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# Affiliation and negative assessments in peer observation feedback for foreign language teachers professional development

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**Abstract:** The growing use of peer observation in teacher professional development has created an interest in understanding how it is carried out and what the benefits are. Post-observation feedback is a crucial component of peer observation practices. This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of peer observation feedback in foreign language teacher's professional development. Adopting a conversation analysis perspective, we aim to establish how the interactional infrastructure is developed between observers and observees after a negative assessment during peer observation feedback. The results show that, when the observer is assessing a specific teaching action negatively and the observee expresses alignment with the observer's position, the observer adopts an affiliative stance through the use of his/her epistemic expertise in two ways: either putting his/her self in the shoes of the observee or, in other cases, expressing the affiliative stance by appealing to the epistemic community to which they both belong.

**Keywords:** affiliation, foreign language, peer observation, teacher development, negative assessment

## 1 Introduction

Peer observation (PO) has been a valuable tool for teacher professional development (TPD). PO is being implemented in different contexts, because it permits teacher development to be based on their own practices and reflections about what

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is going on in their classrooms and about their own performance. However, one of the main criticisms of reflective practice studies is the absence of data-led analysis and understanding of how reflection is instantiated through interaction (Mann and Walsh 2013). As Farr states, ‘there is therefore much more of an imperative to research [peer observation interaction] further, and know and better understand how it operates’ (Farr 2011: 173). In this vein, we aim to develop a better understanding of the interactions involved in PO feedback. In this article, we study the interactional organisation of teachers’ reflective practice in PO activities. With the specific aim of understanding the *language of reflection* (Mann and Walsh 2013) in PO feedback, this article seeks to find out how the interaction between pairs of a group of eight experienced in-service Spanish as a foreign language teachers is organised during an internal, informal and formative training PO activity in an adult language school in Barcelona (Spain). Our focus will be on one of the most common specific actions, namely negative assessments, and specifically on how an affiliative stance emerges after the observer has assessed an observee’s teaching performance negatively.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Peer observation feedback

TPD allows review of teaching practices through observation and reflection, one of which is PO activity<sup>1</sup> (Bell 2001, 2005; Mann and Walsh 2013, 2017; O’Leary 2014; O’Leary and Price 2016; Richards and Farrell 2005; Shortland 2004; among others). Commonly, PO promotes a reflective dialogue between participants, whose relationship has to be one of trust to maintain an appropriate lack of anxiety (Bell 2005). They adopt protocols beforehand (O’Leary 2014: 116–117), such as agreement on an object for discussion after the lesson. In post-observation meetings, criteria and agreements are reviewed, teaching performance is analysed and the observer gives feedback to the observee. During the feedback, PO promotes constructive dialogue and opportunities for teachers to reflect about the effectiveness of their classroom performances (Gosling 2002), develop their own teaching practices (Bell 2005; Dos Santos 2016), take decisions

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<sup>1</sup> Although peer observation is considered an activity carried out within the scope of peer review of teaching (Harris et al. 2008), in this study we opt for understanding peer observation as the practice carried out by the teachers, as our specific focus is on interaction after the observation of the lessons.

to be implemented in their future lessons and transform their own educational insights.

PO feedback has been studied in relation to how it can help to develop reflective practice and TPD (cf. Bell 2005; Farr et al. 2019; Gosling 2002), the language used by novel and experienced teachers (Farr et al. 2019) and the development of language teacher identity (Donaghue 2018, 2019; Farr et al. 2019). However, no studies have so far approached PO interaction from a micro-analytic interactional perspective, in contrast to the numerous studies of interaction carried out in trainer-trainee observations. In the latter, Dobrowolska and Balslev (2017) analyse how the observer's discursive strategies are developed in a mentoring observation feedback. Farr (2003) analyses minimal and non-minimal response tokens, overlaps and interruptions in trainer-trainee interactions, quantifying occurrences. Farr (2011: 128–130) examines the interactional strategies used by trainers to give feedback to trainees in pre-service teachers training courses. Copland (2010), in an ethnographic study of trainer-trainee post-observation meetings, analyses how the feedback session can be disappointing if the trainees are not able to behave as expected. In this case, trainees do not align with the trainer's position, and the common asymmetry (Hyland and Lo 2006) is challenged. In consequence, tension is engendered through the discursive practices of the participants. On the other hand, following a socio-cultural perspective, Engin (2015) explores how trainers scaffold trainees' participation towards learning in an English as a foreign language teaching practicum, while de Lange and Wittek (2018) illustrate how exploratory talk is developed from pre-observation meetings to post-observation meetings. They found that there are some challenges in developing this kind of talk between teachers.

