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PEER-TEACHING IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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ВЗАЄМОНАВЧАННЯ У ПІДГОТОВЦІ МАЙБУТНІХ ВЧИТЕЛІВ: ПОГЛЯД СТУДЕНТІВ

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This publication aims to present the outcomes of peer-teaching and peer-observation practices in mastering English Language Teaching as perceived by third-year students in the pre-service English teacher training program at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. Special emphasis is placed on the role of peer collaboration in fostering life-long learning.

Key Words: *professional development, peer-teaching, peer-observation, English language teaching (ELT)*

Метою цієї публікації є представлення результати практики взаємного навчання та спостереження у процесі опанування методики викладання англійської мови, як її бачать студенти третього курсу програми підготовки вчителів англійської мови у Київському столичному університеті імені Бориса Грінченка. Особливу увагу приділено потенціалу співпраці з одногрупниками для формування основ навчання протягом життя.

Ключові слова: *професійний розвиток, взаємне навчання, взаємне спостереження, викладання англійської мови.*

Introduction. One of the goals of pre-service teacher training is to enable would-be teachers to continue their professional development throughout the whole span of teaching career (Професійний стандарт, 2024). Since one of the main sources of professional development for teachers is interaction and peer-support from colleagues (Richards & Farrell, 2005), the ability to learn from peers should be developed during the years of formal training.

Teaching practice is a vital part of present-day training for future English teachers, which allows students to connect theory with real-world application (Project: New generation School Teacher,

2019). For third-year English Philology students at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, this practice involves both collaborative and individual teaching experiences. Throughout the semester, students prepare lessons, do team-teaching, and observe the teaching of others. These activities not only develop teaching skills but also encourage teamwork and reflection.

Problem Statement. Effective professional development for pre-service English language teachers requires structured opportunities for practical application and collaboration. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that these opportunities foster meaningful peer interaction, reflective practice, and skill development. The current research looks at peer-teaching and peer-observation practices, implemented as part of teaching practice at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, and the ways it contributes to the development of collaboration among would-be teachers. Specifically, it examines the experiences of third-year English Philology students and identifies areas impacted by the practice of peer-teaching prepared and presented in teams.

Purpose. This publication focuses on how peer-teaching and peer-observation during these teaching days contribute to the professional growth of pre-service teachers and promote collaboration for lifelong learning.

Analysis of the latest research and publications.

As supported by various research, the alignment between acquired skills and the actual job market requirements is crucial for many professions, including teaching (Mospan, 2022). Many studies highlight the importance of collaborative learning and reflective teaching methods as the most effective approaches to ensuring high-quality teaching performance (Professional Development for Language Teachers, 2005). Both national and international research highlight that fostering a culture of feedback and mutual support among educators significantly enhances teaching effectiveness and overall job satisfaction (Rachmawati & Lidysari, 2023). According to J.Scrivener (2011), trust-based discussions about teaching experiences can enhance teachers' confidence and motivation while also fostering a positive school environment. Self-reflection is essential for teachers to improve their practice and develop a deeper understanding of their own teaching (Larrivee, 2000).

Results. For third-year English Philology students teaching practice is an integral part of our ELT. During the practice days, each student presents lessons and observes lessons presented by other student-teachers. The role of learners is performed by second-year students doing the same course, just one year behind, and year three peers. Before each teaching day, student-teachers spend a considerable amount of time planning lessons, consulting with ELT methodology teachers, preparing the materials and instructions, and piloting the most challenging parts of the lessons in their own academic groups. After each teaching day, students do the reflective analysis of their own progress and the achievements of other students. Conclusions, presented below, are based on the written feedback received from 35 student teachers at the end of the Autumn semester 2024.

As revealed by the student-teachers' answers, the majority of us admitted to noticing the growth in our confidence and classroom management skills. Figure 1 presents the distribution of our choices as for our own lessons we like the best.

