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EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program

Experiencias de los profesores en formación de EFL con el coaching entre pares durante sus prácticas en un programa de formación de profesores ecuatorianos

AUTORA:

María Daniela Torres Quizhpe

DIRECTORA:

Dra. Miriam Eucevia Troya Sánchez

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Certification

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Dra. Miriam Eucevia Troya Sánchez

DIRECTORA DEL TRABAJO DE INTEGRACIÓN CURRICULAR

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Firma:

Autora: María Daniela Torres Quizhpe

Cédula: 1950137362

Dirección: Loja-Loja-Ecuador

Correo electrónico: maria.d.torres.q@unl.edu.ec / mariadanielatorresquizhpe@gmail.com

Teléfono: 0962707097 / 0982019985

DATOS COMPLEMENTARIOS:

Directora del Trabajo de Integración Curricular: Dra. Miriam Eucevia Troya Sánchez

Dedication

Primarily, I express my gratitude to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary for granting me life, wisdom, and strength to achieve my set goals.

To my parents, Filoteo Torres, for his support, love, and affection; especially to my dear mother, María Teresa Quizhpe, even though she is no longer in this world, I feel her presence from heaven. I know that from there she blesses me and guides my path. She is my main inspiration during every night of study, my guardian angel; her love motivated me to be brave and strive for better future. To my sister, Elvia Esperanza Torres, for always being present in every step I have taken and for being like a mother to me, providing me her unconditional support so that I could move forward, persevere, and fulfill my ideals; to my siblings and others family members for their advice, values, and above all, their constant motivation not to give up and become a person of good character. And to all those friends and acquaintances who participated directly or indirectly in the development of my thesis.

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María Daniela Torres Quizhpe

Index of content

Index of tables:

Index of figures:

Index of annexes:

1. Title

EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program

2. Resumen

El coaching entre pares ha ganado un reconocimiento sustancial en el ámbito del desarrollo profesional de los profesores en formación de EFL. Proporciona un marco colaborativo que facilita la práctica reflexiva y la retroalimentación constructiva, esenciales para el crecimiento y avance de los educadores. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo explorar las experiencias de los profesores en formación de EFL con el coaching entre pares durante su práctica. El estudio se llevó a cabo en la Universidad Nacional de Loja en Ecuador, desde octubre de 2023 hasta marzo de 2024, utilizando un diseño de método mixto secuencial explicativo. Los participantes fueron seleccionados mediante muestreo intencional e incluyeron a 25 profesores en formación inscritos en el programa de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros. Estos profesores realizaron su práctica en instituciones educativas primarias. Se recopilaron datos cuantitativos a través de cuestionarios administrados a todos los participantes y se analizaron utilizando estadísticas descriptivas. Las entrevistas semiestructuradas se realizaron a seis participantes y se analizaron mediante análisis temático. Los resultados revelaron que el coaching entre pares facilitó significativamente el desarrollo profesional al fomentar la reflexión y proporcionar una retroalimentación inmediata. Sin embargo, la falta de directrices claras y los problemas de gestión del tiempo dificultaron su implementación. El estudio concluyó que el coaching entre pares fue un recurso efectivo para el crecimiento profesional de los profesores, gracias a la creación de un entorno de aprendizaje colaborativo y de apoyo. El programa permitió el intercambio de mejores prácticas, alentó el aprendizaje mutuo y los ayudó a construir confianza en sus habilidades docentes. Para maximizar los beneficios del coaching entre pares, es importante mejorar las estrategias de planificación y comunicación. Esto incluye establecer objetivos claros, organizar actividades, programar reuniones de manera efectiva y proporcionar instrucciones claras y retroalimentación constructiva.

Palabras clave: *programas de formación, confianza, aprendizaje colaborativo, reflexión, retroalimentación*

2.1 Abstract

Peer coaching has gained substantial recognition in the field of professional development for EFL pre-service teachers. It provides a collaborative framework that facilitates reflective practice and constructive feedback, essential for educators' growth and advancement. This research aimed to explore EFL pre-service teachers' experiences with peer coaching during their practicum. The study was conducted at the Universidad Nacional de Loja in Ecuador, from October to March 2024, using an explanatory sequential mixed method design. Participants were selected by purposive sampling and included 25 EFL pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros program. These pre-service teachers carried out their practicum in primary educational institutions. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to all participants and analyzed using descriptive statistics. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to six participants which were analyzed through thematic analysis. The results revealed that peer coaching significantly facilitated professional development by encouraging reflection and providing immediate feedback. However, lack of clear guidelines and time management issues hindered its optimal implementation. The study concluded that peer coaching was an effective resource for teachers' professional growth through the creation of a collaborative and supportive learning environment. The program enabled the sharing of best practices, encouraged mutual learning, and helped them build confidence in their teaching skills. To maximize the benefits of peer coaching, it is important to improve planning and communication strategies. These should include setting clear objectives, organizing activities, scheduling meetings effectively, and providing clear instructions and meaningful feedback.

Key Words: *training programs, confidence, collaborative learning, reflection, feedback*

3. Introduction

As part of educator training, it is essential for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers to immerse themselves in the actual teaching contexts. These practicum experiences provide valuable opportunities to apply their knowledge, playing a vital role in their professional development. Gulab and Sharjeel (2019) assert that practicum enables EFL pre-service teachers to refine their teaching, classroom management, and assessment skills. It fosters collaboration with peers and encourages reflection on their professional development, which distinguishes them as future professional instructors.

Peer coaching is therefore an especially effective strategy within this framework. Evişen (2021) states that prospective teachers perceive peer coaching as a valuable collaborative professional development strategy that fosters support, learning, and reflection to enhance. The present study seeks to answer the following research question: what are the EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher Education program? It also addresses two sub questions: what are the potential benefits of integrating peer coaching into the EFL pre-service teachers' practicum? And what barriers do EFL pre-service teachers face from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their practicum?

Based on these aforementioned questions, the central aim of this investigation is to describe EFL pre-service teachers experiences of peer coaching during their practicum. In order to achieve this, the study pursues two specific objectives: to identify the potential benefits of integrating peer coaching in the EFL pre-service teachers' practicum, and to determine the barriers that prevent novice teachers from maximizing these benefits.

Moreover, the existing literature underscores the positive impact of peer coaching on professional development and teaching efficacy. The studies by Loman et al. (2020) and Evişen (2021) demonstrate that peer coaching facilitates reflective practice, mutual support, and the development of instructional skills among EFL pre-service teachers. This collaborative approach is viewed as a valuable strategy for professional development, fostering support, learning, and reflection to enhance teaching skills through reciprocal feedback and support.

Nevertheless, despite these promising findings, there is a notable lack of research focused on the implementation and impact of peer coaching among EFL pre-service teachers in Loja, Ecuador. This study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence on the experiences, benefits, and challenges of peer coaching in this particular setting. In this manner, it contributes to the broader understanding of effective practicum models in EFL teacher education.

4

Furthermore, the findings have the potential to inform teacher education programs about the benefits of integrating peer coaching into their practicum models. This study provides a better understanding of peer coaching can contribute to more effective professional development practices, ultimately improving the quality of teaching English as foreign language. In addition, this study offers practical ideas and recommendations for overcoming the challenges associated with peer coaching, facilitating its successful implementation in the teacher education curriculum.

Finally, this study is limited to the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers at Universidad Nacional de Loja, Ecuador, during the academic semester from October 2023 to March 2024. The scopes include the examination of the benefits and challenges of peer coaching from the perspectives of these EFL-pre-service teachers. However, limitations of the study include the small sample size and the possibility of subjective bias in self-reported experiences. Future research should expand on this study by including a larger and more diverse sample, as well as participants should receive preliminary training on giving and receiving constructive feedback and be guided step-by-step through the peer coaching process to ensure an enjoyable experience.

The structure of this research work obeys what is established in the Academic Regulations of the Universidad Nacional de Loja, therefore it presents; **Title**, which is the object of study called "EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program"; **Abstract**, objectives to be achieved, in English translated into Spanish, detailing in abbreviated and precise form the content of the work done; **Introduction**, describes the background, importance and objectives of the study; **Theoretical Framework**, compiles all the concepts and theoretical references on the topic under study; **Methodology**, describes the research design, participants, data collection methods and analysis procedures; **Results**, presents in detail the results of the study; **Discussion**, interprets the results, relating them to the research questions and the literature review; **Conclusions**, shows the most significant findings of the study; **Recommendations**, possible solutions leading to future research; **Bibliography**, lists all the sources cited in the report used for the collection of information; and the **Annexes**, attached documents that serve as a basis to support the results of the work and the thesis project duly drafted.

<center>**4. Theoretical Framework**</center>

The present study analyzes the EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum. This work is based on an extensive literature review, including books and scientific articles from the past five years, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of peer coaching in similar educational contexts.

4.1 Peer Coaching

Peer coaching has been increasingly developed and adopted by teachers themselves as one form of collaborative practice in which they share learning and reflections with the purpose of enhancing teaching. According to Alsaleh et al. (2017), peer coaching is understood to be a collective effort where several educators work together as a team for accomplishing one common goal: improving and guaranteeing quality in teaching. It is thus a collaborative process, one which builds on mutual trust and balanced power relationships among members. While it encourages professional growth by offering support to one another, it also affirms the validation of teaching practices within a peer context. This is therefore a paradigm shift from the traditional model of mentoring, where peer coaching encourages equal and supportive relationships among colleagues.

While it recognizes professional development, peer coaching has gained widespread acceptance as one of the dynamic methods of skill improvement and learning with co-operation. To elaborate on this concept, one must refer to the view expressed by leading authors Showers and Joyce (1996). They state that this approach has emerged due to the failure of traditional training approaches for teachers started to develop in the 1980s based on pragmatic principles of collaboration in classrooms. It further developed to highlight peer observation, sharing of feedback, and implication of effective teaching strategies. During the late 1980s, the concept of cooperation expanded to include the development of teaching teams. Scholars highlighted that a collaborative school culture is essential for promoting effective teaching practices that would, in turn, realize better performance in students (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

For instance, Joyce and Showers (2002) indicated that peer coaching is "a collaborative relationship between equals who possess no hierarchical status." It is characterized by mutual learning and support where teachers share in planning, observing, and reflecting on their shared teaching practices. In addition, unlike traditional coaching, the idea of peer coaching abandons hierarchical mentoring for a reciprocal learning model. Teachers retained and appropriately applied the new teaching strategies and models to a greater degree when they were involved in peer coaching groups.

On the other hand, Robbins (1991) gives another definition of peer coaching, which he describes as a confidential and collaborative process whereby teachers partner in reflecting on their practices, sharing pedagogical ideas, developing new skills, investigating, resolving work problems, and giving feedback to one another while maintaining an equal relationship.

Although the wordings may differ, the very concept of peer coaching deals basically with mutual enhancement and refining teaching skills. As an exploratory avenue rather than evaluation, peer coaching also serves as a venue for educators to try out innovative methodologies and curricular approaches in a non-threatening environment before formal evaluation. It pedagogically aims at enhancing competency on fair and equal footing through mutual exchange amongst trusted colleagues.

This process, for Becker (2007), is described by having certain and previously determined goals, which can be the reflection of current practices, the extension, and refining of teaching skills, and the development of new ones. The peer coaching approach is therefore really heterogeneous and includes a number of models, such as technical, collegial, team, cognitive, and challenge coaching; all of them have specific objectives, though all share the aim of working towards the amelioration of teaching and learning.

Taking into account the above, peer coaching is an approach that promotes an egalitarian and collaborative platform for EFL professionals during their teaching practicum. The various methodologies proposed by experts such as Showers and Joyce, Robbins and Becker focus on the principle that peer coaching is an essential element of the evolution of teaching practicum, as it provides a space to reflect on their practice.

4.1.1 Peer Coaching in the EFL Practicum

Peer coaching is among the major strategies of psychosocial support given to the pre-service teachers in the EFL internships. The findings by Nguyen (2013) states that when working with colleagues, a teacher gets to share knowledge and emotions among them, which helps him/her in the development of his/her professionalism. This will more probably gain the confidence and teaching skills, which forms an effective learning environment in a student's life. Furthermore, peer coaching in EFL internships is not restricted to observational learning itself but involves a range of teaching-related activities such as mentoring, grading, and co-teaching, thus offering a holistic approach to professional development. This model contributes not only to the immediate support of improvement in teaching skills but also to the long-term identity and professional growth of preservice teachers.

Furthermore, the relationship factor between a teacher and his or her coach has an effect on the success of peer coaching. A quality and positive relationship leads to high levels of

psychosocial support, which is very advantageous for preservice teachers who face EFL teaching challenges. Properly formed relationships for peer mentoring with open communications and shared responsibilities can greatly enhance the experiences of preservice teachers while teaching in internship settings of EFL.

Corroborating the above, Çapan and Bedir (2019) provide a study of preservice EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching internship experiences based on two different mentoring routes: traditional mentoring and reciprocal peer mentoring. The findings of this research showed that teaching internships played a significant role in the professional development of the preservice teachers in practically introducing them to the teaching profession and allowing them to utilize their theoretical knowledge in the actual classrooms.

In the case of peer coaching and shadowing, student teachers valued the peer observation activities that allowed them to form a realistic view of teaching and their roles. This was an approach that proved more active instead of being passive like observation alone. More importantly, these peer observations triggered reflective thinking and opened up possibilities for the student teachers in engaging in critical analysis of their own and their peers' teaching practices. Another constituent of the peer mentoring models, peer conferences, proved extremely helpful. They provided valuable social, psychological, and professional support and developed the pedagogical content knowledge of participants. Discussions given within these conferences allowed in-depth reflections on teaching practices, which were instrumental in improving student teachers' methodological knowledge (Çapan & Bedir, 2019).

