

Harnessing the power of peer dialogue to support GTAs' professional development: Two reflective stories

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Yanyan Li is currently a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. Her research centres on group work and social interaction in classrooms and other institutional settings, with a focus on understanding how people collaborate and communicate. Using conversation analysis, she examines interactional data to uncover patterns in how individuals engage with one another, while also exploring the role of multimodal displays, such as gestures and visual cues, in interaction. Through her work, she aims to improve group dynamics and support the development of individuals' social competencies within collaborative environments. She is currently a Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant in Department of Applied Linguistics, Department of Computer Science, and Medical School at the university. Additionally, she has been appointed as a Student Fellow at Warwick International Higher Education Academy and has been awarded Associate Fellowship of Higher Education Academy (AFHEA).



Abstract

Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) have played an essential role in supporting teaching and learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) across the globe. Enhancing GTAs' professional development (PD) is critical for ensuring the quality of higher education. The influence of peers in GTA's PD has been widely acknowledged (e.g., Bale & Moran, 2020; Dobbins et al., 2021). However, there is limited research on the benefits of peer dialogue, one of the most accessible means of harnessing peer powers in GTAs' PD. This qualitative study aims to explore how peer dialogue can contribute to GTAs' PD. This study will use data from two narratives detailing the experiences of peer dialogue, completed independently by two senior GTAs in a UK-based university, who are also the first and second authors of this study. Through thematic analysis, the two researchers will first identify the themes of the data separately and then work together to synthesize the key themes from the data, to uncover the key benefits of peer dialogue in promoting GTAs' PD. The findings of this study will add to the literature on the power of peers in GTAs' PD and provide insights into the positive impacts of engaging in peer dialogue activities to promote GTAs' PD. This study will have significant implications for GTAs interested in seeking PD opportunities and for stakeholders who support GTAs in higher education. By highlighting the benefits of peer dialogue, this study also underscores the need to create a supportive environment or platform for GTAs to be engaged in open and collaborative peer dialogue.

Key words:

Peer dialogue, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), Professional development (PD); benefits

Introduction

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) play a critical role in Higher Education (HE), juggling their responsibilities as students, teachers, and researchers. These multifaceted responsibilities present significant challenges that can affect their professional development (PD) and overall wellbeing. Recent research (e.g., Jonnalagadda et al., 2022) underscores the need for targeted support and PD opportunities to help GTAs navigate these challenges effectively. This paper argues that peer dialogue, with significant benefits, serves as a promising strategy to enhance GTAs' PD.

This study examines the benefits of peer dialogue on GTAs' professional growth and overall wellbeing. Through thematic analysis of reflective narratives from two senior GTAs, the research explores how peer dialogue has assisted them in managing their roles, shaping their professional identities, improving their overall wellbeing, and fostering both interdisciplinary understanding and a sense of teaching community. The findings offer practical implications for supporting GTAs' PD more effectively. They suggest extending PD frameworks to address aspects of professional identity and wellbeing, raising awareness among GTAs about the value of peer dialogue, and creating supportive environments for peer interaction. By integrating these insights, this article suggests that institutions enhance their support structures for GTAs, leveraging peer dialogue as a vital tool for ongoing GTAs' PD.

Literature review

GTAs' role in higher education and professional development

GTAs are PhD students employed to teach and support learning in their own department/institution, holding the student-teacher-researcher identity (Bale & Anderson, 2024). GTAs play a significant role in HE, undertaking various teaching assignments. For example, STEM GTAs are expected to instruct undergraduate students' learning in a laboratory and discussion settings, marking students' work and

communicating with students concerning their learning during office hours (Zotos et al., 2020). How GTAs live up to their roles can impact the overall organisational effectiveness. Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of research on various aspects of GTAs, including how they are trained (e.g., Jonnalagadda et al., 2022), how they navigate their identity (e.g., Bale & Anderson, 2024; Slack & Pownall, 2023), how they impact students' learning (e.g., Huffmyer & Lemus, 2019; Wheeler et al., 2017), and how students evaluate their teaching (e.g., Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2018). Findings from these studies can be integrated into institutional support for GTA's PD and how they sustain their own PD.

