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# *Models of Supervision: Choices*

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Supervision of teachers is an important part of both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, and teacher educators have a wide choice of supervisory behaviors which they can use in the process of training second language teachers. It seems to be the case, however, that many second language teacher educators continually limit themselves to the same reasons for doing supervision and the same supervisory behaviors. This article illustrates how limiting some styles of supervision can be and then, in exploring alternative ways that supervision can be done, encourages teacher educators to experiment in their use of supervisory behaviors. Five models of supervision are discussed: 1) directive, 2) alternative, 3) collaborative, 4) non-directive, and 5) creative.

As ESL professionals, it is likely that most of us have experienced teacher supervision, at one time or another, either as a supervisor, as a teacher being supervised, or as an outside observer. If we reflect on these experiences and then try to describe the roles or functions which the supervisor played in them, those roles or functions would probably fall into one or more of the following categories:

• to direct or guide the teacher's teaching
• to offer suggestions on the best way to teach
• to model teaching
• to advise teachers
• to evaluate the teacher's teaching

These categories were elicited from many teachers and teacher educators from several countries and appear to be a fairly representative sample of what many teachers and teacher educators perceive supervision to be. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that supervision can be much more than this.

Five models of supervision are presented and discussed. The first model is offered to illustrate the kind of supervision which has traditionally been used by teacher educators. But since this model has some serious limitations, the other four models are proposed in order to describe ways that we can define the role or function of the supervisor and supervision differently—that is, differently from how the supervisor and supervision are normally perceived. The reason for presenting all five models is also to share reflections on experience; which I have personally had with each model. The five models are 1) directive, 2) alternative, 3) collaborative, 4) non-directive, and 5) creative.

### Directive Supervision

This model of supervision is the one which most teachers and many teacher educators express as their idea of what supervision is. In *directive supervision the* role of the supervisor is to direct and inform the teacher, model teaching behaviors, and evaluate the teacher's mastery of defined behaviors.

There are at least three problems with directive supervision. First, there is the problem of how the supervisor defines "good" teaching. Second, there is the problem of negative humanistic consequences that may arise from using a directive model of supervision. And third, there is the problem of who is ultimately responsible for what goes on in the classroom. In order to present these problems clearly, I would like to discuss an experience I had as a teacher being supervised:

I had taken a part-time job at a well-known language school, and as part of that job I was expected to be open to being supervised. One day a person I had never seen before walked in and sat down as I was in the process of teaching a reading lesson. I was trying out a few new ideas and wanted to see the consequences of not going over vocabulary before having the students read. Instead of presenting vocabulary, I was having the students read a story several times, each time working on a different task such as underlining words which described the person in the story or crossing out words they did not know. The supervisor sat in the back of the room taking notes, and I became nervous. After about fifteen minutes of silence the supervisor came over to me. She smiled and whispered that she would like to meet with me at her office after the class. She opened the meeting by leaning over, touching me on the arm, smiling and saying, "I hope you don't mind. I'm not one to beat around the bush." I sank a little further into my chair. She proceeded to tell me that I should always write difficult vocabulary on the board and go over it before the students read, that students should read aloud to help them with pronunciation, and that in every class there should be a discussion so that students have the chance to practice the new vocabulary. This experience was one of several similar ones which I had with that supervisor and others at the same institution. At the time I wondered what made the supervisor's way of teaching more effective than what I wanted to do. Now I know that it was not more "effective." It was simply different. But it nevertheless appears to be the case that most people, including teachers, supervisors, school administrators, the owner of the neighborhood hangout, the person on the street, . . . believe that they can identify good teaching when they see it.

However, it might not be good teaching that these people see. It is, more likely, their idea of what good teaching should be. There is a difference. Most people accept the idea that good teaching means that learning takes place. The problem, however, is not in identifying whether learning has taken place but rather in identifying what specific teaching behaviors caused the students to learn. Identifying what behaviors result in student learning can be so difficult that, after reviewing most of the classroom process-product research on teaching up to the early 1970s, Dunkin and Biddle (1974) concluded that we still have very little idea about what good or effective teaching actually is. Furthermore, as Allwright points out in referring to the field of second language teaching, although research methodology is changing, "the ultimate aim is still to end up with something helpful to say to teachers and their trainers" (1983:199). The search for effective teaching goes on. For these reasons, since we do not know much about the effects of our teaching behaviors on learning, it is difficult to justify prescribing what teachers should do in the classroom.

