planning/statistics/Summary%202011.htm

indeed, Krzanowski confirms the 'shock' factor (2001:1) which tutors[2] experience during this transition. The shift from so-called novice to experienced EAP tutor is a lengthy process; BALEAP defines a novice EAP tutor as one who has been teaching EAP for less than five years (Alexander, 2011). In order to further the professional development of EAP tutors, especially those considered 'novice', and support them in a demanding environment, new perspectives to construct knowledge are necessary. Undoubtedly, development requires proactive tutors (Alexander, 2010) who are open to opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and those in the role of observer. Lesson observations are a key aspect of tutor development which can draw together these three parties in a collaborative venture and provide those involved with the opportunity for targeted discussions about teaching.

The post-observation conference (POC) is the discussion between teacher and observer which takes place after an observed lesson. Despite the importance of the observation process in teacher education, the lack of research into the POC has been highlighted:

> Given the ascribed importance of supervisory conferences to the processes of formal teacher education, one finds it ironic that so little attention has been given to understanding the quality of what transpires during these encounters.
>
> (Zeichner and Liston, 1985:171)

Over 25 years later, this comment on the deficiency of mainstream education literature and research is still applicable; whilst the literature concentrates on preparing for the observation and what the observer should do (Howard, 2008), clearly a necessary focus, there remains little attention paid to teachers' attitudes towards the post-observation dialogues, particularly once the teacher has left pre-service training. Furthermore, Waite's 1993 claim that most of the literature on

[2] Where I use the term tutor, I do so to distinguish between EAP practitioners and teachers in other settings, such as mainstream education and EFL, and also because this term is adopted in my own professional context.

instructional supervision is theoretical and prescriptive still holds true and the clinical supervision paradigm for teacher observations retains surprising sway over the process to date.

In a higher education context, the literature addresses mentor schemes, but these tend to target beginner lecturers, albeit at tertiary level. This leaves the EAP observation experience largely overlooked by theorists and researchers and the perceptions of EAP tutors for the most part unexplored, with the exception of a recent study (Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press). Research in this area is both timely and necessary. EAP has reached a significant point in its development (Alexander, 2010), indicated not just in the literature, but also by the choice of title for the upcoming BALEAP Biennial Conference (2013): *The Janus Moment*; however, the scarcity of full-time, permanent EAP contracts, described as the 'increased casualisation of academia' (Sharpling, 2002:92), means that the opportunities we have to enhance continued in-service development must be exploited as fully as possible, particularly when we factor in the EAP environment, acknowledged as being high-stakes (Hamp-Lyons, 2010). Added to this, the lack of formal EAP qualifications makes the development needs of EAP tutors more acute and research in this area all the more valuable. This dissertation foregrounds the POC as an essential tool to narrow the development gap.

The prevailing reflective model of teacher education assumes development, not training. Training implies building a set of finite skills, while development

> focuses on the individual teacher – on the process of reflection, examination, and change which can lead to doing a better job and to personal and professional growth.
>
> (Freeman, 1982:21)

This is a key distinction and the elements of reflection, change and development are closely examined in this dissertation. With this definition in mind, I have made conscious and informed linguistic choices herein which are intended to encourage a collaborative process of reflection and change in both observer and tutor rather than a one-way 'gifting' of knowledge. Consequently, I avoid using the term *feedback*. Malderez (2009) argues that 'giving feedback' has become synonymous with anything from evaluative judgments to collaborative decisions, advising that the term be avoided, signalling as it does that the observer or mentor is responsible for the giving, that is, the talking or transmitting. *Feedback* suggests singularity and can discourage democratic interaction (Brandt, 2008). One key strategy to challenge and change such assumptions is to make active discourse choices intended to promote alternative meanings; rather than employing the term *feedback*, I use terms such as *conference* and *discussion*.[3] This underlines a theme in this dissertation that our language choices to describe this event can influence perceptions of it. The situation is therefore described throughout as the *Post-observation Conference* (POC), a term which has been widely adopted in the literature specific to this area of teacher development (Waite, 1993; Vásquez, 2004; Copland, 2010). *Confer* suggests a two-way exchange of ideas in contrast to *feedback* which indicates one-way delivery and can prompt prescriptive advice and a focus on negative aspects of the lesson. Consider the recent trend for offering feedback after an unsuccessful job interview and it is likely to call to mind a focus on the candidates' deficiencies.

This study is underpinned by a constructivist approach to research and knowledge building, highlighting experiential learning and reflection. My personal theory of

[3] It is important to note, however, that this decision was taken after conducting the interviews for the empirical study; therefore references to *feedback* occur in the interview guide and the interviews themselves. This is a term I would avoid in future research on development.

EAP practice is congruent with this established paradigm in EAP and the broader education system; indeed it is personal practice which has led me to this research. I have been responsible for delivering POCs for many years, yet it remains a stressful event which I find difficult to do well. I wanted to improve my performance in the POC, but also enhance the situation for others (tutors and observers, localised and beyond). As a result, I conducted an empirical study (Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press) exploring the event using recorded POC data. This research focuses on the themes which are addressed in the conference, but it also raises interesting points on the structure of the POC and the ratio of observer/tutor talk which is often in favour of the observer (Appendix A). The study was observational in the sense that we were examining what actually happens. This led me to my current exploration of tutor perceptions of the POC, a non-observational approach intended to illuminate the event from a different angle.

The POC, in general terms, has an ill-defined dual-purpose of fulfilling formative and evaluative functions (Holland, 2005; Chamberlain, D'Artrey and Rowe, 2011). Although there have been calls to separate the two functions (Lam, 2001), typically they co-exist. In an EAP context, it is not clear whether development is being sidelined by evaluation. To gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting the developmental function of the POC, a review of the literature is conducted in Chapter 2 to situate the study in its research context and examine the body of work relating to the core issues of reflection, knowledge construction, change and development. This is followed by details of the research methods used in the empirical data collection of 'novice' EAP tutor perceptions of the POC (Chapter 3). My understanding and interpretations of the data are then presented in Chapter 4 before a concluding chapter which offers recommendations, a flexible observation model for EAP tutor development and final reflections (Chapter 5).

1.1 Overall research aim and individual research objectives

A number of individual research objectives were established in order to achieve my overall research aim of contributing to our understanding of the EAP POC and exploring to what extent it facilitates tutor development. The observation process can be an uncomfortable one for both parties; therefore investigating ways to enhance the experience could help to maximise the potential benefits which it holds for both parties. Thus, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the features which typically comprise the EAP POC and explore whether they encourage development.
2. Examine what tutors feel happens and should happen in the POC and whether a gap exists between the two.
3. Assess the contribution which tutors make to the POC with a view to redressing the balance of talk and encouraging knowledge construction and development.
4. Analyse the discourse used to describe the POC and explore the influence of these linguistic choices.
5. Explore the cognitive processes which lead to the construction and re-construction of knowledge.
6. Formulate recommendations based on the empirical findings of the study.

My assumption, prior to the research, was that the EAP POC had a bias towards evaluation and that this causes tension and an imbalance of talk. The present study into EAP tutor perceptions draws on the literature on mainstream education and initial teacher training, mentoring in higher education and teacher development in EFL to enrich my empirical research into the EAP POC and inform my understanding and recommendations. It is interesting to note, though, that this flow of information is not simply one-way, but that the expanding EAP research base is starting to influence ELT practices (McDonough, 2005), potentially making this study of interest to the wider educational research community. Any potential research claim for relatability is only possible if

transparency of context is achieved. I therefore outline the context of this study in the following section.

1.2 Context

The EAP centre in this study is situated within a British university and prepares a large number of international students for entry into UK higher education, reflecting a common situation in many universities across Britain and at other English-speaking institutions around the world. Again, as in many EAP departments, student numbers peak in the summer term and as a result, a large number of temporary tutors are employed and the observation process is intensified with summer tutors observed at least once. The event is dyadic in nature and generally scheduled two to three days after the observation.

The observations are typically performed by the course director, who is only temporarily elevated to this post during the summer term. For summer tutors, the evaluative aspect of the POC is significant as the decision to invite tutors to teach on future courses is based largely on the observation and the written summary which is generated by the POC. That said, most summer tutors are invited back, yet retaining summer tutors from year to year is problematic. It is not clear why this is the case, although improving opportunities for development can only help the situation, particularly in light of the fact that some temporary summer colleagues only work as EAP tutors at this time of year. During the summer term, it may also be necessary to observe year-round members of staff which can result in a scenario of peer observations with both evaluative and developmental functions. As such, I use the term observer (not supervisor, which implies a superior/subordinate relationship) as, at times, there can be very little difference in experience and/or level between the observer and the observed tutor. For

year-round tutors, it would seem desirable to focus on development, although this brings with it the possibility of resentment at being 'developed' by same-level colleagues with similar levels of experience. The situation is therefore a complex and sensitive one, with the purpose (evaluation and/or development) being difficult to pinpoint.

BALEAP has produced an extensive and well-informed *Competency Framework for Teachers of EAP* (2008), with the broad objective of guiding less experienced EAP tutors and a number of more specific sub-aims, one of which was to help inform an observation protocol. The department in this study trialled the new protocol in 2010 (Appendix B) and currently uses a revised 2011 version (Appendix C). It constitutes a system-based observation process (Wallace, 1991); that is, both tutor and observer are aware of a pre-arranged and fixed set of categories which the observation and following discussion focus on. In terms of clinical supervision, which remains the most common model, it would fall under Swan's 1993 categorisation of prescriptive clinical supervision in which 'experts' compile the observation schedule. The protocol, alongside the BALEAP *Competency Framework* (which tutors are supplied with in their summer induction), provides valuable metalanguage for both parties to discuss the lesson more confidently. It also incorporates a *reflection box* which is e-mailed to the tutor after the observation and is completed then returned to the observer before the POC. Reflection in teaching is addressed by a wide body of literature and accepted as essential to practice. Williams and Watson (2004) hypothesise that tutor reflection before the conference may lead to the tutor initiating more topics and that delaying the discussion is widely regarded as good practice to support reflection (Roberts, 1998). Despite the use of this observation protocol and the attention paid to reflection, the process of performing POCs remains difficult and tense at times and it is unclear whether the EAP POC is fulfilling its developmental

function. There is a need for enquiry in this area which has been confirmed in the literature (Colley, 2002; Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press).

The next chapter examines in more detail the literature relevant to my research aims and objectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review examines the key issues relevant to the POC in terms of tutor development, specifically those relating to research objectives 1-5 outlined in the previous section. (Objective 6 is addressed in Chapter 5.) After examining the features of the POC, I explore the following areas: the value of tutor experience in redressing the balance of talk; the role of discourse and structure; the cognitive processes involved in knowledge building and change; development. These areas are inevitably interrelated and are framed by the *reflective model* of teacher education theory.

There is a large body of work on mentoring and coaching in different educational settings. Pre-service teachers' expectations and perceptions have been explored in both mainstream and second language education; however, studies which solicit the perceptions of the POC from in-service second language teachers are rare and in the specialised field of EAP, rarer still. Consequently, I draw from the literature on mainstream, second language and higher education to inform my exploration of the EAP landscape. Whilst the context of these studies is necessarily different, the aim, I hope, is the same: to enhance the quality of teacher education and development. Drawing on a wide body of literature is a valuable resource to give context to this study, yet the relationship between EAP and the broader education community is not a parasitic one; EAP, as mentioned previously, is influencing EFL practices and the provision of valuable academic support is, in some cases, being extended to home students in higher education, thereby raising the profile of EAP pedagogy (McDonough, 2005). It is hoped that this review of the literature helps to clarify the main themes on the subject and contextualises the empirical study which follows.

The clinical supervision paradigm for teacher observations was established by Cogan (1973), with most later approaches deriving from this (Arcario, 1994). A variety of conceptual models of supervision followed in the 1980s; mainstream education offered critical-incident analysis and peer coaching and in second language education, Gebhard (1984) and Fanselow (1988) advanced insight into the key features of supervisory encounters (Arcario, 1994), including a focus on discourse. Studies, meanwhile, provided empirical research into student teacher perceptions in both second language teaching (Freeman, 1982) and mainstream education (Wragg, 1994). The latter concludes that teachers expect some form of evaluation. In an EAP context, a rare yet more recent study (Vásquez, 2004) analysed recorded data from POCs, revealing a conspicuous absence of 'constructive criticism' resulting in unmet expectations. Her study, however, contributes to a body of literature addressing initial teacher training. Research into the perceptions of in-service EAP tutors regarding this developmental opportunity has remained an uncharted area until the present study.

2.1 Experience

Teacher education research has acknowledged that one of strongest influences on teacher expertise and knowledge about teaching is classroom experience, helping to shape our teaching 'self' and inform our practice (Tsui, 2003). Teacher education theory, both mainstream and second language, is now firmly situated in the *reflective model* first detailed by Schön (1983). This model emphasises experience and yields labels such as *facilitator* for teacher educators and *teacher development* in preference to teacher education (Wallace, 1991; Swan, 1993). The value of teacher experience as a resource was highlighted by Freeman 30 years ago:

> The experienced teacher may react to the observer in a variety of ways, ranging from passive tolerance to outright hostility. […] The reactions all seem to stem

> from the observer's failure, either intentionally or not, to recognize and to affirm the teacher's experience.
>
> (Freeman, 1982:28)

Recognition of experience leads to a further salient point concerning the nature of knowledge generation in teacher development; articulating experiential knowledge facilitates the transformation of tacit knowledge to make learning possible (Edge, 2003).

Collaboration is necessary for teachers to articulate ideas and the literature values collaborative encounters (Fanselow, 1988; Edge, 2003; Hyland and Lo, 2006) in which learning is conceived as a dynamic, two-way process necessitating a partnership. Drawing on theories of systemic thinking, a co-constructive model of teaching and learning (Askew and Lodge, 2000) has a core aim of minimising the perceived power differences between the two parties, with the observer viewing herself not as a transmitter of knowledge but as a co-learner. The model encourages collaborative dialogue to construct meaning, alongside reflection and reflexivity. 'Feedback' and reflection are interrelated and a shared responsibility for learning and development is inherent (*ibid*). The model is not judgment-focused and recognises the value of experiential learning as a resource available to the teacher in order to explore individualised solutions to teaching issues (Hargreaves, 2010).

The theory is persuasive; however, in practice, it is not clear whether EAP tutor and observer thinking has shifted sufficiently beyond the previous stage of the applied science model where the educator is conceived as the transmitter of knowledge. Empirical research certainly suggests that a balance of talk in favour of the observer in the EAP POC is still evident (Vásquez, 2004; Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press) and prior assumptions of who should control the

conversation may create a sense of tension (Freeman, 1982), particularly if one party tries to introduce a different approach.

2.2 Discourse and structure

In order to ease the tension which has been linked to the observation process and facilitate collaborative dialogue, the literature addresses discourse and structure in post-observation dialogues (Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press). It endorses descriptions of teaching, rather than positive and negative judgment (Fanselow, 1988; Gebhard, 2005; Malderez, 2009) which is all too often served up in a 'feedback sandwich' (Edge, 1993:1) of positive-negative-positive content. A predictable POC structure can be the result of a rigid observation schedule, not suited to a range of teachers, which in turn can result in box-ticking bureaucracy (Kersten and Israel, 2005). The pattern of positive-negative-positive generates a discourse of contradictory adjectives: good/bad; positive/negative; strengths/weaknesses (Watkins, 2000). The term *feedback,* as I have mentioned earlier, is also problematic; it emphasises the observer as being responsible for transmitting the bulk of the information (Malderez, 2009), potentially leading to an imbalance of talk, prescription and judgment. Gebhard (2005) proposes establishing discourse rules before a post-observation discussion takes place to encourage a more dialogic and less evaluative encounter. These examples offer an indication of the influence which terminology and discourse choices can have on teacher perceptions of the conference.

2.3 Knowledge building and change

In adult learning theory, knowledge is constructed by drawing from complementary sources: experience, literature and discussion. Experience and existing knowledge act as mediators of external input (Roberts, 1998). In the

case of teachers, their engagement with teaching and learning theory results in the development of 'powerful personal theories specific to teaching and learning' (Roberts, 1998:88). Constructivist theory assumes self-awareness to be a prerequisite to uncovering these theories and that personal theories evolve and change through interaction with others, that is, through confirmation or challenge (Roberts, 1998). These two influences are also necessary from a social perspective in which personal representations of the world draw on traditional images of teaching and teaching situations (*ibid*). Undoubtedly, external input provided during dialogue is a key component in knowledge construction and a valuable learning resource for teachers. This should be framed by reflective practice, essential in helping teachers to articulate their experiences and make sense of their world (Freeman, 2002).

Influential theoretical frameworks have been applied to examine the supervisory process in teacher education. Kolb's Experiential Learning cycle (1983, cited in Randall and Thornton, 2001:45), highlights experience as an essential component in the adult learning process and can be mapped onto the teaching practice cycle, in particular the POC (Randall and Thornton, 2001) where pre-service teachers are encouraged to reflect on concrete examples to gain new knowledge, galvanising the link between practice and personal theory. Research into organisational change has also been applied to the post-observation dialogue by Hooton (2008). Organisational change offers a theory of *profound change* which combines inner and outer shifts and it is in *profound change* that learning occurs (Senge, 2002, cited in Hooton, 2008:28). In Hooton's model, an inner realm exists consisting of abstract constructs such as teaching values, aspirations, beliefs and experience. Surrounding this is an outer realm of teaching aspects (strategies, practices, systems). Dialogue can challenge inner realm beliefs and initiate the required shift in this realm which enables outer realm changes to

follow. Observable outer realm changes indicate that a change in behaviour may have taken place and that learning has occurred (Hooton, 2008). The teacher is therefore responsible for allowing (or disallowing) the outer realm to exert a change in their teaching behaviour (the inner realm characteristics); however, there is always the potential for a teacher to outwardly alter their behaviour to please the observer without a corresponding shift in the inner realm. Reflection before, while and after teaching connects the two realms. The reader is likely to draw comparisons between this theory and Schön's seminal research into reflective practice (1983); indeed, Hooton (2008) makes a similar connection by comparing inner realm shifts to the 'naming' and 'framing' process detailed by Schön.

Despite influential research to the contrary, it has been claimed that successful post-observation discussions occur when the teacher and observer share the same cognitive values about teaching (Howard, 2008); that is, their knowledge and beliefs about teaching are aligned. This can result in show lessons designed to tap into observer ideals, making an open dialogue about teaching based on one's own theories unlikely. Such a situation is exemplified by Tarnpichprasert (2008), a university lecturer in ELT and supervisor of pre-service teachers, who outlines her strategy for being observed. She found it beneficial to glean as much information as possible regarding the observer's teaching beliefs and describes her strategy: 'I tried to teach in the way that I thought my observers would approve' (2008:126). It is doubtful whether this approach can lead to any examination or reassessment of one's own practice or the collaborative teaching dialogues which challenge our beliefs and foster change and development. It may produce short-term results. The administrative box is ticked and face-saving for both parties is achieved; however, this does not indicate a longer-term view of development.