Having said that, there has been research specifically on GTAs' PD. Some put forward frameworks for the training or evaluation of GTAs' PD programmes. For instance, Reeves et al. (2017) propose a conceptual framework for assessing and investigating GTAs' PD programmes, as an initial step for practitioners and researchers to collaborate on large-scale and systematic research. This framework integrates the contextual, moderating and outcome variables. Some conduct empirical studies to investigate the effectiveness of their own GTAs' PD programme. For example, the research by Alicea-Muñoz et al. (2018) indicates that their programme which integrates pedagogy, subject content and PD strategies contributes to GTAs' self-confidence and teaching abilities. Others pay close attention to different ways for advancing GTAs' PD (e.g., Sadera et al., 2024). Popular strategies encompass practicing reflective practice (e.g., Gallego, 2014), engaging with teaching observation (e.g., Campbell et al., 2021), conducting action research (e.g., McDonough, 2006), and leveraging the power of peer (e.g., peer mentoring, see Anders et al., 2023; peer facilitation in training, e.g., Bale & Moran, 2020).

Peer (dialogue) in GTA's professional development

According to Jonnalagadda et al. (2022), a lack of training of GTAs can adversely affect organizational effectiveness and individual performance. Conventionally training sessions, consisting mainly of workshops on general guidelines, are argued to be insufficient for supporting GTAs' role in HE (Di Benedetti, 2023). Maximizing the power

of peers in GTAs' PD can be an innovative way to contribute to the training of GTAs. As mentioned in the previous section, the role of peers has been recognized in promoting GTAs' PD. Studies have indicated various benefits associated with involving peers in GTAs' PD. Anders et al. (2023) conclude that a human-centered design for inclusive peer mentoring contributes to a collective sharing and learning experience and GTAs' sustained motivation and confidence in handling challenges. Similarly, in another designed program of GTAs embedding peer elements (Bale & Moran, 2020), it is found that peer facilitation of GTA training enables ongoing pedagogical discussions beyond the training program, and higher quality of learning experience for new GTAs. Additionally, the empirical study by Di Benedetti (2023) shows that GTAs can develop their skills of reflective practice and student-centered teaching by engaging in peer teaching and self-reflection. Similarly, through a literature survey, Howe (2010) concludes that peer dialogue, which involves exchanging opinions in support of shared objectives, has value for one's cognitive development.

To date, no systematic study has yet been done to investigate how peer dialogue influences GTAs' PD. This study intends to address this gap by exploring the benefits of different types of peer dialogues that two senior GTAs from Applied Linguistics at Warwick have experienced.

Methodology

This study uses data from two narrative reflections by two senior GTAs (the first and the second author of this article) to explore the benefits of peer dialogues for GTAs' PD. The reason why narratives are used is that through narrative inquiry, researchers can gain knowledge and make sense of life from storytellers' viewpoints (Bakhuizen, 2019, as cited in Zhuo, 2024).

For the collection of the two narrative reflections, first, the two researchers discussed with each other the various types of peer dialogues they had engaged in since the beginning of their GTA work. Figure 1 shows how the two researchers visualized all the possible aspects of peer dialogues for GTAs in Applied Linguistics (See Footnote 1 for

