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Pathology of Language Teaching Ineffectiveness: A Case Study Exposing Teacher Cognition Stepwise

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ABSTRACT

The variability of the professional knowledge and skills required for diverse pedagogical contexts makes second language teaching effectiveness a complicated issue and teaching ineffectiveness a common concern among EFL practitioners. Notwithstanding the scholarly consensus on this matter, the roots of teaching ineffectiveness have remained contentious. Hence, we conducted a case study deploying collaborative critical reflection (CCR) to diagnose the possible roots of the participants' teaching ineffectiveness using Saphier, Haley-Speca, and Gower's (2018) skillful teacher framework. To this end, two EFL teachers were selected as the participants of the study and were guided to utilize their selves, and colleagues as professional development (PD) resources. Video-recorded classroom observations guided the subsequent reflections and a focus group collaborative discussion. Then using a retrospective lesson- objective interview and a retrospective lesson plan, we elicited the teachers' thinking types while planning. The analysis of multiple sources of data through multiple methods and by multiple investigators revealed teachers' erroneous and over self-evaluation, teachers' non-reflective practice, faulty thinking for lesson planning, and the discrepancy between their intentions and actions as the possible roots of the observed teaching infectiveness. The findings of this pathology, shedding light on the professional development path, might benefit EFL theoreticians, teacher educators, and teaching practitioners.

Keywords: Instructional Objectives; Professional Development; Teacher Reflection; Teaching Ineffectiveness; Thinking for Lesson Planning

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1. Introduction

Teaching effectiveness, a key teacher attribute, plays a leading role in student learning. What effective teachers do during instructional planning and its delivery leaves a lasting impact on student achievement (Killion, 2018; Saphier et al., 2018; Stronge, 2018). We, the researchers in this study, through years of our professional experience as EFL learners, teachers, and teacher educators have realized that in the Iranian context, teacher effectiveness has often been subjectively perceived and unprofessionally evaluated by learners, teachers, and private language school managers. The misconception about teacher effectiveness and a false sense of satisfaction has minimized chances for reflection, restrained teachers' ability for collegial cooperation, and impeded professional development among experienced teachers (Borg, 2019). This, being the problem, urged us to conduct pathology of language teaching ineffectiveness in the context of a language institute in Iran on two experienced EFL teachers. Following Borg (2019), this scrutiny of the teachers' cognitive qualities contributed to a contextualized conception of their ineffectiveness.

To date, teacher effectiveness has been investigated from different perspectives (De Graaff & Housen, 2009; Harris & Duibhir, 2011; Khodadady, 2010; Khodadady & Shakhsi Dastgahian, 2015; Stronge, 2010). The studies have covered issues concerning teachers, researchers, and learners. For example, De Graaff and Housen (2009) examined teacher effectiveness and its impacts specifically in the domain of ESL instruction. Likewise, Babai Shishavan, and Sadeghi (2009) reported Iranian teachers' and learners' perceptions of effective EFL teachers. Similarly, Khodadady (2010), Harris and Duibhir (2011), and Stronge (2010) probed into the factors underlying effective teaching. Later, Stronge (2018) synthesized research on the preparatory, personal, and practical teaching dimensions into a framework of effective teaching. The concept was further explored with reference to teaching experience by Kini and Podolsky (2019). On the other hand, Griffiths and Tajeddin (2020) disseminated research characterizing effectiveness as a quality of good language teachers from three interrelated perspectives—macro perspectives (e.g., teacher cognition, and reflection), classroom perspectives (e.g., classroom management, and corrective feedback), and instructional perspectives (e.g., teaching pragmatics).

Studies from the learner viewpoint have mainly focused on the *interactive* and *postactive* phases of teaching, which by nature are more tangible compared to the *pre-active* phase that involves thinking for lesson planning (Babai Shishavan et al., 2009; Bremner, 2020). Notwithstanding the vital role of the former phases of ineffective teaching, the pivotal role of the *pre-active* phase cannot be de-emphasized. Although "teaching is much more than enacting a lesson plan" (Richards & Farrell, 2011, p. 62) and the

situatedness of teaching also demands different unplanned decisions known as “interactive decisions” (Richards & Farrell, 2011, p. 62), it is the *pre-active* thinking for lesson planning that results in a "blueprint for action" (Richards & Farrell, 2011, p. 62). However, the findings of studies investigating learners’ views on teacher effectiveness indicate their focus on features like engaging, real-life skills, immersion, rapport, and personalized attention to the students which epitomize the interactive and postactive phases of teaching (Bremner, 2020). These features are discernable without thinking about deeper cognitive processes involved in effective teaching, the deepest being thinking for lesson planning and setting instructional objectives (Saphier et al., 2018).

Among the empirical studies, the ones reporting teachers' perspectives on proper lesson planning and implementation (Babai Shishavan et al., 2009; Bremmer, 2020) are noteworthy. In these studies, effectiveness factors identified by teachers, though not noticed by the learners, included assessing homework, group activities, pedagogical knowledge, mastery of English, personality, and assessment. Evidently, these features are mostly concrete actions that obviate the need for further scrutiny of the underlying cognitive process of teacher thinking for planning effective lessons. This calls for in-depth qualitative case studies in the Iranian EFL context, addressing the sources of teacher ineffectiveness. Therefore, the present study focused on two experienced EFL teachers with reference to two PD resources: manifold guided self-reflection, and collaborative critical reflection with colleagues.

