

Exploring EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of Classroom Video Surveillance: A Qualitative Study

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Received: 2019-09-23 | Revised: 2020-02-05 | Accepted: 2020-02-22

Abstract

The theory and practice of language teacher autonomy seems to be contradictory in terms. While, in theory, language teaching is conceptualized as a reflective process wherein teachers exercise their professional expertise, in many contexts including some private language schools of Shahrood and Semnan, teaching performance is tightly monitored through closed-circuit cameras. This study attempts to explore language teachers’ perceptions of teaching under video surveillance through elicitation data gathered and analyzed based on grounded theory. Iterative data collection and analysis and the constant comparative techniques revealed that video surveillance negatively affects language teaching since the participants believed it violates their rights to privacy, induces

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artificial practice, suppresses teacher initiatives, and deskills teachers by inducing disused atrophy. Through the counter-evidence presented by the language teachers, it was also found that the rationales for using video surveillance are unjustified. The findings of this study have clear implications for managers, supervisors and language teachers teaching in private language schools in the context of this study and other similar contexts.

Keywords: classroom video surveillance, EFL teachers' perceptions, grounded theory, monitoring practice, ELT.

Introduction

While in general education rhetoric, there has been a shift away from autonomous, reflective practice towards performativity discourse (Jeffrey, 2002), which legitimizes tight control over the teaching process, in language teacher education, reflective autonomous practice is still the dominant paradigm (Timmins, 2015). The rationale underlying this conceptualization is that experience by itself does not improve practice (Nguyen, 2017). Comparing the theory and practice of language education, we found that teacher education is very promising in theory but very bleak in practice. That is, although in theory, good practice is conceptualized as autonomous and reflective, in practice, it is totally determined by external control since more often than not, closed-circuit cameras give the people external to the immediate teaching context a constant eye to check teachers' conformity with their prescriptions and proscriptions. This study attempts to explore language teachers' perceptions of video surveillance through elicitation data gathered and analyzed in line with the guidelines presented in grounded theory. The findings are significant to the field of English language teaching in that they give voice to language teachers who are always at the consumer end of education reform. By exploring how video surveillance affects language teaching performance, the findings of this study and other data-driven studies may help managers and supervisors who work in the context of this study make more informed decisions concerning the use of video surveillance for monitoring teaching performance.

Review of Related Literature

A brief review of the rhetoric of language teaching profession reveals that our conceptualization of good teaching has shifted away from conformity towards reflective and autonomous practice. During the method era, good teaching was regarded as correct use of the method and its prescribed principles and techniques (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since good practice was defined as the degree of conformity to a given method, scholars of language teaching were on the lookout for the best method for three decades. As Ostovar-Namaghi (2011) puts it, "disappointment with the 'method' concept led scholars of language teaching to rethink and focus on alternatives to methods" (p. 837); hence, rather than prescribing a pre-fabricated procedure which involves an ordered progression

from 'approach' to 'method' to teaching 'techniques' (Anthony, 1963), educators thought that language teaching profession would be better grounded if teachers were trusted to improve their practice through reflection.

With its ever increasing acceptance in the educational circle, reflective practice is now a paradigm that dominates teacher education around the world (Lee, 2007). Richards (1991) argued that bottom-up approaches, especially those based on teacher self-reflection, hold the most promise for developing effective teachers because they emphasize development, discovery, and inquiry rather than training in fixed methodologies. Similarly, Richards and Lockhart (1994) argued that reflective practice could better serve the profession than making teachers conform to an external model; therefore, in many contexts including Asia, reflective practice has been implemented to encourage reflection routines among pre-service teachers (Widodo, 2018)

In many parts of the world, the discourse of teacher autonomy has gained widespread attention as a consequence of decentralization (Lundström, 2015). Accepting the shift away from conformity to reflective practice automatically entails a shift towards recognizing language teacher autonomy. This term has variedly been defined as: self-directed professional action (Little, 1995); self-directed professional development (Tort-Moloney, 1997); and freedom from control by others over professional action and development (Anderson, 1987). Compared with the first two definitions, the third one is more comprehensive since it covers both teaching practice and teacher development. Moreover, it clearly delineates that it is freedom from external control that shifts teaching away from conformity and convergent practice towards reflective practice and teacher autonomy.