Although Conversation Analysis (CA) has been considered a good tool to understand PO feedback interaction (Farr 2011: 32–33), this discipline has been used in few cases. For example, Strong and Baron (2004) analyse the trainer's suggestions to the trainee in initial teacher training. Donaghue (2019) studies how display questions give in-service teachers and supervisors the possibility to claim positive identities through showing knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, Phillips (1999) analyses the trainer-trainee feedback interactions in pre-service and in-service teachers training courses with the aims of considering whether these interactions can be considered as institutional, and whether observer and observee can be categorised in a specific membership category. Phillips (1999) found that the observer undertakes the role of the expert: establishing and managing the agenda, calling the observee to give his/her opinion about the whole class, being more involved in managing the interaction and giving feedback about what the observee has been reporting. Asymmetry of knowledge is also made clear, as the trainer is conceived as an authority (Farr 2011: 89). However, in in-service

interactions the epistemic gap between trainer and teacher is reduced. Nonetheless, an element of asymmetry continues as the observer retains the questioning and eliciting roles.

PO is a specific activity in which two or more people participate to develop their professional skills through reflection about action. In consequence, Shortland (2010: 296) notes that ‘relationships between lecturers are fashioned by individuals who construct meaning through bringing their own perceptions and understandings to their social interaction’. PO can be conceived as social action in which agents are involved with the aim of improving their own teaching practice. Feedback interaction in PO, therefore, can be considered as an Institutional Interaction (Heritage and Clayman 2010; Phillips 1999). Social accomplishment in peer observation is carried out through a relationship based on mutual respect (Gosling 2002) and it is supported by a commitment.

## 2.2 Peer observation and negative assessments

Feedback interaction implies sharing ideas, experiences and concerns, and assessing the observee’s performance with positive or negative comments. In in-service peer observation feedback, negative assessments are taken seriously by the participants. Phillips (1999) shows that observers, when having to produce a negative assessment, tend to be more polite and use strategies such as the inclusion of ‘we’ to stress in-group membership and social similarity, indirect speech acts, hedges, etc. Therefore, the observer implicitly recognises the negative assessment as a face-threatening act by the use of mitigations to defuse their value (Farr 2011: 111). Although negative assessments are commonly accepted in trainer-trainee PO feedback (Copland 2011), they play a crucial role in face work. Their management is complex: participants negotiate face in feedback with different actions, such as mitigation, intensification of the face threat or its acceptance (Copland 2011). Donaghue (2018), in a study focused on the identities in PO feedback between an in-service teacher and a supervisor, finds that the observer’s institutional identity is negotiated during the meetings, in some cases, to mitigate the negative feedback s/he offers. The mitigation is carried out by double-voicing (Donaghue 2018: 106), that is, talk that shows the speaker heightening awareness of the recipient’s agendas through the use, for example, of personal pronouns that involve both the speaker and the recipient, and with which the observer dilutes criticisms.

Negative feedback, like other kind of assessments (Lindström and Mondada 2009; Pomerantz 1984), is a social activity that shows specific knowledge about what is being assessed. Participants mutually display their alignment or disalignment, as well as their access, knowledge, expertise, experience, and authority

in relation to the matter being assessed (Heritage and Raymond 2005). These actions are difficult to manage due to their sensitivity to the ongoing sequential organization. Understood as dispreferred actions (Pomerantz 1984), negative assessments can be used to articulate a stance toward the second pair-part (Seuren 2018: 35). This stance will have implications for the affective stance of the participants. Therefore, we can state that assessments are organised in a manner that allows participants to display to each other shared affect and co-experience in the matter being assessed.

As has been stated before, PO is in theory implemented by teachers or trainees with an equal relationship status (Gosling 2002). Teachers maintain a symmetrical relation, but their roles are temporarily different during PO: both are teachers, but one is the observer, whereas the other is the observee. Epistemically, this difference is meaningful. The observee has delivered the teaching and, for that reason, has an epistemic primacy (Hayano 2011). The observee is able to talk about the performance experienced. On the other hand, the observer has viewed the lesson in the classroom and has their own epistemic domain, that is, s/he is able to talk about the experience because s/he has observed it. Moreover, the observer has the institutional right to give feedback to the observee. The rights and duties of each social role establish an asymmetrical relationship between them due to their epistemic positions (Raymond and Heritage 2006). Phrasing negative assessment, therefore, can be considered as a sensitive action, as it is carried out by someone who has a different epistemic position, but not a higher status, because both participants are teachers. Negative assessments can potentially affect their affective stances. Affiliation, then, comes into play as an important issue to deal with these particular challenges.

## 2.3 Affiliation and assessments

For a better understanding of how PO feedback interaction works, it is necessary to take into account how social relationships between participants are developed through interaction. Affiliation (Lindström and Sorjonen 2012; Stivers 2008; Steensig 2012) in that way becomes a key concept to comprehend how social action works. Understood as ‘the affective level of cooperation’, affiliation is a phenomenon which is tightly interrelated with affect and emotion. It is designed as an action preference, displaying empathy or supporting the speaker’s stance (Steensig 2012; Stivers et al. 2011). Affiliative actions are supportive of social solidarity (Lee and Tanaka 2016) and try to push the speaker towards agreement regarding what has just been said. Therefore, affiliation is only relevant when the recipient takes a specific stance in relation to the preceding action (Steensig and Larsen 2008).