A second problem with directive supervision concerns humanistic consequences. On the basis of experiences such as the one I described above, it is easy to see that directive supervision can have negative consequences. First, it can make teachers see themselves as inferior to the supervisor, and this can lower their self-esteem. For example, after I met with the directive supervisor I referred to earlier, I felt doubtful about myself as a teacher. A second negative consequence of directive supervision is that it can be threatening. While going to work I remember saying to myself more than once,

"Oh, supervisor, don't come today. Please don't come today." I knew that the supervisor was not going to like what 1 had prepared. Rardin describes this state of affairs clearly when she notes that "threat can produce a 'half-in-half-out' engagement" (1977:184).

Although I wanted to fully engage myself in my own ideas of what the students could benefit from, I could not because of the overriding threat that the supervisor would disapprove.

In other words, threat can create the need for teachers to defend themselves from the supervisor's judgments concerning whether or not they are meeting the supervisor's expectations of them as teachers. Rowe has pointed out that if we feel that we are being judged, we lose the "right to be wrong" (1973:308). She believes that if we lose this right, we can also lose the courage to try new ideas, to explore more than one alternative, and to explore freely.

A third problem with directive supervision is that a prescriptive approach forces teachers to comply with what the supervisor thinks they should do. Blatchford (1976) and Jarvis (1976) have both suggested that this keeps the responsibility for decision making with the teacher educator. It does not allow the teachers to become their own experts and to rely upon themselves, rather than on the supervisor, for the answers.

**Alternative Supervision**

Copeland (1982) discovered in his research on teacher attitudes to supervision that some teachers feel the need to be told what to do when they first begin to teach. He attributes this to their insecurity in facing students without having the skills to cope with that situation. Teachers from a number of countries have also pointed out that if the teacher is not given direction by the supervisor, then the supervisor is not considered qualified. The roots of directive supervision grow deep.

However, there is a way to direct teachers without prescribing what they *should* do. This way is through a model that Freeman (1982) calls *alternative supervision.* In this model, the supervisor's role is to suggest a variety of alternatives to what the teacher has done in the classroom. This limits the number of choices for teachers, and it can reduce anxiety over not knowing what to do next. However, it still keeps the responsibility for decision making with the teacher. There is simply less choice. Freeman points out that alternative supervision works best when the supervisor does not favor any one alternative and does not sound judgmental. The purpose of offering alternatives is to widen the scope of what a teacher will consider doing.

Fanselow (in press) states that his goal is to substitute self-generated alternatives for prescribed alternatives. Like Freeman, Fanselow might begin by suggesting alternatives. However, Fanselow also provides ways through which teachers can generate their own alternatives in their teaching. One way is to try the opposite of what is usually done. For example, if students usually read silently, the teacher can generate a lesson where they read aloud. Another way is by duplicating inside the classroom what goes on outside of it. He also trains teachers to be aware of "leaden" (as opposed to "golden") moments when things consistently do not go well (for example, when students always come to class late) and to try alternative behaviors to resolve the problem (for example, offer coffee to those who come on time or simply sit down and talk with the students about the importance of starting on time).

No matter how the alternatives are generated, the aim, as Fanselow makes clear, is for teachers to try alternative behaviors and to pay attention to the consequences. If the supervisor provides strategies (such as those described above) which give teachers a way to understand the consequences of what they do, teachers can gradually become their own experts and can rely on themselves to make teaching decisions.

In the supervisory situation I described at the beginning of this article, instead of prescribing what I should have done with my reading lesson, the supervisor could have had me describe what I did that day and then describe how I could do the opposite. She could have requested that I try the opposite to see what happens, and this could have been a way to teach me a strategy of paying attention to the different consequences on the students' behavior of doing lessons differently. Or, if I had appeared to need more direction, the supervisor could have limited the number of choices and said something like, "I don't know what the best way to teach a reading lesson is. You will have to make those decisions for yourself. However, I can share my experience. Let me give you three ways to teach a reading lesson. You can try the one you like or try all three on different days. The first way you can teach a reading lesson is . . ."