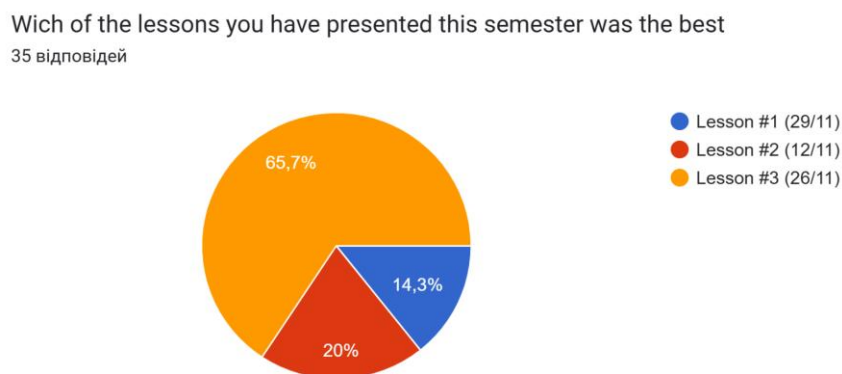


Fig.1. Student-teachers' choice of their lesson they liked the best

Though six student teachers and seven student teachers voted for their first and second lessons respectively as the best ones, the majority of my colleagues voted for the third lesson as the most enjoyable. Based on the informal discussion with my colleagues I can assume that the initial lessons were more stressful, while accumulating experience and witnessing genuine support from our peers gave us greater confidence and composure.

Among the factors that contributed to the student-teachers' growing confidence is the support and assistance of teammates. Teaching is not something we have to do alone, especially when we do it for the first time. Therefore, the lessons we conducted in autumn were prepared and presented in groups of two or three. This format of work has a lot of benefits, including the possibility to divide work and share responsibilities. Some of us made a plan, someone created a presentation, someone was responsible for recording our lessons. We also divided our lesson into parts which we were responsible for. For example, the most sociable person conducted warm-up, someone focused on conducting practical exercises etc. As a result, we experienced relatively low level of stress even when presenting our first lessons, and enjoyed the feeling of peer support. Figure 2 demonstrates the overall assessment of peer support by student-teachers.

Did you receive enough support from your groupmates while preparing the lesson?
29 відповідей

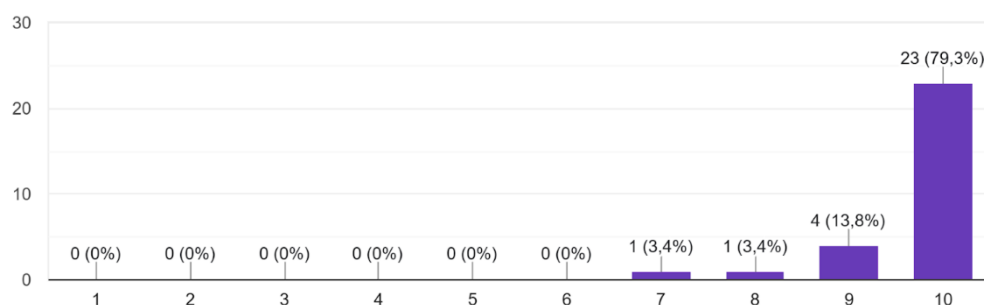


Fig 2. Assessment of level of support from groupmates

The majority of respondents (23 out of 29, or 79.3%) rated their support experience as 10, the highest possible score. Four students (13.8%) rated the support at 9 points, indicating a slightly lower but still very positive experience. The results show that peer support in lesson preparation was highly effective. The overwhelmingly positive responses suggest that group collaboration played a significant role in the success of the teaching practice.

Constructive collaboration with the ELT teacher was another factor that contributed to the professional development of would-be teachers. In addition to providing emotional encouragement, the teacher's feedback served as a guide for self-reflection and self-evaluation. The efficiency of ELT teacher – student-teacher interaction is reflected in the students' assessment of support received from the teacher (Figure 3).

Did you receive enough support from your teacher while preparing the lesson?
29 відповідей