One of the actions commonly related with affiliation is assessments (Lindström and Sorjonen 2012; Pomerantz 1984). Assessments can be reflexively transformed in order to produce affiliative and disaffiliative responses (Lindström and Mondada 2009). Assessments project participants' orientations to an affiliative stance towards the speaker's position (Mondada 2009). The assessment indexes a tacit claim to epistemic primacy (Heritage and Raymond 2005) or shows lack of affiliation (Huma 2015). Negative assessments, as dispreferred responses (Pomerantz 1984), can be considered as disaffiliative actions. In consequence, affiliation can be considered a key means of managing the interaction after negative assessments, for example, when the observer has to say something negative about the teacher performance. In this case, affiliation mitigates the negative impact of the negative assessment (Donaghue 2019: 9).

Following Farr's (2011) and Mann and Walsh's (2013) claims about a deeper understanding of PO interactions, this article aims to reveal the *language of reflection* during the post-observation PO activities carried out by a group of Spanish as a Foreign Language Teachers. In this way, our research aim is to understand in what ways teachers develop post-observation interactions and their own TPD. Specifically, we analyse how affiliative stance is oriented to and displayed after a negative assessment by the observer and which resources are used by the observer to establish an affiliative stance.

### 3 Data and method

Our dataset is composed of a total of 15 h and 19 min in 30 video-recorded post-observation peer feedback interactions carried out by eight Spanish as a Foreign Language experienced teachers (two male and six female, ranged between 28 and 48 years old) grouped in four pairs. Seven teachers have Spanish as a Foreign Language Master's Degree and all of them have completed specialised teaching training courses and participate in different teachers training workshops during the year. All teachers have had previous observation experience as all of them participated in previous sessions of this internal training program, but they only developed PO actions in the school where the research was conducted. The entire group has a strong formal and informal relationship with each other. The researcher did not take part in the activity and did not design the PO procedure, which was designed by the school's head of studies. However, the researcher collected the dataset out of interest in PO feedback interaction. Ethical guidelines were established and strictly followed. All the teachers participated voluntarily in the study after signing an informed consent form. The privacy of participants was ensured by using a coding system in the transcription.

Data was recorded in a private Spanish as a Foreign Language school in Barcelona between February and March 2017 and February and March 2018, as a part of a peer observation activity as internal training for TPD. For the group of teachers, PO activity was developmental (see Copland and Donaghue 2019: 403–405), as the focus was on the establishment of a reflective practice process. Although the internal training was not mandatory and teachers did not receive any incentive, all of them joined the activity. The Feedback style can be considered as collaborative (Farr 2011), as both the observer and the observee were working as equals beforehand. The PO procedure was as follows: as a starting point, all the participants met to discuss the focus of the observation and decide in their pairs where and when they would record the classes. It should be noted that the teachers' focus in this specific PO was general observation. Each teacher had to observe his/her peer two times. After each performance they shared the video recording and the notes taken. In some cases, after the first PO meeting, teachers agreed to focus on a specific aspect of the teacher's performance in the second PO. Finally, all the teachers involved in the project carried out a final meeting to reflect on how the PO process had gone and what insights could be taken into account for future PO training.

The peer-observation procedure followed by the participants was not agreed across the group, meaning that each pair developed their feedback as they deemed appropriate. The PO feedback was not designed in any specific way: no questions were prepared and the topics to be discussed were not planned. In consequence, although teachers could have followed procedural techniques such as the 'Sandwich' feedback method, no specific peer review protocol was taken into account. Moreover, there were no instructions to participants suggesting that the observees should reflect critically on their performance before the observer's feedback was provided. In consequence, the observer did not always have the observee's first impressions before giving feedback. Two pairs started their feedback with the observer asking the observee about his or her feelings, but the other two pairs did not do so. In all cases, the interaction after the opening was developed mainly by the observer, who commented on what happened during the lesson. Generally speaking, the most common observer action was negative assessment. A total of 54 cases of affiliative actions after a negative assessment were carried out. These occurred in 15 of the 30 video-recorded feedback sessions. We are going to analyse four different extracts with the aim of exemplifying and understanding the joint performance of these actions.

The analysis primarily draws on Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sidnell and Stivers 2012) as a research methodology. CA is a naturalistic approach whose main aim is to characterize, understand and explain the organization of social actions in interaction. It involves the comprehension of how participants create and orient to shared understanding through the observation, description,

analysis and understanding of social interaction as a basic component of human behaviour. CA is characterised by an emic perspective, adapted to uncover the actions that participants carry out. Because of that, the analysis takes into account all aspects involved in the interaction and provides richer details about the data. In consequence, CA is understood as an appropriate methodology to uncover actions that teachers accomplish during peer observation feedback. The extracts have been transcribed following the common conventions for CA (Hepburn and Bolden 2017; Jefferson 2004, see Appendix) with an idiomatic translation into English. Multimodal actions, when meaningful, have been included in the transcription. To ensure confidentiality teachers have been renamed and anonymized.

## 4 Results

As discussed earlier, after the lesson observation, participants arrange a meeting to talk about the teacher's performance and strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Criticisms, therefore, are carried out in form of negative assessment and can be accepted or refused by the observee. If they are accepted, the observee shows alignment with the observer's position, whereas the observee shows disalignment when the assessment is not accepted. In this study, we are going to focus our attention on the first case, in which the observee aligns with the observer's perspective. In our data there were no cases when negative assessments were rejected by the observee. On the contrary, there were 54 cases of affiliation after negative assessments. Three different ways to show affiliation have been observed: through personal expertise ( $n = 31$ ), through membership of the epistemic community ( $n = 16$ ) and through general pedagogical knowledge ( $n = 7$ ).