Although the foregoing definition governs language teacher education, in general education, the concept of teacher autonomy has metamorphosed. Gleeson and Gunter (2001) chart this metamorphosis as follows:

- from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, it was conceptualized as 'relative autonomy', i.e., teachers were accountable to themselves through informal reflection and peer review;
- from the 1980s to the 1990s, it was reconceptualized as 'controlled autonomy', i.e., teachers are accountable to themselves through formal reviews or classroom observation;
- between 1988 and 1994, educational acts turned teachers into 'a technical workforce to be managed and controlled rather than a profession to be respected';
- Since 2000, teachers have been controlled by 'productive autonomy', i.e., teachers are now accountable through formal audits of student learning outcomes controlled by senior management.

This metamorphosis clearly shows that teachers do not teach in vacuum; they teach in a social context and it is the exigencies of the context that shape teaching practice and teacher development and makes the pedagogy for autonomy and reflection elusive and beyond reach. Teaching occurs within a struc-

tural context which, as Cornbleth (1990) argues, "is the education systems established roles and relationships, including operating procedures, shared beliefs and norms ... often distinguished as organization and culture" (p. 35). It is the decisions made at all levels throughout the education system, from the central government authority to the school committee, that determines teacher development and teaching practice, rather than the rhetoric of teacher reflection and autonomy. To ensure that decisions made at the top of hierarchy are implemented by those at the bottom of the hierarchy, teachers are exposed to disciplining (Ostovar-Namaghi, 2011).

According to Foucault (1977), discipline is an effective means of controlling and being able to predict such matters as employee behavior. In language education, discipline ensures that teachers do their job in a uniform manner and with identical results. To this end, "first permissible acts are issued periodically through circulars and directives and then reinforced through teaching teams, evaluation and promotion" (Ostovar-Namaghi, 2011, p. 842). With the advent of technology, however, the circle of external control over teaching is tightened through what Foucault calls 'panopticon'. The word 'panopticon' literally means 'all-seeing'. For Foucault "it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 187). "There should be, with respect to education, a vigilant eye everywhere" (McClure, 1979, p.33).

This vigilant eye is operationalized as surveillance in schools. Surveillance can take many forms including "CCTV (closed-circuit television), online monitoring strategies, smart cards, RFID (radio-frequency identification) tags, and biometric tracking" (Nemorin, 2017, p. 240). He disapproves of surveillance in the classroom since he believes it normalizes unevenly distributed power hierarchies. Many empirical studies have found that students have a negative perception of classroom surveillance (Ahmed & Aton, 2019; Nemorin, 2017; Steeves et al., 2018). For instance, Ahmed and Aton's findings revealed that "students expressed a lot of worry in relation to their data somehow being accessed by external parties" (p. 20). Similarly, Steeves et al. found that students tended to get annoyed by limitations imposed by technology, causing them to react negatively in situations where data was gathered without obvious benefits. They also found that surveillance often disrupts classroom activities because of students feeling like objects of suspicion rather than learners.

To sum up, despite the fact that, teaching is theoretically conceptualized as a reflective process wherein teachers are free to exercise their professional judgment to respond to the varied needs and learning styles of students, in practice, teaching is a disciplined act which is molded in TTC and controlled through video surveillance. Although school masters and supervisors who impose this technology on classroom practice hypothesize that it positively affects the teaching/learning process by improving teaching efficiency, the empirical findings reviewed above clearly show that it is negatively perceived by students; hence, prior to accepting this technology to govern classroom practice, the field of language education needs further empirical studies that explore how this technology is perceived by language teachers. Although some studies

have investigated how students perceive video surveillance, language teachers' perceptions of this technology has been left unexplored

Research Methodology

This qualitative, data-first study aims at eliciting and conceptualizing teachers' perspectives concerning closed-circuit cameras, i.e., surveillance. It aims at exploring the grand tour question, "How do you perceive the effect of surveillance through closed-circuit cameras on your teaching performance? This general question not only provided the researcher with initial data but also paved the way for subsequent questions, which emerged from an open coding of the initial data set.