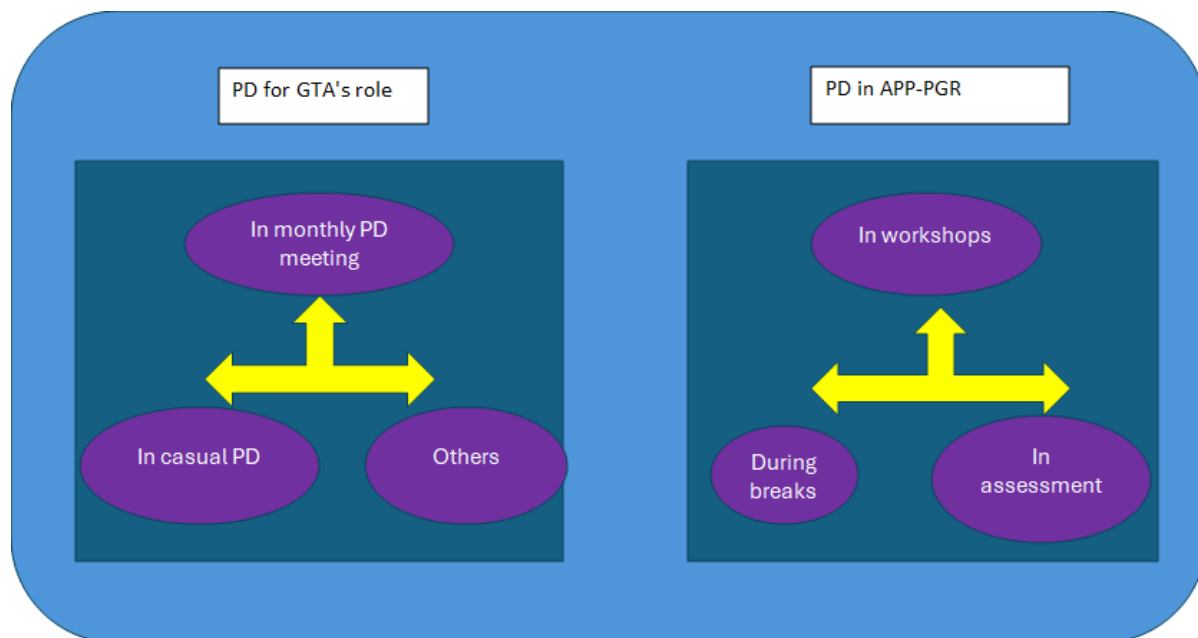
more information about APP-PGR ¹programme at Warwick). Then, according to Figure 1, the two researchers went separately to write the story of their peer dialogue experiences. It is worth noting that Figure 1 acted more as the prompt for the two researchers to consider various peer dialogues, instead of a rigid roadmap to follow. In other words, the two researchers chose the aspects that they intended to elaborate on, which might or might not include all areas in Figure 1. For easier references, the researchers highlighted the specific areas in bold in their story.

Regarding data analysis, when the two reflections were finished, the two researchers adopted Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to generate codes and produce themes on the benefits of peer dialogue for GTAs. This step was also conducted independently without consultation with each other. Then, the two researchers sat down together to compare their codes and themes. Finally, through discussion and negotiation, the two researchers agreed on the final codes and themes for this study. The following section presents the two narrative reflections: Meifang's story and Yanyan's story.

Figure 1

Visualising the possible aspects of peer dialogues for GTAs

¹ APP PGR stands for Academic and Professional Pathway for Postgraduate Researchers who Teach. This professional programme, offered by Warwick Academic Development centre to those having teaching roles alongside PhD/postdoctoral/early careers research commitments, is externally accredited by Advance HE and leads to a recognised Higher Education teaching status. See more information here: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academic-development/coursesandpathways/apppgr



Two narratives

Meifang's story

For my role as a GTA, I benefited from communicating with senior GTAs who worked/were working for the same module before me. In our **informal peer dialogue**, they shared with me advice on catering to the diverse learners, using innovative approaches to enhancing students' participation during the seminar and supporting students to explore the connections between the knowledge and application in their future teaching context. Thanks to these helpful dialogues, I felt much less anxious for my first debut as a seminar facilitator.

For more general questions regarding my role as a GTA, I find answers from **the monthly peer dialogue meeting**. These peer dialogue meetings created a safe environment for us to share our vulnerabilities and a wonderful platform for us to support each other's growth as a GTA. I remember clearly that in one session, some GTAs mentioned that they had spent much longer than they were paid for marking. Most GTAs confessed that they had the same issue with the first few markings. From this, I realized that some issues were common problems for every GTA, due to unfamiliarity with the work. Instead of doubting our ability as GTAs, we should have

more patience with ourselves and allow ourselves time to develop. I felt I got validation from these peer dialogues. As I grew more experienced, I saw myself transforming from an advice seeker to an advice giver in these peer dialogues. As Zhu and Carless (2018) point out, peer feedback is a dialogic process whereby both the receiver and the provider could gain some benefits. Thanks to these peer dialogue meetings, I also felt that I was not alone, and we were all part of a community.

When doing the APP-PGR program, I had the chance to communicate with peer GTAs from other disciplines. I particularly liked the dialogues about our teaching philosophy and signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005) **in the workshops**. Through the discussion, I understood that teaching philosophy can vary from person to person, but the fundamental professional values are expected to be shared. Additionally, I was inspired to ponder how a typical pedagogy outside my field can be used in my area. For example, case study, which is a signature pedagogy for Law is rarely used in teaching in Applied Linguistics. How might it be if we use a case study for language teacher education in our department? This could be a fascinating and effective unexplored territory for our discipline.