2. Literature Review

An effective language lesson is the function of skillful language teaching; however, effectiveness and skillful teaching are fuzzy concepts. Over the years, teacher effectiveness has been defined based on different criteria including teachers’ adherence to standards (Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults, 2008), mastering curriculum objectives (Acheson & Gall, 1997), and having an impact on students' achievement (Stronge, 2010). However defined and evaluated, Richards (1990a) argued that *teacher effectiveness* does not necessarily result in *successful teaching*, which leads to higher levels of learning. Another relevant notion is *skillful teaching* defined as teachers' being aware of their practice; regulating their teaching through monitoring, reflection, and revision of their practices; having clear ideas about instructional objectives, and the ways to attain them; and finally, being eager to constantly seek out help for growth in their profession (Saphier et al., 2018). Similarly, Richards (2015) attributes access to certain resources and repertoire of techniques (to deal with given curricula, learners' situations, and needs) to skillful language teachers. Therefore, skillful teaching implies the features of both teaching effectiveness and teaching success. This justifies

our adherence to Saphier et al.'s (2018) skillful teacher framework here. The framework substantially overlaps with Richard's (1990b) *Language Teaching Matrix* highlighting the three factors central to effective language teaching: "curriculum, methodology, and instructional materials" (p. VII).

Effective and skillful teaching requires certain resources among which *teachers' knowledge base* is noteworthy and can be obtained through academic study and practical experience (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Roberts (1998) classified teacher knowledge into six different types, namely *content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, curricular knowledge, contextual knowledge,* and *process knowledge*. Likewise, Richards (1998) presented six domains of language teaching knowledge base including *theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning, and decision-making skills,* as well as *contextual knowledge.* Later in 2015, Richards introduced three aspects of professional ELT knowledge, also known a content knowledge: *disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge,* and *technological pedagogical content knowledge*. The comparison of Richards' taxonomies reveals the encompassing nature of content knowledge, including all other types of teacher knowledge but *communication skills* and *contextual knowledge.*

Language teachers' pedagogical content knowledge embodies *reflective teaching* and *curriculum knowledge* (Richards, 2015). Noticeably, curriculum knowledge has also been underscored in the skillful teacher framework as "the anchor and starting point of planning daily lessons" (Saphier et al., 2018, p. 441) providing a general scheme for effective instruction. Further elaboration of curriculum knowledge within the framework of skillful teacher subsumes "Curriculum Design, Objectives, Planning, Differentiated Instruction, Assessment, and Overarching Objectives" (Saphier et al., 2018, p.12). Based on this framework, there must be a strong link among the outcomes of the instruction, general course aims, lesson objectives, and class activities; otherwise, the lesson will not be very effective. Therefore, efficient instruction by skillful teachers demands correspondence among teachers' *stated, lived,* and *worthy objectives*. This partly emerges from teachers' reflectivity, a facet of their pedagogical content knowledge, defined as "the teacher's thinking about what happens in classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims" (Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981, as cited in Bailey, 2012, p. 23). Teacher thinking or what Schön (1983) termed as teacher reflection has been further categorized into three types, i.e., reflection-*in*-action happening while teaching, reflection-*on*-action, before or after the lesson, during lesson planning and reviewing (Zeichner & Liston, 2014), and proactive reflection-*for*-action. Critical and reflective review of teaching practices requires

teachers' involvement in *self-observation, peer observation, discussion groups,* and *collaborative critical reflection* (Richards & Farrell, 2011) each of which can enhance teachers' knowledge base and effectiveness.

Effective and skilled reflection, aiming to attain instructional objectives, requires different types of thinking for lesson planning which has been graphically presented in five concentric circles by Saphier et al. (2018). The scheme includes *coverage thinking, activities thinking, involvement thinking, mastery objectives,* and *thinking skill objectives*. The first three thinking types (the means) respectively provide the teacher with a blueprint embodying the details of the teaching/ learning process, alternative options, anticipated problems, and instructional resources. The next two types of thinking (the ends), being the higher-order thinking types, give teachers a wider perspective enabling them to see the final destination of their teaching journeys. Not surprisingly, the thinking types for lesson planning identified by Saphier et al., in general education correspond with the steps for lesson planning by Purgason's (2014), and cognitive dimensions of lesson planning presented by Richards (2015). Similarly, Scrivener's (2011) thinking for *procedure aims* embodies the three inner circles while *achievement aims* represent the two outer circles in Saphier et al.'s scheme.

The importance of thinking about objectives has been underlined as the first component of the curriculum and the initial stage in decision making for lesson planning (Pergamon, 2014; Stern, 1983). "Fuzzy thinking about objectives is the root of an enormous number of teaching and learning shortfalls in our schools" (Saphier et al., 2018, p. 441).