### 4.1 Affiliation after negative assessment through personal expertise

As shown above, the most common way to show affiliation after a negative assessment is through the observer's personal expertise. That is the case in extract 1: MIR criticises that SIL has cut the interaction off with her students because one of her students (T) talked about the five senses. SIL decided to tell the whole group what the five senses are called in Spanish. This action is criticised by the observer because she considers that the teacher should not have cut the interaction off to explain this specific vocabulary set, and the teacher should have explained that vocabulary to T individually.





11. SIL: claro: pero >como ya se estaba generando  
*of course but as it was generating*  
 + nods
12. entre no el sexto no sé qué se estaban hablando  
*between no the sixth I don't know what they were talking*
13. [(entre todos ↑ellos)<  
 about between all of them
14. MIR: [y luego (0.4) y luego pasa mucho que me pasa a mí creo  
*and then it happens a lot, that it happens to me I think*  
 + points to herself
15. (.) no sé si a ti te pasó porque estaba-  
*I don't know if it happened to you because I was-*
16. no sé (0.4) que a mí me pasa que a veces cuando  
*I don't know, that it happens to me that sometimes when*
17. me preguntan cosas (0.5) yo misma empiezo a dudar de si:  
*they ask me things I myself start to doubt if*
18. lo estoy haciendo bien o no, si no había  
*I'm doing well or not if I hadn't*

The negative assessment is delivered in lines 1–3: MIR is explaining to SIL that one action in her performance could have been done in another way. SIL aligns with MIR, acknowledging her position through affiliative actions ‘↓claro’ (‘of course’, line 5) and nodding (Stivers 2008) at the same time. As Heritage and Raymond (2005: 23) points out, ‘a declarative assessment in first position invites a matching response claiming similar access’. MIR suggests in lines 7 and 8 that it would be better not to carry out the action, reinforcing the negative impact of her assessment. SIL reacts by showing alignment with MIR’s negative assessment by using a rhetorical question (line 9). SIL leans forward in a non-verbal signal of willingness to align with her. MIR responds by nodding, establishes the same bodily position as SIL (line 10) and keeps developing the action to solve the problem assessed (line 10). SIL in line 11 nods, showing acknowledgement, and continues with ‘claro: pero >como ya se estaba generando’ (‘of course but as it was generating’), a ‘yes, but’ expression (Heritage and Raymond 2005) which tries to justify her performance. SIL disaligns with MIR’s position through

a turn based on her epistemic stance, as she was the teacher and has access to the experiences she lived in the classroom. She justifies her action due to the fact that the students were talking about the five senses. For that reason she took the opportunity to explain what the five senses are called in Spanish (lines 12 and 13). However, MIR insists in an overlapped turn on her negative assessment, whilst establishing an affiliative response. She appeals (line 14) to a common ground (Enfield 2008), pointing to herself and using her own experience as a teacher to mitigate SIL's problem: so this problem 'pasa mucho que me pasa a mi' ('it happens a lot, that it happens to me', line 14). Just after that, however, she downgrades her affiliative stance with an 'I think' utterance (line 14). Then MIR tries to find the reason why SIL acted in that way (line 15), explaining what happens in her own lessons when students started to ask different questions that are not related with the main topic of the interaction (lines 16–18). MIR establishes a common ground between the two teachers and an alignment position -the reality of their classrooms- and her epistemic expertise, to show she has experienced a similar situation to the one assessed.

In consequence, we can see that common ground and epistemic expertise are used by the observer to create an affiliative action. The affiliative response is proposed after an alignment and an explanation by the observee justifying the negative assessment. That happens in an overlapped way to try to take the floor to insist on the negative assessment but nonetheless in a mitigated way: the affiliative response is built on the observer's epistemic rights (Raymond and Heritage 2006) and mitigates the negative assessment. Affiliative responses are put forward by the observer in two different forms: by putting herself in the shoes of the observee and by agreeing with the reasons presented by the observee to justify her actions.

The analysis of the affiliative response after the negative assessment by the observer is developed in a complex way. She is not developing her affiliative position in a single turn, but she carries out different actions to establish and maintain a similar affiliative stance which mitigates the negative assessment. The affiliative action after a negative assessment is developed through justifying it, taking into account her epistemic expertise, and supporting social solidarity. MIR, through the affiliative response, is downgrading her epistemic position as an observer and stressing in-group membership. However, she is not developing social solidarity through the use of 'we' (Phillips 1999: 155), but rather expressing the affiliative response with a 'me'. MIR is saying she could equally be assessed in a similar way because it is a common problem in their performances. Moreover, MIR is reinforcing her social solidarity by claiming a common ground (Enfield 2008). By explaining a similar situation in her lessons and specifying that she also has doubts whether she is behaving properly, the observer is reinforcing her affiliative stance towards the observee.