Research Context

Language education in Iran can be represented as two ends of a continuum: at one extreme, language education in public high schools is shaped by the high-stake university entrance exam (UEE) with its focus on reading, vocabulary and grammar; at the other extreme, private language education is shaped by learners' need to develop their conversational skills and as such, it focuses mainly on listening and speaking. Under such conditions, students are torn between passing the high stake test by focusing on reading and grammar in public education and developing their conversational ability by focusing on listening and speaking in the private sector. In this context, good practice has two contradictory meanings: developing test taking strategies to ensure students' top performance on the UEE and developing their oral skills through involving them in communicative tasks and activities. In the former, teaching practice is controlled by school principals who compare students' performance on UEE tests while in the latter, it is controlled and shaped by video surveillance.

Participants

Using purposive sampling procedure, eighteen participants were sampled from private language schools of Shahrood and Semnan, two major cities in Semnan province, Iran. The participants were eleven male and seven female teachers, aged 28-36 years. Thirteen majored in ELT and five majored in other fields not relevant to language teaching and English literature. Yet, they were all sampled based on three criteria: willingness to participate in the study, language teaching experience, and assertiveness. In addition to purposive sampling of the participants, we also used theoretical sampling to collect concepts which were relevant to the emerged categories.

Data Collection

Unstructured, open-ended interviews were used to elicit teachers' perceptions of video surveillance. The study started with the general question, "What is

your perception of video surveillance, i.e., closed-circuit cameras in language classes?" The question was then elaborated to make sure the participant presents relevant information. Data collection was a two-stage process. First, we collected and analyzed an initial data set from two participants to develop transient concepts and categories related to video surveillance. These concepts and categories were then used to develop more refined questions and collect concepts which are theoretically-relevant to the transient categories developed early on. It is worth noting that the questions that followed were not new questions in new directions. Rather, they aimed at clarifying the participants' perspectives.

Prior to interviewing, however, the researcher tried to pave the way for the participants' free expression of their views and perspectives by: (1) ensuring the participants that pseudonyms rather than their real names would appear in the final report, since in grounded theory, we are interested in the emerged concepts rather than the participants' names; (2) seeking the participants' consent to participate in the study; (3) informing the participants that their views were audio-taped; (4) establishing rapport with the participants prior to the interview so as to pave the way for an informal unstructured interview; and (4) conducting the interviews in Persian, i.e., the participants' native language, so that their level of proficiency would not affect the quality and accuracy of their perspectives. The interviews were conducted by one member of the research team who had some teaching experience in private language schools. The time and place of the interviews were decided on by the participants themselves. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory aims at data reduction and conceptualization. Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), we followed a multi-pronged approach:

- audio-taped interviews were first transcribed verbatim to make sure that nothing important was left out;
- to ensure that the transcripts properly reflect the participants' perspectives, they were shown to the participants for their verification;
- each interview transcript was open-coded line-by-line and word-for-word to uncover first level, transient concepts;
- similar concepts were then organized and grouped into categories, i.e., umbrella terms that cover the subordinating concepts, and their links and interrelationships were specified through axial coding;
- the core concept that pulls all the categories into a unified whole was specified through selective coding;
- transient concepts and categories together with the final conceptualization of teachers' perspectives on surveillance were shown to the participants, and modified and verified through member-checking.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through member checking. That is, the final conceptualization, including the emerged concepts and categories, were shown to the participants for verification and any possible modifications. To address ethical issues: (1) the purpose of the study was clarified to the participants prior to the interviews; (2) the participants were also asked to fill out an informed consent form; and (3) they were informed that they can resign from participating in the study whenever they thought it fit. For ethical considerations, the participants' real names have been replaced with pseudonyms; hence, in the results section, participants will be referred to as teacher participant followed by a number. For instance, Mr. Alavi will be referred to as teacher participant 1 or TP1.

Findings

The analyses revealed that there is a conflict of interest between the two groups concerning video surveillance, i.e., the use of closed-circuit cameras. While the schoolmasters believe that surveillance improves learning through increasing language teacher accountability, language teachers believe that the harms of surveillance outweigh its benefits. What follows aims at conceptualizing the disadvantages of surveillance presented by the participants and the purported advantages presented by schoolmasters and supervisors through: (1) categories or umbrella terms that emerged from the coding of the teachers' perspectives; and (2) grounding these categories in language teachers' perspectives, i.e., presenting evidence which indicates that the categories have been inductively driven from the participants' perspectives. Categories such as 'violating the right to privacy', 'inducing artificial practice', 'suppressing teacher initiatives', 'inducing disused atrophy', 'ignoring individual differences', 'inducing mutual distrust', and 'imposing non-professional practices' illustrate the debilitating effects of surveillance on teaching and learning while categories such as 'improving classroom discipline', 'raising accountability' and 'ensuring learner security against outsiders' conceptualize the rationales presented by schoolmasters which are considered to be unjustified by the teachers.