2.4 Development

A vast body of literature supports the fact that the desire for development must come from within and not be prescribed. In counselling theory, the influential work of Carl Rogers still holds sway. He affirmed that no approach which relies on 'the acceptance of something which is taught' (1961:32, cited in Freeman, 1982:25) can bring about change. In mainstream teacher education (Faneslow, 1988) and second language teacher development (Freeman, 1982), distinctions have been drawn between training and development, reinforcing the inherent difference that training is done by others while development is 'something that can be done only by and for *oneself'* (Wallace, 1991:3). Teacher development has been compared to personal development (Underhill, 1992; Freeman, 2002) both of which can only be self-initiated (Wallace, 1991). It is important to note, however, that a desire for continued professional development, once initiated, requires the support of others: 'No one else can do it for us, though other people can be indispensible in helping us do that' (Underhill, 1992:79). A deficiency has been identified in EAP departments' ability to provide sufficient in-house development (Krzanowski, 2001). This suggests that in EAP, provision is expected and that the desire for development is present despite the existence of a 'training gap' (Sharpling, 2002: 88).

This review of the literature has highlighted emerging issues which require further exploration. Experience and prior knowledge form the base on which new knowledge and learning can be built (Freeman, 1982) and articulating experiential knowledge in collaborative encounters facilitates learning (Edge, 2003). Development must be self-initiated (Wallace, 1991) and reflective (Askew and Lodge, 2000). Reflection (Schön, 1983; Freeman, 2002; Hooton, 2008), self-awareness and the acknowledgment of personal theories of practice are all important factors in bringing about change (Roberts, 1998) which can only occur

once inner realm beliefs have been considered and challenged (Hooton, 2008). However, the potential for tension during the event is high (Copland, 2010). Misaligned expectations may contribute to a sense of frustration (Copland, 2008) and this can be further aggravated by discourse choices and a POC structure which prompts a judgmental element (Watkins, 2000) and limits its potential as a development tool.

The following chapter presents the research methods used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

In Chapter 2, I identified a gap in the literature whereby in-service teacher perceptions of the POC are rarely explored. Furthermore, empirical studies into EAP tutor perceptions of the POC have been overlooked to date. Learning is a collaborative venture; therefore empirical study which enables EAP tutors to have a voice in the observation process is essential in order to address the deficiency in the literature. In this chapter, I outline my research strategy, which is inevitably influenced by my underlying research approach. This approach is considered in order to ensure compatibility with my research framework. I then detail my data collection and framework for data understanding before acknowledging the limitations of the study.

3.1 Research strategy

This dissertation details a case study of the EAP POC which allows for in-depth exploration of the event in order to gain a richer understanding and implement research objectives 1-3. A case study allows the researcher to explore the characteristics of a specific event and analyse it intensively (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). It is a suitable tool for encouraging a thick description of the issue (Dörnyei, 2007) during which the researcher reflects on the situation in order to 'see' what the participant is doing (Thomas, 2009). Case studies are valued as a research strategy when examining areas where knowledge is shallow or incomplete (Dörnyei, 2007), enabling the researcher to contribute to 'existing experience and humanistic understanding' (Stake, 1978:7).

In this practice-based study, I apply an interpretive approach to complement the real-life aspect of a case study. The literature review has raised the issue of subjective teacher knowledge, accrued by experience, which results in a clearer

understanding of how learning occurs in a given context. It is important for me not to reject this principle in terms of my research strategy and so the subjective contextual knowledge I bring to this study is a valuable tool towards gaining a deeper understanding of the particular case.

According to this research approach, I have a necessarily subjective involvement in this study and this subjectivity is valued in practitioner research. Inevitably, all approaches to research have limitations (which I detail in section 3.5); however, the argument for well-executed qualitative research to be practice-based has an established history. Stenhouse's (1975) theory of the teacher as researcher came from a belief that a teacher researching her own context was preferable to studies by decontextualised academics. Practitioner research has gained currency as a credible form of research in the field of education. More specifically, in EAP there is an expectation that practitioners conduct research, with the research-teaching relationship helping to further the professionalization of the field (McDonough, 2005).

The reflexive role which the practice-based researcher plays is fundamental to the interpretive approach in this dissertation. The interpretive framework I use, now firmly acknowledged in research methodology (Bartlett and Burton, 2006), is underpinned by the principle that we interpret through language. It is not possible to position oneself 'outside' language to achieve objectivity; therefore it is interpreted subjectively and linguistically (Arcario, 1994). A reflexive approach entails individual understanding to interpret a situation (Bartlett and Burton, 2006), although this simplification would leave it vulnerable to criticisms such as those who have devalued 'the tendency to individual reflexivity' (Adelman, 1993:21). Reflexivity must be a rigorous and systematic process of understanding

and challenging our researcher 'selves'. An interpretive paradigm complements practitioner research as it draws on the contextual knowledge of the researcher. The tutor and researcher are not neutral or value-free (Iano, 1986, cited in Hartas, 2010:20) and the practical knowledge and understanding which is accumulated in a given context are valuable and applicable. Applying accumulated knowledge to the context I am exploring enhances the research, allowing for problematisation of the situation (Burns, 2010). I do not view this application of knowledge as 'baggage' (Cohen *et al*., 2007), a term which suggests that researcher knowledge is somehow negatively loaded; instead I view the emphasis on reflexivity as a positive inclusion in my research strategy.

3.2 Data collection: Sampling

This research explores a sensitive event (the POC) in a complex environment (an EAP department within a university). As such, I have outlined in detail the context of this study in Chapter 1. It is also important to note the sampling strategy to frame the interpretations which follow in Chapter 4.

By adopting an ecological approach to sampling, I have attempted to maintain the integrity of the real-world make-up of the EAP department when sampling this context. As mentioned previously, observations of temporary and year-round tutors can occur at the same point in the academic year. It is therefore important to ensure that the sample of participants reflects a similar blend of teaching staff (Appendix D[4]). Furthermore, this form of purposive sampling of participants was a principled decision which enabled me to select male and female participants according to the typical ratio in this presessional department (approximately 1:3) and non-native/native English speaking teachers (approximately 1:6). Participants

[4] In Appendix D, I provide interview and participant details, including length of EAP experience and employment status.

also needed to fulfil the criteria of having up to five years' EAP experience at the time of interviewing in order to fit the 'novice' category. Finally the sample comprised of colleagues, a practical consideration which allowed easier access, some of whom I had known for two years and others for just two weeks. Again, this was a deliberate selection to address the accusations of bias which purposeful sampling has attracted (Cohen *et al*., 2007).

3.3 Data collection: Interviews

The method of data collection should suit the context of the research (Bartlett and Burton, 2006). Interviews are an appropriate method to explore perceptions and experiences and can probe more deeply than a questionnaire (Thomas, 2009). They encourage an exchange of views between two interested parties (Hobson and Townsend, 2010) and, if well-designed, can produce rich data. I used a semi-structured interview with a set of guiding questions and prompts (Dörnyei, 2007) in my interview guide (Appendix E). Semi-structured interviews are a popular choice in qualitative research as they allow the interviewer to raise key questions on a specific issue alongside the opportunity to explore points and perceptions as they develop. I wanted to achieve collaborative exploration which is contextually-based (Fontana and Frey, 2005) as this seemed to reflect my understanding of the POC as a collaborative event. I acknowledge that I was interacting with the participants. This has been described as 'empathetic' interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 2005:696) and reinforces the idea that in this research approach the qualitative researcher is not striving for neutrality. The semi-structured interview suited my research context as I had sufficient prior knowledge of the situation (the POC) which informed broad questions around this event (Dörnyei, 2007).

A combination of closed and open-ended questions enabled both parties to contribute to the direction of the interview (Hobson and Townsend, 2010). The

opening question (*How long have you been teaching EAP?*) allowed me to obtain useful details whilst putting the participant at ease with a straightforward question (Dörnyei, 2007). This was followed by a request designed to elicit a lengthy response (*Talk me through a typical EAP observation session for you*.) and to explore research objective 1. As the interviews progressed, I moved from general to specific questioning. To foster meaningful responses, sensory question characteristics (for example, *What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?*) and oblique questioning (*If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?*) were introduced to illuminate the issue from different perspectives (Richards, 2003). A final question (*Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?*) was included to encourage participants' contribution to the agenda.

Once ethical approval was granted, the six participants were approached informally and given a general idea of the nature of the research, with no obligation to take part. This was then followed up by email to confirm whether or not they would like to participate. Research information and consent forms were sent in advance of the interview (Appendices D and E), signed and a copy retained by both parties. A sample interview guide was sent out before the interview to provide an indication of content and tutors were invited to bring notes if they found it helpful. All six potential participants agreed to be interviewed and digitally recorded. During the transcription process, pseudonyms were applied and identifying features removed (for example, references to countries of employment). After transcription (Appendix H), each recording and transcript was emailed to the corresponding participant who was invited to raise any concerns they had and check the transcripts for accuracy. The Social Research Association (2003) warns that 'a particular configuration of attributes can, like a fingerprint, frequently identify its owner beyond reasonable doubt'

therefore assurances regarding anonymity were given and emphasised as participants were employed in the university and would be potentially commenting on a delicate and sensitive situation.

An initial exploratory phase was conducted with two participants (Appendix D) to assess the efficacy of the research instrument. The interview questions were generally eliciting the responses I was interested in and generating sufficiently rich data in the time-scale I had allowed (20 minutes). I considered my behaviour as an interviewer, noting points where I felt I could have probed further and the type of responses my questions elicited (Richards, 2003). These two interviews were transcribed and deconstructed (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) in order to gain a sense of emerging, temporary themes (Appendix I). Whilst I did not apply conversation analysis notations to the transcripts, I did note pauses, laughter, tone, speed, emphasis and 'struggles' to convey meaning. The extracts which are offered in this dissertation were tidied by taking out habitual empty phrases, such as *you know*, to improve fluency for the reader.

After collecting preliminary data in the exploratory phase, I returned to the literature which highlighted the importance of referring to tutor experience in the POC. Here data 'silence' became as relevant as data content; although a lack of observer teaching experience was discussed, the value of tutor experience was absent from the data. This influenced a revision of the interview guide, with the addition of the question *What can your experience of teaching EAP contribute to the feedback session?* This process of data collection was then up-scaled in the main phase of the research which took place on campus between July and September 2012. The study was carefully planned to ensure that the majority of the interviews (three out of four) could take place in a limited time frame before

the summer observation process started. This lessened the likelihood of participants focusing on their most recent POC and helped to build a more accurate picture of a typical event. The process of data collection and understanding was interspersed with a renewed literature search which was essential to the research process. 'The goals of reporting require that you depart from the data but ground all the threads of your theory in data' (Richards, 2009:202). The literature acts as additional data to inform emerging themes and underline issues absent from the data which may be relevant to the study and inform conclusions.

3.4 Framework for data understanding

I have adopted the term *understanding* in the title for this section as it is less restrictive than *analysis* which, in a qualitative study, can imply a 'discrete phase of a research project' (Waite, 1993:680). *Understanding* conveys more accurately the process of making sense of the data, emphasising that this is ongoing and rarely complete (*ibid*). The term also implies a sense of insider knowledge congruent with my research approach.

A non-linear approach to the understanding of qualitative data is necessary to notice emerging themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, it can help to maintain the sense of exploration which is necessary when analysing rich data (Richards, 2003) and is beneficial in preventing coding from becoming an 'automated task' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:240). I applied labels to search for 'temporary constructs' (Thomas, 2009) within each interview and then cross-referenced them with the other interviews. I found it helpful to refer to a data understanding prompt (Appendix J) as an aide mémoire when studying the data. In order to prove an audit trail (Dörnyei, 2007) from process to product and address the issue of confirmability, an overview of these constructs and the

interviews in which they occurred are provided in Appendix K and their frequency is recorded in Appendix L. The units of analysis, for the most part, comprised words and phrases from the data (Cohen *et al*., 2007), for example *improve, defend* and *experience*. This approach to retrieval helped to mitigate my intrusion on the data. I also found it useful to combine the transcripts into one data set to maintain a wider perspective alongside a more detailed focus. Inevitably a research tension exists between the two and I wanted to limit the atomising of data (*ibid*).

A process of constant comparison was used to compare new and existing data and the categories were rearranged, expanded and sub-divided over time helping to build the narrative which follows in Chapter 4. I felt it was important to recognise that in terms of emerging themes 'frequency does not equal importance' (Cohen *et al*., 2007:481); thus, low-frequency items such as *reflection* were considered alongside high-frequency units (for example, *good* and *bad*). This approach of 'purposive coding' encourages the data, not the researcher, to dictate the categories or labels which apply (Richards, 2009:95). If a construct did not fit into a category, a new one was created until a measure of saturation was achieved, although as I have mentioned earlier, this is not a stage which I can claim is ever complete.

3.5 Limitations

My overall research aims and objectives informed my choice of research strategy (case study) and data collection technique (interviews). These elements combine to form a qualitative research approach to this study. I find that both practitioner enquiry and an interpretive approach sit comfortably in the qualitative paradigm. A case study approach cannot lead to claims of generalisability; nonetheless, the

EAP centre in this study is not atypical and foregrounding the context of this study allows readers to assess to what extent it relates to their context. I therefore claim relatability of the interpretations to other contexts.

'Behind the apparent simplicity of qualitative data there is a good deal of complexity, requiring care and self-awareness from the researcher' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10). Whilst the researcher 'self' (Dadds and Hart, 2001) is acknowledged and, indeed, valued in interpretive analysis, researcher bias is not. I have structured my study to avoid such bias, for example in the design of the questions in the interview guide (Appendix E) and aimed for transparency throughout the study. Full transcripts are provided in Appendix H. Appendix I shows the units of analysis from the exploratory phase and in Appendices I and K all items are detailed, including those which were rejected for this study. It is important to note that I also rejected occurrences of items which I felt were invalidated by my behaviour as an interviewer, for example when it was felt that prompts were 'leading' the participants (Appendix I). My research interest in the POC was initially generated by a feeling that it does not fulfil its potential as a development opportunity. I have tried to avoid confirmation bias by adopting an open-minded and respectful approach towards all participant opinions so that I do not 'cherry-pick' constructs to ratify such prior assumptions.

Concerning the sample, mechanisms were put into place to further eliminate researcher bias, for example sampling participants in the main phase who I had only known for a short time. I knew the participants in the exploratory phase better as, at this stage, it was expedient to select people who I could easily approach. A sample size of six was considered sufficient to produce as rich an account as possible of the experiences of tutors and the sample generates

'internal generalizability' (Dörnyei, 2007:58) by incorporating a ratio of male/female and non-native/native English speaking tutors (Appendix D) representative of this EAP department as a whole.

The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) raises the tensions which the dual roles of teacher and researcher present. Insider knowledge of the POC could cause data contamination; however, I have argued earlier that practitioner research has benefits in terms of researcher presence. In addition, most established researchers have considerable background in the context of their studies (Dörnyei, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight a deliberate strategy which I employed. The timeline for the study allowed me to install a time gap between the interviews and transcript analysis which helped to create a sense of distance. In terms of confidentiality, assurances were made on the research information and consent forms (Appendices F and G). These also detailed supervisor contact information and carried the institution logo. Additional verbal guarantees were made at the time of the interviews and I assured colleagues of my research credentials, detailing this MA research study.

Finally, I did not introduce participant validation into my study which involves sharing the data understanding with the participants to establish whether or not they support the findings. This leaves the research open to the criticism that a single researcher's interpretive analysis is insufficient and liable to bias, thereby potentially compromising internal validity. I decided against this form of validation for a number of reasons. Firstly, it relies on the participants' ability to reflect critically and analytically on the data and this requires a certain amount of detachment which is not always possible when that data is self-generated. There is also a necessary shift in roles, from participant to researcher, and this calls for

a level of research experience which may not be present. Furthermore, if participant checks are carried out on the data, disagreement regarding the interpretive validity of the results still does not establish which interpretation is more accurate, the researcher's or the participants' (Dörnyei, 2007). Finally, if it is to fulfil its function of enhancing overall validity, participant validation should be regarded as additional data (*ibid*) and this would require careful analysis rather than superficial checks with participants.

This chapter has outlined my research approach and the methodology for this study. A qualitative practice-based approach has been discussed and the benefits of an iterative cycle of data collection, understanding and referral to the literature have been highlighted. In the next chapter, I present my data interpretations and comment on the issues which emerged.

Chapter 4: Data Interpretations

This chapter presents emerging issues from the case study described in Chapter 3. I have organised my findings by themes, moving from tutor experience through to development, reflecting the organisation in the literature review in Chapter 2. Having previously mentioned that I assume a reflective approach to teacher education theory, I have included a section on reflection to acknowledge its relevance in the literature and to the data interpretations.

4.1 Experience

The literature emphasises the necessity for observers to draw on teachers' experience as a key source of learning and development (Freeman, 1982:24). The exploratory phase interviews include a number of references to *experience*; however, in each case, these references are related either to a lack of observer experience or a perceived lack of their own experience and not to the value of their teaching experience. Sarah responds to a prompt on observer experience, emphasising her desire to acquire ideas from the POC:

> Obviously, it's good if someone's got a lot of experience and they've got new… I think it's having new ideas – getting new ideas and new ways to do things. […] I think it's just about the ideas, really – whether you are new to EAP or whether you've been doing it for 100 years, it's about how good the ideas are, and guiding […] to give you something back.

The sense that knowledge is provided is apparent, especially in Sarah's desire for the observer to 'give […] something back'. This raises questions as to whether her expectations of the POC match those of her observer. The literature confirms that a conflict of expectations can exist in general pre-service training (Brandt, 2008) and in an EAP pre-service setting (Vásquez, 1994) and that this can cause tension (*ibid*). It also raises the issue of whether the delivery of the POC reflects developments in teaching approaches with a move from the *received knowledge* model to a *reflective* model (Wallace, 1991). Failing to recognise the value of prior teaching experience, on the parts of both observer and tutor, could cause tutors

to look upwards for guidance (indeed Sarah mentions 'guiding'), rather than seeking collaboration to construct new knowledge.

References to a perceived lack of EAP experience are also evident in the exploratory phase data. Rachel refers to herself as 'still a newbie', suggesting that she is somehow inexperienced or new to teaching. Sarah also stresses that she has 'only been doing it [EAP] three-and-a-half years'. This may not be simply due to a lack of value attached to their EAP experience, but to the fact that EAP tutors are considered *new* or *novice* by BALEAP if they have less than five years EAP experience; indeed, Rachel describes Sarah as 'novice'. The participants in this study have between three and four years' EAP teaching experience (Appendix D) yet their *novice* label may affect how they perceive themselves and their attitudes to development opportunities. Thus, the value their contribution has to the POC may be under-recognised by both parties and result in mismatched expectations and an observer-driven event.

After the exploratory phase of data understanding, a further question was added to the interview guide: *What can your experience of teaching EAP bring to the feedback session?* Explicit questioning on this yielded a variety of responses ranging from those who had not considered this before to more direct references to the value of experiential knowledge. Louise clearly had not considered the value of her experience before and spent some time thinking about it prior to the interview:

> I wrote something here because I couldn't think what to say. I wasn't quite sure what you meant by this. I think having the experience of encouraging students to try and be more independent. If you're wanting to improve your teaching, I think you can ask for suggestions, for example, for how you could improve.