Peer dialogue, required as part of the summative **assessment** by the program, enabled me to reflect and have a deeper understanding of my teaching philosophy and how it affected the way I taught. The significance of reflective practice for teachers' PD has long been emphasized in literature (Schön, 1983). Through this discussion and reflection, I realized that my seminars were future-oriented, prioritizing assisting students in transforming the declarative knowledge they gained from lectures into functioning knowledge for the students to think about its connection to their future professional practice (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In addition, this peer dialogue also enabled me to consider my weaknesses in teaching and how I could improve it.

Thanks to peer dialogues, I have now grown more confident in my role as a GTA and gained a sense of achievement as a GTA.

Yanyan's story

My journey as a Senior GTA began in September 2022. This marked a significant shift from being solely a PhD student to balancing the roles of a PhD candidate and a Postgraduate Research (PGR) teacher.

The APP PGR course proved invaluable in helping me manage the complexities of my intersecting identities - my Chinese female identity, my role as a PhD researcher, and my emerging identity as a teacher. **During a session on Teacher Role and Identity**, I recounted a challenging experience from my first seminar to my peers. A senior male student, a native English speaker with substantial teaching experience, persistently contradicted my points on classroom exercises with his wrong ideas, which undermined my confidence. This incident highlighted the cultural and professional conflicts I faced as a non-native English-speaking female teacher from China. I struggled with doubts about my legitimacy as a 'real teacher' (Winstone & Moore, 2017). However, with support from peers and mentors, I learned to address these conflicts by affirming my expertise as a researcher while acknowledging my growth as a new teacher. I concentrated on improving classroom management for mixed-aged master's students and sought advice on handling classroom disruptions, gradually building my confidence and refining my teaching and research skills.

Another pivotal moment occurred **during an online chat with a PhD colleague** regarding activity design. As a new teacher, I found it challenging to create engaging activities for a complex and technical course. I discussed my concerns with an experienced seminar tutor, who suggested that the students' disengagement might stem from not seeing the relevance of the course to their future careers. She advised designing activities that linked course content to their future teaching roles. Her suggestion to incorporate evidence from my PhD research into a group activity proved transformative. I designed a group discussion and presentation activity based on my research on classroom interaction, demonstrating how course content could analyse classroom dynamics and enhance teaching practices. This evidence-based approach not only boosted student participation and engagement but also encouraged them to

integrate an interactional perspective into their teaching reflections and group work designs (Perry & Smart, 2007).

Conversations with fellow dissertation supervisors were also crucial when I took on the role of master's dissertation supervisor in April 2023. **In a peer dialogue in July 2023**, I voiced concerns about students delaying their dissertation drafts, which might force me to work on weekends to review their submissions before the supervision deadline. This situation caused significant pressure and disrupted my schedule. My peers shared similar concerns but stressed the importance of maintaining a work-study-life balance. They reminded me that as GTAs, teaching is just one part of our responsibilities. We should work within our allocated hours to avoid harming our physical and mental well-being. Their advice underscored the importance of work-study-life balance, leading me to adopt a healthier work style that prioritised both my wellness and efficiency.

Reflecting on these peer dialogues, I recognise how crucial peer support has been to my PD as a GTA. As I continue in this role, I am better equipped to manage the demands of academia and teaching. I deeply appreciate the guidance from my colleagues, which has helped me grow into a more capable and resilient teacher.

Analysis and discussion

Thematic analysis of the two narratives reveals five key benefits of peer dialogue for GTA, including promoting professional growth, establishing professional identity, enhancing overall wellbeing, constructing interdisciplinary understanding and strengthening a sense of PGR teaching community.