Debilitating Effects of Surveillance

Iterative data collection and analyses and the constant comparative technique which are common procedures in grounded theory revealed that video surveillance negatively affects teaching performance as the participants believed installing closed-circuit cameras and making teachers teach under video surveillance violates their privacy, moves them away from teaching naturally, and implies a sense of mutual distrust between the supervisors and the teachers. What follows attempts to present a thick description of the negative effects of video surveillance on teaching practice and present extracts from the participants' perspectives to show that these negative effects reflect the participants' perspectives rather than reflect researcher bias.

Violating the Right to Privacy

Participants complained that video surveillance is an unjustified intervention that violates their privacy. They believed that third parties should not exercise any control over classroom practice. They considered the class as an entity that is owned by the teacher and the learners. Teachers do not like to teach under video surveillance because these cameras make the private space of the classroom visible to outsiders. Just like a house, classroom issues are like family affairs the privacy of which should be respected. Supporting this theme, TP2 states:

Classroom, just like any other places such as house, office or even our personal rooms, should have privacy since someone owns it. Teachers should have the right to privacy and installing any kinds of cameras is considered as spying and violating their privacy. Anyone likes to enjoy the sense of privacy and tranquility of where s/he is. For instance, if the administrators think surveillance cameras have no purpose but supervising, would it be ok to install one of these cameras in their office and allow someone to watch them all the time? Definitely the answer is negative, for spying and peeking has a completely negative impact on human behavior.

Just like teachers, students were said to be concerned about closed circuit cameras because they believed the videos may be misused by outsiders. Elaborating this concern, TP7 explains:

... and students have problems with surveillance. My students hate these cameras because they do not trust the schoolmaster. They suspect that the videos may be misused or shown to others. As they learn they make mistakes and they do not like their mistakes to be seen by outsiders. This suspicion affects their willingness to express their thoughts in the classroom and for the fear of being observed by an external eye, they censure their thoughts and feelings. Everybody is an actor when there is no camera but the very moment that the camera appears people are embarrassed and 99 percent of people are not willing to talk or express their thoughts.

Inducing Artificial Practice

Teachers complain that closed circuit cameras adversely affect classroom atmosphere. Under surveillance, neither the teachers nor the students can perform naturally. In other words, the participants believed that teaching under closed circuit cameras is quite different in quality from teaching in a class where there are no cameras. TP1 complains:

I teach in another school which does not use cameras. There my students act naturally and I myself feel at ease. To help students overcome their boredom, sometimes I tell a joke or derail for two or three minutes from teaching and when I feel students are ready to learn, I resume teaching. In this school because of cameras, I cannot act normally and I do not dare go beyond the prescribed procedure.

Thus, surveillance cameras cause a dry and cold environment in classes as cameras leave no room for feelings and emotions. Explaining how surveillance makes teachers teach mechanically, TP15 states:

When I teach in this language school, I feel like a robot. Sometimes I feel like saying something or doing something but I am forced to forget about it because it is not part of the prescribed procedure and since I know that an external eye is constantly watching me.

Moreover, surveillance leaves no room for self-involvement and self-expression and turns teaching and learning into something mechanistic. The participants believed that, in the absence of cameras, they feel free to express themselves the way they like, but when cameras appear, they tend to censor a great percentage of what they intended to say. Explaining this problem, TP3 states:

When I teach under closed-circuit cameras, I feel like a robot which has been programmed to do what it is told to do. My students are also robots since they have to learn externally determined materials in a predetermined pace and procedure. I believe when the self is not involved in teaching, I am a puppet without self-control, and my students are like baby robots that have been programmed to learn.