Negative assessments appear not only in first position, but also as a reaction to the observee's reaction to the previous negative assessment. In extract 2, we can observe

the further development of the former negative assessment continuing from extract 1. SIL is justifying why it was a bad idea to explain the meaning of the five senses: she says that the students could get into a mess because of the difficulty in distinguishing between the verbs ‘taste’ and ‘like’ (lines 1 and 2), two verbs whose similar meanings can create misunderstanding in Spanish. At this point, MIR, who shows alignment through nodding (lines 1 and 2), is again assessing SIL’s performance. MIR takes the floor and keeps developing SIL’s assessment, through talking about taste and pointing to her mouth (line 3) and shaking her hand to reinforce her expression of closing down SIL’s statement. SIL is showing alignment through nodding (lines 3 and 4). After that, MIR says that this action could get her into a mess (line 4).

## Extract 2

EF\_M&amp;S\_1:1, 15:47

01. SIL: y el sabe- el ↑saborear que es el ↑verbo  
*and the tas- tasting that is the verb*  
 mir: \*nods ----->
02. >porque no es el verbo ↑gusta:r<  
*because is not the verb to like*  
 ----->
03. MIR: o saber no sé no sé no sé  
*or to taste I don't know I don't know*  
 \* points to her mouth  
 \* shaking her hand in front of Silvia  
 sil: \* nods ----->
04. pero que te metes en un berenjena:l=  
*but that you get into a mess*  
 sil: ----->
05. SIL: =cua[ndo no es el objetivo [(ni o-) ni::  
*when it is not the objective either*  
 \* shakes her head----->
06. MIR: [que- [que les has cortado a ellos  
*that that you have cut them off*  
 + looks up  
 sil: \* nods----->

07. que yo también lo hago muchas veces eh? >de cortarles  
*that I also do it many times eh? by cutting*  
*\* shakes her head*  
*sil: ----->*
08. el rollo de estar haciendo una cosa y digo< (.) espera  
*the trap, by being doing something and I say wait*

During the negative assessment, SIL is nodding, showing alignment with MIR. With ‘cua[ndo no es el objetivo [(ni o-) ni : :’ (‘when it is not the objective either’, line 5), she acknowledges the observer, shaking her head as a sign of approval, through saying ‘no’ as the observer, and explaining that if the objective of the interaction is not to talk about the five senses, she shouldn’t have done it. She insists that her action didn’t match with the aim of the activity. MIR, in overlap, keeps developing her negative assessment (‘que les has cortado a ellos’; ‘that you have cut off them’, line 6). She looks up as a sign of thinking and explains that SIL wrongly cut the students’ participation off, while SIL is expressing alignment through nodding. However, just after that, MIR mitigates her position with an affiliative response (‘que yo también lo hago muchas veces’; ‘that I also do it a lot of times’, line 7), shaking her head as a sign of disapproval of what she had just said and explaining how she makes the same mistake. Meanwhile, SIL keeps nodding, an action that shows alignment with the negative assessment. MIR thinks that she has also cut the interaction off in this kind of situation, so the action carried out by SIL can be understood as common in these situations. As in extract 1, the observer uses her epistemic expertise to mitigate the negative assessment and construct an affiliative position after the observee thereby showing themselves to be in alignment with that point of view. Again, the social solidarity is expressed by appealing to the epistemic expertise. The use of ‘me’ again shows that an affiliative response used to mitigate a negative assessment is an action focused on downgrading the face-threatening effects of the act.

## 4.2 Affiliation after negative assessment through membership of the epistemic community

The examples above show that affiliative stance after a negative assessment is shown in turn after the observee has aligned with the observer’s position and through social solidarity. However, these are not the only strategies employed by the observers to adopt an affiliative stance after assessing the observee’s performance negatively. In extract 3, FRA, the observer, and ALB, the observee, are talking about the necessity of making explicit the aims of the lesson at the beginning of the lesson.

ALB has commented that she didn't specify the aims of the lesson (data not shown). FRA, is acknowledging the negative self-assessment, in alignment with ALB's own negative assessment ('es verdad< es algo que:'; 'that's true, is something that', line 1). At this point, ALB acknowledges FRA, agreeing with what he said and, therefore, accepting the assessment from the observer. However, FRA, in an overlapped way, keeps developing his negative assessment, nodding and establishing that teachers don't take it into account (line 3), although the word 'objectives' is written in the whiteboard. He points out the wall, so they are in the same classroom in which ALB is teaching- to remind teachers that they have to make explicit what they are going to do during the lesson. In his explanation, FRA is adopting an affiliative stance.