This literature review hopefully covered the potential sources of teacher ineffectiveness. This study was a small-scale enterprise to identify sources of ineffectiveness in our case. Therefore, the following research question was formulated. What are the sources of teaching ineffectiveness in the two experienced Iranian EFL teachers— a TEFL- vs. a non-TEFL-graduate?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Along with a senior teacher, one of us (the researchers), from 15 observed teachers, two full-time female EFL teachers were selected from a private language institute in Karaj, Iran as the main participants. They were in their thirties and had taught learners ranging from beginner to advanced level of English proficiency for over five years: Fariba (pseudonym), a bachelor's degree holder in English Translation, and Sara (pseudonym) having a master's degree in TEFL. They were selected for their willingness to develop professionally which distinguished them among the 15 teachers

whose practices were video recorded. This could add to the naturalness of the collected data.

For practicality concerns, Fariba's advanced level general English class was videotaped for this study. There were 15 adult students (3 males and 13 females) aged between 15 and 26. They were taught *Summit 2B* (Saslow & Ascher, 2012) as the major coursebook. As for Sara, her Intermediate class was selected which comprised 15 female students, aged between 15 and 30. Sara taught *Top Notch 2* (Saslow & Ascher, 2011) as the main instructional material.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

To investigate the research question, the following instruments were deployed:

3.2.1. Classroom Observation

Five sessions, comprising the whole lessons completed in a unit of the coursebook, were selected. Each session was scheduled for 105 minutes. To minimize the possible disturbance caused by camcording, the same research assistant was assigned to regularly attend the class sessions.

3.2.2. Reflective Teaching-Quality Questionnaire (RTQQ)

The inventory of ELT reflection developed by Akbari et al. (2010) was adopted. It comprises 29 items on a five-point Likert-scale checking six components of second language teacher reflection: *practical, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, critical,* and *moral.*

3.2.3. Lesson Observation Form (LOF)

For focused lesson observation, a form (Richards, 2015) was adopted. The form, developed by Casa Thomas Jefferson Center, presents nine facets of *language teaching effectiveness* on a five-point scale ranging from Fully (F) to Most of the time (M), Partially (P), No, and Not applicable (NA). The respondents were required to decide the degree of correspondence between their teaching practice and the forty items representing (a) planning, (b) instructing, (c) learning, (d) assessing, (e) interpersonal dynamics, (f) language, content, culture, and digital identity, (g) attentiveness to institutional regulations, (h) the learners' performance and attitude in class, and (i) commitment to professionalism.

3.2.4. Retrospective Learner-Reflection Written Interview

The interview designed by the researchers required the students to identify camera effects on them and their teacher (See Appendix A).

3.2.5. Retrospective Teacher-reflection Written Interview

This interview included 10 items addressing the teachers' feelings towards the existence of the camera and its possible effects on their practices. Moreover, it elicited their attitudes towards video recordings for evaluating their teaching effectiveness (See Appendix B).

3.2.6. Critical Peer-Reflective Discussion

A focus group discussion between the teachers was arranged. The proceedings, negotiated by the researchers, directed the discussion towards the disclosure of their teaching effectiveness concerns. Meanwhile, each partner was required to contribute three main strengths and three major weaknesses derived from the observation of their own and partner's videotaped classes.

3.2.7. Retrospective Lesson-Objective-Elicitation Written Interview

Following Saphier et al.'s (2018) guidelines for conducting a content-focused planning conference, we devised a set of 12 questions to elicit each teachers' thinking during lesson planning (See Appendix C). These questions were meant to address the content or skill(s) covered in their lesson.

3.2.8. Lesson Plan Template

The template adopted from (Richards, 2015) incorporates three main sections. The first covers preliminary information including lesson duration and aims. The second addresses lesson phases (opening, instruction, closure, and follow-up). The last section concerns self-evaluation and follow-up comments.

3.3. Procedure

This qualitative case study investigated the sources of teaching ineffectiveness exploring incongruities between the practitioners' and professionals' evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The theoretical underpinning of the study was derived from Richards' view of effective teaching represented in his *Language Teaching Matrix* (1990b) and Saphier et al.'s (2018) *The Skillful Teacher* framework originally developed for general education which has considerable overlaps with the facets of the effective EFL teaching matrix. To increase the credibility of the study, we tried triangulation of *multiple sources* of data and *multiple investigators.* We also deployed *multiple method* triangulation through interviews, observations, and documents. To raise the participant teachers' self-awareness of their effectiveness, we were guided by a model of disciplined collaboration provided by Dunne and Toland (2012) comprising six steps of critical feedback. Then we added three steps to adapt it to the purpose of this study and triangulated the available sources of feedback i.e., the teacher's

self, colleagues', and students' feedback. Having gained the teachers' permission, we initiated data collection with the video recording of 15 EFL teachers' practices. Then two of the teachers were selected as the participants. Later, a five-session set of each teacher's videotaped classes was selected. Subsequently, the teachers were given a written interview concerning possible affective changes and strategic variations to their teaching due to the presence of the camera. The interview also elicited the teachers' general attitudes to reflection on action (Schön, 1983) and self-evaluation. Meanwhile, a similar written interview was given to their students to triangulate thAfterwardfterwards, the teachers were given a teacher reflectivity inventory (Akbari et al., 2010). The video recordings were also shared with the teachers to be reflected upon along with a teaching effectiveness form (Richards, 2015) guiding the teachers' critical observation of their own and peer's videos. Next, they filled a teaching effectiveness form for each session of their video-recorded classes (5 forms altogether). However, while evaluating their peer's performance, they were free to choose as many sessions and to observe as many times to detect three strong and three weak points. Meanwhile, the researchers observed the video recordings, filled one teaching effectiveness form for each session, and made evaluative notes. Later, a collaborative peer consultation session, the proceedings of which were reported, was held. The report incorporated the issues the teachers had discussed and the outcome. The teachers' stated concerns guided us towards further data collection through a retrospective *lesson objective elicitation written interview*. Later, a retrospective lesson plan targeting their thinking for lesson planning was elicited. Finally, the data were analyzed. The possible discrepancy between the teachers' stated intention and action, their faulty self-evaluation, the degree of their reflectivity, and the effectiveness clarified through their responses shed light on our pathology.