Peer coaching during EFL practicum is definitely a testimony to the spirit of collaboration in teaching, whereby the exchange of ideas and the mutual betterment of pedagogical skills capture the very essence of professional development. Critical components entailing reflective dialogue, shared experiences, and peer observation join together to give meaning to this robust continuous improvement framework. It supports not only individual growth for EFL educators but also drives collective advancement in improving educational practice.

4.1.2 *Showers and Joyce's Principles for Peer Coaching*

The most comprehensive and multi-dimensional peer coaching principles for enhancing teachers' professional growth were articulated by Showers and Joyce. At the heart of the model is an inclusive participation structure where educators come together in study teams for collaboration purposes. This unified kind of participation ensures a collective commitment to the practice and refinement of pedagogical strategies, offering support to one another and measuring student learning impacts.

A key principle underlying the approach is the intentional avoidance of verbal feedback, specifically evaluative feedback, during peer coaching process. This stems quite logically from prioritizing mutual growth over assessment of individual performance. The avoidance of judgmental feedback can be a way to create an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual help.

Additionally, operational roles within the coaching process are reworded: an active instructor is referred to as a "coach," while another one who is observing plays the role of the "coached." This shift in wording redirects the emphasis from a top-down critique to the experiential acquisition of pedagogical knowledge through first-hand observation.

Furthermore, their model goes beyond the isolated observation and feedback. It incorporates core activities such as collaborative lesson planning, preparation of teaching materials, and shared reflection about student results. This more extended definition then holds within it a holistic notion of praxis- that is, one which foregrounds collective knowledge and collaboration.

Based on these principles, Showers and Joyce create peer coaching as a demanding yet flexible model for teacher professional growth. By emphasizing collaborative inquiry, fluid coaching roles, and joint lesson design and reflection, they establish the preconditions for the developmental sequence of peer coaching. A pre-condition of any description of the sequence itself is to establish a safe climate in which frank, non-evaluative dialogue can take place. Guided by non-judgment and support, stages enabling incremental skill development can be developed. In what ways these stages facilitate the growth of teachers collectively will be discussed subsequently.

4.1.3 Stages of Peer Coaching in EFL

The process of peer coaching generally proceeds through matching, followed by successive stages of planning, observation, and debriefing. The progression allows for some good aspects of teaching to be identified and reinforced while weaknesses that need further development come to light. The relation between them is mutual, based on trust and equality, which itself contains the benefit for both parties in the exchange (Nguyen, 2013).

According to Robbins (1991), peer coaching is defined as "the structured process whereby teachers help one another in a non-threatening way reflect on, analyze, and refine their teaching strategies." The whole process falls into three stages: the pre-conference, the observation, and the post-conference. Each of these stages is vital because it ensures that the ultimate peer coaching experience is helpful and successful to the teachers involved in it. It is relevant to point out the non-evaluative role of an observer, whose task is just to gather information, and the importance of a collaborative and supportive debriefing session since they

state, "An important point to consider here is that observers are not supposed to do any kind of evaluation, but they are expected to gather information, communicate it to the teacher, and provide feedback."(Afshar & Doosti, 2022, p.4)

Afshar and Doosti (2022) mentioned that peer coaching should begin by stating that teachers observe classes given by their peers and provide constructive feedback during a pre- and post-observation discussion in regard to lesson planning, strategies to be used, and possible challenges.

4.1.3.1   Pre-observation. Pre-observation is regarded as one of the most important stages of peer coaching for pre-service teachers. During the pre-class observation conferences, with the participants' assistance, aspects to be observed and recorded are determined. This method ensures that the data to be collected is specific to the contribution of this method toward the professional development of the pre-service teacher (Britton & Anderson, 2010).

In the context of professional development of EFL teachers through peer coaching, pre-observation is an important phase according to authors Afshar and Doosti (2022). In this stage, the peer coaching teachers meet before any observation; they discuss the nature of the class to be observed, lesson content, student characteristics, teaching approach, and any problems that may arise. According to the authors, this is the most critical stage in building a shared understanding of the observation grounds. Afshar and Doosti have also stressed the pre-observation phase as important in the process of peer coaching on raising reflectivity for improving teaching practices.

Melekhina and Barabasheva (2019) discussed the phase of pre-observation within the framework of peer coaching in the work practice of EFL teachers in their article "Peer Coaching as a Means of EFL Teachers' Professional Development". During this stage, the participants reflect upon their own experiences as university teachers, assess professional achievements, and give a definition of challenges they face in their work. During this stage, the participants reflected on themselves, specified efficient teaching methods that had proved helpful during their own teaching careers, and discussed the given educational context of constant change. The reflection gave a lead on developing an exemplary model of teaching excellence. Course organizers also presented a range of educational approaches and activities, such as team teaching and teaching portfolios, to take into account the immediate professional needs and long-term aspirations in teaching EFL.

4.1.3.2 **Observation.** The observation phase of peer coaching in an educational setting has been considered an important source for the improvement of teaching practice and professional development. This is also supported by Suhirman (2019), who states that through peer observation, teachers try very hard to find each other's helpful teaching techniques. This forms a critical basis for formulating constructive feedback based on real student learning data. Because teachers can observe their peers teaching in real time, this setup creates a collaborative environment of improvement and a sharing of expertise.

Drawing on the significance of observation, Panggua et al. (2018) note that peer coaching during this phase offers a privileged occasion when teachers can observe multiple teaching approaches and strategies their peers put into practice-an aspect necessary for expanding their range of teaching strategies and professional competencies. It allows educators not only to observe but also to appreciate diverse pedagogical approaches, hence enriching their teaching repertoire.

Similarly, Alsaleh et al. (2017), in their study of peer coaching in Kuwait, reaffirmed that written notes and audio/video recordings during lesson observations are a potent tool that can be used to extend and enhance the detail of their analyses of teaching practice. These practices provide an in-depth look at diverse pedagogical methods that result in a critical learning opportunity. Teachers reflect on and share exemplary practices in order to improve their own teaching methods, thus helping raise the overall quality of education.

4.1.3.3 **Post-observation.** Panggua et al. (2018) emphasized that the post-observation stage in peer coaching remains an essential part when a teacher reflects upon his or her practice. This stage has crucial implications for enhancing professional self-esteem and teaching effectiveness since such a session provides an opportunity for educators to receive constructive feedback on the observed session, playing a pivotal role in facilitating continuous improvement and positively impacting student performance. During this phase, teachers are able to reflect on and adjust their approaches to teaching.

Building on this idea, Alsaleh et al. (2017) stress that discussion of peers after observation is highly critical. At this stage of the process, educators interpret the observation data together with regard to its educational implications. This reflective stage provides the opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching methodologies. It develops a shared culture of improvement in pedagogical competence as teachers work with each other for improvement in instructional methods and techniques.

Suhirman (2019) reiterates such thoughts by explaining that the post-observation phase of lesson study is a time to identify and analyze significant phenomena that happened along

with the observation of lessons. This phase characterizes deep reflection with a profound emphasis on detailed analyses in depth regarding the lesson itself, methods of teaching, and student learning. The teachers discuss as a group and appraise the effectiveness of the lesson being delivered and debate ideas and strategies for future improvements."

4.1.4 Components of Peer Coaching

Important works, such as those made by Showers and Joyce in 1996, have led to a development of peer coaching towards the identification of key elements. Trust has been considered a significant constituent to any given relationship since it underpins adult learning and enhances other aspects of peer coaching.

Another critical aspect of peer coaching is that this approach is collaborative, and this is often emphasized in the literature to be one way through which growth and development of teachers are fostered. In various reports, such as from the Southern Regional Education Board (2005), peer coaching is claimed to accord symmetrical learning opportunities to educators, especially those who are still undergoing training. Conferences are the second vital ingredient, which forms a systematic avenue of feedback on a process of talking and listening that is best given meaning by data. Observations with systematic collection of data are the fourth element, further making better this process of peer coaching. Finally, analysis and reflection complete the cycle, allowing educators to process data, refine practices, enhance self-efficacy, and engage in self-assessment.

In this way looking for a deeper and more critical approach to professional development. Britton and Anderson (2010) argue that rigorous analysis and reflection at the end enable educators to assimilate data, refine practices, enhance self-efficacy, and engage in critical self-assessment, and this, in turn, fosters a deeper and more critical approach toward professional development. These components are all interrelated in a supportive sense that leads to the outcomes.

For instance, trust is a base factor allowing openness and receptiveness. Collaboration taps into collective wisdom, uniting preservice teachers in solution-finding. Conferencing allows structured opportunity for rich dialogue. Feedback, appropriately given and openly received, allows next steps to be defined. Finally, reflection works as an integrative mechanism that brings ideas together and connects every part into a system that is continuously improving practice. Each component's function within the larger construct will be examined next.

4.1.4.1**Trust and confidence.** In the case of peer coaching, it is going to be all about trust and safety. It allows the teacher to critically examine his or her own practices and their consequences on learning environments in a process of reciprocal observation with a colleague, many times referred to as a "peer." By this token, teachers observe and are observed. This can minimize some stress from assessment because it is not by a superior but rather done among peers. This is considered a less-threatening process since it is away from managerial supervision and in a safer and more collegiate environment (Evişen, 2021).

Additionally, the result of peer coaching can lead the way to incorporate new effective teaching strategies. Indeed, Showers and Joyce report that in their study, teachers who were in coaching relationships applied new skills and strategies more frequently and appropriately than those who preferred to operate independently. Thus, it is critical that the trust and security inherent in peer coaching relationships provide a safe environment within which professional growth and continuous development of teaching practices may occur.

Analysis done by Anderson (2020) shows that trust can serve as a driver for the dynamics of peer coaching and, therefore, for positive transformation in the education context. The study conducted by Lea et al. (2004), as documented by Anderson, underlines the deep effect that mutual trust can have when school staff are told that it is there. More than the peer coaching process being based on this form and give back similar reassurance of their own capabilities to their colleagues in a joint quest for professional improvement.

4.1.4.2**Collaboration.** Drawing from Afshar and Doosti (2022), in peer coaching, the "collaborative" aspect is core in teacher development. It is conveyed that the center of learning is collaboration, and it forms the very essence of a developing teacher. Such collaboration is not typified by competition; rather, there is mutual support, where colleagues take pride in the others' successes and constructively provide feedback rather than evaluative criticism. Shared values and goals, together with a trusting relationship based on care and mutual respect, form the basis for such a productive collaborative environment.

This is further reinforced by Hadar and Brody (2010), who shifts the focus to the learning community of teachers; It postulates that professional growth can be achieved where teachers step out of their personal and professional isolation to join up with the professional development community. As Afshar and Doosti (2022), assert, it is the commitment that is required to break the settings that confront in service teachers, thereby fostering the collaboration that is necessary for improvement and learning.

4.1.4.3   Conferencing. In a study conducted by Canaran (2023), conferences appear as an important context within which peer coaching takes place; it has been thought to be a significant process contributing to educators' professional development and reflective dialogue and giving useful feedback to each other. In these conference sessions, educators not only discuss their experiences and challenges but also share the designing of strategies for overcoming these issues and setting goals to improve teaching methodologies. This collaborative framework provides an atmosphere that is basically non-threatening-favorable for continued professional growth. The above approach again testifies to the fact that interaction with peers may play a significant role in developing teaching competencies.

This is also supportive by Melekhina and Barabasheva (2019) when referring to the role of conferences during peer coaching. They indicate that conferences provide an avenue for discussants to reflect on their teaching practices, thus creating avenues for sharing experiences, ideas, and constructive feedback. It gives educators an opportunity to highlight areas in which they need improvement; it helps in the enhancement of self-reflection and self-evaluation abilities and aids in leadership and collaborative skills development. The ultimate goal of the conferences in peer coaching is the betterment of teaching quality and assurance of professional growth.

The third integral part of the peer coaching process, as reported by Canaran, Melekhina and Barabasheva, is conferences. These conferences promote shared learning on the part of participants by providing numerous opportunities for participant feedback both before and after instructional events. The clarity, questioning, and active listening that accompany this feedback are much more effective if they are based on data rather than personal opinion. This approach has underlined the vital role of data-driven observations in enhancing peer coaching interventions effectively.

4.1.4.4   Feedback. In Feedback in peer coaching is consistently conveyed as an important variable in research studies. Alsaleh et al. (2017) highlight that feedback is the key element that provides teachers with opportunities to easily introduce new teaching techniques into their teaching practices. The authors highlighted that pre-service teachers greatly benefit from peer feedback in improving their teaching practices. Feedback received from peers has been found to enhance a variety of teaching components such as effective communication and self-reflection.

Taking into account the aforementioned, Dönmez and Şahin, (2022) supports by underlining that pre- and post-observation meetings constitutes an integral part of the process of peer coaching. This study underlines the importance of feedback-in fact, provided in both

pre- and post-observation meetings that allows the peer coaches to share ideas and thus give valuable suggestions for refining each other's teaching practices. It is this continuous exchange of feedback that enriches collaborative learning among educators.

To add on this, Panggua et al. (2018) note that peer coaching provides this unique opportunity in which teachers are able to understand their professional strengths and weaknesses through the feedback provided, mainly by their colleagues, but carried out in a constructive manner. However, they contend that the act of providing feedback is not always straightforward, as many educators grapple with inhibition when offering feedback. Particularly on areas of weakness, it may cause discomfort or embarrassment. Avoiding the challenges, it can be said that the peer coaching model is recognized for its potential in problem-solving and sharing of experiences among EFL teachers. More importantly, it avails a channel for mentorship of the experienced teachers to their junior colleagues for inspirational purposes.

4.1.4.5 **Reflection**. Schön (1992) notions of "reflection in action" and "reflection on action" form the basis of peer coaching with teachers contemplating their teaching both during an action and afterward. Reflecting in such a supportive context can result in deeper insight and change.