## Extract 3

EF\_F&amp;A\_1:1,3:24

01. FRA: >y es verdad< es algo que:  
*and that's true, is something that*
02. ALB: mhm (0.8) va[le  
*ok*  
*\* nods*
03. FRA: [a pesar de que lo tenemos ahí ↑escrito  
*despite we have it here written*  
*\* nods*  
*\* points out the wall*
04. ALB: sí (.) no no y a veces se no:s olvida o >yo que sé< sabes,  
*yes no no and sometimes we forget it or I don't know, you know*
05. fra: *\* nods*  
hay días que tampoco es tan claro  
*there are days that neither it's not as clear*  
----->  
fra: *\* nods*  
*\* nods agreeing ----->*
06. quizá el obje↑tivo::  
*maybe the objective*  
*+ looks at the ipad ----->*  
fra: ----->

07. FRA: sí=  
yes
08. ALB: =vale  
ok  
---->  
\* *touches the screen*

Just as in the former examples, the observer's affiliative stance emerges in the next turn after the observee has aligned with the negative assessment. However, in extract 3 ALB is acknowledging and aligning with the observer's assessment about not justifying her teaching's decisions, but simply acknowledging and finishing the topic. The observer gives ALB the opportunity to close the assessment and to change the action to be commented on in the feedback. FRA, in an overlapped way, insists on his alignment position about the former negative assessment (line 4). FRA's action means that ALB's attempt to move on from the assessment has been ineffective, so he keeps developing his alignment with the negative assessment. In consequence, ALB has to reply to the previous turn, insisting on the negative assessment, but using the move 'a veces se no:s olvida' ('sometimes we forget it', line 4), as an affiliative response. ALB's turn is projected by the former one. She agrees with the previous turn, so is maintaining a similar stance towards the affiliative position. She recognises that teachers commonly forget to make explicit the aims of the lesson, so she is showing an affiliative position in accordance with the observer's. ALB, after a gap, develops the idea to which the observer has shown an affiliative stance (lines 4–6). To close the development of this negative assessment, FRA, through nodding, agrees with the position of ALB, who has started to look at the iPad as an attempt to move on from reflection about the negative assessment. Finally, ALB succeeds in changing the topic of the peer review, agreeing with what has been said, and looking at and touching the screen of the iPad, where they are watching the recorded lesson.

In extract 3, the way the observer is establishing the affiliative response after a negative assessment differs from the previous examples. Although the affiliative stance is also shown after the observee's acknowledgement of the negative assessment, the observer is not establishing social solidarity through epistemic expertise. He establishes an affiliative position, looking for their common ground, showing their community membership as teachers through the use of 'we'. They belong to the same epistemic community. Therefore, the difference between extract 1 and 2 and this one is that in the first two extracts we have seen that the epistemics involved in the affiliative response is related with the teacher's experience. In this case, however, the epistemic community implies that the observer is not talking about herself as an individual, but talking about herself as a member of a community, of teachers in this case.

### 4.3 Affiliation after negative assessment through general pedagogical knowledge

The last and least common case for establishing an affiliative response by the observer after a negative assessment is through the use of general pedagogical knowledge. As is seen in extract 4, ROG, the observer, is assessing negatively an activity executed by JUL, the observee. ROG is explaining that the activity proposed should have prompted the students to negotiate meaning instead of only to talk. The negative assessment ('claro y les hace a ellos que tienen que negociar'; 'of course and it makes them to have to negotiate', line 2) is acknowledged by JUL (line 3), who tries to justify her teaching action (line 6). Justifying her negative action, JUL is expressing agreement with the negative assessment stated. ROG agrees with the difficulty of carrying out these kind of activities in the classroom (lines 7 and 8), but he is not able to justify why he is assessing JUL's action negatively. This is because she takes the floor, interrupting him, to reaffirm that she agrees with the negative assessment ('no me ha parecido muy bien porque es verdad='; 'no it has seemed to me very well because it is true', lines 9 and 10). Afterwards, ROG tries to justify his negative assessment ('te lo digo porque'; 'I say it to you because', line 14), but, again, in an overlapped way, JUL takes the floor to justify why she considers the negative assessment adequate (lines 15–17).

Extract 4 EF\_R&J\_1:1,14:50

01. JUL: con un objetivo  
*with an aim*
02. ROG: claro y les hace a ellos que tienen que negociar  
*of course and it makes them to have to negotiate*
03. JUL: mhm  
*\*nodding*
04. ROG: bueno yo creo que esta:: es importante pero para mí es  
*well I think that this, it is important but to me it is*
05. más importante lo otro  
*more important the other*
06. JUL: a mí me cuesta esto de encontrar una actividad [así  
*to me it's hard all this about found an activity like that*



07. ROG: [a mí- a  
me-  
\*points out  
Himself
08. mí también (1.5) solo te lo digo [porque:  
me too I only say to you because
09. JUL: [no me ha parecido muy  
no it has seemed to me very
10. bien porque es verdad=  
well because it's true
11. ROG: =porque como punto de referencia: yo creo que (1.5) no  
because as a point of reference I think that, don't  
\*nodding
12. te parece?  
you think?
13. JUL: sí sí sí [sí  
yes yes yes yes
14. ROG: [o sea (1.0) [te lo digo porque  
I mean I say it to you because
15. JUL: [>q' a ver< que no es hablar por  
of course that it's not talk for
16. hablar o sea estamos negociando tenemos que llegar a una  
talk I mean we are negotiating we have to come to a
17. conclu[sión  
conclusion

In extract 4, the observer is developing his negative assessment and the observee agrees with him, explaining that it is difficult to find the correct aim for the speaking activity. Her alignment turn is cut off by the observer, who expresses an affiliative response ('a mí- a mí también'; 'me too', lines 7 and 8) with a quick hand movement.