**Collaborative Supervision**

Within a *collaborative* model the supervisor's role is to work with teachers but not to direct them. The supervisor actively participates with the teacher in any decisions that are made and attempts to establish a sharing relationship. Cogan (1973) advocates such a model, which he calls "clinical supervision," Cogan believes that teaching is mostly a problem-solving process that requires a sharing of ideas between the teacher and the supervisor. The teacher and supervisor work together in addressing a problem in the teacher's classroom teaching. They pose an hypothesis, experiment, and implement strategies which appear to be a reasonable solution to the problem under consideration.

In the supervisory situation I described at the beginning of this paper, instead of telling me what I should have done, the supervisor could have asked, "What did you think of the lesson? How did it go? Did you meet your objective?," in a positive, interested, and non- judgmental way. Then the supervisor could have more easily understood my ideas, problems I saw in the lesson, and the kinds of things I was planning to do. It would have been possible for the supervisor to also have input, to make suggestions, and to share her experience. A decision about what to do next could have been made

together.

It is worth mentioning that although the ideas of equality and sharing ideas in a problem-solving process can be appealing, the ideal and the real are sometimes far apart. Not all teachers are willing to share equally in a symmetrical collaborative decision- making process. This has been pointed out clearly by a colleague from a Middle Eastern country who remarked that if, as a supervisor, he attempted to get teachers to share ideas with him, the teachers would think that he was not a very good supervisor.

### Non-Directive Supervision

While collaborative supervision places the teacher and supervisor in a sharing relationship, *non-directive supervision* does not. Nor does a non-directive supervisor prescribe or suggest non-prescriptive alternatives. What a non-directive supervisor does do was recently expressed by a teacher when she said, "My supervisor usually attempts to have me come up with my own solutions to teaching problems, but she isn't cold. She's a giving person, and I can tell that she cares. Anyway, my supervisor listens patiently to what I say, and she consistently gives me her understanding of what I have just said." The same teacher also expressed the consequences of this type of supervision for her when she added, "I think that when my supervisor repeats back to me my own ideas, things become clearer. I think this makes me more aware of the way I teach—at least I am aware of my feelings about what I do with students. "

When the teacher talked about how the supervisor listened and provided an understanding of what she had said, she was referring to something that Curran (1978), who bases his ideas on the work of Carl Rogers, calls an "understanding response." An understanding response is a "re-cognized" version of what the speaker has said. In supervision, the supervisor does not repeat word-for-word what the teacher has said but rather restates how he or she has understood the teacher's comments.

In the supervisory situation I described at the beginning of this article, instead of the supervisor prescribing what I should do, she could have said something like, "You just explained to me what and why you did what you did in the classroom. Let me see if I understand what you said. You told me that you wanted to see the consequences of trying a reading lesson where the students read silently while doing tasks such as underlining words which describe the main character in the story. You said that you did not write vocabulary on the board because you wanted to see if the students would come up with the words they wanted to learn. You also said that you wanted students to . . ."

According to those foreign and second language teacher educators who have discussed a non-directive supervisory approach (Dowling and Sheppard 1976, Early and Boitho 1981, Freeman 1982), if the supervisor had been more non-directive when supervising me, I could have had the freedom to express and clarify my ideas, and a feeling of support and trust could have grown between us. I could have discovered that there was no need to be defensive. I could have realized a freedom to try new ideas and to fully invest myself in what I was doing. I could also have had the chance to raise questions about myself as a teacher and about the consequences that my teaching had on the students. I could also have gained experience in making decisions on my own, and I could have further realized my own responsibility for my teaching behavior.

It is important to point out that the opposite effect can also result from non-directive supervision. Some teachers report that this kind of supervision makes them feel anxious and alienated. But one reason for anxiety may be due to the inexperience of the teacher. For example, I remember once supervising a new teacher through mostly non-directive means. He suddenly looked up and said, "But what do you think I should do in the classroom? How can I know what to do if I have no experience doing it?" If we follow the assumption, as Copeland (1982) does, that teachers benefit from what they think they need, then a non-directive model of supervision might not always be appropriate.

A second reason why teachers become anxious and uncomfortable could be because of the way the supervisor understands non- directive supervision. When teachers comment that this kind of approach makes them anxious, we should wonder whether the supervisor has simply been using the surface techniques while ignoring the deeper philosophical principles. Blair makes sense when he points out that "to borrow only certain outward features of the approach without understanding what its real power is would be like using an airplane only as a car or a sophisticated computer only as a typewriter" (1982:103-104).