4.1.4.5.1 *Reflection in Action.* To comment on the process of reflecting in action, Pang (2022) gives emphasis that such reflective activity does prompt teachers "to re-examine and refine their teaching approach and theory comprehensively." The result of this type of reflection is not only to activate critical judgment but also to form a research-oriented attitude within their present professional development.

In the educational context, reflection in action takes a step further for Pang, who describes the process as one that is responsive and an adaptive mode employed by tutors in their active appraisal and adjustment of teaching methods during an action. This level of reflection is quite important for swift problem-solving and the ability to adjust teaching methods to conform to the ever-evolving dynamics of the classroom.

Extending this view, Vidmar (2005) underlines that reflection in action is a dynamic, interactive process where educators are continuously interpreting and responding to demands and challenges being thrown up by the teaching process itself. This immediacy of reflection becomes part of professional practice, where instructors get the opportunity to modify their attempts midstream and thus perfect their effectiveness in the classroom.

4.1.4.5.2   Reflection about Action. Also known as reflection on action. Pang (2022) reveals that, when discussing reflection-on-action, this very reflective practice gives the educator an opportunity to reinstate a deep reevaluation and reshaping of teaching strategies and theories. The approach tends not only to provoke critical evaluation but also to spur the development of a research-oriented perspective in their continuing professional development process.

Consistent with this view, Wang et al. (2019) argue that reflection-on-action is considered a deeper level of reflection for the educator. Through this stage, the educator replays and reframes teaching methods during the post-instructional activity. This reflective process has been considered an important activity in developing new theoretical practices in teaching that will further promote a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in teaching methods.

4.1.5   *Research Instruments for Peer Coaching*

Instruments suggested by Göker (2021) come to the forefront with great importance in the peer coaching process among the EFL student teachers. All the devices are prepared to help teach students study their pedagogical ideas more critically and facilitate professional growth. The reflective diary sheets, video recordings of the interactions, and the coach's diary eventually present the teacher candidate with a three-dimensional perspective on their own practices, making them more reflective and growth-oriented.

The following are the descriptions of Göker's instruments:

- **Reflective Diary Sheets:** These are a personal record kept by student teachers in which they would write down their reflections concerning teaching practices throughout the school year. As an introspective tool, it is supposed to allow them to engage in self-assessment and develop greater awareness of effective and ineffective teaching methods. As Rajab (2013) has mentioned reflective diary models also allow the teacher to remember positive results or issues addressed during the operation of the program. The use of such diaries would determine in-depth the peer coaching program operated in classrooms. The model of Rajab could be reflected below in the following table:

Table 1

Rajab's Reflective Journal Model

Section	Description
Date of Observation	[Date]
Time and Place of Observation	[Time and Place]

Name of Observer	[Observer's Name]
Name of Observed	[Observed Teacher's Name]
Purpose of Observation	[Purpose]
Purpose Achieved	Yes / No
Most Beneficial Aspects	1.
Barriers Encountered	1.

Note. Adapted from Peer coaching in the Kingdom of Bahrain: Exploring the implementation of a professional development programme for primary teachers by S. Rajab (2013).

- **Video Recordings of Interactions:** On this tool, interactions between the pre-service teachers and the reflective coach are captured. These are very important in providing a tangible basis on which post observation meetings feedback and self-reflection may revolve, enabling the coach and the teachers to get hold of specific aspects of teaching practice.

- **Coach Diary:** This is a diary maintained by the reflective coach in which he makes some observations and insights from teaching sessions. It forms a professional logbook for the coach so that feedback sessions are conducted in a more organized manner. The coach's diary forms the basis of planning peer coaching discussions, focusing on progress achieved and further areas of growth as reflected upon by video recordings and reflective diary sheets.

As for the contribution of Okumura (2020), his publication stands prominent in educational development; it can be found working effectively on peer coaching tools within a strategic application of lesson plan document reviews and reflective note analysis. Okumura refined the practice of peer coaching:

- **Lesson Plan Documents and Teaching Materials:** These instruments are used to review the planning phase of peer coaching on lesson plans and teaching materials, making the instructional resources relevant and engaging. It would help teachers to consider options according to the goals, content, and mode of delivery and adapt a proactive attitude towards teaching in a reflective and collaborative manner.

- **Reflection Notes:** This kind of instruments are used in the reflection phase for self-evaluation by teachers in order to the recording of their teaching experiences and reflecting on them. These notes are essential in peer coaching, in which educators can analyze and evaluate instructional processes, highlighting areas of improvement. In

fact, teachers may realize more in this reflective practice about their professional growth and instructional effectiveness.

The tools described, ranging from Göker's Reflective Journal Sheets to Okumura's Lesson Plan Reviews, model these multidimensional instruments that permit impactful peer coaching.

4.2 EFL Pre-service Teachers' practicum

The practicum periods are, therefore, an important constituent of the professional preparation of preservice EFL teachers. It provides an essential space where the theoretical knowledge acquired during the undergraduate course can be put into practice, and pedagogical competencies can be developed. This section, therefore, concentrates on an analytical view of structure, challenges, and opportunities regarding internships in the teaching of the English language, with an emphasis on the necessity of providing a firm knowledge base to preservice teachers. It examines how the internship experiences, in turn, shape the professional identity of the preservice teachers and their growth in the area of language teaching.

4.2.1 Practicum in the EFL

Ulum (2020), in a research review of the pedagogical strategies concerning EFL, emerges with what he terms the necessity of practicum that "merge specialized teaching methodologies with exposure to socio-cultural processes". Field experiences in EFL can be regarded as an intrinsic part of teacher professional development and support the mentoring model as a means of developing such competencies among preservice teachers. In this respect, the transactional nature of learning is transcended and a reflexive paradigm that critically assesses the interaction among educators' experiences, belief systems, and knowledge of content is forwarded.

Ulum's discussion further endorses such a reflective approach in reconciling theoretical paradigms with practical pedagogies and strengthens calls for substantive reforms in EFL education if it is to cope with the increasingly complex demands of global language instruction. Ulum (2020) says that the practicum is introduced as an integrated course and statutory requirement within pre-service teacher education, and has become a statutory pre-requisite to be completed by students for the successful completion of studies. Their mandatory character underscores that they play an indispensable role in service while connecting the vital link between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the preparation of future educators.

This paper goes beyond merely being a stage in their educational career by highlighting how practicum is fundamental in shaping professional development and identity as educators. Maharani and Fithriani (2023), state that the process of training will prepare the preservice

teacher to meet many challenges, which they will face in light of rapid changes in the social, political, economic, and educational environments of today's institutions.

According to the authors aforementioned, it can be seen that the practicum design is highly specialized to afford preservice educators the opportunities to find and use appropriate teaching styles that would enhance such complexities in the modern classroom and workplace. In addition, it highlights the development of critical thinking to question assumptions and reflect on their pedagogical approaches.

In summary, teaching practicums provide the needed induction in the profession of teaching, making instructors adept with better skills and widen their repertoire of successful teaching techniques. An internship can be regarded as one of the cornerstones of professional pedagogical development, providing a needed bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application when it comes to EFL, Tantoy and Gemota (2018) claim.

Through the process of guided internships by the instructors, usually experienced instructors themselves, student teachers move from being learners to being independent educators. This way, an internship provides an opportunity for these candidates to observe and assimilate the complexities entailed in real teaching and classroom management, an experience that Kyriacou (2007) suggests is important in stimulating new concepts of teaching. As the process progresses, the student teacher starts to assume normal teaching responsibilities as learned from their mentor and results in independent teaching practices on the part of the student teacher within an educational setting.

In the winder domain of professional fields, Universidad Nacional de Loja. (n.d) perceives internship or practicum as an integral, at times mandatory process through which learning is combined with professional competency development within organizational and institutional contexts. Its importance is underscored by providing opportunities for labor market integration, industry dynamic familiarization, and professional competencies development.

For EFL teachers, the internship is not a formality; rather, it was a transformative stage of professional identity construction and a way to endow them with knowledge to prosper in the arduous and shifting dimensions of language teaching. It is during this internship period that the gap between theoretical knowledge taken from courses and practical realities found in the classroom can be met. An internship provides an opportunity for the prospective EFL teacher to fine-tune his teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and how to cater to diversified learning styles and needs in a crucible.

From what has been discussed, it can be said that the internship period constitutes a decisive time when pre-service EFL teachers integrate multi-faceted dimensions of an emerging knowledge base. This experiential phase enables pre-service teachers to firm up their notions about knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of pedagogical techniques, and knowledge of general principles of teaching and learning. The internship period gives instructors a fertile ground where they can integrate into practice the mastery of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

4.2.2 Knowledge Base for EFL Teachers

The knowledge base of EFL teachers should be broad and multi-dimensional. English According to Shulman (1987), for effectiveness in teaching, it is necessary for the teachers to possess a good understanding of various forms of knowledge categories. Content knowledge comprising what is taught, general pedagogical knowledge or how to teach, curriculum knowledge, knowledge about learners and their backgrounds, and clarity about goals for education. In the author's line of reasoning, such practical concerns as language management, instructional flow, and student understanding are thought to directly influence and shape effective teaching practices (Jansem, 2019).

It is here that Shulman's description of pedagogical content knowledge attracts especial attention, incorporating as it does both subject matter and teaching methods. Further developing this, Day (1993) includes content, pedagogical, and didactic knowledge that, all taken together, will provide a teacher's expertise and the skills employed during teaching practices.

To this list, Richards (1998) adds teaching theories, teaching skills, communication skills and language proficiency. Further, other aspects were added such as self-awareness and assessment knowledge-required for reflective practice and assessing student progress. Finally, there is also pedagogical reasoning and decision-making, coupled with contextual knowledge of the environment in which teaching and learning are performed, as being paramount.

It is evident that the knowledge base required of an EFL teacher is extensive, equipping them with the necessary expertise to address challenges effectively and successfully. Such a base consists of knowledge about the content to be taught, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about the curriculum, and knowledge about the educational goals. Guided by these, the specific types of knowledge to be discussed in the following section shall be elaborated upon, namely content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

4.2.2.1   Content Knowledge. Content Knowledge (CK) refers to the understanding of the subject matter that teachers are expected to teach. It encompasses the "what" of teaching, including facts, concepts, theories, and the structure of the subject area. CK is the foundational knowledge that educators need to understand in depth before they can think about how to teach it to others. It encompasses the information and skills within the EFL pedagogy that are important for effective teaching experiences (Gomez, 2020).

According to Jansem (2019), content knowledge refers to a teacher's understanding of the subject matter they are teaching. This includes knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills within the context of language teaching. In consequence, content knowledge represents an intricate understanding of the subject that enables teachers to incorporate personal and academic knowledge into their teaching.

In correspondence with the pronouncements of Fathi and Yousefifard (2019), the term "content knowledge" is defined as the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching. It encompasses the facts, concepts, theories, and principles that are fundamental to a particular academic discipline. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, CK would specifically relate to the teacher's knowledge of the English language, including its grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural aspects. This knowledge is crucial for effectively teaching the language to students.

4.2.2.2   General Pedagogical Knowledge. As earlier suggested from the research, pedagogical knowledge has to do with knowledge about the ways and manner of teaching. In this light, it is knowing how students learn, strategies applying in classroom management, the setting up of lesson plans, and implementation of assessment techniques. PK concerns knowledge of various instructional techniques and includes how such methods can best be applied in the classroom (Fathi & Yousefifard, 2019).

As posited by Sarıçoban et al. (2019), pedagogical knowledge can be described as the as the knowledge that engenders responses to a series of critical questions concerning the nature of teaching and learning. The authors' questions include "What is learning and how does it take place? How does knowledge emerge and what is considered significant knowledge? How is knowledge realized?" (p.1125).

Pedagogical knowledge concerns how and in what manner teaching methods and techniques are applied to the learner. It involves an understanding of the context within which students learn. It is about choosing educational approaches based on that knowledge during teaching processes. This is very fundamental knowledge that is required for teachers to be able to effectively aid students in the internalization of knowledge and instill in them positive

attitudes toward learning and science. A teacher lacking deep pedagogical knowledge may find difficulties in giving sufficient answers to how students will internalize knowledge and develop a positive attitude towards learning.

        4.2.2.3   **Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** As defined by Najjari et al. (2021), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is a knowledge base that integrates pedagogical knowledge with the content knowledge. In this paper, Shulman (1987) is credited with challenging the then-prevailing notion that content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge were separate domains that did not intersect in the context of teacher education. Moreover, he argued that content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge in isolation is insufficient for effective teaching.

Consequently, Shulman introduced PCK as a new, interrelated knowledge base derived from the intersection of the two domains, emphasizing that for teachers to be truly effective, they should possess deep understanding of how to connect these multiple domains of knowledge. According to Gomez (2020), pedagogical content knowledge is a specialized form of knowledge that enables teachers to effectively present educational content to learners.

It is a mix between content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge since it deals with how to represent things so that they become learnable for students by knowing the best ways of presentation. This includes choosing the illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations that make difficult subject matter clear. PCK also involves knowledge of the prevailing misconceptions and preconceptions of students that influence the learning process. Shulman adds that the PCK includes organization and representation, together with adjustment for the diversity in students' needs and performances. It is a matter of making sure teachers are skilled not only in the subject they teach but also in how they teach it.

4.3   State of Art

The article "Perception of Pre-service Teachers on Pair Teaching and Mentoring During Practicum" by Gulab and Sharjeel in 2019 in Pakistan explores the insights and perceptions of 29 pre-service teachers from Bachelor of Education students' on pair teaching and mentoring during their practicum. This approach is descriptive and exploratory in nature; questionnaires were used to measure the response of the students. The results indicated that, overall the students were very pleased with pair teaching and mentoring but not over enthusiastically so. This research points to a basic need for further research into these methods of teaching as a means to understand how these various forms of teaching will work in an educational setting Gulab and Sharjeel (2019).