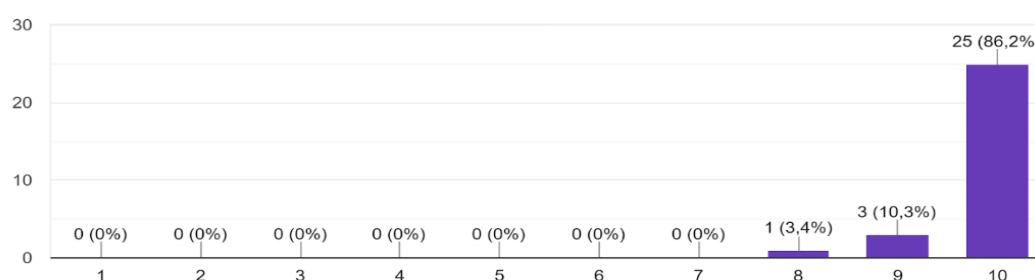


Fig. 3. Assessment of support received from the ELT teacher

As illustrated by the bar chart, 25 out of 29 students (86.2%) gave their teachers' support a rating of 10, the highest possible score. This number indicates that the vast majority of students felt very well-supported by their teacher during lesson preparation. The small percentage of students who rated slightly lower (8 or 9) might have experienced minor difficulties or needed more individualized attention. However, overall, the teacher's role in assisting students was strongly appreciated.

The next factor that contributed to the positive impact of peer-teaching on students' professional development was the sense of security and encouragement provided by cooperative lesson participants during the lessons. The audience made up of student-teacher colleagues and younger students, was most empathetic and supportive as everyone in the room could relate to the others and their present-moment experience. So, if any aspect of the lesson was not perfect, the participants were still willing to do their best and complete the tasks. Figure 4 illustrates how student-teachers assessed the participants' support throughout the lessons.

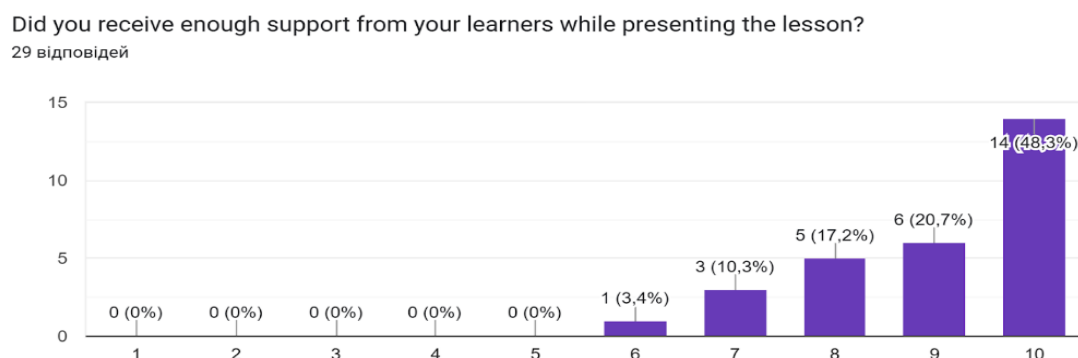


Fig. 4. Learners' support as perceived by student-teachers

As demonstrated by the bar chart, the majority of students felt supported by their learners, with nearly half of the student-teachers (48.3%) giving the highest rating of 10. Notably, no student rated their support below 6, meaning no one felt entirely unsupported.

Yet another factor that shaped the positive effect of peer-teaching on students' professional development was peer feedback. After each lesson, participants had a chance to provide their impressions of the experience to the student-teachers, and the student-teachers could see feedback from the audience. For example, the answers to the question "*What was good about the lesson?*" prompted heart-warming words like "*teachers were pleasant and helpful*," "*the atmosphere was really good*," "*interesting work*," "*nice discussion*", etc. These answers made the student-teachers feel motivated and confident in what they were doing, and resulted in the growth of trust and respect.

While peer feedback from younger participants usually focused on positive aspects of the lessons, the student-teachers were encouraged to take praise critically and pay more attention to the aspects of the lessons that did not receive participants' appreciation. For example, if an activity did not engage students as expected, student-teachers tried to figure out the reasons through analyzing the level of complexity, learners' needs, quality of instructions and explanations, etc. Since the lessons were prepared and presented in teams, the after-teaching reflection was conducted as informal friendly discussion in a friendly relaxed atmosphere. As student-teachers progressed in their teaching practice, they accumulated experience and developed the ability to recognize successes, and see mistakes as guidelines for improvement.

Conclusion. Peer-teaching and peer-observation plays a significant role in the pre-service teacher training. The cooperative nature of lessons, supplemented by the emphatic audience, allows student-teachers to feel secure and motivated, and focus on the development of lesson-planning and classroom management techniques development. Collaboration with peers before, during and after the lesson provides a model for further professional development and lays the basis for life-long learning.

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