Other participants were able to respond more readily. Becky describes her knowledge of students and the classroom in terms of experiential knowledge:

> I think that my knowledge of the students, because I get to see them every day almost. My knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and of the particular dynamic of the classroom because every classroom is different.

Andrew also referred to the student and classroom dynamics:

> So my experience that I can bring is I'm like the frontline troops, I'm the one who's in the field doing all the work. They're the generals at the back saying, "Push forward," but without really realising how things change in the classroom, how dynamics change, how the students change.

The same participant, Andrew, acknowledges the tension which can exist between observers and observed, expressing a somewhat pejorative view of the managers who observed him in one employment:

> I lived and worked in [country] for a long time and I would get these people coming along to classes observing me, they were managers […]. And I thought, "You've got no experience, I've got much more experience than you. And you have no idea what you're talking about because I've done this thousands of times.

He values his experience and maligns his managers for their apparent lack of it. This underlines the merits of drawing on tutor experience. Individualised knowledge of what works, and indeed, what to do (Freeman, 1996) is a valuable teaching resource and a valid agenda item in the POC.

While a lack of observer and tutor experience is highlighted in the data, there is also a sense that, when prompted, tutors can start to recognise the value of their teaching experience. Waite comments that both parties in the POC 'are responsible for the environment they co-construct' (1993:697). A collaborative event which acknowledge the value of tutor experience is necessary to prevent the tutor from looking upwards for ideas. This tutor expectation may put ongoing pressure on the observer to deliver the 'gift' (Askew and Lodge, 2000:113) of knowledge and perpetuate an imbalance of talk. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

4.2 Discourse and structure

Participant discourse choices and POC structure appear to be inter-related therefore I have combined these two themes. In the section which follows, I present five sub-themes (balance of talk; defence; resignation; improve; reflection) to illustrate the impact which discourse and structure can have on the event.

4.2.1 Balance of talk

A question regarding the ideal balance of talk was included in the interview guide (Who do you think *should do* most of the talking during EAP feedback?). Two respondents agreed that a '50/50' balance was desirable. Another participant responded that '50/50' was ideal, although possibly tipping in favour of the tutor, and the other three respondents thought that the tutor should do the majority of the speaking in the POC, one of whom added that 'it would depend on the way in which it was structured'. Becky's remark is a typical one:

> I think ideally it would be the tutor but that's not always the case.

After the exploratory phase of data understanding, a question was inserted into the interview guide addressing the perceptions of actual balance of talk in the POC (Who do you think *does* most of the talking during EAP feedback?). This allowed for a comparison of desired and actual balance of talk helping to address research objectives 2 and 3. One participant thought that he does more of the talking, whilst the remaining three tutors in the main phase felt that the balance of talk is in favour of the observer. Louise confirms that it is usually her observer who talks more:

> I think the person who's done the observation generally does more talking.

The literature has called for a move towards a more dialogic event (Brandt, 2006; Copland, Ma and Mann, 2009). Studies of pre-service teacher POCs have explored expectations regarding the balance of talk, with trainees anticipating a reasonably

active role in the discussion (Vásquez, 2004; Hyland and Lo, 2006); nevertheless, the figures presented in these studies reveal that the observers speak considerably more. It seems that the expectations of pre-service tutors are not met and this is also reflected in the perceptions of in-service EAP tutors. Whilst they desire a balance of talk, they do not feel it is always achieved. An empirical study has been conducted using POC recordings with in-service EAP tutors concluding that the POC typically remains observer dominated and that it is possible that by aligning both parties' expectations, a more balanced conference can be achieved (Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press).

Despite this apparent mismatch of expectations, references are made in the data to *having a chat* (Tom), *discussion* (Andrew) and *conversation* (Becky) which indicate that a more collaborative event is achievable. That said, suggestions as to how the POC might be changed reveal interesting improvements in this area. Louise comments on her preferred balance of talk and offers a solution:

> I think it should be about a 50-50 maybe, but maybe a bit more emphasis on the tutor. Because I think with some EAP observation feedback I haven't had much opportunity to ask questions at the end and I think that's something important.

Hyland and Lo (2006) conclude that the teachers in their study did not have sufficient opportunity to raise issues outside of the observers' agenda and Louise raises the same point. The two-way questioning she suggests may help to empower tutors, giving them more voice, and redress the balance of talk.

A constructivist approach to student learning is often adopted in EAP, encouraging dialogue and questioning, although the extent to which this paradigm is embedded in tutor development remains unclear. Tutors expect a dialogic event, yet it appears that, in many cases, this does not occur. I have mentioned that a shared responsibility exists for a dualistic encounter; however, if tutors are not

given enough opportunity to raise questions and issues, then the balance of talk may remain tipped in favour of the observer. One-way questioning can contribute to the sense of being 'on trial' which is explored in the next section.

4.2.2 Defence

Tensions exist in the POC, exemplified by participants who use judgmental language to describe it. Andrew uses the discourse of defending to justify his teaching actions:

> It gives you chance to defend yourself, you know, we've all got reasons for doing things.

He then moderates this initial statement when probed further:

Interviewer: I'm interested when you say 'defend yourself' because what do you mean by that?

Andrew: Defend, I mean defend my position, not defend myself. I think this is one person's opinion of me, or of what I'm doing. […] But I'm also open enough to learn from that. So when I say defend myself, I mean defend my position if I think I'm right […].

The general discourse used to describe the observation experience, for example the term *feedback*, may influence both parties' perceptions of the event and lead them towards a default position (Hyland and Lo, 2006) whereby each player adopts the expected role in the traditional supervisory conference with its tendency towards evaluation (Haggerty, 1995, cited in Askew and Lodge, 2000:66 suggests that evaluative content is as high as 60%). This can generate evaluative discourse and a defensive reaction in tutors as they justify their teaching actions.

Examining high-frequency language choices in the data provides further insight into tutor perceptions of the POC. The data as a whole includes a significant number of references to *good* and *bad* and the observed lesson going *well* and *wrong* (Appendices I and J). Louise describes a memorable POC:

> You'd have seen me giving my ideas about what I thought was good about the lesson and what I didn't think was so good.

The high frequency of the word *good* in the data might indicate a general positivity when describing the event. In fact, Vásquez (2004) reports similar high occurrences of the item *good* in her corpus of post-observation meeting data, concluding that this indicates an overall positive tone. However, the data in this study shows that items such as *good/bad*, *strengths/weaknesses*, *positive/negative* and *well/wrong* often occur as contrasting pairs (Appendix L) and this offers insight into the typical structure of a post-observation meeting. Louise continues by addressing the structure of the POC in more detail:

> I tend to, my way of when I'm asked for my opinion, I tend to start by saying the things that I think didn't go so well and then talking about the things I think went well. Whereas the person giving the feedback tends to do it the other way round.

The default structure of positive/negative comments can lead to evaluative discourse which underlines 'wrong' actions. While the structure described here lacks the final positive layer of the so-called 'feedback sandwich' described by Edge (1993), it does indicate that typical POC stages exist in which strengths and weaknesses are targeted. Edge supports the preservation of positive/negative/positive stages in the POC, arguing that a little criticism facilitates learning and that ending on a positive note preserves professional relationships; however, he acknowledges that the structure is viewed by some as 'corny and predictable' (Edge, 1993:1). It is this predictability which can result in a stale event generating evaluative language and feelings of defensiveness. Cosh (1999) questions to what extent teaching performance is improved by being told what is wrong with it and confirms that this approach is likely to produce a defensive response. Louise proposes the following antidote to this affective reaction:

> I think I would possibly like to know some of the things I'm going to be asked about beforehand just because I think it's useful rather than being put on the spot.

Here the tutor appears to have a more collaborative approach in mind, although these expectations may not be matched by those of the observer. Such a mismatch may cause frustration (Copland, 2008) and tension (Copland, 2010).

All professionals have their own discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, cited in Arcario, 1994:84) including the teaching profession; however, discourse choices may not always promote progress or development. Gebhard (2005) acknowledges the impact which language choices can have on the event and finds setting language rules for discussing observations very productive. Attention also needs to be paid to the relationship between structure and discourse. A positive/negative framework can generate judgmental language and produce feelings of defensiveness.

4.2.3 Resignation

Discourse choices which suggest evaluation, delivered in a framework which further generates the contrasting of good/bad, can also lead to a sense of resignation. Rachel, referring to the high number of EAP POCs she feels she has experienced, uses the following metaphor:

> It was just because that's how the cookie crumbled, really, how it went.

She appears to accept the situation because there is little she can do to change it. She goes on to describe a typical EAP POC:

> There are a couple of times where I might feel that I have to justify myself – and then just take on board what I've been told, and smile and nod and say, "Thank you very much."

Like Andrew, she describes justifying herself, then summarises the event in a manner which suggests that if she politely agrees with what she has 'been told', then the situation will be more bearable. When prompted on her word choice of

good and *bad* to describe the POC content, she introduces *box-ticking* as a term to describe aspects of the observed lesson which were deemed acceptable:

Interviewer: Okay. So you mentioned there good or bad, and then you very quickly corrected yourself. So is that how you feel – you go through the good things, and then you go through the bad things, or what's the balance like for you?

Rachel: I've been fortunate enough – they have mostly been areas that have been… I think good is probably the wrong word but areas that were more than satisfactory, and areas that ticked the boxes, I suppose.

Her response indicates that she has experienced evaluation and judgment in the POC, although it is not clear whether this is generated solely by the observer or if it also includes self-criticism. That said, Rachel's attitude towards the process is prefaced by her earlier adjective choice, considering herself 'fortunate' if she escapes the experience with only limited criticism. The structure she outlines and the good/bad content indicate a supervisory approach to the post-observation event. Freeman (1982) suggests that this approach is more suited to beginner teachers and raises concerns that it conveys an 'underlying assumption that the class ought to be conducted in a certain way' (Freeman, 1982:22). This may also influence tutor perceptions of their professional status, encouraging them to feel like a 'novice'.

The sense of resignation is continued by Rachel when she is asked *If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?* Her response, after a pause and laughter, suggests that she is reconciled to this professional obligation:

> What would I change? That I didn't have to do it (laughter). No, I know that's not realistic. I don't really know, actually. I've never thought of it like that. It's just something that has to be done, whether you like it or not, really.

Sarah continues this theme when prompted on her feelings after the event:

Interviewer: So how do you feel when you come out of a feedback session then?

Sarah: Oh, there you go – that's done. Not another one for another year. (laughter) Ticked a box there.

Box-ticking implies an exercise in which only superficial attention is paid to the event and this attitude in teachers may be generated by a similar response to the process from those in supervisory roles (Chamberlain *et al.*, 2011). Framing development in these administrative terms suggests that the developmental potential of the event is not fulfilled. This is confirmed by Kersten and Israel (2005) who caution that if observation schedules lack the flexibility to allow for constructive 'feedback' to a range of teachers, it can again result in box-ticking bureaucracy and not an opportunity for development.

Until tutors have 'experientially learnt the value of "co-operative development-like" situations' (Edge, 2003:393), they may remain resigned to a situation which they feel 'ticks a box', but does not fulfil its potential for development. A directive approach subordinates the teacher (Brandt, 2006) and treating EAP tutors in this way is likely to affect their attitude towards the POC and may generate a sense of tension, defensiveness or resignation. If observers default to such an approach and structure, they confirm that it remains the accepted norm. Waite demonstrates that trainee teachers who understand the stages of the POC and accept the observer's role are considered to be 'unproblematic' (1993:691). It may also be politic for EAP tutors to accept the structure and assumed function of the EAP POC, embedded, as they are, in a landscape which lacks job stability.

4.2.4 Improve

The bias towards evaluation in the POC discourse is once more suggested by participants' choice of *improve* as a verb to describe content. Rachel recalls a typical EAP POC in which

> you talk about the good things, the bad things – or, sorry, the areas to improve.

The tutor initially selects word choices which imply evaluation, then softens this to what she feels is the more acceptable phrase of 'areas to improve'. Andrew exhibits the same shift in discourse:

> So usually I'm expected to fill in what I think went well and what I thought went wrong, what could be improved, as it were.

Louise opts for *strengths* and *weaknesses* to describe POC content and again identifies the inclusion of improvements on the agenda:

> So usually the tutor has started off by asking me how I felt that the lesson went, and then just giving me a chance to say what I thought the strengths and weaknesses were before giving any feedback themselves. […] Most of the time I've found people have started by talking about the strengths of the lesson and then maybe going on to talk about things that could be improved.

Improve retains a sense of judgment since it identifies aspects of the lesson which need to be done better (Arcario, 1994). The extract is also notable for confirming a positive-negative structure, typical in a supervisory approach, and this can cause a bias towards evaluative discourse. References to *improve* in the data largely address how the lesson itself could be bettered and not to tutor-generated comments regarding their own improvement or development.

I include *improve* as a sub-section because it is mentioned by the most participants (five out of six: Appendix K) and is the second highest occurring item overall (Appendix L). While this may indicate a bias towards evaluation in the EAP POC, it may also be a language item which does not occur in the POC itself, but is used by tutors to describe the event. In this regard, the item could be recasting of actual language, selected because the tutors themselves want to improve their own teaching. This is an interesting point to consider and would place both parties in a different light; the observer, in this case, is employing less judgmental

language and the tutor is showing a willingness to engage in their own improvement.

4.2.5 Reflection

The structure and content of the POC may be influenced by the choice of opening question. In Louise's extract above, she identifies an opening observer question of *How do you feel the lesson went?* Becky's description of a typical POC suggests a similar initial question:

> Well, I think that usually what would happen I would spend a few minutes going through my own thoughts about how things had gone and things that I would do differently.

While this question may be well-intentioned and used to promote reflection, the strategy of opening the conference in this way can be counterproductive as Louise suggests in her recommendations for redressing the balance of talk:

> "Oh, what did you think of how the lesson went?" It's very vaguely worded and so you can say a certain amount but I think there a more structured piece of paper asking you some specific things that you could perhaps think about before doing the observation feedback, then you'd actually be able to say more and then it could be more constructive from both sides.

Her reference to vague wording is an interesting one. The need for language to have a 'slippery' quality (Wajnryb, 1998:532) is raised in the literature, especially in the context of the POC, so that the observer has a escape route as they test out teacher reactions to what they say (Wajnryb, 1998); nevertheless, a lack of specificity can frustrate teachers and inhibit balanced and constructive dialogue. The apparent prevalence of this question as a starting point for the POC can result in both parties 'reflecting' on the lesson using the evaluative discourse of *went well* and *went wrong*, items which appeared throughout the data (Appendices I and J). As teachers progress and develop, they move from the technical concerns of the classroom through to practical reflectivity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), but reflection requires socialisation (Valli, 1997, cited in Brandt, 2008:43), that is to

say, discussion. If the discourse of the POC, in particular the opening question, is not encouraging a reflective conversation, then a valuable opportunity is missed.

Reflection is a collaborative process in which teaching insights and theories are tested against those of colleagues (Schön, 1983). Reflection as an individual activity can lead to self-criticism, exemplified by Rachel:

> I am terrible at the reflection point because I really do give myself a hard time.

However, she later conveys a more positive attitude, and an ongoing sense of reflection, when prompted on the importance of personal purpose in the observation process:

Interviewer: Do you always have the same personal purpose, or does that change?

Rachel: It does change because, again, it depends on the class, it depends on the level of the class that you're teaching, it depends on also, as well, for example… Because as you are, and I am, we're studying, so there's a constant thing in my head going on – "Okay. Right. I need…" And also, with jobs as well, that you think that I feel… Like personal development in what you're doing. […] So, in the back of my head, there's always little things going on of how this is going, what's going on, what I can improve. It just changes depending on the class. And I know that's a really vague answer (laughs) but it just depends a lot.

The participant struggles at times to articulate her thoughts, yet a sense of self-evaluation is evident. This inner struggle to verbalise emerging ideas is valued in adult learning theory as is the link between intellectual knowledge (Rachel mentions that she is studying) and experiential knowledge (Edge, 2003). 'Implicit in any classroom actions' (Brumfit and Rossner, 1982: 227) are individualised theories of practice and tutors need development opportunities to articulate these in order to make implicit classroom practice explicit.

Consideration and challenge of personal theories enables the external input from colleagues to change behaviour (Hooton, 2008), with the cognitive and interpretive processes required to do this also being fundamental to development.

Reference to such personal theories is not apparent in the data. This is not to say that tutors have disregarded them, but there is an emerging sense that consideration of these theories is not occurring in the POC. Furthermore, vague wording and questioning may be counterproductive and generate evaluative comments from both parties rather than reflection and discussion. If the POC is not delivered within a truly reflective framework, it inhibits its value as a development opportunity.

4.3 Development

A direct question in the interview guide concerning development[5] yielded interesting responses which further the discussion on the nature of reflection, learning and development. Sarah responds:

> I think it should be to help teachers. How? I don't know. I suppose by suggesting alternative ways to do things, or, perhaps, how you can get more out of what you've done […].

The sense of the tutor looking upwards is evident with language choices such as *help* indicating a 'helping relationship' with the tutor as the subordinate (Arcario, 1994). When this help is not considered sufficient, mismatched expectations occur and this may account for Sarah's response concerning her feelings after the event:

> I don't know if I've ever come out with anything like, "Wow, that's a brilliant idea. I've never thought of it."

Becky responds more positively to the question of development:

> When I started teaching academic writing and English for academic purposes I was very keen to get as much feedback as possible. […] It was just helpful to be told that it's important to help the students develop their independent learning skills.

[5] It is important to note here the wording of the interview guide question: How have EAP feedback sessions *helped* you develop as a teacher? The word *help* is used in the question and may have influenced the responses which it elicited. It is an item I would avoid using in future development studies.

She is clearly referring to her starting point in EAP when she found a more directive approach 'helpful'; however, in order to add context to her comment, it is interesting to note that Becky does not have a typical EFL background and that she entered the language teaching profession as an EAP tutor. This may explain her openness to this approach. Rachel's attitude to feedback is, on the surface, less enthusiastic:

Interviewer: How does the EAP feedback session help you, or teachers, to develop?

Rachel: Any feedback is always useful, to a certain point. You take away with it what you will. And you might not take onboard everything because you might not agree […] and you might both just say, "Well, okay, what we're both doing is EAP but we're just not meeting in the middle." And so you've got to come to some sort of compromise and hope it works.

The impact of her initial comment that 'feedback' is always useful is softened by the addition of 'to a certain point'. A message of disagreement and compromise is evident, yet there is also a sense of negotiation which can be productive. She appears to select information from the event which is relevant to her teaching, indicating engagement with the cognitive processes which enable the challenge of her personal teaching theories.

Self-direction plays an important role in enabling change and development to take place (Gray, 2012). Louise expresses a willingness to engage in the process, taking steps towards self-directed development:

> We're encouraging students in EAP to go and do things on their own so I think it's good if we can, after observations, be encouraged to go and do the same thing actually, want to go and improve the areas that we need to work on.