According to the explanation given by Göker (2021) in Turkey, it can be seen that the article explain how reflective coaching influences the development of instructional skills and self-efficacy among pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers. Combined quantitative and qualitative research methods demonstrated that the teachers had significantly improved their instructional capabilities and also their confidence in performing these skills. Thus, the study underlines the importance of reflective coaching in the teacher development process and would therefore suggest a warrant for further exploration on its wider implications and possible benefits for the field of EFL education (Göker, 2021).

The article entitled "Turkish EFL Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Views on Professional Development and Related Activities" by Evişen, carried out in Turkey in the year 2021, has focused on attitudes maintained by six in-service as well as six pre-service EFL teachers toward professional development. The qualitative research methodology that was adopted during the study revealed generally a positive perception of professional development among both groups. The results obtained provide further research in the context of various EFL teaching with different designs and methods of data collection to enhance understanding of professional development in EFL teaching (Evişen (2021).

Another article named "EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Practicum Experiences: A Case Study Based on Complexity Theory in China" by Li et al., 2023 explains how the country is rich in detail as it thoroughly covers the complex practicum experiences shared by two pre-service teachers of the English language. In this paper, the qualitative case study approach is elaborated upon, situated within the realm of complexity theory, with the aim of examining the nature of these experiences through the interactional relationship between individual, institutional, and societal influences. The study underlines the complexities of the practicum journey in such an ecological system, where different elements interplay and thus influence student teachers' learning. It also states that further research needs to look into the roles that universities and schools may have in terms of collaboration and professional identity. In this way it can be emphasized the need for a holistic approach toward understanding teacher training in EFL contexts (Li et al., 2023).

The paper "EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Teaching Practicum Experiences on Professional Identity Development", conducted by Minh and Thanh in 2019 in Vietnam, researches on the impact of teaching practicum experiences on the professional identity and their identity development. It took ten pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Vietnam. This study also reiterates that practicum plays a very important role in constructing professional identity through an adopted qualitative

descriptive method in EFL teaching. Thus, the findings reported in this present paper provide deep insight into the professional identities of English pre-service teachers from experiences in teaching practicum and will contribute significantly to research into teaching professional identity, professional competencies, and professional development in pre-service teachers in Vietnam. Findings of the paper thus have significant value for further investigation into teaching professional identity, professional competences, and professional development in the State of Vietnam (Minh & Thanh, 2019).

Finally, the article "Video-Based Reflection and Peer Coaching in Enhancing TEFL Student-Teachers' Teaching Practices of Receptive Skills" made by Shaaban (2022) in Palestine presents a valuable insight into the use of video-based reflection and peer coaching among 24 female TEFL student-teachers. Therefore, the present study undertakes an experimental approach to investigating the contribution of these novel teaching methodologies to receptive language skills enhancement in the TEFL context. The findings indicate the potential effects of these methods on the emergence of teaching behaviors and may be validly and reliably generalized to other skills also. This therefore provides scope for further studies in this area, particularly in investigating the broader generalizability of such techniques in language teaching (Shaaban, 2022).

<center>## 5.   Methodology</center>

This investigation employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design to investigate the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers with peer coaching during their practicum. This section outlines the research setting and participants criteria, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques used to comprehensively explore the research questions.

5.1   Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at the Universidad Nacional de Loja, which is situated to the south of the city of Loja in Ecuador. The geographic coordinates of the university campus are as follows: latitude -4.035155008548064 and longitude -79.20110463122181. The Universidad Nacional de Loja (UNL) is one of the regional leaders in higher education, attracting students from across Ecuador.

In order to select the participants, a purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling is the process of selecting a sample with specific characteristics and predefined criteria that are relevant and appropriate to the objectives and questions of the study (Andrade, 2021). In this way, the participants were 25 EFL pre-service teachers from the eighth semester enrolled in the Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (PINE) program from the Universidad Nacional de Loja. The sample consisted of 19 females and 6 males, and their ages ranged from 22 to 29 years old. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: they participated in the seventh semester of the Ecuadorian teacher training program from October 2023 to March 2024, and completed 40 hours of internship in primary educational institutions.

5.2   Procedure

Once the research object was identified, the relevant dimensions and indicators for the study were defined. The dimensions include the stages of peer coaching, the components of coaching, the research instruments used for coaching, and the knowledge base for EFL teachers. Specific indicators were determined to measure these concepts effectively.

A thorough search was conducted for the study variables: peer coaching and practicum. The operationalization of the variable (see Annex 3) was used to address the general research question: What are the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers with peer coaching during their practicum in an Ecuadorian teacher education program? Two sub-questions were then formulated: 1) What are the potential benefits of integrating peer coaching into the EFL pre-service teachers' practicum? and 2) What are the barriers that prevent EFL pre-service teachers from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their practicum?

According to Arias Gonzáles (2021), the operationalization of variables is a table comprising three or more rows and six columns, in which the variables, their conceptual definition, operational definition, dimensions, indicators, and measurement scale are presented in an orderly manner. The operationalization of variables was validated through expert educators. Considering those above, this research utilized the matrix proposed by Arias Gonzáles, which was used to construct the questions for the questionnaire. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement of the respondents.

Afterwards, the questionnaire was subjected to a process of development and validation, conducted in collaboration with expert educators, with the objective of ensuring its validity and reliability. A pilot test was carried out with five participants to identify and remove any ambiguous elements, thereby enhancing the clarity of the questionnaire. As Sürücü and Maslakçi (2020) state, although validity and reliability are mutually interconnected, they play different roles in the evaluation of measurement instruments. While validity assesses the accuracy of the instrument in measuring the intended construct, facilitating meaningful interpretations, reliability refers to the consistency of a measure.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to select research participants based on the researcher's judgment. The focus was on those who had the necessary information and were willing to share it (Etikan & Kabiru Bala, 2017). Based on this, the sample was selected, with participants meeting the following criteria: they participated in the seventh semester of the Ecuadorian teacher education program from October 2023 to March 2024, during which time they carried out their practicum for 40 hours at primary institutions.

For the quantitative phase, the questionnaire was developed and administered via Google Forms, with the objective of optimizing accessibility and efficiency in data collection and analysis. The questionnaire was administered to the 25 EFL pre-service teachers who participated in the peer coaching program in the seventh semester. It is important to note that the researcher obtained permission to administer the questionnaire, ensuring the anonymity of the participants. Then, the participants voluntarily complete the questionnaire within an estimated time of 15 minutes. After that, the researcher utilized Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency or reliability of the questionnaire items.

In the qualitative phase, six participants were selected to collect a wide range of peer coaching experiences during their internships. Therefore, an interview guide with eight semi-structured questions was developed to gather detailed information about their lived experiences during the peer coaching program. Furthermore, probing questions were included to follow up on important points and gather more in-depth information. To facilitate accessibility and

convenience, the interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then subjected to thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns within the data, focusing on the complexities of peer coaching experiences. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used to present the results of the interviews.

Ultimately, the researcher was directly engaged in the processes of data collection and analysis, utilizing descriptive statistics and a thematic analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, data correlation was employed by combining and cross-checking the quantitative results from the questionnaires and the qualitative findings from the interviews. This rigorous process facilitated the generation of meaningful discussion based on the results obtained. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn that culminated in recommendations for future research.

5.3   Method

The present research was designed using the explanatory sequential mixed method design, as its best suits the characteristics and needs of the research. The explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted to explore the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers with peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program. Using this approach, quantitative and qualitative data were collected to explain or build upon the initial quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The methodology was structured into several vital components, adapted to align with the specific research objectives and questions.

5.3.1   Research Design

For this research, a descriptive research design was used. As explained by Olorunlana et al. (2018), that descriptive research design provides detailed descriptions of people, events, or situations as they are. One of its primary objectives is to respond fundamental questions about what currently exists and what is happening without establishing causal relationships or explaining why something happens. By employing this approach, the researcher is able to capture and document relevant attributes, behaviors, dispositions, or patterns examination, thereby yielding an enriched and elucidative account of the subject under investigation.

5.3.2   Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

In the process of data collection, surveys were administered using instruments such as a questionnaire (see Annex 1) and a semi-structured interview (see Annex 2). Furthermore, both the questionnaire and the interview were validated through a pilot test to ensure their reliability and consistency for the research objectives. The pilot test made it possible to identify

and rectify any ambiguities, thus improving the clarity and effectiveness of the data collection tools before their application.

The quantitative phase employed an online questionnaire of 27 closed-ended questions using Google Forms to gather specific information about the EFL pre-service teachers' experiences with peer coaching during their practicum. According to Taherdoost (2021), the questionnaire is a widely used tool for gathering information. It comprises a series of structured questions and answers that respondents complete, supplying the necessary data for the researcher. Notably, this questionnaire directly addresses the first research question.

The questionnaire was designed considering the following dimensions found in the theoretical framework of this study:

- Stages of Peer Coaching in the EFL
- Components of Peer Coaching
- Research Instruments for Peer Coaching.
- Knowledge Based for EFL Teachers

Additionally, Likert scale was used to measure respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements regarding attitudes toward peer coaching. This scale has been validated for its reliability in capturing nuanced opinions and perspectives, facilitated a more detailed understanding of participants' experiences. The use of a validated Likert scale enhanced the credibility and accuracy of the research findings by ensuring that the measurement tool was reliable and valid for assessing attitudes in educational research contexts (Boone & Boone, 2012).

In the qualitative phase of this study, a semi-structured interview was used to gain insight into the experiences of six EFL pre-service teachers who were selected. The semi-structured interviews comprised eight open-ended questions aligned with the study's second research question. The questions were developed considering the following categories found in the theoretical framework:

- Peer Coaching
- Peer coaching in the EFL Practicum
- Stages of Peer coaching in the EFL
- Components of Peer Coaching
- Research Instruments for Peer Coaching

These questions were designed to explore the nuances of peer coaching experiences, including perceived benefits, challenges, and the overall impact on professional development

and teaching practice. As Mannan (2020) highlights, interviews are an invaluable tool in qualitative research, enabling researches to elicit detailed, context-rich responses that quantitative methods may only partially capture.

5.4 Data Analysis

5.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

After data collection, a detailed analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to summarize the evidence obtained from questionnaires simply for interpretation. As mentioned by Conner and Johnson (2017), descriptive statistics summarize, describe, and enable the representation of data in a way that facilitates the understanding and explaining aspects of a specific set, helping to identify particular patterns in the sample. As such, this statistical approach provided a clear summary and interpretation of the main features of the data collected, along with information on trends and patterns in the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers during peer coaching.

Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items. According to Barbera et al. (2021), this statistical method is used to assess the degree of correlation between the items of a questionnaire. As the Cronbach's alpha value moves closer to 1, the level of internal consistency among items increases (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020).

Afterwards, the data were organized to obtain the percentages and results through frequency tables and graphs, and this information was contrasted with the theoretical foundations developed in the theoretical framework. Finally, the main findings and recommendations for future research were obtained.

5.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

A detailed analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the semi-structured interview data and the responses to probing questions. According to Dawadi (2020), thematic analysis organizes and describes the data set in detail and interprets various aspects of research topics. Thematic analysis is characterized by its flexibility and usefulness in achieving a rich, detailed, yet complex data account.

In the first phase of the qualitative analysis, the data were familiarized through detailed transcription of the recorded interviews and the systematic coding process was initiated. As the transcripts were carefully reviewed, initial codes were assigned to relevant features of the data. These initial codes were then grouped into broader potential themes. Whether these candidate themes worked in relation to the coded excerpts and the full data set was constantly reviewed.

Through an iterative process of review and refinement, final themes that captured meaningful patterns in the data were defined and named. Finally, an analytical report supported by evidence from the data was produced, presenting these themes in a logical and coherent manner. The thematic analysis revealed rich and nuanced perspectives on prospective English teachers' peer coaching experiences during their practicum, shedding light on key benefits, barriers, and the overall impact on their professional development.

Through this rigorous thematic analysis, the qualitative data from the interviews offered profound insights into the complexities of peer coaching experiences among EFL pre-service teachers, directly addressing the nuances of the second research question.

6. Results

In this section, the results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative instruments are presented. The findings are summarized using graphs to effectively highlight significant patterns and trends. A greater comprehension of the data is made possible by the visual depiction, making it possible to identify broad concepts and themes.
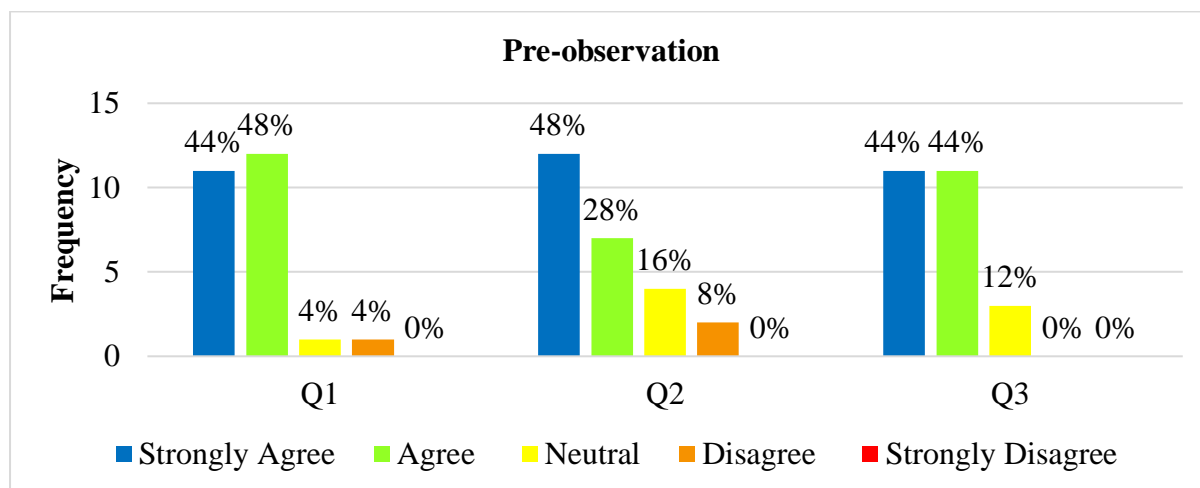
6.1 Quantitative Results

Objective one: To identify the potential benefits of integrating peer-coaching into the EFL preservice teachers' practicum.