For practicality considerations, we delimited the study into three facets of teaching effectiveness, namely, *planning, instructing*, and *learning*. The *planning* facet as presented in the first section of the questionnaire was compared with the teachers' recorded practices, their thinking for lesson planning which was revealed through their retroactive lesson objective written interview, and their retroactive lesson plan. The *instructing* facet in the second section was compared with their recorded practices to investigate the discrepancies in terms of lesson objectives. Finally, the *learning* facet in the third section was compared with the teachers' recorded practices to investigate the discrepancies in the teaching outcome.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this stepwise inquiry into teacher cognition, we jointly explored the qualitative data collected from multiple sources and methods through

repeated data reviewing, and reading which yielded five themes that were sequentially more focused in two successive rounds of analysis. In the first round, to enhance the dependability of the data, we juxtaposed the teachers' and learners' interview responses concerning the camera effect. During the initial coding, we spotted the facets of teaching effectiveness in the observational data. The selection of the LOF facets to be focused on was guided by the teachers' self-stated concerns and our observations. Next, we juxtaposed the data from the LOFs with the RTQQs looking for the degree of alignment between the teachers' practices and teaching reflectivity. The insights gained at this stage indicated their non-reflective practice and their erroneous self-evaluation. This guided us towards further triangulation of the data sources using Saphier et al.'s (2018) framework of the skillful teacher which guided our second round of coding and analysis of the retrospective lesson plan and interviews disclosing the discrepancies between teachers' intention and action and clarified their over-self-evaluation as sources of ineffectiveness. Besides, the stronger patterns emerging from the rereading of the data indicated the teachers' cognitive reasoning skills, more specifically, their thinking types for lesson planning as a major root of their misidentification of lesson objectives and consequently ineffective teaching.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The results of the analysis revealed the cognitive processes involved in the participant teachers' lesson planning. A detailed account of the results is reported below. However, to maintain the integrality of this qualitative inquiry, the results and discussion are tightly merged and cannot be functionally dismantled.

4.2. Discussion

Effective language teachers are expected to be mindful practitioners aware of their cognitive processes, beliefs, and the degree of the alignment among their thinking, beliefs, and practices, or the reasons behind their nonalignment (Borg & Sanchez, 2020). The observed discrepancies between the teachers' stated beliefs and actual practice referred to as nonalignment, could have been explained in terms of contextual constraints. Nevertheless, the context was not a restricting factor in this specific case study since the participants were teaching in the same institutional context with the same degree of freedom and curricular constraints. To analyze the data, we initially investigated teacher ineffectiveness adopting the broad perspective advocated by Richards (2015). However, data mining guided us towards deeper layers of teacher effectiveness, i.e., teacher thinking types for lesson planning representing the planning facet in the curriculum domain of the skillful

teacher framework proposed by Saphier et al. (2018). These steps were followed in our pathology of the teachers' self-stated and observed weak performances (ineffectiveness) which could have stemmed from: (a) the presence of the camera, (b) the degree of the teachers' reflectivity, (c) the type of teachers' thinking for lesson planning, and (d) the teachers' misconception about teaching effectiveness and teaching success elaborated below.

4.2.1. Problems Stemming from the Presence of the Camera

The data concerning the presence of the camera collected through retrospective written interviews served two purposes: firstly, it provided a space for initial teacher reflection. Secondly, it helped to enhance the credibility and dependability of the preliminary data.

The analysis of Sara and her students' responses revealed no deteriorating effect of the camera. The unanimous responses of the teacher and students contributed to the dependability of the findings. Fariba's responses, however, revealed that initially, her teaching was affected by the presence of the camera, which she considered normal, but "the effect was diminished as time passed". Nonetheless, her students' responses revealed inconsistency. Nearly half of the students claimed that they felt nervous and shy at first and that their feelings gradually changed, but their responses about the teacher did not support the teacher's claim. They all indicated that the teacher had maintained her usual classroom behavior.