While Louise appears to value input from others, an aspect of development which has been highlighted in the literature (Underhill, 1992), she also raises an interesting point in EAP. Student autonomy is valued, but Louise seems to recognise a paradox in that tutors are not always similarly encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. This responsibility has been described in

the literature on EAP as 'crucial' (Sharpling, 2002:89), with an important caveat that motivation in reality can be low as most EAP tutors are employed on part-time or temporary contracts and very often hourly paid (Sharpling, 2002). The literature also highlights a lack of appropriate conditions in which self-directed development can occur; resources and time may not be sufficient (Gray, 2012), the latter worsened by the ongoing intensification of teachers' lives (Wei *et al*., 2009, cited in Gray, 2012:236).

Tom uses the self-imposed label of 'early stage' when making more explicit references to development:

> Even though I've been teaching for a few years now, I still feel I can develop, I still think that I'm in the early stage, and so I actually like the feedback sessions that I receive from observations.

Although he views himself as an 'early stage' tutor, in this case it is a label which he seems to value and one which allows him the scope to develop further. Alternative terminology such as this may help tutors' sense of self-worth in a profession so often fraught with self-doubt. His sense of ongoing professional development is amplified when he proposes videoing himself as a tool to track his progression:

> If that observation I had last year in [country], for example, was recorded and I can look at that tape now and see how I've progressed since then, I think that would be helpful.

He continues by underlining the benefits this would have for self-directed development:

> Just for yourself, yeah. No one has to see it, just for yourself so you can see your own progression throughout the space of six months or a year and so on.

This is a salient point to end on and highlights the fact that the itinerary for development benefits from individualised input. Tom considers development to be ongoing and self-generated, underlining a private element which can facilitate reflection and progression. This ongoing process of self-development has been highlighted in the literature as a prerequisite for teachers to become autonomous

(Kumaravadivelu, 2001); however, complete autonomy is neither possible, nor desirable as it would be counterproductive in the process of development which is both self-initiated and colleague-dependant.

Despite a sense of looking upwards for development, the data also suggests that tutors are prepared to look inwards in order to reflect on teaching actions, with some evidence of self-directed development. A disparity is evident between apparent attitudes towards student learning and tutor development in EAP. If this gap is to be bridged, autonomy in tutor development needs to be encouraged, particularly in terms of current theory in which learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are considered interdependent (Sinclair, McGrath and Lamb, 2000). Rachel's earlier comments on 'personal purpose' connect personal and professional development, both of which must be self-initiated (Wallace, 1991). Development requires reflection, yet also open-mindedness to the exploration of alternative interpretations of teaching (Cosh, 1999). The EAP POC has the potential to fulfil this role, but only if collaboration, not evaluation, is foregrounded.

In the next section, I summarise the findings in relation to my research objectives.

4.4 Research objectives: Summary of findings

The broad challenge in this research has been to contribute to our understanding of the POC and its role in tutor development. Despite an interview question directly targeting development, overall, the data suggests that discourse choices used to describe the POC reflect its evaluative function more strongly than the developmental function. 'Novice' EAP tutor perceptions of the POC in this study

imply that the event typically follows a pattern of clinical supervision in which a number of features emphasise its evaluation function. A positive/negative pattern is evident as is the opening question of *How do you think it went?* Both features can generate evaluative discourse, exacerbating feelings of tension, resignation and defensiveness which may be felt by both parties. Such tension may be intensified by mismatched expectations. A desire is expressed for an equal balance of talk, but this expectation is, in many cases, unfulfilled. The POC can become an observer-dominated event and one which may engender a box-ticking attitude in both parties.

In order to fulfil the developmental function of the event and for learning to take place, a conversation needs to occur which is dialogic, 'very carefully managed' (Vásquez, 2004:33), constructive and one in which the two parties bring to the table their experience and knowledge of teaching. The observers' failure to recognise the value of tutor experience or to encourage inner realm reflection is a failure to understand the complex nature of learning and development. Raising awareness of the value of experiential knowledge for observers and tutors may help to give tutors more of a voice during the event. The tutor also has an obligation to take responsibility for their own learning, particularly given that they work in an environment which foregrounds student autonomy.

The reflective model of teaching is well-established but tutors should not be judged on their approach to pedagogy in an observation process which is static and prescriptive and likely to discourage the dialogue which can lead to profound change and professional development. Questioning the efficacy of a prescriptive approach for generating changes in awareness and knowledge has been raised in the literature (Bailey, 2009) and is pertinent to this study in which the typical EAP

observation described by the participants is largely directive and incongruent with espoused theories in EAP.

In the closing chapter which follows, I outline my conclusions and recommendations, with reflective comments.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The overall research aim of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the EAP POC and explore to what extent it facilitates development. This chapter draws conclusions based on the research findings from the previous chapter. Recommendations which arise from this study are presented, including suggestions for a flexible observation model, and the research is progressed by offering suggestions for future research. I conclude with my reflections on the study.

5.1 Conclusions and recommendations

This dissertation has highlighted the partnership and shared responsibility necessary for tutor development and draws on theories of learning, including the cognitive processes involved in knowledge construction. Both parties are responsible for participating in a POC which encourages collaboration through acknowledgment of tutor experience, consideration of individual theories of practice and attention to discourse choices. Linking practice and theory is fundamental to all research and, as a practitioner researcher, it seems appropriate that the recommendations in this study address both practical and theoretical considerations.

EAP is not monolithic; departments vary considerably from one context to the next in practices and norms. Nevertheless, EAP has a broad responsibility to recognise student learning processes and we must also acknowledge the processes which tutors go through to acquire knowledge and learn. Unless we place sufficient value on individual teaching theories and experience and encourage the same exploratory and dialogic approach to learning which we do in our students, then we risk accusations of hypocrisy. The tutor must consider their

current conceptions and theories of EAP practice and the observer must be willing to revise their own theories. Challenging personal theories and testing new ones is fundamental to the process of change and development and essential to exploring practice and furthering the development of EAP as a profession.

Discourse choices can have a significant influence on the content of the POC. Making the opening question more specific may help to break the pattern of judgmental discourse which is apparent in the data. Fanselow (1992, cited in Arcario, 1994:25) noted the tendency towards making judgments and the lack of specificity in his study conducted 20 years ago. It seems that these are still issues which need addressing today. Pre-arranged discourse rules can be negotiated, such as eliminating the use of the adjectives *good* and *bad* in order to generate descriptions of teaching rather than evaluations of the tutor.

The complexity of the situation and the unclear purpose of the POC rules out a 'one size fits all' approach. Firstly, institutions must clearly articulate to what extent their observations are fulfilling a developmental and/or evaluative function. Secondly, the observation model requires a flexible design which can be tailored to suit the individual and can accommodate tutor input. Situating the POC within a broader developmental framework encourages tutor autonomy. I propose that tutors select from a range of options, creating an individualised observation model, encouraging differentiated and less formulaic POCs. This can accommodate the differences between year-round tutors and those 'new' to a particular context such as temporary summer colleagues. It may also facilitate engagement and contribution in the POC and encourage a sense of tutor ownership of the process.

5.2 A flexible model of observation

The suggestions outlined below are intended to enhance the developmental function of the POC and contribute to a flexible observation model. They have been informed by the literature review and the data understanding in this study.

- Make criteria for observations clear to tutors (Freeman, 1982; Wallace, 1991; Holland, 2005). Articulate accurately and clearly the purpose of the POC to achieve a closer match of expectations. The well-documented tensions between the developmental and evaluative functions of the event (see for example, Lam 2001) are aggravated when it is unclear to either or both parties what the role of the POC is in their particular context (Brandt, 2006).
- Both parties should consider their EAP personal theories of practice before the observation discussion. Maintain ongoing discussions about teaching outside of the observation process to facilitate the construction of personal theories of practice which can be further revised and tested in the POC. This ongoing dialogue on pedagogy adds momentum to a process of collaborative discussion through to development resulting in 'thriving communities of practice' (Gray, 2012:234).
- Incorporate a negotiated observation focus, preferably tutor-initiated, before or after the observation. Narrowing the agenda stimulates discussion (Edge, 1993; Gebhard, 2005) and lessens the likelihood of tutors having to respond to unknown questions.
- Follow-up observations are desirable and should be situated in a broader observation programme rather than being viewed as discrete annual events (Edge, 1993; Washer, 2006). Setting future learning goals has been identified as a significant factor in the learning process (Watkins, Carnell, Lodge and Whalley, 1996) and the teacher self-selecting future

action is seen as particularly beneficial (Askew and Lodge, 2000; Watkins, 2000).

- Vary the structure of the POC (which can be done in collaboration with the tutor), and ensure that this structure is clear to both parties before the event takes place. This encourages the flexibility to suit a range of tutors and learning preferences (Copland, 2010) whilst lessening the likelihood of a 'box ticking' attitude.
- Influence a change in POC structure and discourse by considering alternative opening questions. Vásquez suggests using: *Would you say that [the class that I observed] was a fairly typical class?* (2004:43). Give tutors more voice in the process by allowing time for tutor-initiated questions.
- Video the observation and use the recording as the basis for collaborative discussion. The tutor can select the part of the lesson to focus on (Gebhard and Ueda-Motonaga, 1992) with both parties analysing the excerpt prior to the meeting. Both parties contribute their analysis and discuss the stage of the lesson. This reduces the sense of being 'put on the spot' and encourages collaborative descriptions of teaching.
- Involve tutors in the design of their observation instrument. Although the value of observation protocols has been acknowledged, the idea that they can only be compiled by experts perpetuates a prescriptive, rather than collaborative, approach (Swan, 1993).
- Set language boundaries for the POC (Gebhard 2005) which can be jointly negotiated or tutor-driven. This can help to reshape the conversation and the learning and development outcome.

5.3 Future research

To progress this study, I propose a number of future avenues for research. Firstly, it would be interesting to see the conclusions if this study were replicated in other EAP departments, both in the UK and internationally. Another possibility is to implement the above model to study the impact which it has on the POC and tutors' perceptions of it. It may also be possible to extend this research into a longitudinal study which tracks participants who become observers, re-interviewing them to explore changes in perceptions. A comparison of the balance of talk before and after the setting of discourse rules and the use of alternative opening questions would also be an interesting area to explore. This study has not included a focus on real, desired and inappropriate observer discourse (a discarded theme detailed in Appendices G and I), another interesting area to investigate. In addition, further studies which record the EAP POC could help to construct a broader picture of the event and the discourse choices which are made. Finally, asking observers a similar set of questions and comparing the data could help to explore any mismatch of expectations which may exist.

5.4 Reflections

I have made recommendations which are relevant to observers and tutors, a decision which was influenced by the fact that I fulfil both roles in my current employment. The conclusions drawn may be of interest to the wider education community, not only EAP and EFL, as they have implications for all professionals involved in the observation process and in the development of themselves and their colleagues.

'Classroom observation research can make a significant contribution to the improving of teaching competence' (Wragg, 1994:103), a comment which has helped to drive me though a research process which has been, at times, challenging, time-consuming, frustrating and rewarding. Submitting this dissertation is just one stage of this process. Research results require dissemination; in fact a fundamental principle of academic study is that 'research is systematic enquiry made public' (Stenhouse, 1975). A proposal has been accepted for this study to be presented at the BALEAP 2013 biennial conference, with the ultimate aim of publishing it in the conference proceedings and developing it into a text worthy of journal publication. It is hoped that this generates further interest and research in the area of EAP tutor development.

This study into EAP is both timely and relevant, offering an original contribution to knowledge. It presents a unique study into EAP tutors' perceptions of the post-observation event and its contribution to development. My feeling, now that this phase of research is complete, is that more attention needs to be paid to the design of the observation process and to the structure of the EAP POC. Tutors may find themselves locked into a rigid process in which they have limited input. The 'help' they crave from observers is unlikely to result in true development; therefore, they remain 'novice' for longer. Revisiting the paradigm of novice/experienced may help to empower tutors. While *novice* is a label which is widely used in education, in ELT it is applied to teachers with less than three years' teaching experience (Freeman, 2002). Reducing the *novice* time-scale for EAP tutors may give more confidence to colleagues who are being failed by a shortage of available EAP specific qualifications and underexploited development opportunities. The POC should not exist as an administrative box to be ticked, but as an opportunity to maintain an ongoing dialogue for development.

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Appendix A: Ratio of Talk

Observer	Tutor	Recording length (min/sec)	Ratio (observer: tutor)	% of observer talk
1	A	38.25	5:3	63
2	B	54.57	5:3	63
3	C	21.15	2:1	67
4	D	34.42	1:2	33
3	E	20.12	3.5:1	78
5	F	22.36	1:2	33
6	G	25.39	4:1	80
2	H	39.43	3:2	60
7	I	42.17	1.5:1	60
5	J	17.41	1:1	50
1	K	27.50	4:1	80
			Average 3:2	**66**

(Kavanagh and Robinson, 2012 in press)

Appendix B: Pilot Tutor Observation Guide 2010

TUTOR OBSERVATION GUIDE

Tutor:	**Observer:**
Lesson observed:	**Course:**
Length of observation:	**Date:**
First or second observation:	

LESSON AIMS	
Does the lesson focus on both academic language and skills? *Are links between the lesson, the syllabus, course assessment, and university practices and conventions made clear to students?*	

MATERIALS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES	
Are materials and activities appropriate to the learners' academic needs? *Do the materials preserve the intended focus of the EAP course syllabus?*	

LESSON FOCUS	
Does the lesson develop the students' ability to process and produce academic texts? *Is there evidence of academic language input/recycling/development?* *Is there a clear discourse approach to skills and language?*	

TUTOR AND STUDENT ACTIVITY	
Does the tutor communicate effectively and appropriately with all students? *Does the tutor create opportunities for critical thinking, self reflection and evaluation?* *Does the tutor respond flexibly and effectively in class and exploit unplanned learning opportunities where appropriate?* *Does the tutor foster learner autonomy?* *Are there clear learning outcomes for students?*	

Tutor's reflection on the lesson

Observer's summary and comments on lesson and post-lesson discussion

'Feed-forward' to tutor's future personal practice

Observer name and signature:

Tutor name and signature:

LESSON OBSERVATION CRITERIA

(NB assessed only where relevant and appropriate)

All lessons should:

- **Link learning to academic contexts and practices**
- **Integrate academic discourse**
- **Meet learner needs**
- **Implement the syllabus**

LESSON AIMS

- Do the aims include academic language and skills development?
- Does the tutor make the aims of the lesson clear to the students?
- Does the tutor show the links between the lesson and the syllabus? (i.e. links with previous/future lessons or with other modules)
- Does the tutor show links between the lesson and the practices and conventions of the university? (i.e. the relevance of classroom tasks and activities to the students' future academic study)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Are texts used academic(-like), and if not, are the skills and language being practised and developed those required for academic study? (i.e. whatever the materials and methods used, there is a clear academic focus)
- Do the materials and methods used meet the needs of the students?
- If the tutor has opted to use their own materials, do these materials clearly reflect the intended focus of the course syllabus and meet students' needs? (i.e. the use of any materials and methods should have a clear rationale in terms of how they meet students' needs and how they fit in with the prescribed syllabus)

LESSON

- Is there a clear focus on practising and developing academic skills appropriate to the students' needs (reading/listening/speaking/writing)?
- Are the skills focused on the processing and production of academic texts?
- Is there a focus on general and subject-specific academic language – input/recycling/development?
- Are students made aware of how the skills and language focus of the lesson relate to the processing and production of academic discourse?

TUTOR ACTIVITY

- Is the tutor anticipating and dealing with questions effectively, and giving equal attention to individual students? (i.e. the tutor is aware of what is happening in the classroom and who needs help)
- Is the tutor aware of the students' educational and cultural backgrounds and their current and future academic goals and bridging the gap between them? (i.e. the teacher is sensitive to where the students have come from and where they are heading)
- Do activities and tasks also develop critical thinking strategies? (i.e. the students are also developing critical thinking strategies as well as skills and language, and responding to content)
- Are students encouraged to reflect and evaluate their own progress? (i.e. students practise and develop their metacognitive strategies)
- Does the tutor have a flexible approach? (i.e. the teacher is able to make informed decisions about exploiting unplanned learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the students and the requirements of the syllabus)
- Does the tutor help students to take responsibility for their own learning?
- Are the learning outcomes for students from this lesson clear?

Appendix C: Revised Tutor Observation Guide 2011

TUTOR OBSERVATION FEEDBACK

Tutor:	**Observer:**
Lesson observed:	**Course:**
Length of observation:	**Date:**
First or second observation:	

LESSON AIMS	
Does the lesson focus on both academic language and skills? *Are links between the lesson, the syllabus, course assessment, and university practices and conventions made clear to students?*	

MATERIALS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES	
Does the tutor exploit the materials appropriately and fully? *Do the materials and the way they are used satisfy the learners' academic needs?* *Do any additional materials used preserve the intended focus of the EAP course syllabus?*	

LESSON FOCUS	
Does the lesson develop the students' ability to process and produce academic texts? *Is there evidence of academic language input/recycling/development?* *Is there a clear discourse approach to skills and language?*	

TUTOR AND STUDENT ACTIVITY	
Does the tutor communicate effectively and appropriately with all students? *Does the tutor create opportunities for critical thinking, self reflection and evaluation?* *Does the tutor respond flexibly and effectively in class and exploit unplanned learning opportunities where appropriate?* *Does the tutor foster learner autonomy?* *Are there clear learning outcomes for students?*	

Tutor's reflection on the lesson

Observer's summary and comments on lesson and post-lesson discussion
Comment, where appropriate, on the following: • Meet learner needs • Implement the syllabus • Integrate academic discourse • Link learning to academic contexts and practices

'Feed-forward' to tutor's future personal practice

Observer name and signature:

Tutor name and signature:

Appendix D: Participant Details

Recording	Date	Pseudonym	EAP experience (years)	Employment status (N/NNEST[6])	Interview length (mins)	Phase
1	21.3.12	Rachel	3	Year-round (NEST)	27	Exploratory
2	21.3.12	Sarah	3.5	Year-round (NEST)	17	Exploratory
Interview guide revised to include question on experience						
3	26.7.12	Louise	3.5*	Summer (NEST)	10	Main
4	26.7.12	Andrew	4*	Summer (NEST)	16	Main
5	27.7.12	Becky	4	Summer (NNEST)	18	Main
6	3.9.12	Tom	3* approx	Summer (NEST)	16	Main

* Intermittent contracts

[6] NEST=Native English Speaking Teacher
NNEST=Non-native English Speaking Teacher

Appendix E: Revised Interview Guide

Interview Guide (May 2012)

Appreciation/confirm purpose (to explore the post-observation discussion)/length of interview (approx. 20 minutes)/ethical reassurances/confirm permission to record

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
~~Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?~~
Who do you think does most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
~~How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?~~
How have EAP feedback sessions helped you develop as a teacher?
What can your experience of teaching EAP contribute to the feedback session?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be? Why?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Possible probes:

Why was that important to you?

Why do you think you noticed that?

Why does that matter?

How did you feel about that?

What was significant about that?

Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Have you always felt the same as this? Has this changed…?

What do you mean by X?

If you were the observer, what would you do in that situation?

Thank you very much for your time and help. I really appreciate it. (Send copy of recording/transcript for them to check.)

Appendix F: Participant Research Information

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (anonymised)

Project title: *Exploring the Post-observation Conference in EAP*

Aim of research project: The aim is to explore tutor perceptions of the Post-observation Conference (POC) in order to answer the following research questions:

How can we enhance the POC experience for tutors?
What are tutor expectations of this experience and are these met?