Promoting professional growth

Both authors expressed appreciation for peer dialogue as an effective tool for enhancing PD in teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. This was in line with most existing studies on the peer power (e.g., Anders et al., 2023; Di Benedetti, 2023). Meifang particularly valued the advice she received on customising her teaching

methods for culturally diverse learner groups, while Yanyan found inspiration in her peer's suggestions for incorporating research evidence from her PhD project into group activity designs. Moreover, both narratives emphasise the harvest of elevated understanding of evidence-based teaching from peer dialogue, an indication of peer dialogue contributing to enhanced cognition (Howe, 2010). This shows that peer dialogue can guide GTAs in fostering student engagement, supporting students' application of knowledge to real-world scenarios and adopting evidence-informed approaches. This aligns with the findings of Bale and Moran (2020) who highlight the role of peer facilitation in promoting pedagogical discussions and improving teaching practices among GTAs. Furthermore, Alicea-Muñoz et al. (2018) emphasise the value of integrating pedagogical knowledge with practical experience, which resonates with the experience shared by Yanyan in incorporating research into teaching practices. This further illustrates that peer dialogue can cultivate GTAs' professional values of respecting individual and diverse student groups, promoting engagement of and equal access to all learners, and using scientific research and alike evidence-informed approaches outlined in UK Professional Standards Framework 2023 (PSF2023) (hereafter UKPSF2023) (Advance HE, 2023).

Meanwhile, it also helps GTAs in pursuing better professional practices of learning activity and programme design and providing support to guide learners emphasised in UKPSF2023. Consistent with the advocate for adding peer elements in GTAs' PD in Bale and Moran (2020) and Di Benedetti (2023), the analysis displays the benefits of embedding the peer elements in such professional dialoguing activities in spurring GTAs' PD. Additionally, this discover also extends Howe's (2010) discussion on peer dialogue to the context of teacher education and training and offers empirical evidence on its function in boosting GTAs' professional growth in HE sector.

Establishing professional identity

Existing studies have emphasized that GTAs frequently juggle multiple roles as students, teachers, and researchers (e.g., Bale & Anderson, 2024). The act of balancing these roles can trigger identity conflicts and challenges. This study reveals that

engaging in peer dialogue can be vital for resolving these issues and supporting their development from novice to experienced teachers.

Firstly, peer dialogue was instrumental in helping GTAs navigate the conflicts tied to their cultural, gender, professional, and personal identities. It facilitated Yanyan's gradual recognition of her research strengths and illuminated areas for growth as a new teacher. This is consistent with Slack and Pownall's (2023) findings on how peer interaction can help GTAs navigate complex identity intersections and foster professional self-awareness. International GTAs, in particular, face unique challenges, such as those highlighted by Jonnalagadda et al. (2022), which include language barriers and cultural differences. Peer dialogue provides a space for addressing these barriers, allowing GTAs to gradually adapt to the teaching context.

Meanwhile, a lack of teaching experience can present challenges for GTAs in shaping their professional identity and pedagogical practices. However, through peer dialogue, Meifang evolved from a novice GTA, seeking advice from her seniors, into an experienced teacher who now offers guidance to new GTAs. This progression highlights how peer dialogue can significantly facilitate the transformation from novice to seasoned tutor, demonstrating substantial PD in teaching expertise and understanding of institutional norms. This echoes the findings of Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko (2018), who argue that peer-based feedback helps develop teaching confidence, thereby accelerating the shift from novice to expert within the teaching role.

Enhancing overall wellbeing

Previous studies on how peer dialogue can contribute to GTAs' wellbeing mainly focus on GTAs' confidence in teaching. This study indicates that peer dialogues offer a safe space where they can openly share their concerns and difficulties, thereby obtaining crucial emotional support and improving their overall wellbeing.

Balancing multiple commitments is a major challenge for GTAs, especially given their intersecting identities. The multiple responsibilities of GTAs can significantly impact their physical and mental wellbeing. As Park and Ramos (2002) explain, GTAs often feel like

“donkeys in the department” (p.47) because of the heavy workloads, which can lead to immense stress. Peer dialogue is crucial in helping them manage this pressure. For instance, Yanyan found relief and support after discussing her struggles with excessive working hours with fellow dissertation supervisors who understood and reciprocated her difficulties. This mirrors Musgrove et al.’s (2021) observation that peer support plays a critical role in alleviating job-related stress among new teachers, creating an adaptive coping mechanism that improves emotional well-being. This illustrates the critical role of peer dialogue in encouraging healthier work habits and improving GTAs’ overall wellbeing.