At the deeper philosophical level, we need to understand the importance which Curran (Curran 1977, 1978, Rardin 1977, Stevick
1980, Taylor 1979) placed on working with the "whole person" of the learner. He advocated such techniques as the non-judgmental
"understanding response" to break down the defenses of the learners, to facilitate a feeling of security, and to build a trusting relationship between the learners and the teacher. This trusting relationship allows the teacher and learners to "quest" together to find answers to each learner's questions.

**Creative Supervision**

DeBono's idea that "any particular way of looking at things is only one from among many other possible ways" (1970:63) serves as the basis of *creative supervision.* The models of supervision which have been presented thus far limit our way of looking at supervision. The creative model allows freedom to become creative not only in the use of the models presented, but also in other behaviors we may care to generate and test in our supervisory efforts. There are at least three ways the creative model can be used. It can allow for 1) a combination of models or a combination of supervisory behaviors from different models, 2) a shifting of supervisory responsibilities from the supervisor to other sources, and 3) an application of insights from other fields which are not found in any of the models. Working with only one model can be appropriate, or it can be limiting. Sometimes a combination of different models or a combination of supervisory behaviors from different models might be needed. Freeman (1982), for example, selects a particular supervisory approach according to the type of information the teacher is seeking. If new teachers are trying to find out "what" to teach, he uses a directive approach. If they want to know "how" to teach, he uses an alternative approach. If they want to know "why" they teach, he uses a non-directive approach. A colleague likes to work with teachers through alternative supervision and will sometimes model the alternatives. Gradually he starts to use non-directive supervision as the teachers gain the ability to generate their own alternatives and understand the consequences of what they do in the classroom, Another colleague approaches supervision through a non-directive model; after she gains the teachers' trust, she begins to collaborate more with them. The number of combinations is endless.

A second way that a creative model of supervision can be used is to allow for a shift of supervisory responsibility from the supervisor to another source. One way is to make teachers responsible for their own supervision. To do this, Zigarmi (1979) shows how teacher centers can be used. Teacher centers are places where teachers can go to find answers to questions, have access to resources, and talk about problems with other teachers or special "consultants" or "supervisory experts." Rather than the supervisor going to the teachers, the teachers can go to the teacher center. Another way to shift responsibility away from the supervisor is to have peer supervision, where fellow teachers observe each others' classes. In this case there is no supervisor. I have seen this done in Thailand at the university level where teachers were friends, had no reason to defend their teaching, and enjoyed trying out new ideas in their classes.

A third way that creative supervision can be used is through the application of insights from other fields which are not found in any of the models. For example, some teacher educators have adapted observation systems originally developed for research, such as Moskowitz's (1971) and Jarvis's (1968) adaptations of Flanders' Interaction Analysis, to help them observe and supervise practice teachers. Other teachers prefer Fanselow's (1977, in press) FOCUS
(Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings) because the five major categories and many subcategories within FOCUS can be used easily as a metalanguage to talk about teaching in non-judgmental and specific terms.

The application of observation systems has been a valuable asset to supervisors. It allows supervisors to describe rather than prescribe teaching, and observation systems provide a means through which teachers can continue to monitor and study their own teaching. But, why stop there? Why not apply yoga and meditation techniques to teacher supervision? Leadership training from business management? Ethnographic interviewing techniques? Story-telling skills from Hawaiian folklore? Use of metaphors in counseling? As Fanselow (1983) makes clear, we will never know the consequences of trying new ideas in the preparation of teachers if we keep doing the same things

over and over again.

I have taken Fanselow's comment seriously and have been exploring the application of insights from several fields to teacher supervision. It would be beyond the scope of this article to discuss all of these fields and insights but, as an example, I will present the application of insights into the rapport-developing process which I have gained from actively learning Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). NLP was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, who base their techniques on their observations of what "therapeutic wizards" such as Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, and Milton Erickson do as professional communicators. One concept central to NLP is that communication between people can be analyzed and understood by systematically focusing on the process rather than on the content, and it is by helping us to know what to concentrate on within the process that NLP can provide insights.