What I would like you to do:

- Provide details of your name, contact information, gender and length of time teaching.

- Participate in a recorded interview (approx. length 20 minutes) on aspects of the POC.

What I will do:

- Conduct a digitally recorded interview which will be transcribed and analysed in order to provide insight into the POC process. The will form part of my MA TESOL dissertation in the University of [name of institution].

- Provide you with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.

Ethical details:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequences.
- Information gained during the study may be published, but you will not be identified and your personal details will remain strictly confidential.
- The data will be stored with us, and at any time you can request to see data relating to you. This includes access to the recording and the final assignment.
- You may contact us if you require further information about the research.
- You may contact the Research Ethics Committee if you wish to make a complaint relating to your involvement in the research.
- This will not affect your academic status at the University of [name of institution]

Signed …… (Researcher)

Researcher's name: Lisa Robinson **Date:**

Contact details

Researcher: [email]
Supervisor: [email]
Research Ethics Coordinator: [email]

Appendix G: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (anonymised)

Project title: *Exploring the Post-observation Conference in EAP*

Researcher's name: Lisa Robinson

Supervisor's name: [name]

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage without risk or prejudice and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, it will only be reported in an anonymised form in reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.
- I understand that I will be digitally recorded during the interview. Data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and I have the right to access my data.
- I understand that audio files, transcriptions and analyses of the data will be stored by the researcher on a password protected computer and that all data will be destroyed after 7 years.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement i the research.

Signed …… (research participant)

Print name …… **Date** ……

Contact details (email address)

……

Contact details

Researcher: Lisa Robinson [email]
Supervisor: [name and email]

Research Ethics Coordinator: [email]

Thanks. Your help is very much appreciated.

Appendix H: Transcripts

Participant 1: **Rachel**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: 3 years	Start time: 2.30
Location of interview: A09	End time: 2.57
Date: 21.3.12	Actual duration: 27 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Interviewer: Okay. So thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. And so I'll just start off with how long have you been teaching EAP?

Participant: I've now been doing it for just over three years.

Interviewer: Okay. So you must have had a couple of observations in this time, I'm guessing.

Participant: I have had 1, 2, 3 – I've had about 4 or 5, official and then unofficial as well. It's because I've worked on so many different levels and different courses and things, so it's just, "Rachel, we'll put you down for observation again." (laughs) But it was nothing really to upset me, or to say there was anything bad, it was just because that's how the cookie crumbled, really, how it went.

Interviewer: Okay. So what I'm really interested in is the feedback that you get from the person who's observed you – and so after the observation. So talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.

Participant: Oh, blimey. Well, they've all been really different because they've all been different people that have gone through it with me. But I think the basic thing that seems to have just come out is that you arrange a meeting, you sit down, you talk about the good things, the bad things – or, sorry, the areas to improve – and then maybe give my reflections on what's actually happened – not give excuses but there are a couple of times where I might feel that I have to justify myself – and then just take on

board what I've been told, and smile and nod and say, "Thank you very much." (laughs) No, of course, everything is taken onboard, definitely.

Interviewer: Okay. So you mentioned there good or bad, and then you very quickly corrected yourself. So is that how you feel – you go through the good things, and then you go through the bad things, or what's the balance like for you?

Participant: I've been fortunate enough – they have mostly been areas that have been… I think good is probably the wrong word but areas that were more than satisfactory, and areas that ticked the boxes, I suppose, and things that were appropriate for the class that I was teaching at the time. And I'm not going to talk about every time, obviously, because things change and days are different – I'm only human – but I have had more positives, I would say, than areas to improve. So I think the last one I had was probably about an 85/25 (sic) balance of areas that were good enough for the whole observation for what I was teaching.

Interviewer: Okay. And you mentioned also the reflection box.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: So how do you find that process?

Participant: I'm incredibly self-critical to the point of that I almost do myself damage, really, and I put myself down for things that I think I've done wrong, and then the person that's observing have actually either didn't notice it or they've just said, "That's not a bad point at all. I don't know why you're saying that." So a lot of the things that I think that the observer has seen that are areas that could improve, I realise it myself – either as I'm saying it, or as I'm doing something, you're thinking, "Oh, no!" And you just think, "Oh, well, carry on." And then, to be honest, as long as I'm aware of things that I've done that I know that it's something that I can actually try and change next lesson… But, yeah, I am terrible at the reflection point because I really do give myself a hard time.

Interviewer: So maybe it's you give yourself such a hard time that it actually makes the experience probably a bit more pleasant for you – you're so hard on yourself that, actually…

Participant: It is. Pretty much, that's one of my things in life, really (laughs) – I make things very hard for myself, and then anything good that comes out is a bonus (laughs). But, yeah, that's just the way it is. But at least it's something that… It doesn't matter how

nitpicky I get at it, it's still things that I know that I need to improve. And the day that I get to the point where I don't feel that I can nitpick at anything that I do, that's the day I have to stop teaching – because nobody's perfect.

Interviewer: If you think about an example, a specific example, of an EAP feedback session – if I was to say, okay, think of example – what would make the example that springs to mind particularly memorable for you?

Participant: In what way?

Interviewer: Well, it could be, I guess, something that's good or bad, or it could even be, I suppose, something that really made you think about a way to improve.

Participant: (laughs) The first thing that springs to mind – it is a negative – is the fact that... I don't know if it's EAP or it's just general, but it was that I put 'modal' on the board and I spelt it as 'model' about three times, and I didn't even realise because my brain had just written it down as it was and I was so intent on getting back to teaching, to getting onto the point, and getting everyone involved in what we're doing, and then I just didn't even realise – and so I got royally slapped on the wrist for that, which is fair enough, something as basic as that. But that sticks in my mind. So I don't know if that answers your question about EAP, as it were.

Interviewer: But it's a memorable moment.

Participant: Yeah (laughs).

Interviewer: So if I was watching that session, or listening to that feedback session, what would I have seen and what would I have heard?

Participant: You'd have probably heard me laughing my head off and saying, "Did I really?" And then being told that, "Yes, you did, three times, Rachel" – and me hanging my head in shame. That was pretty much what it was. And I was really kicking myself about that because, normally, my spelling is really good, but just sometimes – and, again, this is not an excuse, but I know this happens – when you write on the board and you look at it and you think, "That's not right" and it is, and there's times when you look at it and go, "Yeah, that's fine – it's right" and then in your head you're going, "No, it's not – carry on, carry on."

Interviewer: It looks different on the board to writing it on paper, doesn't it?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a trap that I've certainly fallen into.

Participant: But the worst thing about it was that my students didn't even realise that I'd spelt it wrong (laughs) – they were all copying it down and… Oh, well. So I had to go back the next day and tell them I spelt it wrong – they were fine with it though.

Interviewer: I'm sure. Does it matter to you how long a feedback session takes?

Participant: Not really, as long as it's within reason – because if it goes on about an hour, and hour-and-a-half, two hours, if it's something as bad as that then you're thinking, okay then, there's going to be more negatives, I would say, than positives – or areas to improve than positives – and I think there's a certain point before a teacher, in whatever capacity, just feels like you can't take any more of it at all. But, in general, I don't really have any problem, unless it's an excessive amount of time. But, other than that, I've got no problems with how long it takes. It takes as long as it takes, really.

Interviewer: Who do you think should do most of the talking in the post-observation…

Participant: I'd say 50/50.

Interviewer: Why?

Participant: Because… Well, not even 50/50. I would say, in some respects… Again, it depends on the lesson, it depends on what you've been observed on, and the purpose of the observation. And it also depends on the personal purpose of the observation too. I don't know. So it does depend. But I would like to say, in general, 50/50. But that would change, again, like I said, on purpose. But it's as much as it is. If you've got nothing to say on a certain point, then you've got nothing to say. If your observer has something to say, then it's as long as they take. So I think it balances out, really.

Interviewer: I'm interested when you say it depends on the personal purpose of the observation – so, for you, do you always have the same personal purpose, or does that change?

Participant: It does change because, again, it depends on the class, it depends on the level of the class that you're teaching, it depends on also, as well, for example… Because as you are, and I am, we're studying, so there's a constant thing in my head going on – "Okay. Right. I need…" And also, with jobs as well, that you think that I feel… Like personal development in what you're doing. So, maybe, from your last observation, you think, "Okay. Right. It's the same person that's observing as it was before" – then you think, "Okay. Well, this is what happened last time. I want to

make sure that I've learnt something from that last observation." And that purpose may be, even if it's one little thing, it's just to make sure that you've got that bit right. And if you're studying as well, I know because I've got to do quite a lot on observation, and watching other people, and creating tools and stuff, so, in the back of my head, there's always little things going on of how this is going, what's going on, what I can improve. It just changes depending on the class. And I know that's a really vague answer (laughs) but it just depends a lot.

Interviewer: It brings up something interesting though – because you mentioned if it's the same person who observed you before. So this is something I hadn't really thought about before, but is it a good thing to have the same observer over time, or would you rather it was a different one?

Participant: I think if there were reoccurring mistakes, errors, or however you want to perceive it – if there were problems – I think it would be appropriate for… I think, first of all, to have your first observer, obviously, and then discuss what's happened, then maybe have that same observer again. But if these are problems still, or what the observer thinks, it might be best to get somebody else to see if it's… Or – and I know it's terrible – have two observers in, as I had in my first lesson – I had Phil and Toby, which was a killer (laughs). But it was quite nice because then I had feedback from two people. And as one of my first observations that I ever had, it was useful – terrifying (laughter) but useful.

Interviewer: So you mentioned if there are problems and whether or not you might have the same observer, but how about if it was more about your – you've mentioned already – professional development?

Participant: Yeah. If it's professional development, having the first person again, I think, would be more than appropriate, more than acceptable, really, because it's that person seeing how you are growing as a teacher, and how you are developing yourself and becoming more aware of what you're trying to get out of this for the students, and what the students are trying to get out of it. So I think, in that line, I would say definitely, I think it's great to have the same person just to see, just to notice, in what areas... You might not develop completely but in what direction you've taken, and to have that sort of feedback and that communication, I think, is very useful.

Interviewer: I suppose that comes back to – you mentioned earlier – personal purpose of the observation, but also the purpose of the observation – is it developmental, or it is evaluating you as a teacher, or a combination of both.

Participant: Yeah – and it does. And it's terrible because there's so many things that you can't really give so much of an answer – it just depends, really. And I know it's vague, but there are so many different areas, bits you could talk about, and different situations and stuff, so it's… In some regards, it's good, I think it's very good to have the same person; in other circumstances, I think it's good to get a more rounded view from other people, not just the opinion of one person.

Interviewer: This 'rounded view' is very interesting, isn't it, because, as teachers, we want to do the best job we can…

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: But you want the person observing you to get a full picture of you as a teacher – and that's not always an easy thing to do.

Participant: Not in one lesson, no. Being observed, some people find it really useful and are absolutely completely at ease with it. It terrifies me because I start getting all tight and it's not me. But just being observed for one lesson, I really, really don't think it shows who you are and it shows what you can do and what you can achieve because there are so many things… We are human. The class, in that day, might be in a particularly bad mood, you might be in a bad mood, even though, as professionals… Which I have to take off that bad hat and put on the good hat. But sometimes little things will annoy you a little bit more, or it's not taken the right turning in the lesson that you wanted to, and the outcome is not right, and you're on a massive tangent. So I suppose, really, in there, it's good if you had a few of them – even though it terrifies me. So if someone said, "Right. We're observing you now, we'll observe you tomorrow, and next lesson" – that would kill me (laughs). But…

Interviewer: Yeah. It's like you say, there's no… We don't rehearse, as teachers. We don't – I don't know – we don't have to submit a report that we can sit down and go over and work on later and give in – we have to do something live, and then, when somebody is there watching you, they're getting that snapshot, for good or bad.

Participant: Yeah. And those good or bad makes a difference.

Interviewer: Well, when it's evaluative, when it's in the summer and your invitation back for your next job or your offer of work next year relies heavily on it, it's…

Participant: Yeah, it does.

Interviewer: Yeah, sometimes it does have quite a lot of significance. And you mentioned having a job – I think you mentioned job earlier – but, yeah, we're all aware of trying to give the best impression we can of ourselves.

Participant: Well, we have to. We've got to. You can't have someone coming in that's… Because a lot of the purpose of coming in is to evaluate, especially in the summer, and you can't just... You've got to show that you're up to the… That you are right for this job. You can't just show that you are bad at this job, or you can't just show that you're poor quality as a teacher – you've got to try and show the best you can for the time that it is, whatever the outcome. And that's not just in teaching.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. How does the EAP feedback session help you, or teachers, to develop?

Participant: I don't think it's different from any other observation that I've had, whether it's EAP or it's EFL or at uni. It's just the actual feedback itself – it's the idea of someone looking at what you're doing and just having maybe a different slant on it to be able to say, "Okay. Right. What you're doing is okay, but you might need to think about looking at it a bit more analytically, or look at it a bit more critically, or try and get the students to think a little bit more about this and how it relates to university purpose and what they're actually doing." So any feedback, really – as long as it's not really, "You're rubbish, you're rubbish, you're rubbish" – but any feedback, and it doesn't matter what situation, I think, is always useful, to a certain point. You take away with it what you will. And you might not take onboard everything because you might not agree – because the observers have got their own opinions and they might not like what you're doing, but you might not agree with what they're doing, and you might both just say, "Well, okay, what we're both doing is EAP but we're just not meeting in the middle." And so you've got to come to some sort of compromise and hope it works, really.

Interviewer: I think compromise is quite a big part of getting that balance right, actually. We're nearly at the end, you'll be pleased to know.

Participant: That's fine.

Interviewer: If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?

Participant: (pause) (laughs) I think… What would I change? That I didn't have to do it (laughter). No, I know that's not realistic. I don't really know, actually. I've never

thought of it like that. It's just something that has to be done, whether you like it or not, really. And I think as long as the person – your observer – is… I would say their manner or attitude towards it is for the right reasons, then it's perfectly… It's good. It's perfectly acceptable. But I suppose if an observer was really negative or their attitude was a bit off, say, it does make a big difference. And I suppose it does make a difference from person to person. Every observation I've had has always… It's never been with the same person, so it's… And everybody's different in the way they give their own feedback, and the way they approach things, and so it's… Yeah (laughs).

Interviewer: Would you like to choose your observer, if you had a pool…

Participant: (laughs)

Interviewer: I don't know. I'd not thought about it before, but if you had a pool of observers that you could then choose from.

Participant: Again, in an ideal world, yeah, of course. But I really don't think that would be useful because you'd choose the person that you think would be the easiest going on you. And if that person was notorious for being easy-going, that person would have everybody to observe. I just think you take the rough with the smooth – you get given tough observers, you get given… Some of them may be not as strict.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to add that hasn't been covered? Anything else that you'd maybe thought about when you saw the consent forms and thought, "Oh, I wonder if I'll be asked about that"?

Participant: Not on the consent forms, no – not at all. I think one thing that I would say about feedback is that if it's… Sometimes, I think – not with me – but through other people that I've seen, is they're being observed by someone who is either less… On a lower level – which has happened – or someone that's had very little experience or less experience than the person they're observing in EAP, and I think that it's a bit… To be observed, I think you need to be… You need to have somebody who has had a heck of a lot more experience than I have, or other newbies, as it were. I'm not completely new, but I'm still a newbie. For example, if I had someone, say – I don't know –Sarah or James or someone like that, then we have observed each other a lot but it's from an equal basis, it's an equal level, and we're not criticising each other, we're just taking good things away from each of us and leaving out the negatives, as such, because it's not really our job to do that. But to have someone

that is a lot more experienced to be able to do the observations, I think, is more appropriate, and I think more valuable.

Interviewer: So are you talking about level of jobs or just length of experience?

Participant: No, I mean length of experience. Because Sarah, again, she's a newbie. She's been here a little bit longer than me, but she's still a novice, as it were, and she considers herself that – she might not now but you know what I mean.

Interviewer: Not now she's doing an MA.

Participant: Yeah, anyway, but you know what I mean. So it's someone of the same sort of experience level. Yes, okay, I'm not saying that people that have less experience have no ideas – I'm not saying that in the slightest – but it's from someone that, I think, has seen more, and taught it for a lot longer, that they might be able to give you... And they've had ups and downs, and they've experienced more things than I would have done, and seen things and thought things that I would never even have considered. So I think someone who… Yeah, to be observed by someone who's had a lot more experience than me is more beneficial, personally, than someone who's had less.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Participant: And just because they've got a Masters or a PhD… Because I want to do my Masters anyway. But I mean someone who that's just come up and just gone, "Oh, right, I've got a Masters in this – right, I'm higher than you in level, in scale, so I'm going to observe you" and you're going, "Hmm, okay." I really would take more away from someone that, possibly, has been in the field a lot longer – but that's personal preference, really.

Interviewer: But it's opinion, and that's what it's all about.

Participant: Yeah. I just hope I haven't offended anybody (laughs). Anybody that's listening.

Interviewer: I'm the only person that's going to be listening – I promise you, I will be the only person listening to this. Okay. Well, thank you very much…

Participant: My pleasure.

Interviewer: For your time. And I'll switch it off now.

[End of Transcript]

Participant 2: **Sarah**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: 3.5 years	Start time: 3.30
Location of interview: A09	End time: 3.47
Date:21.3.12	Actual duration: 17.12 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Interviewer: There's a red light that shows that it's recording. Okay. So thank you very much for agreeing to come.

Participant: That's okay.

Interviewer: And I'll just start by asking you how long have you been teaching EAP?

Participant: I started here in 2008, so what's that?

Interviewer: That's quite a long time then.

Participant: This will be my fifth year. I started in [month] 2008.

Interviewer: Yeah. 9, 10, 11 – that's 3-and-a-half years.

Participant: Yeah, something like that.

Interviewer: So I'm guessing you've had a few observations in university context before.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Talk me through a typical EAP post-observation feedback – that typical session, for you.

Participant: So you go in and meet the observer. And you've written up your own perspective of how you think the lesson went, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, there's that reflection box, isn't there?

Participant: Yeah. Or have they sent you something first? But, whatever, you go in there with the form, and then you just sit and talk through what went well in the lesson, areas that you could improve, etc., etc.

Interviewer: Okay. And you said you sit there and you talk – so who do you think is responsible for doing most of the talking in that feedback?

Participant: Who do I think should be responsible or, in reality, who…

Interviewer: Who should.

Participant: Well, I suppose it should be 50/50, really.

Interviewer: Why?

Participant: Because you need to put your opinions across, and they need to tell you what they think, and come to see if you agree with each other.

Interviewer: So there's an agreed point that you want to reach – you're looking at things from different perspectives, maybe?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay. If you were to think about an example of a particular EAP feedback session that you'd had – if one springs to mind, what is it that makes it particularly memorable? What makes it jump to the front of your mind?

Participant: Nothing, really. I just remember it because it was the last one, and it was the most recent.

Interviewer: Okay. So what happened in that one?

Participant: Well, we just talked through… Because I'd used some material that I'd created – so it had not been used before – so we talked about how I used it, and what I thought had gone wrong with it, and how it could be used again in the future, and how I would focus on using it differently. So that's the main thing that I remember about it.