4.2.2. Problems Emerging from the Degree of Reflectivity

The qualitative analysis of the selected data from the *reflective teaching quality questionnaire* and its cross-comparison with their *videotaped practices* revealed new points. We identified the items which could give clues about the facets of teaching effectiveness as indicated by the LOF. They mainly tapped teachers' concerns for individual learning styles, learner-centeredness, and teachers' use of resources and strategies. Having compared the blank forms, we realized that items A4 and A6 on the LOF correspond with item 13 on the RTQQ. They reflected teachers' concerns for different learning styles in their planning. This was also expressed as one of Sara's self-stated concerns, unlike Fariba. Yet, on the RTQQ, Fariba claimed that she *always* considered her students' learning styles and preferences. Her following self-evaluation, however, revealed one level drop in her rate of attention to students' learning styles which can be interpreted as what Farrell (2015) calls self-awareness achieved through self-monitoring. Besides, this comparison revealed incongruity between Fariba's self-evaluation and that of ours; we observed no remarkable sign of her attention to the students' learning styles. Yet Sara's responses to the same items confirmed her stated concern for learning styles which was further supported by the RTQQ data.

Neither we nor Sara specified any evidence for incorporating individual learning styles in her planning.

The comparison of the forms also revealed that item A6 on the LOF parallel with items 14 and 15 on the RTQQ were related to the degree of learner-centeredness in planning. Checking Fariba's responses to these items indicated her insistence on seemingly over-self-evaluation, a judgment which was not in line with ours. Concerning Faribas' practice, we unanimously selected *partially* on the scale while the data related to Sara's response on the RTQQ indicated that she *often* incorporated learner-centeredness in teaching. Our judgment of Sara's learner-centeredness corresponded with that of Sara indicating her more realistic perspective.

The comparison of the blank forms also showed that items B6 on the LOF which represents the *instructing* facet corresponds with items 23 to 28 of the RTQQ. Item B6 concerns teacher's use of resources and strategies to build on learners' reasoning, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and learner autonomy development. Comparing their responses to the identified items, we noticed Fariba's inconsistent responses to the items tapping the same construct. Her responses ranged from *sometimes* to *always*, and her self-evaluation revealed a discrepancy with that of ours on the LOF which again supported Fariba's over-self-evaluation. Sara's results, however, revealed more consistent responses ranging from *rarely* to *sometimes*. Our evaluation juxtaposed with Sara's yielded further support for her more realistic self-evaluation and self-awareness. Neither side observed signs of critical instruction in Sara's performance.

Having found no direct correspondence between the LOF and RTQQ items, we limited the analysis of the *learning* facet to the cross-comparison of our and the teachers' LOF data which revealed a considerable difference. Again, Fariba's over-self-evaluation surfaced through item C3 on the LOF about teacher talk time. Noticeably, *teacher talk time* was among Fariba's self-stated teaching weaknesses, while she evaluated herself as successful on it. Generally, our only common learning concern was encouraging target language use. Sara's self-evaluation, however, was more consistent with our judgment with only one level of over-self-evaluation. Regarding item C4 in the LOF, tapping teacher talk time, both evaluations indicated the teacher's partial success.

4.2.3. Problems Rooted in Levels of Thinking for Lesson Planning

Later, we scrutinized the teachers' retroactive lesson-objective interview designed to address the teachers' *coverage thinking* (Saphier et al., 2018). We analyzed interview questions one at a time. The first question addressed the knowledge, skill, or concept being taught. Fariba's response addressed only the knowledge disregarding the skill dimension while the

main goal in the coursebook is “explaining the benefits”, a subskill covering conversation strategies. Besides, the knowledge side that she identified as “collocations, adverbs of manner and order of modifiers”, was irrelevant to the lesson objective.

Considering the teacher's thinking type, we detected gaps in Fariba's *coverage thinking:* inattention to the *unit of work* and its *focus*. It should be explained that *Summit 1B* units cover two-page lessons each with a specific goal. Fariba had planned for three pages regardless of the logical lesson division. In the retrospective lesson plan, the teacher did not recount the lesson coverage precisely. In practice, the planned grammar point was not covered. Moreover, Fariba’s response to the second question, "Which part of this unit covers this knowledge, skill, or concept" again revealed inattention to the unit of work and its focus. She identified the conversation section to be covering the stated language knowledge facet, i.e., grammar point, irrespective of its major focus, contextualizing the speaking function, and communicative strategies.

The third interview question concerned the teaching resources used. Fariba neglected the coursebook as the main teaching resource. Her response to the third question sought to elicit evidence for her worthy objectives, an indispensable facet of coverage thinking since teachers conceptualize objectives as *stated*, *lived*, and *worthy* reflected in different layers of thinking for planning (Saphier et al., 2018). The objectives stated in the lesson plan can be identified in coverage thinking. Lived objectives actualized in activity and involvement thinking, are reflected in the classroom activities and the degree of learner involvement. Likewise, worthy objectives, derived from the curriculum, can be realized in mastery-objective thinking. Fariba’s response indicated her concern for collocations as a stated objective disregarding fluency development–a worthy objective, a major objective of teaching collocations (Woolard, 2005).

In response to the fourth question, Fariba stated partially wrong worthy objectives. Her misidentified knowledge dimension of the objectives might have been conducive to deficient mastery objective thinking, reflected in her response to the fifth question addressing the required learner background knowledge. It indicated her flawed involvement thinking which corresponded with her response to the first question but was irrelevant to the expected worthy objectives of the lesson.

The 11th question addressed what the teacher expected the students to learn. Fariba’s response revealed her stated worthy objectives with almost reasonable expectations. However, to investigate whether her stated objectives, despite the gap observed in her coverage thinking, would be

actualized as lived objectives (Saphier et al., 2018) made us further scrutinize the retrospective lesson plan and the observation records.