Suppressing Teacher Initiatives

The participants maintained that the teaching practice in language schools controlled by surveillance is shallow and devoid of any creativity since schoolmasters and supervisors of these schools have a simplistic view of language teaching. More specifically, convergent artificial practice is induced in three stages: (1) through a very short teacher training course, the trainers' subjective, idiosyncratic conception of teaching is inculcated as good practice; (2) through judgmental surveillance, practice is categorized as convergent and divergent; and (3) divergent practitioners are promoted and convergent practitioners are marginalized. Thus teaching is nothing more than cool implementation of the trainer's prescriptions and proscriptions. Illustrating this scenario, TP6 says:

You know, I have critically reviewed the long history of language teaching and I have taught English for over fifteen years. My professional experience and knowledge give me lots of innovative techniques but I cannot use any of them. What I do is implementing a plan of action developed by someone who controls my teaching through closed-circuit cameras continuously. I really hate teaching but there is no way out; I have to follow what he believes since I have to make the ends meet.

Moreover, some of the participants criticized the prescribed teaching recipe, showing a tendency to introduce some changes but they feel they can't because the ever-watching eye reports any degree of divergence. TP11 explains:

I am in tune with the heartbeat of my students. I know that my teaching practice yields no fruit. I do believe in reflective practice. Through repeated reflec-

tion on my own teaching, I have come up with ways to improve teaching and learning but I am not allowed to follow my own initiatives since I am constantly being watched by video cameras.

Inducing Disused Atrophy

Not only does surveillance leave no room for divergent practice resulting from creativity, imposing one teaching recipe on all also leads to disused atrophy. That is, since teachers find no chance to use their professional knowledge, skills and strategies, they lose them over time. TP18 explains what happened to him as a result of surveillance:

I got my MA in TEFL from the University of Tehran. I ranked first among class of 2012. But now I have to work under the supervision of someone who has been hired on the basis of his proficiency rather than his knowledge and expertise in TEFL. I know that if I follow my own initiatives, I will be marginalized. In this language school, I never found a chance to use what I learned during pre-service TEFL program. Prior to starting my profession here, I took part in a TTC, where I was implicitly told to forget my own skills and strategies. Now I feel professionally alienated since I feel I have lost a great portion of what I had developed over time.

As mentioned before, during TTCs, participants are told what to do and what not to do. When they teach, they are watched through cameras to make sure that they follow the recipe prescribed in the TTC; hence, teacher evaluation is based on judgmental surveillance. Disused atrophy is exacerbated through a teacher evaluation scheme, which reinforces convergent practice and penalizes divergent practice. Knowing that convergence leads to promotion and pay raise, language teachers forsake their own initiatives, skills and knowledge, and follow convergent practitioners. TP12 describes the metamorphosis in his teaching as follows:

When I entered this language school, I tried to follow my own knowledge and skills. Although TTC prescribed some routine procedures, I tried to follow my own lead. I was reprimanded by the schoolmaster and supervisor repeatedly but I tried to insist. However, when I found that teachers who have no professional and skills have been promoted, I surrendered and tried to converge with the dominant practices. Now, I have guaranteed my pay raise and promotion but this costs me dear. I know that my professional identity is shaky and fragile but I also know that my family economy is more fragile. You know, I don't simply teach, I teach for money.

Ignoring Individual Differences

Similarly, the participants rejected surveillance-induced convergent teaching, arguing that it fails to take individual differences into account. It goes without saying that there are individual differences among both teachers and learners. Surveillance inculcates the idea of one method fits all. Based on their profes-

sional knowledge and experience, the participants believe that instruction should be in tune with individual differences. TP9 puts it this way:

This language school prescribes spontaneous communicative practice through pair work and group work and checks whether we follow the prescribed mode of teaching through cameras. This technique does not take individual differences into account. Based on my experience, I know that some of my students are reflective. That is, they need to think and then talk. Since this prescribed procedure forces students to talk without thinking, it penalizes students who need time to think and, more often than not, leads teachers who are not aware of individual differences to judge students negatively as weak or reluctant.

Similarly, in teaching grammar, the participants believed that they had to ignore the learners' needs since the dominant method did not recognize individual differences between learners. TP5 explains:

You know, during the TTC, we were instructed to teach grammar through examples and avoid explaining rules. However, in practice I found this technique problematic because some students insist on my explaining the rule. They believe that providing them with a formal rule consolidates and enhances their grasp and execution of grammar. But I should ignore my students' needs because I know that there is an external eye that is always watching me.