Moreover, new teachers, particularly GTAs with intersecting identities, busy schedules, and limited experience, often face a range of negative emotions. Initially, Meifang experienced self-doubt and anxiety due to her unfamiliarity with the role and limited knowledge of HE pedagogy. Similarly, Yanyan struggled with waning confidence in the face of classroom disruption. Their experiences of feeling positive after peer dialogue demonstrate its crucial role in providing emotional support. This shows that peer dialogue serves as an adaptive coping strategy that helps GTAs navigate negative emotions (Musgrove et al., 2021), while also boosting their confidence, efficiency, and overall job satisfaction. This supports the findings of Anders et al. (2023) who argue that peer mentoring programmes significantly contribute to emotional well-being, motivation, and teaching effectiveness, particularly for GTAs managing multiple roles.

Constructing interdisciplinary understanding

In current literature, GTAs’ interdisciplinary understanding mainly results from an interdisciplinary GTA training program. For example, an empirical study by Mutambuki and Schwartz (2018) indicates that a GTA learning community consisting of Chemistry and Biology disciplines is essential for enabling GTAs to receive constructive feedback and discover ways to enhance their classroom practices. This study contributes to the current literature by revealing that casual conversations with peers from other disciplines also have a role in enhancing GTAs’ recognition of disciplinary boundaries within pedagogical practices and gradually foster their interdisciplinary understanding of

HE pedagogy. In Meifang's narrative, she noted that her conversation with a Law GTA prompted her to consider whether the unique approach to case studies in law could be adapted for exploring language teacher education in applied linguistics. This type of cross-disciplinary interaction is also encouraged by UKPSF2023, which promotes collaborations that transcend traditional academic silos. Such interdisciplinary dialogues can lead to innovative teaching practices that are both contextually aware and creatively adaptive across fields.

Strengthening a sense of PGR teaching community

PGR teaching community is relatively less researched in current literature, most of which seem to be embedded into GTA training programs. However, having a training program does not guarantee GTAs can have a sense of belonging. Morris (2021) and White and Nonnamaker (2008) have proved the importance of nurturing a strong sense of belonging within a community for postgraduate students and GTAs, which contributes to better academic and personal outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to explore how GTAs can gain a sense of belonging in the PGR teaching community. This study reveals peer dialogue can have such a positive effect. Peer dialogue is a crucial environment where GTAs can build alliances and camaraderie, significantly enhancing their positive feelings about their teaching roles. Meifang, for example, felt validated and supported within the GTA community, which strengthened her confidence to continue her work after doing peer dialogues. The sense of community fostered by peer dialogue also corresponds to the collective learning experience noted by Anders et al. (2023), which helps sustain motivation and a shared sense of purpose among GTAs.

Implications

This section outlines the implications of the findings from the two narratives to better support GTAs' PD in a wider context, particularly in HE in the UK. Based on the analysis and discussion of findings above, this study put forward the following three key suggestions regarding how we can harness the benefits of peer dialogue in GTAs' PD. These three key suggestions include: extending the framework for GTAs' PD,

enhancing GTAs' awareness of peer power and situating peer-dialogue in proper GTA communities.

First, to enable a sustainable and comprehensive GTAs' PD, it is essential that current professional standards frameworks ((in the UK context, it would be UKPFS), for teaching and learning in higher education be extended, to include the dimensions of establishing professional identity and taking care of overall well-being.

Without a firm acknowledgement of one's GTA identity, GTAs are more likely to question themselves and doubt their ability in performing their tasks when being confronted by students of more senior teaching experience (as shown in Yanyan's story). Likewise, without paying attention to one's overall wellbeing, GTAs may struggle with their work and constantly experience negative emotions. Although some recommendations to enhance GTAs' wellbeing have been put forward in literature (e.g. the five recommendations by Slack & Pownall, 2023). Including overall wellbeing as one of the official descriptors can have a game-changing effect for GTAs' sustainable PD.

Second, to support GTAs' PD in difficult contexts, it is significant that GTAs develop their awareness of peer power in their PD, particularly taking peer dialogue as self-regulated PD opportunities and as a valuable channel for exploring teaching innovations by drawing upon interdisciplinary insights.