Sara's thinking for lesson planning, similarly, indicated an illogical division of units of work. She initiated her lesson from the middle of the first lesson in Unit Four. Besides, we noticed her inattention to the functional dimension of language knowledge. Her response to the first question concerning the knowledge, skill, or concept taught, was: "in conversation … listening to and understanding the conversation in which the grammar … is used and also reviewing the vocabulary related … to *describing a book* which they had learned". This revealed her tendency towards a focus on formS (Long, 1991) disregarding *grammaring* (Larsen-Freeman, 2003) while the coursebook deals with this dimension in the grammar booster. This represented a confused mindset in her stated and worthy objectives. She assigned communicative values to the vocabulary presented in the conversation discounting the intended communicative function of the conversation. Her response to items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 further supported her obsession with language formS. Even when faint signs of attention to function were observed, e.g., "using vocabulary to describe different types of books", they seemed detached from the main functional goal of the conversation, *recommending a book.*

Sara's stated lesson aims were symptoms of her flawed coverage thinking. Her responses to items 9 and 10 revealed her abiding limited perspective in planning for teaching and assessment. Having a negative backwash effect, this could have even more serious repercussions. Generally, Sara's interview revealed her *form-bound* coverage thinking as a major source of ineffective teaching.

4.2.4. Problems Located in Misconception about Teacher Effectiveness

To find the roots of the mismatch between practitioner action and professional expectations concerning facets of teacher effectiveness, we further mined the data. Using a lesson plan template, we elicited the retrospective lesson plans to identify the discrepancies between their thinking types, revealed in their *lesson plans*, and those realized in their practice.

We further scrutinized Fariba's lesson plan and obtained similar results. The first section of the template, eliciting coverage thinking, required lesson type identification. Fariba identified the lesson type as "vocabulary" detached from the speaking skill it was designed to serve. This revealed her flawed coverage thinking. Likewise, her plan on *Lesson aims* and *materials used*, which reflect the teacher's coverage thinking, reflected her narrow perspective expressing only one linguistic dimension (vocabulary) disregarding the communicative goals. Moreover, while planning for materials to be used, she ignored the main coursebook. Besides, the section

concerning *anticipated problems* revealed her confusion about the lesson aims and coverage. That is, her anticipated problems seemed irrelevant to the designed lesson aims. Probably, a source of Fariba's weak performance was her disintegrated coverage thinking.

Viewing activity thinking as a broader domain in the hierarchy of teacher's thinking, we focused on the *lesson procedures* section of the template, eliciting Fariba's decisions about what the learner activities during the lesson opening, instruction, and closure. Fariba's plan for the lesson procedures depicted traces of activity thinking; however, it seemed not to be goal-oriented. Consequently, her plans kept the students busy with little concern for the expected learning outcomes. As Saphier et al. (2018) put it:

> … if the focus rests on activities alone—students being busy—without examining the activities in light of an important learning outcome or weighing the decision about what activities students will do in terms of how well each activity supports the achievement of an intended lesson objective … it is possible that [the] activity is not teaching what should be taught or that the activity can be completed without students learning anything (p. 490).

Fariba's defective activity thinking was supported by her expressed concern about "insufficient activities". Fariba's goal-free activity thinking and her faulty time allotment (10 minutes for *instruction* but 20 minutes for lesson *closure*) revealed her misconception about activity thinking, i.e., confusing *insufficient* with *inefficient* activities.

Fariba's lesson plan showed traces of involvement thinking in the *groupings* section and *lesson procedures* of *what the teacher will do*. The opening section embodied defective involvement thinking. Fariba, whose coverage thinking did not capture the communicative goal of the lesson, was not expected to do the corresponding activity or involvement thinking. Despite the central role of the conversation snapshot contextualizing the conversation strategies and speaking goal of the lesson, Fariba had not stated any plans for it, which showed the absence of involvement thinking. This also evidenced her inefficient use of time. Her haphazard activity decisions led to unequal student involvement; therefore, her whole lesson was jeopardized. Further evidence was found in the *follow-up* stage of the lesson plan where she had assigned the learners supplementary worksheets irrelevant to the instructional objectives.

The last section, *self-evaluation, and comments after the lesson* opened space for reviewing the lesson and assessing its effectiveness (Richards, 2015). Fariba's self-evaluation started with the phrase "the worst teaching I have ever had", which supported our finding. She identified her weakness as too much teacher talk and insufficient learner output. This

indicated traces of involvement thinking in retrospection which can promise future changes in Fariba's thinking, planning, and acting.

The same procedure was followed to detect Sara's thinking types for lesson planning. Sara's indication of the lesson type reflected her problematic coverage thinking. She had considered grammar detached from conversation while in the lesson covered, grammar was designed to serve a conversational function. Similarly, Sara's plan for *lesson aims* demonstrated a limited perspective. Her imprecise statement of the lesson aims and mistaking peripheral lesson objectives for the core lesson aim signified her limited coverage thinking. Again, the section on *anticipated problems* revealed her form-bound view of grammar. Seemingly, one main source of Sara's problem was her narrow coverage thinking perspective.