In most models of supervision, supervisors are told to establish rapport, but supervisors are rarely given insight into how to do this. Instead, rapport is defined with vague words such as "harmony," "empathy," or "a sympathetic relationship." However, Bandler and Grinder (1979), Cameron-Bandler (1978), and Lankton (1980) have indicated that they develop rapport by consciously and unconsciously matching verbal and non-verbal behavior with the other person, and they provide specific ways to help others learn to do so. With regard to verbal behavior, in NLP one step toward establishing rapport is to match the other person's way of verbally representing his or her experience, known in NLP as a person's "representational system." According to Grinder and Bandler (1976), we have five recognized senses for making contact with the world. We see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. In addition to these sensory systems, we have a language system which we use to represent our experience. In order to identify a person's way of verbally representing his or her experience at a given point in time, we need only to pay attention to the predicates (verbs, adjectives, adverbs) which that person uses. Thus, if a person says things like "I *see* what you mean," *"Focus* on this," "I can *picture* that *clearly,"* or "Your *perspective* sure seems *vague,"* that person is representing experience through a visual channel. Likewise, a person represents experience through an auditory channel when using language such as "Her new dress is a real *scream,"* "I'm really *tuned* into learning," or "The idea was *amplified* when . . ." and a person represents experience through a kinesthetic channel when using language such as "I have a *feeling* that . . . ." "Can you *grasp* that idea?," or "His writing has some *rough edges. "*

The more practice we have in identifying another person's representational systems, the easier it becomes. This is because each person tends to process information through a favored sense in any given context. Although we represent the world around us through all of the senses, people tend to make use of one or more of these representational systems more often than others—"which is to say that we more highly value one or more of the representational systems" (Lankton 1980:234).

In order to develop rapport, people who are practicing NLP match their predicates to those of the other person. If, for example, a person is using predicates which indicate an auditory representational system, the person practicing NLP will also switch into an auditory system, using auditory words and "tuning into" the experiences of that person, In cases of matching visual and kinesthetic representational systems, the person practicing NLP would attempt to "see" or "feel" the experiences of the other person.

It is also possible to match a person's non-verbal behavior. In brief, matching non-verbal behaviors, like matching verbal predicates, can place people who are using the technique closer to the experiences of the person with whom they are interacting. It is possible to match a person's posture, walking stride, breathing rate, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and tempo of speaking.

My observations of mismatches of non-verbal behaviors with representational systems make the nature of rapport apparent. Lack of rapport, for example, was especially evident in the following observed interaction. The supervisor was sitting up, shoulders tense, breathing shallow in the chest (visual position) and looking at the teacher. The teacher's eyes were toward the floor (to the right), shoulders relaxed and drooped, breathing deep from the abdominal area (kinesthetic position). (See Dilts et al. [1980:81-84] for these and other non-verbal positions. ) The following dialogue took place (as I recall it):

Teacher:: I feel the class just doesn't respond to the way I teach.

Supervisor: I see. Would you like to focus on any particular part?

Teachers: Well, I felt that none of the students could grasp what I wanted them to do. I had a sense it was the directions I gave.

Supervisor Well, I think they were clear, but you gave them in such a flash that students couldn't see what you wanted them to do.

Teacher: Yeah. I sense I need to smooth things out. I wonder how? What would you do?

Supervisor: I might use more than one medium. I might write the directions on the board so they can see them.

Teacher: Well, I don't know. I feel my presentation is so cold. If only I could warm up to them—make closer contact with them . .

The supervisor and teacher were talking through two different representational systems. There was little rapport and, as far as I could tell, the teacher's problem was not resolved. If, according to Bandler and Grinder and others, this supervisor had used NLP matching techniques and, as a result, had developed a fuller representation of the teacher's experience, the communication would have been "packaged" so that understanding could take place more easily.

There is much more that could be said about how observation systems and NLP can be applied to the supervision of teachers. However, the main point here is not how these two fields of knowledge can be applied to supervision, but rather that we have the freedom to apply concepts from outside supervision as we discover them.

## CONCLUSION

It seems to be the case that many second language teacher educators limit their approach to supervision and their choice of supervisory behaviors. Supervision under such conditions can restrict or, in the case of very directive supervision, can even retard teachers' progress in assuming the responsibilities for their own teaching and in developing their talents as professional teachers. This article illustrates that there is a wide choice of supervisory behaviors which teacher educators can select from. However, there are no claims being made regarding the best model of supervision or the best supervisory behaviors. This task of discovering which supervisory behaviors work well for the supervisor is left to the supervisor. However, unless we are willing to explore and use new behaviors in our supervisory efforts, we will never know the consequences that these behaviors can have on the professional development of teachers. It is up to us to continually apply this and other knowledge in our development of more and more sophisticated and productive teacher supervision.


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