Interviewer: Okay. So there was a 'what would I do next time' aspect to it.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So if I had been in that session, or watching that conversation, what would I have seen?

Participant: You would have seen me, and you would have seen the observer (laughs), and you would have seen us discussing my lesson.

Interviewer: And what would I have heard?

Participant: You would have heard me saying what I thought went wrong with the lesson, and the observer agreeing with me (laughs), and me also saying how I thought I would change it – because I knew when I was in the class that, if I was going to use it again, how differently I would use it, because a few things went wrong with it. And then the observer giving me ideas of how they would use it.

Interviewer: So you've mentioned 'went wrong' quite a lot – are you quite critical of yourself or do you find...

Participant: I am very critical of myself. But, yeah, I suppose I would have also been saying what I thought went well with the lesson. But I'm very critical with myself anyway.

Interviewer: What would you tend to start with then? Would you tend to start with the things that you thought had gone wrong?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Get in there first (laughs).

Participant: Well, just… Because, for that one in particular, I knew very well what had gone wrong, but I also knew that the materials that I was using were good, and it's just that it was… I tried to use it as a listening… And, first, I got them taking notes, whereas what I should have done was give them the material and use it as a gap fill. So I remember it was as I was getting them to take notes… Because it was on numbers. So the reason, that time, that I was quite critical is because I knew very well that it didn't work very well in the class.

Interviewer: Okay. Does it matter to you how long the feedback session takes?

Participant: It depends – because if it's useful, then it could take as long as… It wouldn't really matter, as long as I was getting some constructive feedback.

Interviewer: So that's interesting – you say, "If it's useful." So, for you, are there times when you have had useful developmental ideas?

Participant: In feedback sessions?

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant: Yeah, I think so. I can't remember any in particular, but I think I've always… Well, saying that, I think I've always really… I don't know if I've ever come out with anything like, "Wow, that's a brilliant idea. I've never thought of it" because I think that I'm quite good on picking up things that have gone wrong anyway, so it's really just been confirming, "Oh, yeah, this is how you could improve it." But I think, most of the time, I've known that myself anyway. I don't ever remember coming out of a feedback session… Not since I've been here.

Interviewer: So how do you feel when you come out of a feedback session then?

Participant: "Oh, there you go – that's done. Not another one for another year." (laughter) Ticked a box there.

Interviewer: Well, yes… Sometimes it is – it's like a hoop you've got to jump through, isn't it?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: If we think… Well, you've done… Or have you done observations yourself? Have you given…

Participant: I've done one. But I've never been trained in giving observations – I've never been trained in doing it – and there were quite a few things from the lesson that I really thought needed... There was some good things from the lesson, but there was a lot of things that needed improvement. But then, when I was giving the feedback, I did a terrible job.

Interviewer: Why?

Participant: Because I didn't want to say anything that was too critical. I didn't feel that it was my place… Because the person who I was giving the feedback to, we'd started here at the same time, we're the same age, we've had the same experience, and I just felt… Because she knew that also I'd not been trained in observing, I just felt really uncomfortable, and I just skirted around the things... Giving some suggestions but not actually saying what I probably would have liked to have said.

Interviewer: I've seen somebody describe it as you've got pussyfooting and clobbering. And I think I'm in the same camp as you – I pussyfoot. I'm very bad at coming out with what I feel needs to be addressed in a constructive way.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: But I think that's exactly like you say – if you're not… Very few people have training to be observers, I think, certainly in EAP – and this is one of the things I'm interested in.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: But, yes, I'm a pussyfooter.

Participant: Yeah, definitely – because I also thought, well, have I really helped there at all?

Interviewer: What was the purpose of that observation? Were you evaluating them, were you helping them – was it both?

Participant: What do you mean?

Interviewer: The person who you were observing, was it because they were being invited back the next summer, or was it…

Participant: No, it was because I was course directing that term, so they needed to be done that term, so it was just... But it's someone who's here all the time anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah. So that puts a different slant on it.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Have I asked…

Participant: Yeah, I would have probably been more comfortable had it been someone who was only here for a summer term, or something, and somebody that I didn't really know. I think it was the fact that I knew this person quite well.

Interviewer: A question in my mind has been should the person being observed… Can they choose from a pool of observers – so I suppose, in that respect, that person you observed may well have chosen somebody else because your relationship is already quite close.

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: So yeah. Thinking about the feedback session then – we've touched on this – you said you didn't really feel that you'd developed or got that many ideas from it. Do you think, in general, that it's meant to give teachers ways to develop? Or how can we help teachers to develop in the feedback session?

Participant: I think it should be to help teachers. How? I don't know. I suppose by suggesting alternative ways to do things, or, perhaps, how you can get more out of what you've done – are there certain parts that you should focus on more and pull things out of... Or how you could work with bits of the lesson and develop it more.

Interviewer: This is the last question. If there's one thing that you could change about the feedback session – anything that you could change in an ideal world – what would it be?

Participant: (pause) If you could change anything… I don't know.

Interviewer: What would make it different for you? How might you get more out of it? Maybe you get enough, maybe you're happy with it.

Participant: (pause) You've got me. I don't know, really. Maybe that – them giving you… If you take in the materials that you've used for them to show you some new ways of using them.

Interviewer: And so do you think then that if they're showing you ways, does it… You mentioned that you'd observed somebody who was on the same… Who had been here for the same length of time and they were the same level. Is it helpful if somebody's had more EAP experience?

Participant: Not necessarily. It depends. Obviously, it's good if someone's got a lot of experience and they've got new… I think it's having new ideas – getting new ideas and new ways to do things. Because, when I did the feedback session, that's what I concentrated on a lot – saying you could have used this, this way, and you could have developed it this way. And I'm not particularly… I've only been doing it 3-and-a-half years. And then my observer, the last time, has been doing it for quite a long time. So I don't think it matters. I think it's just about the ideas, really – whether you are new to EAP or whether you've been doing it for 100 years, it's about how good the ideas are, and guiding… Well, it's supposed to be there, really, surely, one, to check that you're doing everything okay, but to give you something back.

Interviewer: Yeah, I agree. You need… Yeah.

Participant: Because, otherwise, how are you developing? If they're just, "Okay, yeah, that was good. Okay, maybe that didn't work. How could you…" But if you already know how you could change it next time anyway, it's not really giving you anything new, is it?

Interviewer: So that reflection box then, that opportunity to reflect, does that give you the chance to think, “Okay. How I would do it differently…”?

Participant: Yeah, but then you’ve already written that, and then the observer sees that, so it could be that you’ve already said everything that they were going to say, and there’s nothing really… There might not be anything… Fair enough if you’ve not noticed yourself or you don’t have any ideas of how you could have improved it yourself.

Interviewer: I think most people end up with… Like you say, if you feel something’s gone wrong, I think, automatically, even if it’s not an official reflection box, we all think, “Oh, God. That didn’t go very well.”

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: You come out and think, “Right. I’m not doing that again. How would I do it?”

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: So it goes on, doesn’t it?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: It’s just making the process a bit more obvious. When you had the information, and I told you it was about EAP observations, did a question spring to mind? Is there anything else that you thought we might talk about that we haven’t covered today?

Participant: Not that I can think of.

Interviewer: There doesn’t have to be, it’s just… I’m just thinking.

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Right. Well, thank you very much for your time – I do really appreciate it.

Participant: That’s alright, Lisa.

Interviewer: Thank you.

[End of Transcript]

Participant 3: **Louise**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: 3.5 years	Start time: 2.00
Location of interview: B19	End time: 2.10
Date: 26.7.12	Actual duration: 10.25 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Interviewer: Okay. So, thank you very much for agreeing to be recorded and interviewed.

Participant: That's okay.

Interviewer: So first of all, I'd just like to ask you how long you've been teaching EAP?

Participant: I've been teaching EAP just under four years with a break in the middle, so it's been mainly for the last two years.

Interviewer: Great. So you must have had quite a few observations, EAP observations in that time?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: So this is something that I'm particularly interested in because, you know, it doesn't seem that there's an awful lot out there on EAP observations. So talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.

Participant: Okay. So usually the tutor has started off by asking me how I felt that the lesson went, and then just giving me a chance to say what I thought, you know, what I thought the strengths and weaknesses were before giving any feedback themselves. And then if there's something that I say that, you know, they had particularly picked up on they might start by talking about that point. But most of the time I've found people have started by talking about the strengths of the lesson and then maybe going to talk about things that could be improved. And then if there was a scoring system for the observation, you know, explaining that and explaining how

I'd be scored and why and what the reasons for that would be. And then, you know, talking about possibly more practical areas for improvement or, I think on one occasion it was suggested, you know, that I did a peer observation which I think is a useful way of, you know, seeing how other people are working, doing the same kind of thing.

Interviewer: So how did that suggestion come about then? What was the, how was it presented to you?

Participant: It was just really, you know, if you, it wasn't a case of, "Oh, you've got to go and do a peer observation." But, "If you think that this would be useful for you, helpful for you, you know, this person is very good at doing this at this particular area so you might want to ask this person if they'd be willing to let you observe them."

Interviewer: I see. So, a typical EAP feedback session then, if you cast your mind back to one that was particularly memorable for you, what would it be that made it memorable?

Participant: I think it, what made it memorable was it was when I hadn't been teaching EAP long, and so I wasn't really 100% sure in my lessons whether I should, you know, be doing some kind of introduction that was setting some of the materials in context to make it a bit more interesting. And I think the reason that that was memorable for me is because, you know, it was suggested, yes, you know, it doesn't all have to be really deadly serious and it's a good idea to, kind of, introduce a context sometimes just to make it more interesting. So that's really why I remembered it.

Interviewer: So you can still have your warmers, or…

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And so what would I have seen in that feedback session or what would I have heard if I'd been a fly on the wall?

Participant: (pause) You'd have seen (pause) me giving my ideas about what I thought was good about the lesson and what I didn't think was so good. I tend to, my way of when I'm asked for my opinion, I tend to start by saying the things that I think didn't go so well and then talking about the things I think went well. Whereas the person giving the feedback tends to do it the other way round. And then I think the person who'd done the observation did pick up on a couple of the things that I'd said and said, "Yes, that was something that I'd noticed as well." I know that he also, you know, one of the things that he thought I could improve he also mentioned, you

know, “A few people that I’ve seen have had this area which they can improve.” So just really to, kind of, put it in context and allow me to see that, you know, it wasn’t something that nobody else did, kind of thing. So that was helpful. And in terms of what you’d have seen there, you know, obviously there’d be written feedback as well as the oral feedback. I can’t remember whether I was actually given a mark for that, I think it was just, you know, satisfactory or not satisfactory, from what I remember.

Interviewer: Do you tend to then in the feedback sessions, do you tend to have the written feedback given to you there and then or does it come back, come to you later?

Participant: With that one, it was given to me at the end of the feedback session but we didn’t, you know, sit down and go through everything point by point in that way. You know, he gave me the feedback orally and then he said, “Take this away and look at it and if you’ve got any questions then come back to me about them later.”

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: Which I thought was the best thing to do, and in fact in that situation I didn’t have questions but I could see that sometimes that would be very useful to, you know, come back and ask about it later.

Interviewer: Yes. Who do you think does most of the talking during EAP feedback?

Participant: I think the person who’s done the observation generally does more talking.

Interviewer: Why would that be the case do you think?

Participant: Because I think a lot of people see the purpose of observations is to help, well, one’s for standardisation purposes, to make sure all the tutors are doing their job and, kind of, are complying with what the expectations of the college are. But also I think the person giving the feedback, you know, wants to help the tutor improve and they feel that as the more senior person they should be the one making suggestions as to how the tutor should improve.

Interviewer: And so my next question is quite similar, so who do you think should do most of the talking during the EAP feedback?

Participant: I think it should be about a 50-50 maybe, but maybe a bit more emphasis on the tutor. Because I think, you know, with some EAP observation feedback I haven’t had much opportunity to ask questions at the end and I think, you know, I think that’s something important that, you know, sometimes you may be told you can ask

questions later. But I think actually sometimes it's good if there's a bit of time to ask questions while you're there. So I think that's one thing. I think maybe part of the problem is actually that when, at the beginning when you're asked, "Oh, what did you think of how the lesson went?" It's very vaguely worded and so, you know, you can say a certain amount but I think there is was maybe, you know, for example, a more structured piece of paper asking you some specific things that you could perhaps think about before doing the observation feedback, then you'd actually be able to say more and then it could be more constructive from both sides, I think.

Interviewer: What can your experience of teaching EAP contribute to the feedback session?

Participant: I wrote something here (pause) because I couldn't think what to say. I think, I wasn't quite sure what you meant by this, but as I said (pause), I think having the experience of, you know, encouraging students to try and be more independent, you know, it can, you know, if you're wanting to improve your teaching, I think you can, you know, you can ask for suggestions, for example, for how you could improve. And, you know, for maybe (pause), maybe, you know, you could ask about things like doing peer observations or something like that, I'm not sure if that relates to being independent necessarily. But I think, you know, we're encouraging students in EAP to, kind of, go and do things on their own so I think, you know, it's good if we can, kind of, after observations actually, like, be encouraged to go and do the same thing actually, you know, want to go and improve the areas that we need to work on.

Interviewer: If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?

Participant: It's, I think I would possibly like to know some of the things I'm going to be asked about beforehand. You know, just because I think it's useful rather than being, kind of, put on the spot. Obviously, you obviously think about how the lesson went and so on, but you know, to have a few more structured questions and being able to think about those a bit before going into the feedback session. So I think sometimes, you know, I've had feedback where most of the time feedback hasn't been on the same day, but I think definitely you need a bit of a break to, kind of, digest and think about the lesson and what you want to ask about as well.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Participant: (pause) I don't think so, I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you very much for doing the interview. [End of Transcript]

Participant 4: **Andrew**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: 4 years	Start time: 3.45
Location of interview: A20	End time: 4.01
Date: 26.7.12	Actual duration: 16.40 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Interviewer: Okay. So thank you very much for agreeing to do the research.

Participant: You're welcome.

Interviewer: And it should be about 20 minutes and you've signed all the necessaries. So, how long have you been teaching EAP now?

Participant: I've been teaching EAP for four years but it's not four years, you know, as in I do it one year, I do for four summers, four summer courses.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: But I've done something similar in other countries.

Interviewer: Okay. So you must have had a few EAP observations –

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Feedback sessions.

Participant: In the UK, four.

Interviewer: Okay. That's good, so we've got something to, kind of, go at. So talk me through a typical EAP observation for you.

Participant: From when they come in the classroom or after?

Interviewer: I would say from the post discussion.

Participant: So usually I'm expected to fill in what I think went well and what I thought went wrong, what could be improved, as it were. And that's sent to the observer, I believe, and then we have an informal discussion about how we felt about that. And I would be given feedback and feed forward, and I would be given a chance to put my own views forward too. Generally that's about it, I think.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned feedback and feed forward, so what's the difference for you there then?

Participant: Feedback is how the class went and the good points and the bad points, because obviously it can always be improved. Whereas the feed forward is *suggestions* of how you may do that, which I think was really useful.

Interviewer: Okay. So you've mentioned already what went well, what went wrong, what was good, what was bad, so do you feel a sense of, you know, good, bad in the feedback sessions?

Participant: No, no, I don't think it's good, bad. Yes, of course some things are good and some things are bad, but I don't feel at this stage with how long I've been doing it, that it's never really terribly bad, you know, it's not, things can be improved, let's say. But in the feedback sessions, no, there's definitely no accusations or, you know, "That's terrible." No, no, I think the feedback sessions are very fair, very fair, I liked it.

Interviewer: If you think about an example of a feedback session, if one springs to mind, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?

Participant: Okay. Three years ago, can I mention names?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: Okay. Peg comes in, and so this is only the second time I've done it and I was a bit nervous, Peg, and but actually everything she said was absolutely spot on. And what I liked about it was, of course, you know, I did some things that weren't great and they could have definitely been improved, I can see that even as I was doing it I was thinking, "Oh my God." But, there was nothing, there was no talking down to me, it was very much, "I can see where you're going through, where you're, how you're getting there but you're not quite there yet and this is what I think you need to focus on." She did that directly after the class, straight up to me, which I liked, I like the honesty of it. There was no sugar coating, but there was no, "You're rubbish." Even though, perhaps, at that stage I wasn't great. And so I really liked that honesty

and I think, and of course, she's the director and has tonnes of experience, so if you're going to get feedback from anyone, you going to get the best feedback from the one who's been doing it the longest. I mean, I had my issues with some of it, you know, I didn't always agree with it, but that's something to discuss, you know, I mean, and you could, I could discuss that if I wanted to. That's was thing, it was the openness that, "What do you think?" You know, whether it changed anything, I don't know.

Interviewer: So is observer experience important to you then?

Participant: Well, I think it must be. How can someone observe you if they've got no experience? I was, I lived and worked in [country] for a long time and I would get these people coming along to classes observing me, they were managers of whatever they were. And I thought, "You've got no experience, I've got much more experience than you. And you have no idea what you're talking about because I've done this thousands of times. I know what works and you don't, you're just fulfilling a managerial *criteria* about 'we need to observe our teachers'." Great, I think that's good, but you also need that experience to be able to observe and to offer criticism or constructive criticism. So, yes, definitely, definitely important to me.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned your own experience. So what can your experience of teaching EAP contribute to the feedback session? What can you bring?

Participant: Well, I think, this prescribed material for one thing, and it doesn't always work, for me, I think that could be done better. And so, if someone says, for example, you know, "You could have done better with this material." I'm on a ten week course or a five week course, I'm not here to make materials, I'm on a five week course or a ten week course, I don't have time to make new booklets. If they knew that then that could have been, perhaps, addressed before, before. There's no point in criticising for doing something badly or not well if the material is fundamentally bad but they're prescribing that you should use it. That's how I feel. So my experience that I can bring is like, I'm like the frontline troops, I'm the one who's in the field doing all the work. They're the generals at the back saying, "Push forward," but without really realising how things change in the classroom, how dynamics change, how the students change. You know, why students are doing that change, it's a business. I heard a student yesterday on the bus, "We're all going to pass, it's a business." I thought, "Well, I'm not going to pass you."

(Laughter)

Interviewer: That's a nice way of putting, thought, with the, sort of, the field and the generals and all the rest of it.

Participant: That's exactly what it's like. We're a field, we're in a field, we're in the front doing it all the time, every day, and I think it's important. And other point, I think if, you know, once you start to move away and become managerial material or getting higher up, you begin to lose that connection somehow. And you're prescribing things that might have worked ten years ago or five years ago, things change a lot. And I think you need to keep connected very well, even do a few classes yourself, it doesn't matter, you know? That's what I think.

Interviewer: So we, just to go back to this, sort of, key or memorable EAP observation feedback session for you. If we think about the one you mentioned or even another one other than with Peg, what would I have seen or heard if I was a, sort of, fly on the wall in that feedback session?