Sub-question one: What are the potential benefits of integrating peer coaching into the EFL pre-service teachers' practicum?

Figure 1

Stages of Peer Coaching: Pre-observation

Note.
Q1: Pre-observation meetings help me to decide the focus of the observation.
Q2: Pre-observation in the peer coaching process encourages me to reflect on my teaching practice.
Q3: Pre-observation meetings help me to establish a mutual understanding with my peers about the lesson to be taught.

Figure 1 illustrates the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the pre-observation stages of peer coaching. The questions focused on whether pre-observation meetings helped to decide the focus of the observation (Q1), encouraged reflection on teaching practice (Q2), and established mutual understanding about the lesson to be taught (Q3).

Overall, the majority of EFL pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the benefits of the pre-observation stages in peer coaching. Additionally, a smaller proportion was neutral, and an even smaller percentage disagreed with the statements. This suggests a general positive perception of pre-observation stage among EFL pre-service teachers.

31

The results show that a significant proportion of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the pre-observation stage. Specifically, around 92% of respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (48%) that pre-observation meetings helped them to decide the focus of the observation. Similarly, about 76% agreed (28%) or strongly agreed (48%) that pre-observation encouraged reflection on teaching practice. Additionally, over 88% of respondents strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (44%) that pre-observation meetings helped establish a mutual understanding about the lesson to be taught. These high levels of agreement suggest that EFL pre-service teachers found pre-observation crucial for structured reflection, targeted feedback, and mutual understanding, essential for professional growth.

Conversely, a small minority of EFL pre-service teachers disagreed with the pre-observation stages. For instance, a total of 4% disagreed that pre-observation meetings helped to decide the observation focus, and 8% disagreed about the reflection encouragement. Moreover, neutral responses were relatively low, with 16% neutral about pre-observation encouraging reflection and 12% neutral about establishing mutual understanding. Overall, the perception of the pre-observation stage is positive among EFL pre-service teachers.

Figure 2

Stages of Peer Coaching: Observation
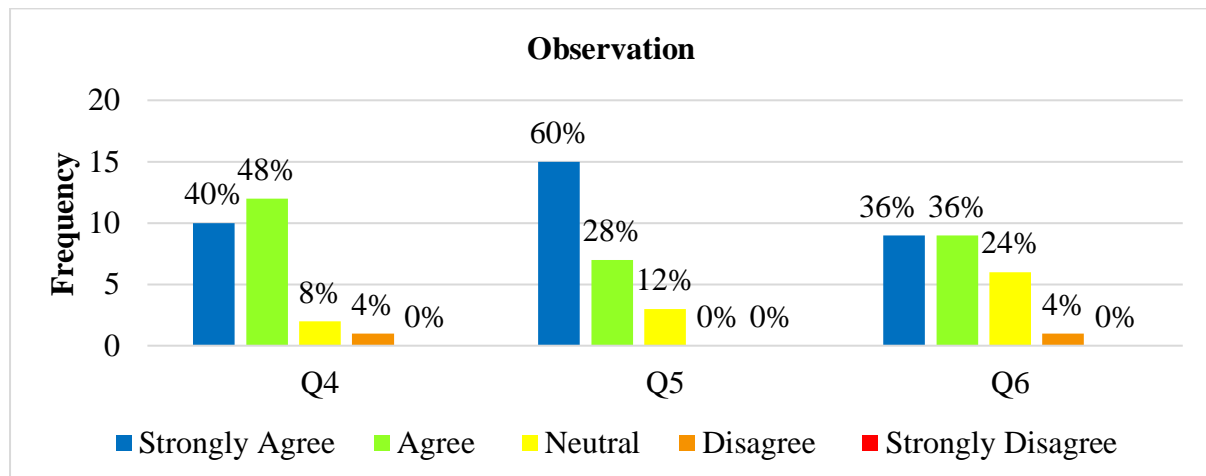
Note.
Q4: Classroom observation helps me to generate meaningful topics for post-observation meetings.
Q5: Taking notes during class observations helps me to analyze teaching more effectively.
Q6: Video recordings during classroom observations provide me opportunities to conduct a detailed analysis of teaching practices.

According to **Figure 2**, the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the observation stage of peer coaching. The questions examined if classroom observation helped to generate meaningful topics for post-observation meetings

(Q4), if taking notes during class observations aids in analyzing teaching (Q5), and if video recordings provided opportunities for detailed analysis of teaching practices (Q6).

Most EFL pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the benefits of the observation stages. Conversely, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, indicating a generally favorable acceptance of this stage.

The majority of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the observation stage. For example, a very larger proportion (88%) strongly agreed (40%) or agreed (48%) that classroom observation helped to generate meaningful topics for post-observation meetings. Additionally, with 88% strongly agreed (36%) or agreed (52%) that note-taking helped to analyze teaching more effectively. Furthermore, over 76% of respondents strongly agreed (36%) or agreed (40%) that video recordings provided opportunities for detailed analysis of teaching practices. These responses indicate that EFL pre-service teachers valued this stage for providing insightful and constructive feedback, effective note-taking, and detailed analysis.

On the other hand, minimal disagreement is observed with the observation stage. Only 4% disagree that classroom observation helped to generate meaningful topics for post-observation meetings. Moreover, neutral responses are slightly higher, with 24% neutral about video recordings providing detailed analysis opportunities. It is clear from the low percentages of disagreement and neutral responses that while there is some variation, the perception remains largely positive.

Figure 3

Stages of Peer Coaching: Post-observation
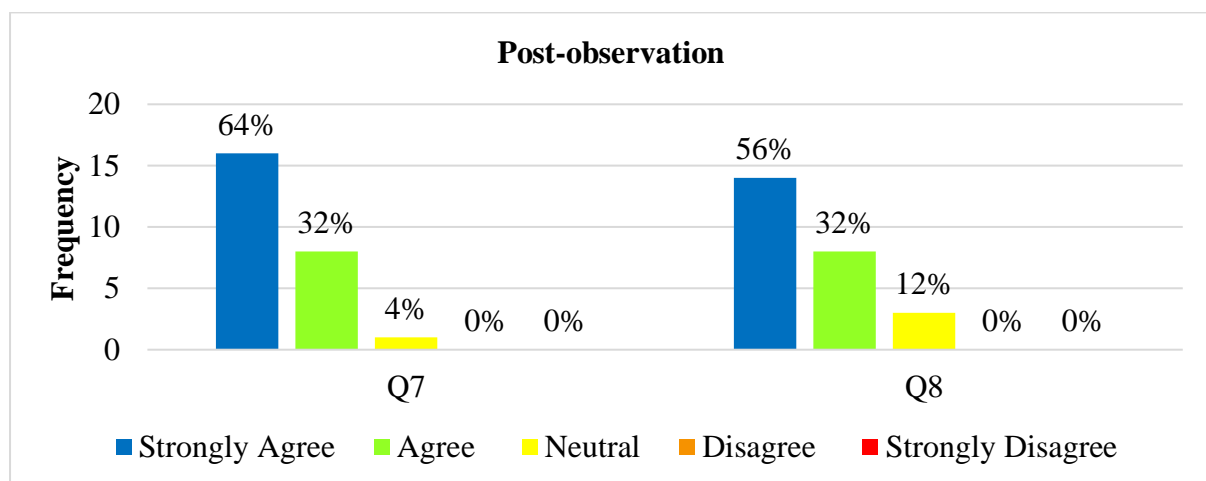
Post-observation

Note.
Q7: Post-observation meetings allow me to identify strengths and weaknesses in my teaching methods.
Q8: Constructive feedback during the post-observation facilitates your continuous improvement.

The data in **Figure 3** depicts the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the post-observation stage of peer coaching. In light of this, the questions center on whether post-observation meetings helped to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods (Q7) and whether constructive feedback facilitated continuous improvement (Q8).
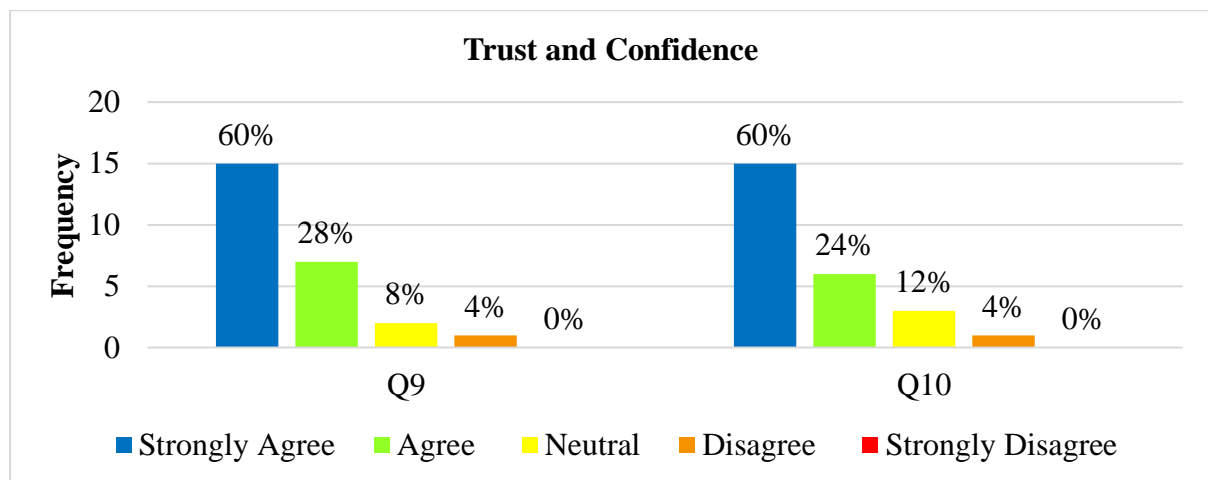
As can be seen, the general trend indicates that most EFL pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the benefits of post-observation stage. Additionally, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, reflecting a predominantly positive view of these stages.

The data indicates that the majority of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agreed or agreed with post-observation stage. Over 96% strongly agreed (64%) or agreed (32%) that post-observation meetings helped to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods. Additionally, with 88% strongly agreed (56%) or agreed (32%) that constructive feedback facilitated continuous improvement. As a result, these high levels of agreement highlight the perceived importance of post-observation for professional development and continuous improvement.

It is evident that none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. About 12 % are neutral about whether constructive feedback facilitated continuous improvement, and no respondents disagreed. Overall, these low percentages indicate a positive perception of post-observation stage among EFL pre-service teachers.

Figure 4

Components of Peer Coaching: Trust and Confidence

Note.
Q9: Trust and confidence provide a safe environment for professional growth.
Q10: Mutual trust is crucial for a meaningful feedback exchange.

As it is presented in **Figure 4**, the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the components of trust and confidence in peer coaching. These

34

questions addressed whether trust and confidence provided a safe environment for professional growth (Q9) and whether mutual trust was crucial for a meaningful exchange of views (Q10).
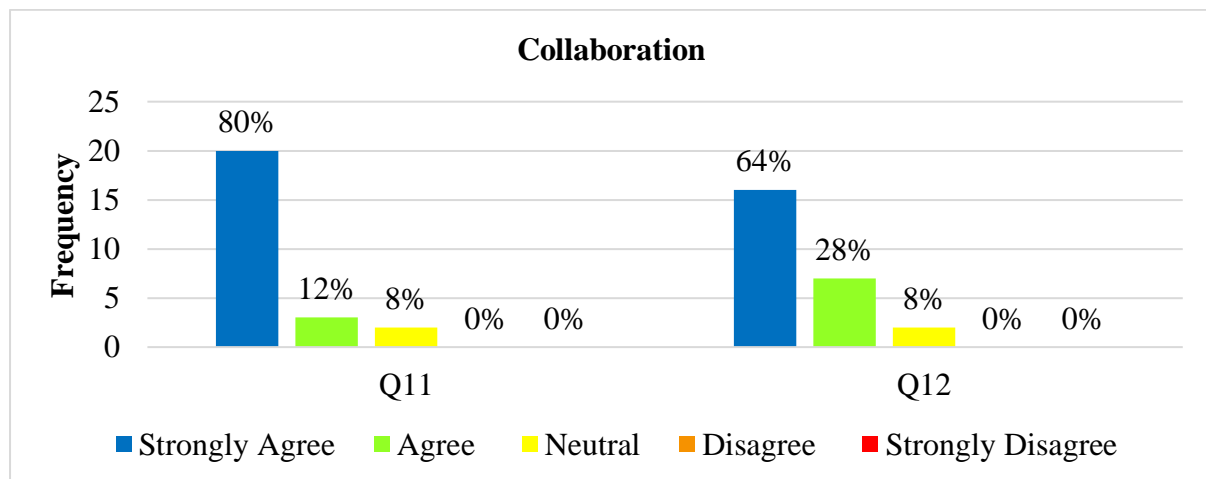
The overall trend indicates that most EFL pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the importance of trust and confidence in peer coaching. Conversely, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, suggesting a general consensus on the significance of these components.