However, he then keeps developing why he considers the observee's action as negative. After the observer's explanation, the observee aligns with it, explaining that there always has to be an aim when the students speak between themselves (lines 15 and 16).

Like the other examples, in this case the affiliative response after a negative assessment is done by the observer after the observee has agreed with the negative evaluation of her performance. The observer adopts the same stance through the use of his epistemic expertise. Like the case analysed in extract 1, he is using his experience as teacher to downgrade the negative assessment and express his affiliative stance to the observee. However, in this case, the observer is not talking about one specific experience. On the contrary, he specifies that, generally speaking, it is hard to find an appropriate activity to have the students negotiate meaning. Rather than referring to a situation which has been experienced, he uses a general pedagogical knowledge to build his affiliative response. Moreover, the affiliative response is cut off due to the insistence on explaining the reasons for the negative assessment.

## 5 Discussion

With the aim of furthering understanding of peer observation feedback interaction, this study examined how affiliative stances can be developed after a negative assessment in peer observation feedback. We have seen in the analyses that the observer commonly shows an affiliative stance in third position: after the negative assessment, the observee shows alignment with what has been assessed, that is, the negative assessment is projecting an alignment response from the observee. In line with Fasulo and Monzoni (2009), in in-service peer observation feedback the first assessment is locating the target and assessing it negatively, and is creating 'a slot for the recipient's consideration of it' (Fasulo and Monzoni 2009: 374).

In this study, we have seen that, in a third turn after the observee's alignment move; it is possible that the observer adopts an affiliative stance. In our data, negative assessments are the most common type of assessment that the observers carry out, although positive assessments also occur. Generally speaking, our data show that negative assessments are not commonly rejected by the observee, but are admitted and acknowledged through alignment. After that, the observer generally adopts an affiliative stance, developed interactionally and explicitly carried out in a third turn. Moreover, we can see that alignment and affiliation are not working at the same time, but at different levels: the affiliative turn is constructed by the observer once the observee has aligned with his former turn. The way the observer is adopting an affiliative stance towards the observee is by appealing to his/her epistemic expertise or to their epistemic community (Phillips 1999), or appealing to their common ground (Enfield 2008). At the same time, as Donaghue (2019) notes, the

observer shows affiliation when demonstrating knowledge and experience ‘to claim the identity of an effective teacher’ (Donaghue 2019: 9). The observee, when agreeing and showing alignment with the negative assessment, is acknowledging the observer’s epistemic primacy and implicitly agreeing that he/she has the authority and the right to assess his/her performance negatively (Stivers et al. 2011). Therefore, we can see that, in in-service peer observation feedback, as in pre-service peer observation feedback, the observer adopts an institutionally authoritative role (Farr 2011). However, in in-service peer observation, this authority is primarily talked into being by the observee when he/she aligns with the negative assessment, and it is less evident in their behaviour during the interaction. We can agree that, as Stivers et al. (2011) note, affiliative responses in in-service peer observation interactions are extremely pro-social when the speaker’s stance is matched. In that way, it has to be considered that the acceptance of negative assessments is also a strong foundation for affiliation and it is also engineered into the feedback process.

Besides that, epistemic community (Phillips 1999) and common ground (Enfield 2008) play a crucial role in the construction of the turns in which the affiliative stance emerges, unlike the case of tutor-tutee interactions (Farr 2011). The way the observer mitigates the negative assessment, adopting an affiliative stance through the observee, is commonly constructed by the use of the first person (Phillips 1999), but the epistemic expertise is exposed through appealing to the observer’s experiences as a teacher. Stepping into the shoes of the observee, the observer is downgrading the negative assessment, so the performance assessed is seen as embodying fairly universal teaching problems that the observers, as teachers have experienced too. This reality is in accordance with the findings presented in Phillips (1999), in which the observers also refer to the epistemic expertise (‘it also happens to me’) to mitigate the impact of the negative assessment. Our findings also coincide with those of Donaghue (2018), in which the in-service experienced observee projects double-voicing to dilute criticisms when the observer establishes a negative assessment. In all cases, epistemic expertise is used to mitigate face problems derived from negative feedback and being part of the epistemic community is not understood as a personal attack. As Sidnell states (Sidnell 2012: 305; see also Heritage and Raymond 2005), assessment presupposes access to a ‘state of affairs’. In in-service peer observation interaction, the observee equally has such access because he/she experienced the lesson and his/her performance has been assessed. For that reason, due to his/her epistemic expertise, she/he can call the negative assessment into question. These findings confirm the complexity of PO negative feedback in terms of face (Wajnryb 1994). As with the complexity in the management of initial English language training interactions (Copland 2008), observers in in-service Spanish as a Foreign Language PO are aware of the damage of negative feedback and, in consequence, develop strategies to mitigate the face threat. In the same way, it has been noted that

affiliative responses after negative assessments uttered by in-service Spanish as a Foreign Language teachers work in the same basic way than as in other contexts.