Participant: Well, actually I had two observers, I had two feedback, I had one directly afterwards which I don't think was actually, I don't think, I mean, I had to be done but she did me the favour of doing it, you know? And the second one was a bit more, "Okay, let's sit down and talk about it." And I think I was really receptive to feedback because I thought that these people have been doing it longer than me and I will, to me this is a job, they're saying, "If you do this, this, this and this, we'll give you money (laughter). If you really wanted to do this, we don't want you to do other things, we want you to do what we want you to do because we've got the experience and this is what our standards are." Great, great, that's easy for me to understand, right? They can do that and so I'm really receptive to what they have to tell me to be successful for them. Because I wanted to be invited back, I wanted chances to get connected. So, yes, I'm going to do what they want me to do but, of course, if there's something that I really hated then I thought there was a good chance that I could say why. And they were very, very fair, you know, really fair. I have no criticism, but when you see it written in black and white it can sometimes seem a lot harsher than it is, you know, oh yes, I could have done that better. But then that shows progression in your own sense that there's the fact that you can do it better.

Interviewer: So you prefer the face to face and then that the written feedback comes after?

Participant: Yes, yes. The face to face thing I thought was really good.

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: It gives to chance to, sort of, kind of, defend yourself, you know, we've all got reasons for doing things like, for example, if I went back to the point where they said, "Oh, you know, you could have done better with this material in this way." My feedback answer was, "Well, you could have given me better material. You know, this is what you do as an internationally renowned university, and if you can't change your materials sometimes to develop and to change, then perhaps you should start thinking about that."

Interviewer: I'm interested when you say 'defend yourself' because what do you mean by that?

Participant: Defend, I mean defend my position, not defend myself, I'm not like, really, I'm really relaxed about the feedback. I think this is one person's opinion of me, or of what I'm doing, I'm confident enough in myself to perhaps know what I was doing. But I'm also open enough to learn from that. So I'm not, when I say defend myself, I mean defend my position if I think I'm right because sometimes I didn't the materials were great *in some cases.* And so, I feel that it's right that I should stand up and say, "Well, you know, this could have been better from your point of view as well." Because that will surely pre-empt problems in the future if they, professional and intelligent people, which maybe not me but other people, you know, if everyone's saying that then perhaps, you know, you should maybe try to address that a little bit. So, you know, this is a mistake giving me feedback, they could use that as feedback for themselves as well, which perhaps they do, I'm not of that level, so.

Interviewer: Who do you think does most of the talking during EAP feedback?

Participant: Me.

(Laughter)

Participant: I talk a lot. Well, yes, I still think it's probably me because they're putting the idea there and you're either talking about, so say they give you some feedback about what could be, or some feed forward. Then, you know, that's something for you to discuss with them, it could be 50-50 in some cases but I definitely think it's more me because I'm trying to explain where I'm coming from. So, I can't really remember, but probably me.

Interviewer: A similar question then but, who do you think should do most of the talking during the EAP feedback?

Participant: Me. (pause) Because by explaining myself they can listen to me and either think, "Yes, I agree." And go along with that or if they, if I'm saying something really fundamentally wrong about, opposed to what their point of view is, that's up to them to listen and then they can pick that up and say, "Well, let's look at this and explain why we do it this way or explain why we're doing this." It's just, to me, that's just management technique, it's management. It's like listening to your workforce and maybe helping them to understand where they're coming from. Because sometimes you may think why are we doing this, why all this? But then again, I don't know enough about this business to sometimes know these things. Like I say, I'm in the front somewhere, they're at the back dealing with all the administration things which is an absolutely vast thing, and so there are reasons why they want me to do things in certain ways. And by explaining that that makes me happier and then they can say, "Well, we've told you so." So, yes.

Interviewer: If there was something you could change about EAP feedback sessions what would it be?

Participant: (pause) Good question. To me, I like them, I don't think there's anything I would really change fundamentally. I think especially in [EAP centre] and the ones I've had here have been excellent, I've really, really learned from them. So there could be a, I don't know, what could I say? I mean, better chairs, I don't know (laughter), you know?

Interviewer: Water bottles on the table? (Laughter)

Participant: Yes, yes, it's the lack of tea that makes me real tense, but, no, I think, no, generally I really love them. The one thing that, you know, sometimes when you're talking and it's all friendly and smiles, and then you see the, as I say, when you see it written it can seem a lot harsher. And I think, really, they think, I wish I'd explained that a little bit more. But then again, I did have the opportunity to, sort of, do that before, to explain my position, so maybe that could be said that I should have thought about it more and when I went and had the meeting. And also there's a thing where like, you never know if you're coming back on these jobs, so how much do you really care anyway? Frankly, how much do you really care? You know, you may get another job, you may come back, and so to me this is just part of the job, feedback for me is just part of the job. I've been, I get assessed in every single job I've ever done a million times, so people get, I think people defensive and they take it personally, I never take it personally, never, not once. You can come in the classroom and say what you like, I know that I'm doing a fairly good job.

Interviewer: And at the same time, you've said earlier, that you do feel that you've learned from it.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: So, you know, you do take on board.

Participant: Definitely, I mean, I think, especially in this [EAP centre], the thing that Peg said me, Peg, she said, "You need to make the students understand why they're doing things." And I do, last year I did it more, and this year I'm doing it even more, "Why are you doing this?" I'm asking them, I'm making sure that they'd know how the listening and speaking and project they're all connected, they're not separate entities that this one does not inform this one. And that's directly from that feedback, and I tell you now it works, it absolutely works because you look like you know what you're talking about makes them more comfortable, so when you're trying things to them and you say, "Why?" And they get a bit defensive themselves, you know why, why are you doing this? (Inaudible 00:14:55) it's in the test, and so on. By keeping them focused like that it gives them purpose I think. I mean, that's directly from that and it's made, it made me more confident, frankly.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Participant: (pause) No, I think I'm fine with that. I mean, there's, I'm happy with their feedback, I'm happy. As long as it's done professionally and with a slight sensitivity, I think, because I'm a fairly hard person, I can take it, you know, I've been criticised before. But I think for other people, especially the very new ones and the younger teachers who are really nervous about feedback and they take it as a personal thing and they think, "Oh my God, if I get bad feedback I'm not going to be invited back." To me that's not the purpose of feedback sessions, the purpose is to help you improve, not as a criticism of your style, it's… And if they, if there is a criticism of your style, it's how it's handled. Everyone deserves a second chance, everyone makes mistakes in the classroom and I don't think, also, that one observation defines you as teacher because things may go wrong, things may not work, because things don't work here sometimes. You may be having a bad day, the students may be having a bad day, so I, one thing I did like about it, if the feedback evaluation went wrong you had the chance to do it again. And I think that's good, everyone deserves a second chance, so for the new teachers, yes, for me especially, I was very nervous the first time because it meant a lot to me, maybe now it means less, I don't know. I'm just more relaxed and that's it.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed.

Participant: You're welcome.

[End of Transcript]

Participant 5: **Becky**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: 4 years	Start time: 2.00
Location of interview: C44	End time: 2.18
Date: 27.7.12	Actual duration: 18 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

Interviewer: Okay. So thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. And can I start with how long have you been teaching EAP?

Participant: Since 2008, so that would be about four years.

Interviewer: Okay. So in that time you must have had quite a few EAP post-observation discussions, so you've been observed and then you get some sort of feedback. So that's what I'm particularly interested in. So could you talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you?

Participant: Right. Well, I think that usually what would happen I would spend a few minutes going through my own thoughts about how things had gone and things that I would do differently. And then the second part of the observation would be going through the list of different criteria, things that had to happen in the class room versus what actually happened.

Interviewer: Right.

Participant: And so it would be self-analysis and then a, kind of, a general overview of the lesson by the person who observed me.

Interviewer: So, if you were to think of a particular example of an EAP session, the first one maybe that springs to mind for whatever reason, what would it be that makes that particularly memorable for you?

Participant: I think one of the things that I find really exciting about teaching EAP, and it's almost always the case regardless of the component that I'm teaching, is that no matter how well prepared you are there'll always be a moment when the students surprise you by asking you something that you haven't really thought of. And it's always a challenge but it's always a really exciting challenge. And so I love the, kind of, collaborative nature of the classroom, I'm not sure that really answers your question. But I think that moment of dialogue or collaboration whether it's me and the students or the students among themselves are working on something, that I think is what's unique about EAP and that what stands, well, that's what I find memorable.

Interviewer: In the feedback sessions themselves, who do you think does most of the talking in EAP feedback?

Participant: I was thinking about this question, I think ideally it would be the instructor but that's not always the case. So, I would say that I had different experiences with different observers.

Interviewer: Okay. So why do you think those experiences were different then?

Participant: I think it has, in some cases, it just has to do with time constraints and the fact that if you've been observed several times then at some points, if you're familiar with the routine, it's, sort of, assumed that certain topics don't need to be covered anymore and so it goes very quickly.

Interviewer: So, you talk about, sort of, as if you've had observations that are systematic, maybe you've had the same observer doing more than one observation.

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: So how did that work then?

Participant: It worked really well actually, I think, because it also allowed me to think about some of the suggestions that were made and try them out and then have a, during the second round of observations have a conversation about things that did work or things that didn't work. So actually I think having, I mean, obviously I can think of really great things about being observed by different people because everyone has a slightly different view of how things should go or shouldn't go. But it's nice also to have a consistency when it's the same person who observes you and can see you on a good day or a bad day and has a, sort of, larger spectrum to consider what it is that you do in the classroom.

Interviewer: I think this, yes, a snapshot isn't always necessarily an accurate one.

Participant: No. And it's also, it's not, obviously it's never just an instructor, it's always the students as well and students you can have the same group and they're going to be a completely different group on Monday and Tuesday, and so it really depends on the students and how they feel on the day that you were being observed.

Interviewer: Yes, oh yes, sometimes they just get it and other times they surprise you with how much don't get it.

Participant: They don't, right, and so that can also affect the, kind of, final picture of the class.

Interviewer: You mentioned that ideally the observer would do more talking, do I get that right?

Participant: No, I think…

Interviewer: Okay, the teacher.

Participant: The teacher would do most, I think that self-analysis as well is helpful and so ideally, I think, this would be a good opportunity for the teacher to analyse how things are going and comment on things that you would want to improve or things that you would want to change in some way.

Interviewer: How have EAP feedback sessions helped you develop as a teacher?

Participant: I think that when I first started EAP my background was in teaching literature and because that was my post graduate training, and so it's a different dynamic in the classroom and a different set of skills that you are helping the students develop. And so when I started teaching academic writing and English for academic purposes I was very keen to get as much feedback as possible. And so I realised that I had a lot of annoying little tics that I needed to, or wrinkles that I need to iron out, and it was just helpful to be told that it's it important to help the students develop their independent learning skills. And it's actually something that I think I'm still thinking about how best to do it because it's a tricky balance, helping them when they need your help but also choosing to give them that freedom to learn on their own and develop their academic skills that they need for their future studies. It's not really, you don't really have to think so much about this kind of balancing of regular literature classes because you are developing different sets of skills. That in particular is something that I struggled with originally and it's something that I'm still very conscious of working on.

Interviewer: So how long did you teach literature, or through literature?

Participant: I started literature as a post graduate student, so in 2003.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Participant: And through most of my post graduate training and also after I got my PhD I was still teaching literature, so it was, sort of, a mixture of different courses that I was teaching.

Interviewer: And you must have found, having done a PhD, that you were able to teach EAP and advise students much better, I would guess, having had that experience?

Participant: I think though in some ways being able to teach academic skills it is easier if you've gone through that, kind of, a rigorous training because it no longer matters what the topic is or the subject that they're going to pursue, but you know the kind of difficulties of conducting research that they will all have to face. And so, yes, a short answer to your question is yes.

(Laughter)

Participant: Yes, it helps because of course research is research and you, the kind of pressure that the students here are under I think I can identify with easily.

Interviewer: We touched on experience then, your research experience, but what can your teaching experience contribute to the EAP feedback session? So what can, I'm interested in what you can bring that the observer can't.

Participant: I think that my knowledge of the students, because I get to see them every day almost. My knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and of the particular dynamic of the classroom because every classroom is different. And I also, in the past, I had the pleasure of spending quite a lot of time with students in a one on one setting and so I think that that is also incredibly useful, that kind of interaction that always spills over into the classroom. Because you really get to know your students quite well and they, once they trust you, you can encourage them in all kinds of ways. If they're not really interested in participating or they're having trouble with writing or any of the skills that we're teaching them, so I think my knowledge of, my relationship with the students and my knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses is the perhaps most significant thing that I can bring to the observations.

Interviewer: If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?

Participant: Interesting. I think that sometimes it's quite useful to have a group discussion or a group feedback as opposed to doing it one on one because… Actually that was something that I really enjoyed when I was doing my CELTA the fact that we got to teach in groups and then had a group feedback session because it's always nice to be able to talk through certain common difficulties that all of the instructors might be having. So I think maybe my experience most of the observations that I've had were individual observations, and actually I've never had two people observe me. So that might be also, I'm actually looking forward to having that experience to see what that would be like.

Interviewer: We've done it for a couple of years now and, okay, I think you could perceive it as a bit, kind of, ganging up, but hopefully if you sell it right, for us, we've certainly found that it makes it more objective. Because although we still do the feedback as one to one, the two observers observe the lesson then go off, you know, have a coffee for an hour or whatever and talk through it. And those discussions generally involve one person, kind of, saying one thing and then the other person either agreeing or bringing the first person down slightly or bring them up slightly, in a sense that, you know, there's another voice of reason there. And then that discussion informs the feedback. And also we've found as observers it's made it quite, if we've had to do difficult feedback which we do occasionally have to, sort of, have quite difficult feedback to give, we were able to say, "Well, we thought." So it wasn't just, "I think and I'm right because I'm the person who's observing you. So therefore I'm superior." We were able to, sort of, say, "We" so it wasn't just me but both informed people. So, yes, but logistically trying to sort it all out and getting people freed up is difficult. But, yes, I, we think, and certainly Paul and I have done it quite a lot like that, but yes, we'll see, maybe I'll do a little questionnaire at the end of the term or something.

Participant: Right. Yes, so I think that that is going to be a new experience for me but I think it will be interesting and I also think it's a personal thing, some people get very, feel very proprietary about their classroom and are not really open to observation. I think it's really useful because, again, it's very hard to analyse your own tics or your own strengths and weaknesses. And of course we always do, we can always tell how the class is going but it's always good to have another pair of eyes or two.

Interviewer: I heard it described once the difference between, sort of, playing in a game of football and being a spectator in the match, and the spectator gets to see the whole field playing, whereas the teacher is just, kind of, so involved in it that they, it's difficult to see the bigger picture. So having somebody, kind of, observing and then feeding it, you know, reflecting that back on to you, I think is helpful, I think it's incredibly helpful. I was videoed for the first time teaching last term, and you talked about tics and I realised there were certain tics that I really have to iron out.

(Laughter)

Interviewer: And I have to stop saying "okay" all the time (inaudible 00:14:57).

Participant: Yes, it's, I didn't realise but my particular tic was that I would ask a question and then I would say "right?" And of course it's asking the students to, sort of, confirm

that everything's going okay and I didn't realise I was doing it and it can be quite annoying and it also makes the question less of a question. And so it's just very useful when someone points this out.

Interviewer: But that's very American though, isn't it?

Participant: It is, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. But…

Participant: But again, it's worth, sort of, the other thing that I've been, like, trying to get rid of, and again it's an American tic, is referring to a mixed gender class as "guys". "You guys."

Interviewer: That's become very British as well though, we –

Participant: And I'm conscious when I doing and I'm trying stop it.

Interviewer: In fact, Joan did it to me today, she referred to me and another female teacher as "guys." And I was like, "girls." You now, just, but yes, we've really, sort of, got ourselves addicted to that one as well. But actually, yes, I've done observations before people have called the whole class "guys" and they've then, sort of, got straight in in the feedback and said, "Oh, I know I did that, I shouldn't have done that." That's not going to, you know, break the class, but –

Participant: I'm sure there are bigger issues that you can address.

Interviewer: But yes, yes.

Participant: But it's the little things that other people can point out when you are unaware of doing it.

Interviewer: Yes. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Participant: I can't think of anything, I was thinking that one of the major differences between, sort of, mainstream literature classroom and EAP classroom has to do with cultural sensitivity. But then, as I was thinking about this it's also true depending on what your curriculum is or what syllabus you're teaching in a literature class. And so, even though the subject of cultural sensitivity almost can't come up in EAP observations, or at least it almost always comes up as you are prepared to teach in the EAP class, I think it's becoming more common across the board. So it's not really something that…

Interviewer: It's certainly very, it's still a very hot topic, isn't it?

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And we've got a couple people who are doing PhDs in that area at the moment in our department and it's still, yes, something that comes up again and again. But, yes, an interesting one, one area I haven't moved into but, yes, is, it would be very interesting to do. Phil, if you know Phil, he's here, he's a big person on that. Yes. Okay, well, thank you very much for the interview.

[End of Transcript]

Participant 6: **Tom**	Intended duration: 20 minutes
Length of time teaching EAP: approx. 3 years	Start time: 11.35
Location of interview: A20	End time: 11.51
Date: 3.9.12	Actual duration: 16 minutes

(Adapted from Wallace, 1998:150)

How long have you been teaching EAP?
So you must've had some observations in this time. **Talk me through a typical EAP observation feedback session for you.**
If you think about an example of an EAP feedback session, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?
What would I have seen/heard if I'd been in that feedback session?
Does it matter to you how long the feedback takes? Why? Why not?
Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback? Why?
How does the EAP feedback session help teachers develop?
If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions, what would it be?
Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered so far?

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you very much again for agreeing to do the research.

Respondent: That's fine.

Interviewer: And I would imagine it'll be about 20 minutes, the interview. It's… All the stuff will be kept, the data will be on a computer and passworded, PC and everything. And I've put the ethical contacts here. So be assured it will all be covered.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay, so let's just start with how long have you been teaching EAP?

Respondent: Well, I've been involved in EFL I suppose since 2005 and sort of teaching EAP a bit since 2006. But that role involved a few things. It was a bit of… ESP, EAP and EFL was all sort of involved really. So just doing pure… Well, then I did my Masters degree and then I was teaching on the MA for a bit. But just doing pure EAP teaching, I think I had a contract last year for seven months in [country] and then this one here, so not long pure EAP itself without anything else attached to that, so…

Interviewer: And so did you have any observations when you were in [country]?

Respondent: I did have one last year, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so we've got a couple of certainly EAP observations and feedbacks that you've had. So we've got something to go at. So if you think of an example of an

EAP feedback session, so post observation, what is it that makes it particularly memorable for you?

Respondent: Well, if I think back to last year's one, I remember the observer was an American. I've forgotten his real name but we nicknamed him Arnie [laughter].

Interviewer: Don't worry, I'll anonymise that [laughter]. I'll put in a pseudonym.

Respondent: Yeah. So he was the observer and he was actually known for being quite strict but he had quite a soft voice, he was quite friendly. But yeah, so he observed me and I remember in our feedback his key thing really… Well, he had two points that he wanted to play. One was positive and that was about my rapport with the students, because lots of western teachers had a difficult time handling the students at university level because they're still like secondary school kids even though they're at university level and they're quite naughty, to be honest. So he said somehow you had a really good balance between being in control of the class but also being friendly with them. So he liked that as a positive aspect. And then the negative comment he had was about my PowerPoint slides because he said they were a bit dull in that they looked too professional, it was just black and white. So he said add some colour to the text, maybe add some imagery, maybe throw some video clips in there or something just to sort of liven up the slides because it seems a bit boring, to be honest. But yeah, those are the two key things that I really remember from that feedback session.