A total of 88% strongly agreed (60%) or agreed (28%) that trust and confidence provided a safe environment for professional growth. Similarly, with 84% strongly agreed (60%) or agreed (24%) that mutual trust was crucial for a meaningful feedback exchange. In this way, it indicates that EFL pre-service teachers view these components as essential for effective peer coaching. A high level of trust and confidence among peers creates a supportive environment for open communication and honest feedback.

Few EFL pre-service teachers disagreed with the importance of trust and confidence. Only 4% disagree with mutual trust being crucial for meaningful feedback exchange. In addition, neutral responses are slightly higher but still low, with 12% neutral about mutual trust. Although there is some variability, this indicates that the perception of trust and confidence is generally positive among EFL pre-service teachers.

Figure 5

Components of Peer Coaching: Collaboration

Note.
Q11: Working together, not competing, is key to learning from each other.
Q12: A productive collaborative environment relies on shared values and mutual respect.

Figure 5 illustrates the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the components of collaboration in peer coaching. It addressed on the importance of working together rather than competing (Q11) and shared values and mutual respect (Q12).

The general trend shows that most pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agree with the importance of collaboration in peer coaching. In the other side, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, indicating a generally positive acceptance of this component

It is evident that a significant majority of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the importance of collaboration. Around 92% of respondents strongly agreed (80%) or agreed (12%) that peer coaching promoted a collaborative environment that enhanced teaching practices. Similarly, nearly 92% strongly agreed (64%) or agreed (28%) that collaboration was based on shared values and mutual respect fostered a sense of community. These responses highlight the essential role of collaboration in facilitating successful peer coaching.

Disagreement with the importance of collaboration is minimal. None of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed, and neutral responses are slightly higher, only 8% neutral about both statements. Overall, all respondents have a positive perception of the components of collaboration is important during the peer coaching process.

Figure 6

Components of Peer Coaching: Conferencing
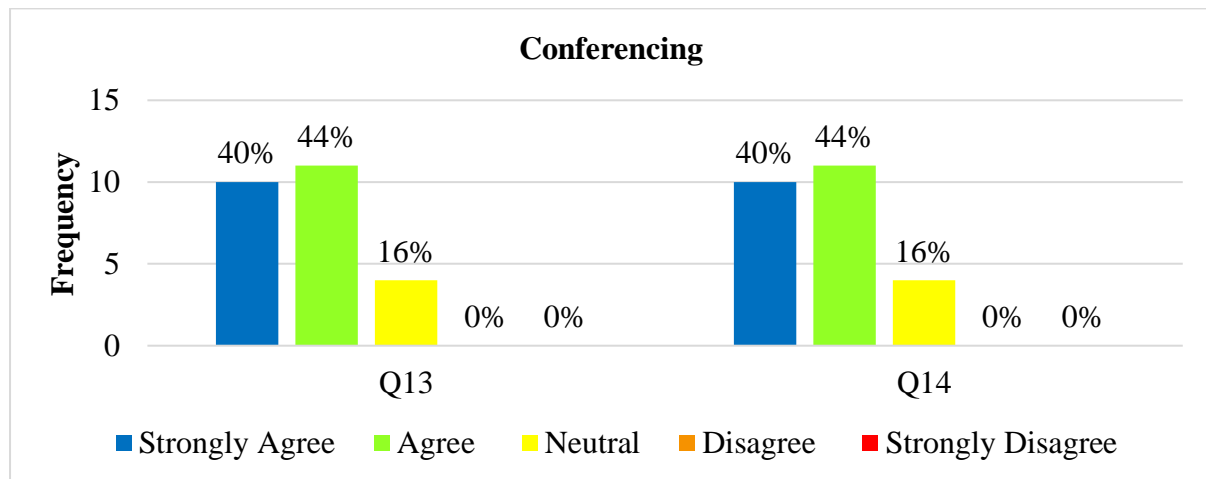
Note.
Q13: Conferencing enhances self-reflection skills.
Q14: Conferencing provides a platform for impactful feedback based on data-driven observations.

Figure 6 depicts the levels of agreement and disagreement among pre-service teachers regarding the conferencing component of peer coaching. It investigated whether conferencing enhances self-reflection skills (Q13) and if conferencing provided a platform for impactful feedback based on data-driven observations (Q14).

Overall, the majority of EFL pre-service teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the benefits of conferencing in peer coaching. Conversely, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, indicating a favorable perception of this component.

Notably, with 84% strongly agreed (40%) or agreed (44%) that conferencing enhances self-reflection skills to improve teaching practice. Additionally, around 80% strongly agreed (36%) or agreed (44%) that conferencing provides a platform for impactful feedback based on data-driven observations. As a result, these levels indicate that EFL pre-service teachers found conferencing valuable for professional development and data-driven feedback.

Minimal disagreement exists regarding the benefits of this component. None of the respondents strongly disagree, and only 16% are neutral about conferencing providing a platform for impactful feedback. Based on these results, it appears that, although some are unsure, the overall perception remains positive.

Figure 7

Components of Peer Coaching: Feedback and Reflection
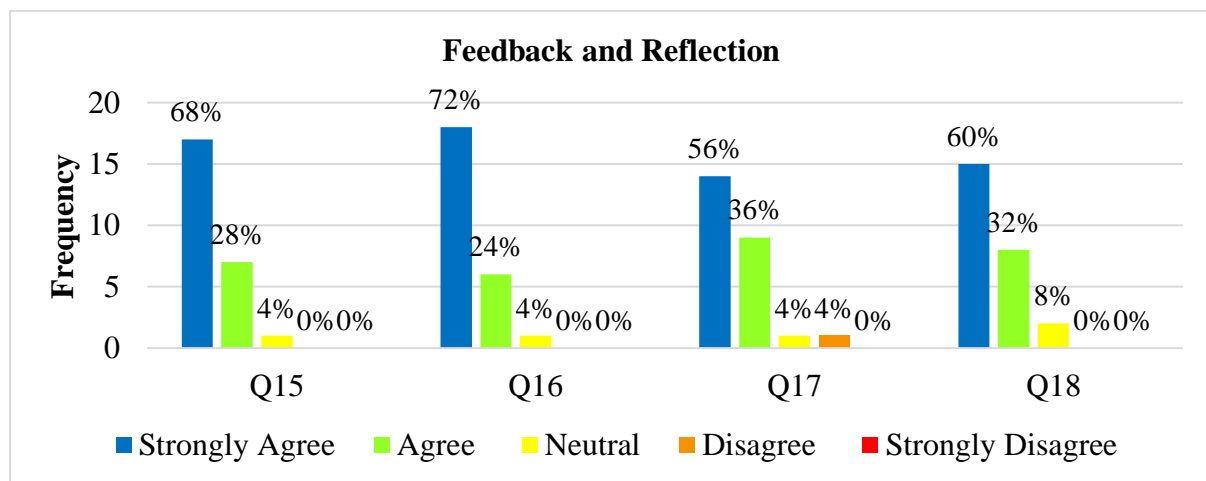
Note.
Q15: Feedback is crucial in integrating new teaching practices.
Q16: Feedback meetings offer a space for sharing ideas that enrich the learning experience.
Q17: Peer feedback supports problem-solving.
Q18: Reflective practice encourages the development of new teaching approaches.

In **Figure 7**, the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the feedback component of peer coaching. The purpose of these questions was to determine the importance of feedback in integrating new teaching practices (Q15), sharing ideas (Q16), supporting problem-solving (Q17), and encouraging reflective practice (Q18).

The majority of the EFL pre-service teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the importance of feedback in peer coaching. In contrast, neutral and disagreement responses are minimal, indicating a very positive acceptance of feedback during the peer coaching process.

It is worth noticing that a large majority of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agree or agree with the importance of feedback. For instance, over 96% strongly agreed (72%) or agreed (24%) that feedback meetings offer a space for sharing ideas that enrich the learning experience. In the same way, about 92% strongly agreed (64%) or agreed (28%) that feedback supports problem-solving. Furthermore, with 92% strongly agreed (60%) or agreed (32%) that reflective practice encourages the development of new teaching approaches. This high agreement level suggests that EFL pre-service teachers value feedback for professional growth, problem-solving, and reflective practice.

Disagreement with the importance of feedback and reflection are minimal. None of the respondents strongly disagree, and only 4% disagree with peer feedback supporting problem-solving and experience sharing. Neutral responses are slightly higher, but still low, with 8% neutral responses on how reflective practice fosters the development of new pedagogical approaches. Overall, this indicates a generally positive perception of the feedback component among EFL pre-service teachers.

Figure 8

Research Instruments for Peer Coaching
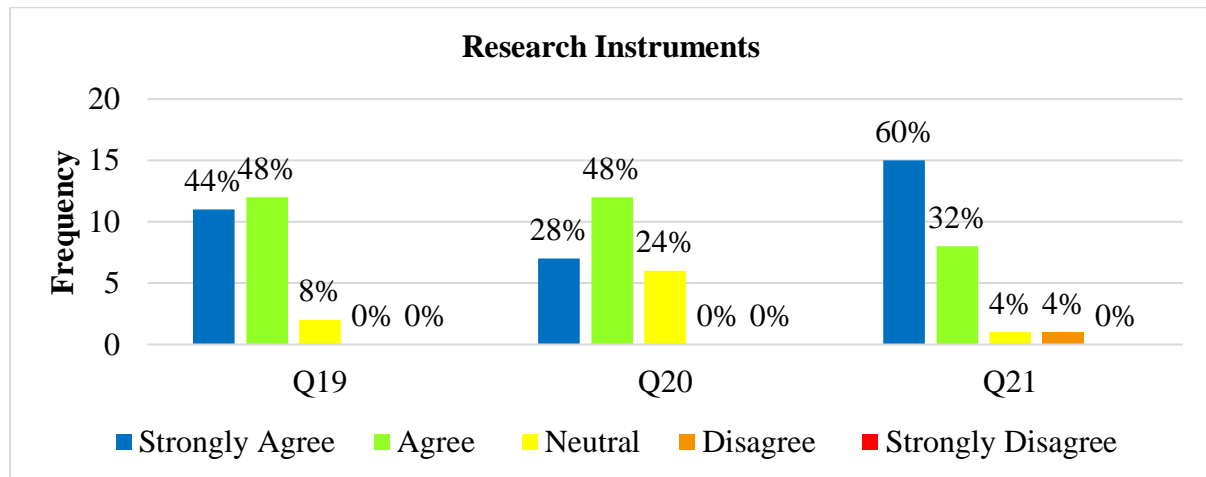
Note.
Q19: Reflective journals allow me to identify areas for improvement.
Q20: Video recordings of interactions provide a concrete basis for feedback.
Q21: Lesson plan documents and teaching materials are essential for engaging and effective teaching.

Figure 8 data clearly shows the levels of agreement and disagreement among EFL pre-service teachers regarding the research instruments used in peer coaching. The questions were addressed using reflective journals (Q19), video recordings (Q20), and lesson plan documents (Q21).

As can be seen, most EFL pre-service teachers strongly agree or agree with the benefits of research instruments in peer coaching, suggesting that they view these tools as valuable for their professional development. In contrast, few EFL pre-service teachers express neutral or negative opinions.

Most EFL pre-service teachers agree or strongly agree with the effectiveness of the research instruments for peer coaching. Regarding reflective journals, over 92% of respondents either agree (48%) or strongly agree (44%) that these helped them to identify areas for improvement. In parallel, with 76% of participants agree (48%) or strongly agree (28%) that video recordings of interactions provided a concrete basis for feedback. Furthermore, about 92% agree (32%) or strongly agree (60%) that lesson plan documents and teaching materials are essential for effective teaching. As a result, these high levels of agreement indicate that EFL pre-service teachers recognize the importance of these instruments for providing structured and effective feedback, which is crucial for continuous improvement.

In contrast, minimal disagreement exists regarding research instruments for peer coaching. None of the respondents strongly disagree with any statements, and only 4% disagree that lesson plan documents and teaching materials are essential for effective teaching. Neutral responses are slightly higher but still relatively low, with 24% neutral about the benefit of video recordings. Overall, these low percentages of disagreement and neutral responses indicate that, although there is a significant range in opinions, the perception of research tools for peer coaching is positive among EFL pre-service teachers.

Figure 9

Peer Coaching Benefits for Knowledge Base for EFL Teachers
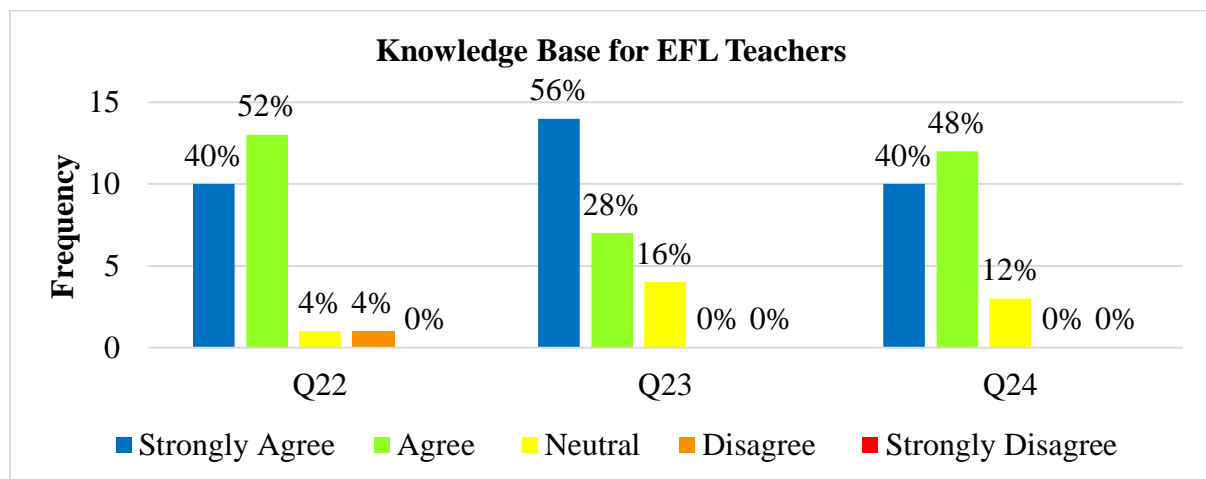
Note.
Q22: Peer coaching gives you insights and support to better understand how students learn.
Q23: Peer coaching helps teachers adapt their teaching to meet diverse student needs and abilities.