To investigate Sara's activity thinking, her plans for the *lesson procedures* were analyzed. Initially, misplaced and mistimed activity assignment revealed her problematic activity thinking. For pre-teaching, she assigned a 20-minute practice with no plan for a lead-in to the main activity. This could be the root of Sara's stated concern about her teaching, and time management. Like Fariba's case, although her plans kept the students busy, they could not involve the learners. Further analysis of the *procedures (instruction, closure,* and *follow-up*) shed light on Sara's activity thinking problems. What was evident was her form-dominated thinking irrespective of the contribution of each activity to the communicative lesson goal. For example, her plan to present the conversation included question-answer exchanges disregarding their role in contextualizing the language features and functions targeted. Closer scrutiny of Sara's plan again indicated her obsession with formS (Long, 1991). Even in cases where Sara planned meaningful communicative activities, she tacitly disclosed her deeply rooted formS-based teaching beliefs. For instance, to practice the newly presented form (embedded questions), having introduced a hypothetical character, she had planned to ask the students to "*make*" rather than *ask* information questions. Her discourse reveals her mindset distant from the assignment of meaningful and authentic communicative activities. Nevertheless, the *closure* section of the procedures was left empty, an expected consequence of her inefficient activity assignment. Though in her lesson review, Sara regretted this gap indicating her insight gained from retrospective lesson planning.

Signs of involvement thinking were evident in the *groupings* section of Sara's lesson plan. Her plans for the *procedures* section were unlikely to trigger real learner involvement. For example, in the second step of *instruction*, Sara had planned to assign a group activity requiring students to read aloud their notes about a book they had read. This did not serve the intended purpose— to give the learners planning time for the following communicative activity. We further noticed Sara's routine in teaching

conversations. She had planned to teach the two dialogs in the lesson following an identical monotonous routine, irrespective of the objectives they were designed to meet. Another issue stemming from Sara's misguided involvement decisions concerned the examples she had planned to provide disregarding the major theme of the unit. This led to a disorganized presentation and practice, a potential barrier to the optimal involvement of the learners. Sara's incoherence might have stemmed from misidentification of the lesson objectives and in turn inefficient coverage thinking. Compared to Contreras et al.'s (2020) findings, this incoherence was unexpected. In the study, they found that "in-service teachers will plan with more consistency, constancy, and coherence than preservice teachers" (p. 13). While Sara's monotonous teaching routine evidenced the expected consistency, and constancy, the diagnosed incoherence in her practice and planning was revealed in the pathology.

Further evidence supporting Sara's problematic thinking was her excessive teacher talk which was among her self-stated concerns. The in-depth analysis further illuminated the interwoven nature of thinking types. In Saphier et al.'s (2018) model, the thinking types are illustrated in concentric circles showing their inclusive nature. Sara's problematic coverage thinking caused her excessive lecturing which in turn led to defective involvement thinking, i.e., not planning for really involving activities. Therefore, her problem in coverage thinking triggered problems in the two other layers (activities thinking and involvement thinking).

In the closing section, *self-evaluation,* and *comments after the lesson,* Sara reviewed the lesson and assessed her teaching effectiveness which revealed the positive effects of her *reflection on action* (Schön, 1983). She regretted her ill-timed actions, inefficient time management, excessive reliance on deductive grammar presentation, improper lesson procedure lacking lead-ins and closures, and the absence of learning outcome assessment.

4.2.5. Problems Residing in the Misconception about Teaching Effectiveness and Teaching Success

Based on Richards' (2015) discrimination between lesson effectiveness and lesson success, Fariba's practice could be judged more as *teaching success* than *teaching effectiveness*. While, due to the fuzziness of these concepts, the mistaken view of teaching *success* could have led to the learners' satisfaction and the teacher's false *sense* of effectiveness (Richards, 2015). In this vein, the analysis of Fariba's self-review indicated a considerable difference from our evaluation. In all of the cases, she evaluated herself above the average, i.e., in 15 out of 38 cases she identified herself as *fully* and, in the rest, as *most of the time* meeting the criteria of lesson

effectiveness. Moreover, certain cognitive processes —specifying linguistic goals, analyzing content, and making decisions about time and sequencing of lesson activities, i.e., *pedagogical reasoning skills* (Richards, 2015)—negatively impacted the other cognitive facets of lesson planning reducing effectiveness and success. This was evident in the teachers' video-recorded lessons. For instance, Fariba kept the students busy and contented irrespective of the worthy objectives in her retrospective lesson plan.