Interviewer: I'm interested when you say he was known for being quite strict. So is there a sense of some observers being much harsher than others and getting an easier ride and…?

Respondent: Oh absolutely, definitely, yeah. So he was known… I mean, at the time I think they had an observation team of about six or seven people and there was him, there was a guy called Mo who was sort of the head of the team and then there was another person, I've forgotten his name, this really tall guy, and those three had a reputation as being the harder ones. And then there were four other observers and if you had one of them you knew you'd get a decent mark.

Interviewer: So there was a score system there?

Respondent: There was a score system, yeah. So you had a rating of one to five, five being outstanding. So amongst teachers we would say, okay, who's your observer, that's the first thing we'd ask, and if it was one of the four who are known for being easier

markers you were like, oh, you'll be fine then, but if you had one of the three you'd be worried about it.

Interviewer: So there was an observation team, so that was made up of a certain level or were they permanent members of staff or…?

Respondent: Yeah they were. Well, I think they were probably the most experienced guys they had on the project itself. The project was massive. They had over 200 teachers, thousands of students, it was huge. Yeah, these guys on the observation team, like the head one for example, Mo, he had experience of like designing (inaudible 0:04:35) tests and things and being an observer in the UK for years. He was like a really old guy. And then this American chap as well, he had a reputation of being… So they're really qualified experienced staff.

Interviewer: Is that important to you, that your observer is significantly more experienced than you, or…?

Respondent: Yeah. Well, I mean, because personally I'd like to get some feedback from them which guides me and tells me what to do and how to improve my teaching, so if I had an observer who was around the same level as me it wouldn't really feel the same. I mean, I'm sure I can get some good feedback from them too but it wouldn't probably carry the same weight to me as somebody who's got more experience in the field, I think.

Interviewer: And did you find that you've changed your PowerPoints as a result of what the chap said to you?

Respondent: Definitely, yes, yeah, the very next lesson I did. So I always try to use colour coded text now at least in my presentations and try to throw one or two images in there and sometimes use video clips. So I did take on the comments, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Who do you think should do most of the talking during EAP feedback, the observer or the tutor?

Respondent: I suppose it would depend on the way in which it was structured, whether or not the observer wanted to ask the tutor for justifications of why they did things. I suppose the tutor would speak more in that situation. But in the ones I've been to it's normally been the observer who's done the most speaking and I think that's because they're giving advice and talking about what you did and things. I'm not

sure which is right or wrong but I think just naturally, the ones I've been to it's normally the observer who does more talking.

Interviewer: So who do you think should do? Are you happy with that balance or…?

Respondent: Yes, I guess that makes sense, yeah. I suppose if I was observing I'd probably ask the tutor why they did something, listen to their response and then I'd probably give some feedback based on their response and my own opinion. So yeah, I guess it makes sense that the observer should do more speaking, I think, yeah.

Interviewer: How have… You mentioned an EAP feedback session where you changed your PowerPoints as a result of it. How else have they helped or might help you to develop as a teacher?

Respondent: I've been quite fortunate because I've generally received lots of positive feedback from it so it really just motivates me to improve upon things I've done. I usually get comments about how I can improve a task slightly and so I'll think about that more, think about how I can make my tasks slightly better. But yeah, I think because I did EFL for a bit with EAP in there, I think that got me a good grounding, I think, so since then, in the pure EAP roles the feedback's all been positive.

Interviewer: If there was something that you could change about EAP feedback sessions what would it be?

Respondent: What would I change about it? I suppose it would be nice if they could actually record the lesson they're observing and then when we have the observation feedback, take me through it step by step. If there's something they noticed at a particular point, maybe say, ah, if we go back to this section of the lecture, have a look at that. Because it's one thing them speaking to me during the observation section and another thing you actually watching the recording with them. I know in [city] where I'm doing my PhD, they had a training session for seminar presentations and they actually recorded us delivering the presentation for 20 minutes and then we had a one to one chat with somebody about the presentation and I really benefited from that. He said, look at your body language at this point, look what you're doing here and how your voice has changed at this point, and it really helped me to improve. And so I think I'd probably like that as well in teaching actually.

Interviewer: So that was for you, when you had to give your own presentation?

Respondent: Yeah, I was going to give an academic presentation about my research and so it was like a training session on how to give them. And I had previously given one anyway, actually two at that point, but then after that I really improved a lot, after that session. And so I think that could probably help my teaching as well if the observation was actually recorded, video recorded, and then we had a chat about the video recording. That would probably help me.

Interviewer: I think that's quite a nice idea because I wonder sometimes that the observer goes in with kind of this pack of evidence and sits down and says… I take copious notes so I have all these notes in front of me, and the person who's been observed doesn't have as many props, if you like. And I think if you the… This is how it is, black and white, or colour, but you have the video clip, then I think that that helps everybody. That's a nice idea.

Respondent: Yeah. And I think also, when I look back at it… I've got the video recording of that lecture I gave, the observed one, and I remember just three months after it, looking at it and thinking, oh, that was a bit bad, I've improved so much since then. So I mean, if that observation I had last year in [country], for example, was recorded and I can look at that tape now and see how I've progressed since then, I think that would be helpful.

Interviewer: Well yeah, you could kind of almost… I mean, I know people talk about portfolios and it's quite the in thing, and e-portfolios and all of… For tutors as well as students. But that would be quite nice, wouldn't it, because you could build up just for yourself… It doesn't have to be…

Respondent: Just for yourself, yeah. No one has to see it, just for yourself so you can see your own progression throughout the space of six months or a year and so on. I think that would be helpful.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's something I've never thought about, using it like that.

Respondent: I mean, I'm not sure how other teachers would feel about it because I noticed that lots of tutors are a bit worried and stressed in observations. I tend to worry sometimes in observations as well but I know it's for my own benefit. It's not like you're being observed so the company can fire you, it's to actually improve you. And so I think that a video recording would really help them develop.

Interviewer: I think as well that… I think if there's a choice… If people have a choice of whether or not it might be being video recorded or bringing in materials, maybe different ideas of how… They can choose maybe from a selection of observation…

Respondent: Types or something.

Interviewer: Types, yes. Because I think for me a lot of the stuff is about initial teacher training and actually in EAP we're quite experienced. So I think we need to kind of…

Respondent: Take it a step further really.

Interviewer: Get with the programme, yeah.

Respondent: I mean, look at this job, for example, you need at least, I think, three years teaching experience behind you before you can apply for it even. So after three, four, five years in the field, you've got some experience of teaching, you know how to teach really and it's just taking it to a different level really, isn't it? So you need something else.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's kind of where I'm starting to go with this.

Respondent: I mean, personally even now sometimes I still record myself with an audio device. I've got a recording device like this and a little mike that I'll put onto my shirt and sometimes record my lessons just to listen to at home and see how I'm doing. And that habit originated because I generally speak quite quickly anyway as my normal voice and my early feedback sessions on EFL teaching, this is in '05, '06 now, I remember the observer saying that you speak quite quickly sometimes and the students can't catch you, so try to speak slower. And I had a difficult time speaking slowly except if I was being recorded, because I felt as if I was sort of acting or reading a speech. And so I used to have a recorder there just to slow myself down and then I started it just to observe my lessons anyway. So I never thought of actually a video recording, that would be really, really useful.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's interesting again, what you say about, yeah, just using a digital recorder. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about observation feedback that we haven't touched on so far, maybe something that you thought we might discuss?

Respondent: Not particularly, no. Hmm… Maybe if you're doing a follow up… I mean, I've never had a follow up observation. So I've had like a standard observation and an observation meeting but never a follow up observation from that to see whether or

not I've improved upon the weaknesses mentioned in the first observation. So for example, the one that happened last year in [country], okay, the American… I was going to say Arnie then. The American gentleman said that I could make my slides a bit more interesting. Okay, he said that, even though I did it he doesn't actually know I did it. So it would have been nice if he could have come back at another point, maybe like a few weeks later or something, or even somebody else, and just note that there's a point about me, that I should use more colour in my slides or something and just check to see that I'm doing it.

Interviewer: So that's interesting because a follow up observation could be by the same chap, Arnie, you said, or it could be by somebody else. So if we're talking about a kind of series of observations… I agree, it's going to be helpful if you can have follow up ones and I suppose it's often down to time and workload and all of that.

Respondent: Yeah, it probably comes down to the resources as well. I'm sure companies or businesses don't have the resources for that really, for each member of staff, to provide a series of observations.

Interviewer: But if you're looking longer term, ultimately it's going to mean better teaching and a better experience for the students, I guess. So would you want the follow up to be with the same observer or…?

Respondent: I wouldn't mind. I mean, with the same observer, I suppose he could see things that I should have improved from the previous one, but I suppose if you have another observer you might get different types of feedback as well from then. They might look at something else that he didn't think of. And maybe just him having that note there about your slides could be a starting point and then he could find something else as well. So I don't really know.

Interviewer: Yeah, swings and roundabouts, isn't it?

Respondent: But again, I mean, when you think of human resources and the time and all the paperwork to manage that, it's probably not really realistic. I don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah, in a perfect world, yeah.

Respondent: And again, like I said, most teachers don't actually like observations anyway so they'd probably not really like the fact that there's two or three observations and they'd probably think…

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I mean, like you say, the people who want to develop more and maybe feel a little bit more confident would probably be okay with it. The ones that (overspeaking 0:15:18).

Respondent: Yeah. Well, you get people that have been doing it for like 15 years and they're like, why do I need to be observed, which is fair enough. If they've been doing it for years I suppose they know what they're doing. But I think even though I've been teaching for a few years now, I still feel I can develop, I still think that I'm in the early stage, and so I actually like the feedback sessions that I receive from observations.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Respondent: Thank you.

[End of Transcript]

Appendix I: Temporary Constructs (Exploratory Phase)

Temporary constructs	Rachel	Sarah
Good v bad[7]	'you talk about the good things, the bad things – or, sorry, the areas to improve'	
Going wrong[8]	'mistakes, errors […] problems'	'what I thought had gone wrong with it'/ 'what I thought went wrong with the lesson' **contrast with** 'I would have also been saying what I thought went well with the lesson'
Self-criticism	'I'm incredibly self-critical to the point of that I almost do myself damage'	'I am very critical of myself'
Constructive feedback		'as long as I was getting some constructive feedback'
Playing the game:		
• **Luck of the draw**	'I've been fortunate enough'	
• **'Jumping through hoops'**	'and then just take on board what I've been told, and smile and nod and say, "Thank you very much." **(later contradicts this)** 'And you might not take onboard everything because you might not agree'	~~'Well, yes… Sometimes it is – it's like a hoop you've got to jump through, isn't it?~~' **(leading interviewer Q)** ~~'Yeah'~~ 'just sit and talk through what went well in the lesson, areas that you could improve, etc., etc.'
• **Resignation**	'something that has to be done, whether you like it or not, really.'	"Oh, there you go – that's done. Not another one for another year."
• ***Box ticking***	'ticked the boxes'	"Oh, there you go – that's done. Not another one for another year." (laughter) Ticked a box there'
• Formulaic		'If they're just, "Okay, yeah, that was good. Okay, maybe that didn't work. How could you…" **(doesn't even bother finishing the Q – it's so predictable? i.e. How could you *have done it differently?* – shared knowledge between the two conversational partners?)**
Other metaphors	'that's how the cookie crumbled'	
Laughter to indicate significant points		'…I thought went wrong with the lesson, and the observer agreeing with me'(laughs)

[7] **Bold** font = items included in the dissertation

[8] *Italics* = participants' own words

Balance of talk	'50/50.' **(in ideal world)** 'I think it balances out, really' **(reality) Check her balance of talk from round 1**	'50/50'
Evaluative or formative?		'check that you're doing everything okay, but to give you something back' ~~'What was the purpose of that observation? Were you evaluating them, were you helping them – was it both?'~~ **(reject-referring to her role as observer not tutor)**
Personal/professional development	'personal development'/ 'personal purpose of the observation'/**significant change of tone**	
Samples of observer language:		
• 'Desirable'	"you might need to think about looking at it a bit more analytically…"	
• Undesirable/actual	"You're rubbish, you're rubbish, you're rubbish"	"Okay, yeah, that was good. Okay, maybe that didn't work. How could you…"/"Oh, yeah, this is how you could improve it."/ 'But if you already know how you could change it next time anyway, it's not really giving you anything new, is it?'
Lack of tutor *experience*	'I'm still a newbie'	'I've only been doing it 3-and-a-half years'
***Experienced* observers**	'You need to have somebody who has had a heck of a lot more experience than I have'	'But I've never been trained in giving observations – I've never been trained in doing it'
***Novice* v experienced tutors (BALEAP)**	'novice' **(to describe another colleague in a similar position)**	
Observer *ideas* (not experience)		'Obviously, it's good if someone's got a lot of experience and they've got new… I think it's having new ideas – getting new ideas and new ways to do things' **(but at what point does the observer present these – tie in with lit on knowledge (Freeman, 1982)**
Feelings:		
• **Tutor opening with a negative**		'Would you tend to start with the things that you thought had gone wrong?' 'Yeah'
• Fear	'terrifying (laughter) but useful'/'which was a killer' (laughs)	
• Humour/laughter	'laughing my head off'	
•		**Doesn't really indicate emotions very much but a sense that she is largely *uninspired* by the process**
• Frustration	'I was really kicking myself'	
• Told off	'so I got royally slapped on the wrist for that'	
• Shame	'and me hanging my head in shame'	
Collaboration	?	?
Compromise	'some sort of compromise'	'come to see if you agree with each other'

Observer *attitude/personality*	'their manner or attitude towards it is for the right reasons',/ 'everybody's different in the way they give their own feedback, and the way they approach things'/ 'easy-going,' 'tough' 'strict'	
Rounded view	'it's good to get a more rounded view from other people, not just the opinion of one person'	
Different slant/perspective	'looking at what you're doing and just having maybe a different slant on it'	
What do tutors feel happens and <u>should</u> happen in the POC? (Research Q)	'50/50' 'If it's professional development, having the first person again, I think, would be more than appropriate, more than acceptable, really, because it's that person seeing how you are growing as a teacher, and how you are developing yourself' **(referring to having the same observer)** 'a more 'rounded view'/ **(but appears torn between finding the process terrifying and wanting to present a fuller picture of herself/observer experience and right attitude/model observer language)**	'50/50' 'constructive feedback'/'it should help Ts to develop'/**evaluative and formative/ideas! (not necessarily experience)/wants more than just how you can improve**
<u>Does</u>…	**Sense that this is presented rather negatively…/kind of useful but** 'you take from it what you will'	'…then the observer giving me ideas of how they would use it'/ … 'I don't know if I've ever come out with anything like, "Wow, that's a brilliant idea. I've never thought of it" **focuses a lot of what 'went wrong'/a sense that it's a bit formulaic/early on (p.2) suggests that there is a way things are done and should be done.**
Stimulated recall		… 'If you take in the materials that you've used for them to show you some new ways of using'

(Based on Thomas, 2009:199)

Appendix J: Data Understanding Prompt

Item search:
Repeated words (Rubin and Rubin, 1995) e.g. *experience*
Synonyms & antonyms (*ibid*) e.g. *strengths/weaknesses*
Interesting words/metaphors/stories (*ibid*) e.g. *newbies*
Possible themes around how people should or do behave (*ibid*)
An emotion e.g. *resignation*
Search for expectations e.g. observer should be experienced?
Emphasis and/or repetition (*ibid*)
'Iconic statements' and 'pithy summaries' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:236)
Because and answers to why questions – these can form the basis for follow ups (Rubin and Rubin, 1995)
Struggles/hesitations – this could be the time that participants are articulating something they have not considered before i.e. what meanings are being examined (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995)
Description, concept, metaphors and stylistic shifts (Richards, 2003)

Appendix K: Overview of Transcripts and Units of Analysis

Item[9]	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant
50/50[10]	L	A	R	S	
Ask questions at end	L				
***Battle* metaphor**	A				
Box-ticking	R	S	A		
Business	T	A			
Chat	T				
Classroom *dynamics*	B	A			
Compromise	R	S			
Connected management	A				
Constructive	S	L			
Constructive criticism/feedback	A	S			
Conversation	B				
Criticism	A				
Defend/justify	A	R			
Delayed feedback	L				
Develop	R	A	S	T	
Differentiated feedback	T				
Discuss	A				
Doing the *job*	T	L	A		
EAP student v tutor dev.	L				
Evaluation	S				
***Experienced* observer**	R	A	S	T	
Fair	A				
Fear	R				
Feed forward	L	A			
Feedback on feedback	A				
Frustration	R				
Fortunate	R	T			
Going wrong	A	R	S		
Good/bad	A	B	R		
Group feedback	B				
Help	L	T	R	B	
How do you think it went?	S	L	A	B	
I don't really care…	A				
Improve	R	T	B	A	L
Metaphors	A	R			
Mistakes/errors	A	R			
Motivates	T				
Nervous	A	T			
Novice v experienced tutor	R	T			
Observer *ideas*	S	R			
Observer *personality/attitude*	T	A	R		
Observer talk (desirable)	R	A			
Observer talk (actual)	L	R	S		
Observer talk (undesirable)	A	R	L		
Observer team	T				
Personal* v *professional dev.	R				
Playing the game	S	R			
Positive/negative	T				
Pre-set criteria	B	A			
Progression	A	T			
Put on the spot	L				

[9] *Italics* = participants' own words

[10] **Bold** font = items included in the dissertation

Q's prior to POC (focus)	L				
Reflection	T	R			
Repeat obs. same observer	T	B			
Resignation	S	R			
Rounded view	A	R	B		
Scoring system	T	L			
Self-analysis	B	R			
Self-criticism	S	R	L		
Shame	R				
Stimulated recall	S				
Strengths/weaknesses	B	L			
Stress/worry	T				
Structure	L	R	S		
Structure (depends on)	T				
Structure (negative/positive)	S	R	L	A	T
Suggestions	B	L	A		
Tutor *experience*	B	A			
Tutor *experience* (lack of)	R	S			
Tutor talks more (ideal)	L	B			
***Vague* wording (opener)**	L				
Video *record* lesson	T				

A= Andrew	R= Rachel
B= Becky	S= Sarah
L= Louise	T= Tom

Appendix L: Item Occurrences in Data

Item	Occurrences in data
Good	48
Improve	35
Bad	27
Experience (observer exp.)	26
Agree	17
Wrong (went/going)	15
Well (went/going)	11
Give (Observer → Tutor)	10
Experience (tutor, value of – after adding Q)	8
Defend	7
Positive	7
Strengths	5
Weaknesses	5
Negative	5
Develop (referring to tutors)	5
Discuss	5
Give (Tutor → Observer)	5
Change	4
Self-analysis	4
Takes on board	3
Learn	3
Progress	3
Mistakes	2
Compromise	2
Chat	2
Errors	1
Experience (tutor lack of)	1
Reflect	1
Grow	1
Openness	1
Honesty	1
Motivate	1