Last but not least, it should be noted that the institutional identity is involved in the observer adopting an affiliative stance. As Phillips (1999: 198) notes in the case of in-service peer observation interaction, when the observer is appealing to his/her epistemic community, s/he is invoking his/her institutional identity. The management of what the participants consider as a common ground (that is, the experience of being a teacher in their specific context and their common problems) is crucial to establish and maintain their institutional relationship and mutual respect. This is in line with Lee's views on disconfirmation after polar questions (Lee 2016).

This study has implications for teachers who want to develop PO for CPD. It has been shown that in-service Spanish as a Foreign Language teachers adopt an affiliative stance through appealing to their epistemic expertise, being members of the epistemic community or establishing a common ground. The use of information that involves both teachers allows the observer to maintain a positive face in spite of executing a face-threatening act, as negative assessment is. In this sense, appealing to epistemic shared knowledge, whether pedagogical or from the own experience, is a good resource to minimize negative face threat involved in negative assessments. Those in-service teachers who undertake a PO procedure may take into account that appealing to epistemic expertise; epistemic community or claim to a common ground facilitates an affiliative stance and positive face. As Bell (2001, 2005) recommends, more confidence is developed between the observer and the observee.

Nonetheless, this study has limitations. Findings have a limited generalisability, as the scope of this research relates to a specific group of Spanish as a Foreign Language teachers. CA as a research methodology develops a microanalytic perspective that allows us to understand interaction in great detail, but results are set out only for this specific context. Taking into account that PO research on in-service teachers is scarce (Donaghue 2019), more research could be done about how in-service teachers from other disciplines manage the affiliative stance. Further research may be required to have a more complete picture of the behaviour of in-service Foreign Language teachers in PO practices. These might include, for example, analysing how teachers manage pedagogical knowledge and practical knowledge (Borg 2003) or studying cases in which negative assessment project a disaffiliative stance.

The observation and analysis of how teachers manage their affiliative responses after a negative assessment enables us to understand in depth how one specific component of peer observation feedback is managed. It has been claimed that observation practices have to drive reflective practice developed through interaction (Mann and Walsh 2013, 2017; Walsh and Mann 2015).

However, research about the language of reflection is scarce. In that way, this study is making a contribution to understanding how the language of reflection is constructed in peer observation feedback interaction.

## 6 Conclusions

Peer observation has become a recurrent tool for teacher training and TPD. As it is based, among other things, on reflective practice, its usefulness has been claimed as a different way to push teachers to think about their performance. However, the interaction involved in post-observation feedback, as an opportunity for the co-construction of knowledge and the articulation of reflective practice, has not been taken into consideration sufficiently. Bearing in mind the necessity to know and better understand how interaction in peer observation operates, this study has tried to show how a specific action is developed interactionally, namely negative assessments.

Specifically, our focus of attention has been on how Foreign Language Teachers are adopting an affiliative stance after a negative assessment during peer observation feedback. This article has shown that affiliative responses after a negative assessment are produced after the recipient has aligned with the negative statement, in a third turn of the sequence. Furthermore, it has been shown that affiliative turns are constructed through shared experience. The observers make use of the epistemic community to present both as teachers and, in this way, mitigate the effect of the negative response, which the recipient has aligned with. The key to constructing affiliative responses, then, is the epistemic community. Observers try to relate to the observee's problems by expressing that they are common problems that affect the entire teacher's community. In consequence, observers categorise themselves as teachers to mitigate the negative assessments and to construct the affiliative stance. We can consider that belonging to an epistemic community and having experienced the problem as a teacher are the main resources used to construct affiliative positions after negative assessments. In sum, we have shed more light on the specific interactional infrastructure of negative assessment in-service peer observation feedback carried out by Foreign Language Teachers.

Peer observation feedback has been shown to be a very complex variety of interaction, partly because negative assessments are the most common type of social action and require considerable interactional and professional work to mitigate the potential disaffiliation involved. This confirms the complexity of social relationships involved in peer observation reported in the literature (e. g. Farr 2011; Gosling 2002). Participants in peer feedback interaction need preparation for the activity in order to succeed, given its complexities. One way to achieve it could be to take into account specific PO programmes (Bell 2001, 2005; Harris et al. 2008).

One way of managing such preparation would be to read about what happens in such sessions, and this article can potentially be used in this way.

## Appendix: Transcription conventions

↑	Shift to high pitch on next syllable
?	Rising intonation on previous syllable
.	Falling intonation on previous syllable
=	Latching
.hh	In breath
hh	Hearable aspiration (e. g., exhale, laughter token). The more ‘h’s’ the longer the aspiration.
[	Top begin overlap
]	Top end overlap (when relevant)
[	Bottom begin overlap
]	Bottom end overlap (when relevant)
<word>	Slower than surrounding talk
°word°	Softer than surrounding talk
<u>word</u>	Emphasized talk
£word£	Smiley voice
wo-	Cut-off
:(::)	Stretching of previous sound (the more colons, the longer the stretching)
(0.2)	Length of pauses in seconds
(.)	Micropause (less than 0.2 s)
(word)	Uncertain transcription
*	Time when the nonverbal action happens

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