Q24: Peer coaching enables teachers to effectively convey educational content to students.

Figure 9 displays the levels of agreement and disagreement among pre-service teachers regarding the knowledge-based benefits of peer coaching for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The questions addressed insights into student learning (Q22), adapting teaching methods (Q23), and conveying educational content effectively (Q24).

Categorically speaking, the trend indicates that the overwhelming majority of EFL pre-service teachers strongly agree with the advantages of peer tutoring in improving their knowledge base for EFL teaching. Just a small percentage express a neutral or negative perception.

As can be seen, EFL pre-service teachers with solid strongly agreement or agreement on the benefits of peer coaching for the knowledge base constitute the largest group. For instance, over 92% of respondents strongly agree (40%) and agree (52%) that peer coaching gives them insights and support to understand better how students learn. Likewise, about 84% of EFL pre-service teachers agree (28%) or strongly agree (56%) that peer coaching helps teachers adapt their teaching to meet diverse student needs and abilities. Additionally, with 88% of respondents agree (48%) or strongly agree (40%) that peer coaching enables teachers to convey educational content to students effectively. Very high levels of agreement suggest that EFL pre-service teachers consider peer coaching invaluable for gaining practical insights and enhancing their teaching effectiveness, which are crucial for their professional development.

By contrast, the EFL pre-service teachers who disagree or strongly disagree with the knowledge base benefits of peer coaching are minimal. None of the respondents strongly disagree with any statements, and only 4% disagree that peer coaching provides insights for understanding how students learn. Neutral responses are slightly higher but still relatively low, with 16% neutral about peer coaching helping to adapt teaching methods. The low percentages of disagreement and neutral responses indicate that while some variability in opinions exists, the overall perception of the knowledge base benefits of peer coaching is positive among EFL pre-service teachers.

6.2   Qualitative Results

Objective two: To determine the barriers that prevent EFL pre-service teachers from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their teaching practicum.

Sub-question two: What barriers do EFL pre-service teachers face from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their practicum?

Figure 10

Q1: Could you describe your experience with peer coaching during your teaching practicum in the seventh semester?
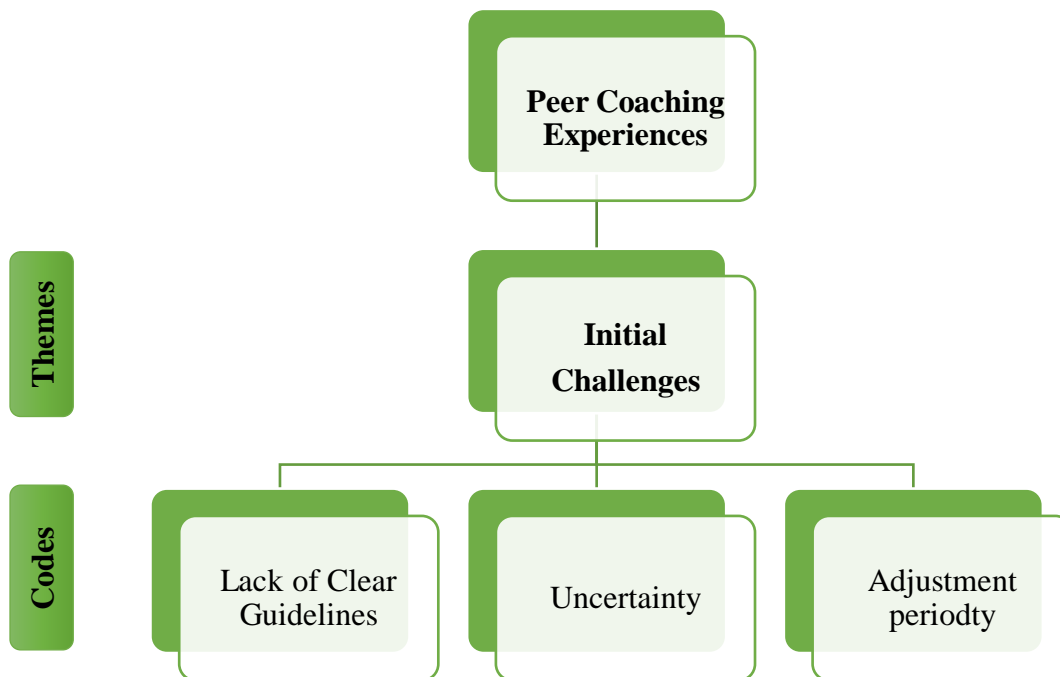

According to **Figure 10**, participants shared their experiences with peer coaching during their teaching practicum in the seventh semester. The initial challenges faced by EFL pre-service teachers such us lack of clear guidelines, uncertainty and adjustment period.

At the outset of this program, the absence of clear guidelines emerged as a significant challenge for participants. As Victoria (personal communication, June 18th, 2018) expressed, *"Lack of clear guidelines from our teachers which caused uncertainty about objectives and processes."* As a result of this ambiguity, participants felt disoriented, potentially impeding initial progress in the program and fostering a negative experience. The situation highlights the need for instructors to have implemented more effective planning and communication strategies with participants, which could have enhanced their experience and maximized the benefits of peer coaching.

Nevertheless, the initial introduction of the peer coaching model presented challenges. For instance, Romina (personal communication, June 18th, 2024) pointed out, *"It was the first time that this new model was introduced... at first it was confusing and we were not really sure about how this peer coaching is going to be developed."* Despite these initial challenges, the participants adjusted and found the process enriching and enlightening, as Jennifer (personal communication, June 19th, 2024) stated, *"The first week was an adjustment period but after that it became a very enriching and enlightening experience."*

Figure 11

Q2: In the first stage of peer coaching, which is pre-observation, what were the challenges that prevented this stage from developing effectively?
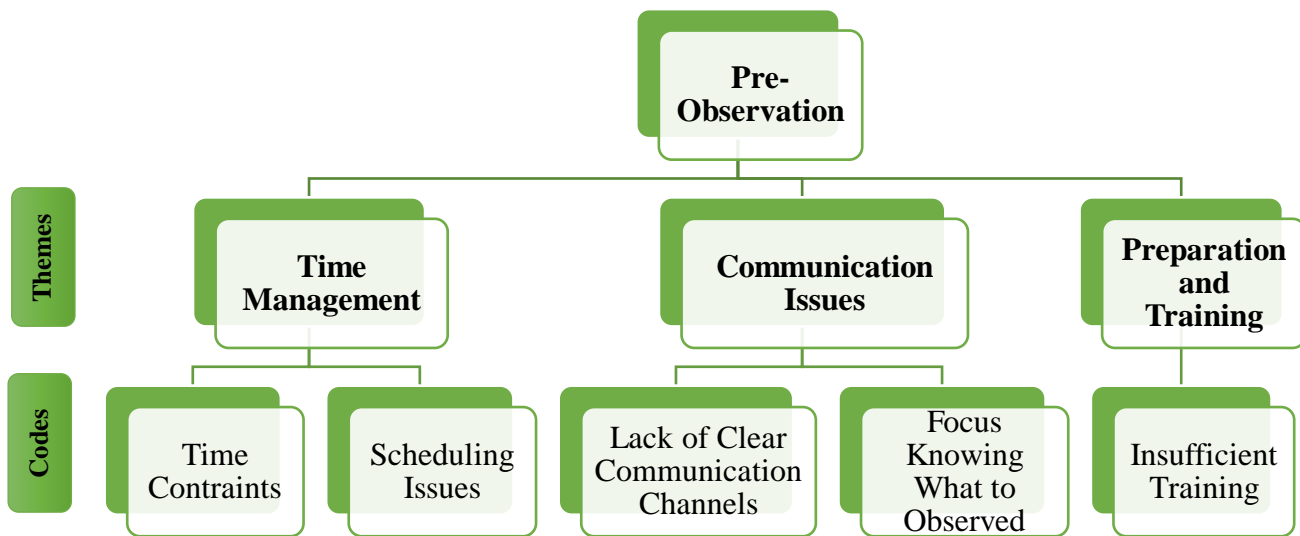
It can be clearly seen in **Figure 11** that participants faced several challenges during the pre-observation stage of peer coaching. These challenges included time management like time constraints and scheduling, communication problems, and a lack of clear guidelines. Additionally, participants struggled with knowing what to observe and felt that insufficient training exacerbated these issues.

Participants faced significant logistical hurdles that hindered the pre-observation stage. Time constraints and scheduling conflicts were common. For instance, Romina (personal communication, June 18th, 2024) quoted, *"I reached the school just in time and had to immediately start the class. So, I really didn't have the time to do the pre-observation."* This often led to rushed or missed meetings, reducing the effectiveness of the process. Furthermore, Raquel (personal communication, June 20th, 20214) said, *"Coordinating schedules which made it difficult to conduct regular observations and meetings before the lessons."* In the same vein, participants had some difficulties in scheduling and time management affected their ability to fully engage in the pre-observation process.

Communication problems also posed a significant barrier. Victoria (personal communication, June 18th, 2024) highlighted this issue, *"We needed a clear channel to communicate but it was problematic... especially with noisy environments during school breaks."* This lack of clear communication channels and noisy environments further

complicated the process. In order to overcome this barrier, it is important to provide clear communication channels to improve the peer coaching program.

Moreover, participants struggled with knowing what to observe. Alejandro (personal communication, June 19th, 2024) expressed this concern, *"Initially we were unsure of what to focus on, which hindered the effectiveness of this stage."* This uncertainty was further compounded by insufficient training or preparation, as Victoria (personal communication, June 18th, 2024) stated, *"Teachers should explain the process step-by-step allowing students to ask questions and clarify doubts."*

Figure 12

Q3: During the classroom observations, what challenges did you face to gather information for the post-observation?
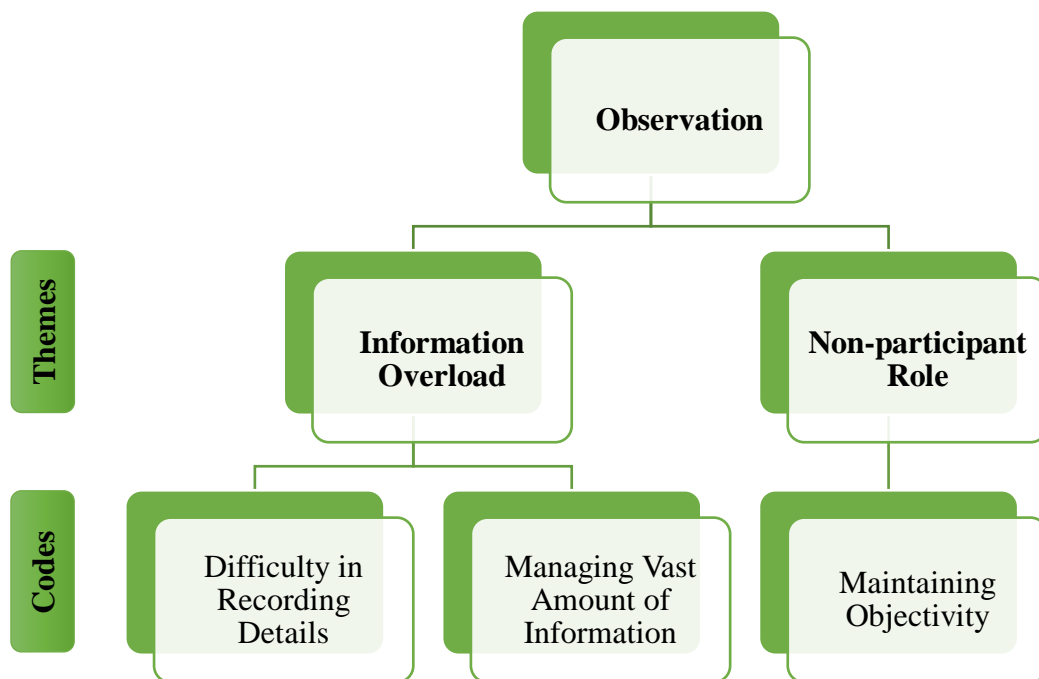
As illustrated in **Figure 12**, participants faced several challenges during the observation stage of peer coaching. These challenges included information overload such as difficulty in recording details and managing a vast amount of information, and maintaining objectivity as a non-participant.

Participants encountered significant difficulties in managing the sheer volume of information during classroom observations. The overwhelming amount of activities and events occurring simultaneously made it hard for observers to capture all necessary details. For instance, Romina (personal communication, June 18th, 2024) quoted, *"It was sometimes difficult to record all the information because a lot of things were happening in the class."* This

indicates that the dynamic and fast-paced classroom environment can overwhelm observers, leading to incomplete or fragmented notes.

Additionally, managing the vast amount of information gathered during observations proved challenging. Jennifer (personal communication, June 19th, 2024) pointed out, *"The overwhelming amount of information available... difficult to manage the vast amount of information."* This suggests that observers often struggled to organize and synthesize the data they collected, which could affect the quality and usefulness of their feedback during post-observation meetings.

Another significant barrier was maintaining objectivity and avoiding interaction with students during observations. This issue was highlighted by the same participant, *"Students were often curious about my presence in the classroom... balancing this role while gathering detailed observations."* This indicates that the presence of an observer can disrupt the classroom dynamics, making it challenging for the observer to remain unnoticed and focus solely on their observation tasks. This dual role of observing while not participating requires careful balancing and can be difficult to manage, especially in interactive classroom.

7. Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, which are compared with the existing literature and previous studies to provide a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers engaged in peer coaching during their internships. The objective of this section is to answer the research questions, assess the quality of the methods used, and evaluate the limitations and possible future directions of this research.

The EFL pre-service teachers, in general, had overall positive experiences with peer coaching during their practicum. In light of the aforementioned findings, the answer to main research question can be provided. The findings emphasize the benefits of introspective practice, mutual support, and non-hierarchical interactions. This finding aligns with the perspectives of Showers and Joyce (1996), who stressed the supportive and collaborative elements of peer coaching for professional growth. As a result, the participants' professional development was greatly benefited, as the experiences enabled them to improve their instructional techniques, refine their teaching strategies, and increase their pedagogical confidence.

Moreover, there are other specific advantages that relate directly to the benefits of peer coaching that were recorded by the study, which include pre-observation meetings, classroom observations, and post-observation. Pre-observation meetings were crucial in clarifying the focus of the observation and improving classroom preparation. As previously noted by Afshar and Doosti (2022), the reflection of pre-observation in the peer coaching process upgrades teaching practices. The data collected during this phase provided invaluable insights that significantly enhanced the professional development of the trainee teachers.

In this regard, classroom observation, especially note-taking, was considered essential for providing constructive feedback. Robbins (1991) argues that note-taking plays a critical role in providing crucial information for constructive feedback after observation. Such an approach would serve to confirm and build upon the observations made, enabling the observers to note those particulars that would enhance subsequent analysis and improve the quality of feedback. In addition, Alsaleh et al. (2017) expressed that written notes and audio/video recordings support classroom observations as they help in understanding the different pedagogical approaches better and hence can be a good learning opportunity.

Furthermore, post-observations were valued for their role in fostering transparency, mutual learning, and critical thinking. According to the work done by Panggua et al. (2018), post-observation significantly boosts the professional self-esteem and teaching effectiveness. This is the period when teachers might provide their input regarding the session that was

observed, thus enabling development to take place continually and make a positive effect on student performance.

However, several problems were identified that prevented EFL pre-service teachers from taking full advantage of the benefits of peer coaching. Firstly, a lack of clear guidelines at the outset of the program left many participants confused about the goals and procedures. As noted by Gulab and Sharjeel (2019), clear guidelines are essential for setting expectations and providing direction, without which participants can feel lost and uncertain. Many times, this confusion can be attributed to inadequate orientation sessions and poorly defined roles in peer-to-peer training, which can result in a lack of focus and ineffective peer interactions.

Secondly, time constraints and scheduling conflicts made it difficult to conduct regular observations and meetings. Some teachers barely had time for pre-observation activities. These scheduling conflicts also made it difficult to coordinate schedules, frequently resulting in rushed or missed meetings. The same issue problem was observed by Çapan and Bedir (2019), who reported in their study that time management and scheduling are critical factors in the successful implementation of peer coaching.

When classroom observations were conducted by the participants, they found it difficult to manage the significant volume of information and maintain objectivity due to the dynamic nature of the classroom environment. Evişen (2021) emphasized that effectively managing the flow of information and maintaining impartiality represent significant challenges in peer coaching, given that the dynamic classroom environment can overwhelm observers. The constant movement and interaction within the classroom require observers to be highly focused and organized, which can be overwhelming in the absence of adequate training and tools to manage information.

Additionally, it was difficult for participants to avoid contact with students, which often disrupted classroom dynamics. This was compounded by communication problems, such as unclear channels and noisy places during school breaks, which made peer coaching even more difficult. According to Alsaleh et al. (2017), the efficacy of peer coaching is contingent upon the presence of effective communication. In the absence of such communication, the process may become fragmented and less effective. The presence of noisy and disruptive school environments can further impede effective communication, resulting in misunderstandings and ineffective feedback exchanges.

In order to overcome these obstacles and optimize the benefits of peer coaching, a comprehensive training, precise guidelines, better time management and open lines of communication are essential. These measures can help create a more structured and conducive

environment for peer coaching, allowing trainee teachers to fully benefit from this professional development model.

With regard to the quality of the method used, in the research a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was employed, which involved collecting quantitative data first and then qualitative data. As such, this methodology is sound, as it allows for a thorough investigation of the research questions from multiple perspectives.

Nevertheless, a small sample size could be a significant limitation that would affect the generalizability of the findings. The participants belonged to the same university, and they were selected by convenience due to the fact that they participated in the seventh semester of the Ecuadorian teacher education program, where they completed 40 hours of practicum in primary educational institutions. Moreover, for the qualitative phase, the EFL pre-service teacher who participated in the semi-structured interview (only six participants out of twenty-five) were chosen by convenience and not randomly. These characteristics can affect the results obtained of this research.

Given that, to address these limitations for future research, it is necessary to include a more diverse and random sample in order to provide a deep understanding of the EFL pre-service teachers experiences of peer coaching in their practicum. Likewise, it is important to provide prior training to participants on how to give and receive constructive feedback and to guide them step-by-step on how peer coaching process should be carried out in order to make the experience pleasant.

8. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to describe the experiences of EFL teachers-in-training with peer coaching during their internships. The following conclusions summarize the most relevant findings related to the implementation of peer coaching, its potential benefits, and the barriers faced.

- The experiences of EFL pre-service teachers with peer coaching during their practicum reveal a general appreciation for the process, highlighting collaboration and mutual support as a central element. Participants valued the opportunity to receive constructive feedback and observe diverse pedagogical practices, which facilitate their professional development and the implementation of new teaching strategies. However, during the development of the program, challenges such as lack of clear guidelines and time management issues were identified by the participants, which initially created uncertainty and difficulties in effectively implementing the peer coaching program.

- Integrating peer coaching into the EFL pre-service teachers' practicum offers potential benefits. Some of these include strengthening self-reflection and self-confidence, developing pedagogical skills through observation and constructive feedback, and creating a supportive and trusting environment. In addition, participants noted that peer coaching facilitates the exchange of ideas and collaboration, which enriches professional learning and promotes the adaptation of teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.

- Despite the observed benefits, EFL pre-service teachers encountered several obstacles that impeded the comprehensive realization of the advantages of peer coaching during their practicum. These barriers include a lack of clear guidelines on the peer coaching process, time management and scheduling conflicts, and insufficient prior training on how to conduct effective observations. Moreover, some participants indicated that difficulties in communication and the formulation of constructive feedback negatively impacted the quality of interactions during peer coaching sessions.

9.   Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the implementation of peer coaching in EFL pre-service teachers' training. These recommendations are intended to enhance teaching practices, address identified barriers, and promote continuous professional development.

- For future research, it is recommended that a structured training program with clear guidelines and structured frameworks be developed to enhance the effectiveness of the peer coaching program. This training program should include detailed instructions on each stage of the peer coaching process, accompanied by demonstration classes to explain the procedures effectively. By providing in-depth understanding and visual examples, new EFL pre-service teachers are better equipped to clearly understand and benefit from peer coaching, reducing initial uncertainties and ensuring smoother implementation.

- It is crucial to improve training sessions and support for reflective practices in the peer coaching program to help EFL pre-service teachers to develop the skills necessary to critically evaluate their teaching methods and thus better identify their strengths and areas for improvement, which will facilitate the development of more effective and self-aware teaching practices. Moreover, in order to facilitate constructive feedback, it is important to encourage teachers to identify specific aspects of their teaching practice that they would like to improve during observations.

- In order to optimize the benefits of peer coaching, it is fundamental to effectively manage time and coordinate schedules. It is recommended that the program integrate enhanced scheduling methodologies to mitigate potential conflicts that may arise, thereby ensuring sufficient time for pre-observation meetings, observations and post-observation meetings. Furthermore, it is recommended to use digital platforms such as WhatsApp or Zoom for pre-observation meetings, which can improve time scheduling, particularly for those with extended commutes, thus facilitating thorough and unhurried discussions.

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Annex 1. Questionnaire

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA

DEPARTMENT OF PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire aims to explore the experiences of pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding peer coaching within an Ecuadorian teacher education program.

Dear student,

Your sincere and honest responses to the following questionnaire are greatly appreciated. Please be assured that your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

INSTRUCTIONS

Please indicate your level of experience by selecting the corresponding option marked with an "X" for each item listed below. Refer to the table above to determine the numerical value associated with your chosen response.

Items	1	2	3	4	5
1. Pre-observation meetings help me to decide the focus of the observation.					
2. Pre-observation in the peer coaching process encourages me to reflect on my teaching practice.					
3. Pre-observation meetings help me to establish a mutual understanding with my peers about the lesson to be taught.					
4. Classroom observation helps me to generate meaningful topics for post-observation meetings.					

5. Taking notes during class observations helps me to analyze teaching more effectively.					
6. Video recordings during classroom observations provide me opportunities to conduct a detailed analysis of teaching practices.					
7. Post-observation meetings allow me to identify strengths and weaknesses in my teaching methods.					
8. Constructive feedback during the post-observation facilitates your continuous improvement.					
9. Trust and confidence provide a safe environment for professional growth.					
10. Mutual trust is crucial for a meaningful feedback exchange.					
11. Working together, not competing, is key to learning from each other.					
12. A productive collaborative environment relies on shared values and mutual respect.					
13. Conferencing enhances self-reflection skills.					
14. Conferencing provides a platform for impactful feedback based on data-driven observations.					
15. Feedback is crucial in integrating new teaching practices.					
16. Feedback meetings offer a space for sharing ideas that enrich the learning experience.					
17. Peer feedback supports problem-solving.					
18. Reflective practice encourages the development of new teaching approaches.					
19. Reflective journals allow me to identify areas for improvement.					
20. Video recordings of interactions provide a concrete basis for feedback.					
21. Lesson plan documents and teaching materials are essential for engaging and effective teaching.					
22. Peer coaching gives you insights and support to better understand how students learn.					

23. Peer coaching helps teachers adapt their teaching to meet diverse student needs and abilities.					
24. Peer coaching enables teachers to effectively convey educational content to students.					

Annex 2. Semi-structured interview

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LOJA
DEPARTMENT OF PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Dear student, answer these following questions related to your experiences with peer coaching during their teaching practicum in the last semester. Please know your answers will be anonymous and confidential. I value your honesty and look forward to your perspectives, this interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes.

Student's code: ………………………………………………...

Date: ………………………………………………….

Opening question

1. Could you describe your experience with peer coaching during your teaching practicum in the seventh semester?

Peer coaching stages

2. In the first stage of peer coaching, which is the pre-observation, what were the challenges that prevented this stage from developing effectively?

3. During the classroom observations, what instruments did you use to gather information for the post-observation meetings?

Components of peer coaching

4. How was your relationship with your coaching partner? What components do you think are essential for this relationship work well?

5. One important component of peer coaching is feedback, do you think the feedback received from your partner helped you to improve your teaching practice?

Research instruments for peer coaching

6. In your opinion, how important are lesson planning and teaching materials in peer coaching sessions?

Peer coaching and Knowledge base for EFL teachers

7. As you are aware, peer coaching is based on mutual support among peers, how have the interactions and knowledge shared with your peer or cooperating teacher through peer coaching enriched your perception of how students acquire knowledge?

Concluding question

8. What recommendations would you give to improve the peer coaching experience for future teachers?

THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Annex 3. Operationalization of variables matrix

Variables	Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators	Items/Questions
Peer Coaching	5.1	Stages of Peer Coaching	Pre-observation	3 items
			Observation	3 items
			Post-observation	2 items
		Components of Peer Coaching	Trust and Confidence	2 items
			Collaboration	2 items
			Conferencing	2 items
			Feedback	3 items
			Reflection	1 item
		Research Instruments for Peer Coaching	Reflective Diary Sheets	1 item
			Video Recordings of Interaction	1 item
			Lesson Plan Documents and Teaching Materials	1 item
Practicum	5.2	Knowledge Based For EFL	Content Knowledge	1 item
			General Pedagogical Knowledge	1 item
			Pedagogical Content Knowledge	1 item

Table is structured in an orderly manner into sections that include variables, concepts, dimensions, indicators and the questions or items themselves, all of which are carefully designed based on the ideas in the theoretical framework. The numbers in the concepts section are directly related to the relevant elements of the theoretical framework, and the numbers in the last column refer to the number of questions for each indicator.

Annex 4. Research matrix

Title:	EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program			
Problem	**Objectives**	**Theoretical Framework**	**Methodological Design**	**Techniques/Instruments**
General Problem	**General Objective**	**Variable 1**	**Research Design**	**Testing Technique**
• What are the EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher Education program?	• To describe EFL pre-service teachers' experiences of peer coaching during their practicum at an Ecuadorian teacher education program.	5.1 Peer Coaching *5.1.1 Peer Coaching in the EFL Practicum* *5.1.2 Showers and Joyce's Principles for Peer Coaching* *5.1.3 Stages of Peer Coaching in EFL* *5.1.4 Components of Peer Coaching* *5.1.5 Research Instruments for Peer Coaching*	Descriptive research with explanatory and sequential mixed method design	Not apply
Sub-problems	**Specific Objectives**	**Variable 2**	**Intervention**	**Observation Technique**
• What are the potential benefits of integrating peer coaching into the	• To identify the potential benefits of integrating peer-coaching into the EFL	5.2 EFL Pre-service Teachers' practicum *5.2.1 Practicum in the EFL* *5.2.2 Knowledge Base for EFL Teachers*	Not apply	Not apply **Survey Technique** • Questionnaire • Semi-structured interview

EFL pre-service teachers' practicum?	preservice teachers' practicum.
• What barriers do EFL pre-service teachers face from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their practicum?	• To determine the barriers that prevent EFL pre-service teachers from maximizing the benefits of peer coaching during their teaching practicum.