



Language Teacher Supervision: A Case-Based Approach

Kathleen M. Bailey

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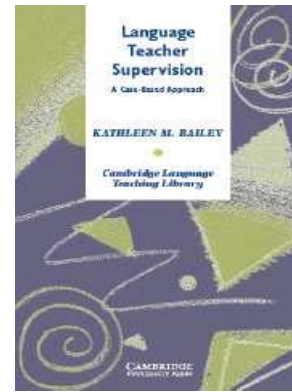
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Kathleen Bailey's *Language Teacher Supervision: A Case-Based Approach* offers comprehensive discussions and case analyses on language teacher supervision. Based on the author's lived experiences in English teacher education and supervision, coupled with a solid review of the professional literature, the book is a suitable resource for both undergraduate and graduate students in teacher education courses, and a useful guide for language teachers and supervisors to gain a solid understanding of supervision in language teaching in particular.

This 15-chapter volume illuminates an under-explored area of the language teaching profession, investigating issues such as teacher evaluation, autonomy, authority, awareness, and attitude. It also comprises a wealth of practical detail on gathering data and providing feedback in post-observation conferences with teachers. Each of the chapters consists of case studies for analysis and discussion, task and discussion sections which invite readers to exercise and reflect on their understandings on the topics discussed, concluding comments to allow readers to review their understanding of key issues, and suggested readings to provide the readers with a useful avenue for further topic exploration.

Chapter One surveys brief definitions of supervision and looks carefully at the position of supervision as a profession, emphasizing that it requires particular skills while, in fact, many people without prior supervisory training have been involved in supervision. The author also addresses such supervisory concerns as teacher autonomy and supervisory roles (from more directive to less directive). For this reason, the skills that a teacher-supervisor needs to have are context- and role-embedded. In short, this chapter succinctly treats the issues of roles of supervisors and skills for supervisors in different areas (e.g., business, social work, psychotherapy, and general education).

In Chapter Two, the issues of awareness and attitude in language teaching are addressed in which these two psychological factors play crucial roles in language teacher supervision. Bailey bases the nature of language teaching supervision on such SLA theories as Vygotsky's *Zone Proximal Development* (ZPD), scaffolding, and affordances to strengthen the relationship between teachers and supervisors. Such an effort enables supervisors to help teachers (1) gain

positive awareness of language teaching and (2) follow up the results of their new awareness. More crucially, it also allows supervisors to assist language teachers in maintaining positive and welcome attitudes toward their own professional development.

The issues of power and authority cannot be overlooked in supervision, so Chapter Three takes into account possible dynamic conflicts between teachers' autonomy and supervisors' authority, different kinds of power individuals might have, and the differences between delegated power and power from knowledge and skills. The author reminds readers of situations in which supervisors' authority and teachers' autonomy may jeopardize learning. In this sense, supervisors' authority in making decisions may "obstruct" teacher autonomy in determining the way they learn.

Chapter Four touches on the effects and ethics of classroom observation. When a teacher or class is being observed, students and teacher behave unnaturally due to the presence of an observer. This phenomenon is known as the observer's paradox; for this reason, supervisors need to do multiple classroom observations (Bailey, 2001). Further, whether a classroom observation is conducted overtly or covertly gives rise to ethical issues, so supervisors need entry permission as a process of negotiation. These issues can be minimized by building trust and transparency between the teacher and supervisor (Erickson, 1992), allowing both to benefit and grow professionally.

In Chapters Five and Six, the author focuses more specifically on data collection methods manually (e.g., note taking or selective verbatim recording) and electronically (e.g., audiotapes or videotapes) in which the two have merits and limitations. In this regard, Bailey suggests greater benefits of using electronic equipment in classroom observation to gather detailed data. The most important aspect of data collection is data triangulation. In this regard, supervisors should employ different sources (e.g., teachers and students) and data collection methods such as observations, documents, and interviews to surmount the limitations inherent in any single data collection source or method, thereby being able to gather objective, solid, and detailed data.

Chapters Seven and Eight focus on post-observation conference as a dialogic channel of communication between supervisors and teachers. In this forum, supervisors should provide feedback, not evaluation, to maintain a good rapport between teachers and them. A supervisor may need to request teachers to change their teaching behaviors or practices. In doing so, however, the supervisor also needs to minimize face-threatening and unequal power relation issues by providing encouraging and dialogic feedback so the teachers will not feel put out or discouraged. The ultimate goal of the post-observation conference is to empower teachers with the help of the supervisors.

Chapters Nine and Ten direct readers' attention to language teacher evaluation. First, the three main aims of teacher evaluation -- formative, summative, and diagnostic -- are succinctly addressed. These chapters also point out that there are many sources of information for evaluating language teachers' performances, one of which is teaching portfolios. Further, the author eloquently analyzes the criteria for evaluation, including individual opinions, group consensus, teaching methods, competencies, and performance standard. These criteria are tailored to make the teaching more effective, yet the word "effectiveness" is somehow difficult to define. This is because teachers do not know for sure to what extent their teaching behaviors affect the learning. In other words, these chapters show the obvious complexities of language teacher evaluation in supervision, so multiple evaluative tools need to be employed.

In Chapters 11-14, the author specifically highlights specific audiences with whom language teacher supervisors work. In this regard, Bailey provides readers with useful explanations about the way to supervise student teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs) differently so as to promote coordination and creativity in supervision. For example, she considers attitudinal factors as reluctance, resistance, burnout, or fulfillment that may arise in situations where a supervisor oversees a veteran tenured teacher, while also discussing the challenges of teaching supervision in a non-native language speaking context.

If this book has limitations, they are that the author does not adequately address (1) how language teacher supervision leads to significant professional development; (2) how videotaped self-observations contribute to reliable data for post-observation conferences and for teacher reflection; and (3) how ethnographic and participant classroom observations are potentially employed for supervisory jobs; and (4) how observational data will be analyzed.

In spite of the aforementioned drawbacks, overall, Kathleen Bailey has provided an eloquent presentation of the supervisory issues, and successfully made connections among chapters in the book. More crucially, she has based this book on her many years of knowledge and experience in language teacher supervision, and these resources strengthen the book to be a good introductory volume for language teachers who may be considering supervisory jobs or who have just began in the profession. For this reason, this book should be a valuable collection for tenured and future supervisors, teacher educators, practicing teachers, and student teachers in the field so as to gain a well-informed understanding of language teaching supervision as a whole.

Works Cited

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