There is no lack of literature discussing the benefits of involving peers in GTA training. For example, the empirical study by Bale and Moran (2020) concludes that GTA can benefit professionally from being taught by a peer, gaining transferrable skills, which can be used in other professional settings. Similarly, the study by Campbell (2021) reveals that peers can build GTAs' teacher identity, confidence and self-efficacy through peer teaching observation. This study adds to this literature by proposing peer dialogue as a way for sustaining and self-regulating GTAs' PD. This is particularly relevant in contexts where institutional support for GTAs is not sufficient or ideal. Particularly, when peer dialogues happen with GTA peers from other disciplines, GTAs can explore opportunities for teaching innovations based on their communications with GTA peers,

as this study indicates. Practices in this regard will extend the finding by Mutambuki and Schwartz (2018), who explore the effect of a PD programme with interdisciplinary design.

Third, to ensure the benefits of peer dialogue in supporting GTAs' PD, it is crucial that peer dialogue be situated in a safe, welcoming and open community. In such an environment, GTAs have a higher chance to maximise their gains from peer dialogues in either casual or formal peer dialogues, as indicated by the two narratives in this article. GTA teaching community can be one of these communities where doctoral students who teach develop their sense of belonging. As Morries (202) argues, a sense of belonging to academia can impact doctoral researchers' academic journeys immensely. An empirical study by White and Nonnamaker (2008) suggests that doctoral students experience multiple communities of influence. It is therefore safe to infer that without a sense of belonging in the GTA community, GTAs can also feel disengaged and less likely to share their inner voices, which will inevitably reduce their chances of harnessing the benefits of conducting peer dialogues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that peer dialogue has multiple benefits for GTAs' PD. These benefits include enhancing GTA's professional growth, overall wellbeing, established professional identity, interdisciplinary understanding, and sense of belonging. By providing a platform for GTAs to share experiences, receive feedback, and explore interdisciplinary insights, peer dialogue encourages reflective practice and innovative teaching strategies. This study contributes new insights into the need to extend existing PD frameworks to incorporate dimensions of identity formation and overall wellbeing, which ensures GTAs can thrive in their multifaceted roles. Moreover, this study illuminates that promoting awareness of peer dialogue as a self-regulated opportunity for development is essential, particularly in contexts with limited institutional support. Finally, this study also makes it evident that cultivating safe and welcoming peer communities is vital for maximizing the benefits of peer dialogue, ultimately enhancing GTAs' confidence, competence, and commitment to their teaching roles in

higher education. These findings offer practical strategies for institutions aiming to better support GTAs' growth and development.

Having said that, the study has several limitations. This study has a small sample size and a narrow disciplinary focus. Only two instances of engaging in peer dialogue drawn from two GTAs in Applied Linguistics are analyzed. This limited sample constrains the generalisability of the findings, as the perspectives of GTAs from other disciplines are not included. It is never the aim of this study to overgeneralize the benefits of peer dialogue, but it hopes to offer a springboard for further exploration of peer dialogue in other disciplines. Broader insights from other disciplines are encouraged to validate and expand these claims in future research. A final limitation concerns the ethical issues inherent in researchers generating and analyzing data about themselves. Drawing on autoethnographic insights, this self-reflexive approach can risk bias, where the researchers' interpretations of themselves in relation to peer dialogue are influenced by their personal experiences, potentially affecting objectivity and credibility. To minimize this disadvantage resulting from using autoethnographic data, the two authors worked together during the analyzing stage where they shared their stories, compared with each other's data coding, and determined the salient themes from the pooled data. Like the collaborative efforts in addressing ethical issues in collaborative autoethnography (Lapadat, 2017), the two authors tried their best to tackle what might stand out as ethical challenges in during this collaborative reflection. However, it is anticipated future research on GTAs' PD that deals with the self can explore more in detail how to navigate this ethical issue.

Looking forward, as one of the first few studies looking into peer dialogue in GTA PD, this study sets a foundation for further research into the specific mechanisms through which peer dialogue impacts GTAs' PD. Future studies should explore how different types of peer dialogues and institutional contexts influence their effectiveness. By addressing these areas, educational institutions can refine their support strategies to better meet the evolving needs of GTAs, ultimately enhancing their contributions to higher education.

Ethical claim

This study only used the data from the two authors and received the full consent from the two authors in using the data. There is no conflict of interests.

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