This issue possibly stemmed from the teachers' misconceptions and their narrow perspectives while skillful teaching demands comprehensiveness (Saphier et al., 2018). This was evident in Sara's regret for deficient time management and insufficient supplementary materials while the problem could have emerged from her improper and time-consuming supplementation. In Fariba's case, the same pattern of linear thinking and disintegrated language teaching was evident. Noticeably, the teachers' concerns underwent considerable change after collaborative peer discussion. This broadened perspective was depicted in their expressed shared concern for "reforming lesson plan and procedures of teaching" (personal communication, February 10, 2018). During the discussion, Sara also expressed concerns for improving student learning, a faint but promising sign of insightful teaching, possibly stemming from her major field of study. Guided by this finding, we based our pathology on Richards' (2015) cognitive dimensions of lesson planning, *pedagogical reasoning skills*: analyzing potential lesson content and identifying pertinent linguistic goals plus anticipating possible teaching problems and relevant solutions. This, of course, involves making appropriate decisions about time, sequencing, and grouping. Among the pedagogic reasoning skills, time management was explicitly stated by both teachers as their concern, however, lesson content analysis, goal identification, and anticipation of teaching problems were disregarded which was evident in their video-recorded lessons. Whether this gap resides in overlooking related facets of lesson planning demands further scrutiny.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The multifaceted nature of skillful teaching and its context specificity demand teacher cognizance and pedagogical reasoning skill. This requires investigation across educational contexts from multiple perspectives and warrants the study of ELT effectiveness. This small-scale case study was diagnostic pathology of language teaching ineffectiveness of two EFL teachers in an Iranian context. The analysis of the data, from multiple sources, yielded results that can provide EFL teachers and teacher educators with insights into the roots of pedagogical practical problems and commonly faced challenges. The degree of the teachers' reflectivity, the type of

teachers' thinking for lesson planning, and teachers' misconceptions about effectiveness were identified as the four main sources of their ineffectiveness. The findings revealed the sources of the problem rooted in the teachers' thinking type and faulty conceptualization of teacher effectiveness leading to their keeping learners busy without achieving the intended learning outcomes. This reflects the broadening perspective in research on *good language teachers,* integrating teachers' actions and attributes. The macro-ecological perspective appreciates teacher cognition, and reflective practice among good language teacher characteristics (Tajeddin & Griffiths, 2020).

The findings of this in-depth exploration should be interpreted cautiously. The study was delimited into the participant teachers' gender, teaching experience, student's age, and English language proficiency in an Iranian context. On the other hand, major limitations of this research are the retrospectively collected data, and qualitative investigation of the teachers' effectiveness without quantitative measurement of student achievement, unlike what Stronge, et al. (2011) did although defining teacher effectiveness in terms of learner achievement is worthwhile. Further studies may focus on the effects of collaborative teacher discussion, and reflection through retrospective lesson planning on the facets of teaching effectiveness holistically or discretely. Moreover, investigating teacher effectiveness and thinking for planning through a priori data may yield more insightful results. For more direct and contextualized insights, future studies could draw on teachers' narrative accounts, professional lives, and autobiographies, and their diaries to clarify their thinking and classroom behavior. Additionally, longitudinal case studies can trace the development of teacher effectiveness and track the process of professional development. Finally, teachers' online reflection *in* action (Schön, 1983) and proactive reflection *for* action (Schön, 1983) demand further research. Hoping for more efficient learning and effective teaching, further in-depth pathology of teacher education may remedy the ailing teaching practices as symptoms of shallow thinking while planning.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Retrospective Learner-Reflection Written Interview Prompt

Dear students:

As you might remember, during the last term some of your classes were video-recorded which might have had some unwanted effects on your lessons, your performance, and your teachers' behavior. Please answer the following questions to share your experience with us. We do appreciate your honest responses and precious time.

1.Did the presence of a camera make you nervous?

2.Did you feel shy to take part in classroom activities because you knew that you were being video recorded?

3.Did your feelings towards the camera change throughout the experience?

4.Did your teacher behave differently during those sessions?

5.Did your teacher teach differently during those sessions?

6.How did the presence of the camera affect your class?

Appendix B: Retrospective Teacher-Reflection Written Interview Prompt

As you might remember, during the last term, you kindly permitted us to video-tape a few sessions of your class which might have had some unwanted effects on your lessons, your performance as a teacher, and your classroom behavior. Please answer the following questions to share your experience with us. We do appreciate your sincere responses and precious time.

1.Did the presence of a camera make you nervous?

2.Did you feel you needed to make any changes to your typical lesson plans?

3.Did your feelings towards the camera change throughout the experience?

4.Did you ever behave differently during those sessions?

5.Did you ever teach differently during those sessions?

6.How did the presence of the camera affect your class?

7.Do you feel like watching and analyzing those videos?

8.How important is it to you to know your strengths and weaknesses in teaching?

9.Do you think it is fair to judge your teaching effectiveness needs based on those tokens of your classroom practice?

10.Which aspect of your teaching was not captured in those videos?

Appendix C: Retrospective Lesson-Objective-Elicitation Written Interview

Name…… date ……..……

Observed videotaped session ……..……

Covered pages of the textbook…….

1. What knowledge, skill or concept were you teaching?
2. Which part of this unit covers this knowledge skill or concept?
3. What teaching resources did you use to teach this knowledge, skill, or concept?
4. What were the most important things that you wanted the students to understand?
5. What background knowledge do you think the students needed to know to be ready for this knowledge, skill, or concept?
6. How would you break this knowledge, skill, or concept down into parts?
7. Which part of this knowledge, skill, or concept do you think students need to understand first?
8. How did you present the aim of the lesson to the class?
9. How did you know if the students were understanding and making progress or not?

10. Did you assess the students in any form?
11. Exactly state what you expected the students to learn?
12. What did you expect them to tell you to show they really learned the knowledge, skill, or concept?

Now watch the video again, and fill in the retrospective lesson plan for one of the recorded sessions.