Imposing Nonprofessional Practices

As the previous findings clearly show, surveillance is a major concern for the participants. What exacerbates the situation is that it is run by nonprofessionals who impose nonprofessional criteria for good practice on language teachers. Supervisor recruitment in private language schools is mainly on the basis of proficiency fallacy. That is, a good supervisor is the one who has a higher level of oral proficiency. Not only does this recruitment ignore language teachers' literacy or written skills, it also ignores their professional knowledge, i.e., their language teaching knowledge, skills and strategies. This may not be surprising if we know that supervisors are selected by managers who do not major in English. Some of the most popular language schools are run by managers who major in chemistry, accounting, and physical education, etc. TP10 expresses this in words:

The biggest problem is that most of institute managers and teachers are among those people whose major is not language teaching. Since they have not studied ELT, they know nothing about language teaching as a profession. Now imagine these people are observing and negatively judging your practice throughout the teaching period and at the end criticize your teaching methodology. Maybe one can come along with these cameras but non-professional surveillance may cause discomfort and tension.

Most private language schools focus on developing learners' oral skills at the cost of other language skills by inculcating the 'conversation only' motto as

their edge. Having fallen for the proficiency fallacy, professionally illiterate schoolmasters recruit supervisors from among those language teachers who have a higher level of oral proficiency. Since oral proficiency is their only strength and merit, supervisors deliberately underestimate the importance of language teachers' reading and writing proficiency and their language teaching skills and strategies. TP17 explains:

Our supervisor majors in electrical engineering and he is very proud of his oral proficiency. It is not that his proficiency is higher than that of other teachers. The thing is that he is favored by a manager who is an alphabet in TEFL as a scientific discipline and as a profession. What is worse is that he wrongly supposes that his proficiency gives him the right to keep an eye constant on language classes and negatively judge other language teachers' performance on the basis of his subjective and professionally unjustified conception of good practice.

Unjustified Rationales behind Surveillance

In addition to elaborating how closed-circuit cameras negatively affect the teaching and learning process, the participants cogently argued that schoolmasters' rationales for the use of cameras in classroom is unjustified. As clearly shown in the previous sections of the findings, the participants are dissatisfied with the use of video surveillance in language classes. What follows is the next emerging theme from the data which attempts to clarify the reasons why these cameras are used and why the participants believe the reasons and rationales for the installment of these cameras are unjustified.

Improving Classroom Discipline

In some language classes, there may be some aggressive bullies; hence, they may threaten physically weaker children and disrupt the flow of language instruction by changing the language teacher's role into that of a manager. Cameras have been installed because it is believed that they mitigate this problem. Rejecting this rationale, TP13 argues:

In each class, there may be one or two aggressive children. When they know that they are being constantly watched by the supervisor and manager, they try to behave. But I believe instead of paralyzing the teaching/learning process through judgmental surveillance, the managers should kick the bullies out of the classes or do not let them sign up by filtering them out.

The participants also complain that the seemingly discipline-raising surveillance is used for other purposes, i.e., to discipline teachers who diverge from the prescribed procedure. TP8 explains:

When teachers complain about the negative effect of surveillance on their practice, managers claim that surveillance helps teachers in classroom management by keeping an eye on violent children. But I believe that there is a hidden

agenda. They use surveillance to identify convergent and divergent practices and then award those who act in line with the teaching procedure prescribed during TTC and penalize those who follow their initiatives and as such diverge from prescriptions.

Improving Language Teachers' Accountability

The second rationale behind using video surveillance is that it increases teacher accountability. In other words, once the teaching process is recorded, it can be shown to the teacher to enquire about what he/she has done in the class. Schoolmasters believe that some language teachers do not fulfill their professional duties without surveillance. They take surveillance as an effective mechanism for identifying and disciplining this group of teachers. But the question is, "Is surveillance the best mechanism for increasing accountability among teachers?" Participants believe that this is the worst mechanism. Rejecting this mechanism for assuring teacher accountability, TP14 states:

I do believe that some language teachers evade their duties. Rather than overshadowing teaching practice through surveillance, schoolmasters should screen out these imposters by improving their recruitment criteria. The supervisor and schoolmaster do not have the right to suspect everyone and put everyone under surveillance to control one or two imposters. I do believe that there are better ways of identifying and firing these teachers, one of which is improving recruitment criteria.

Moreover, instead of identifying professionally irresponsible practitioners through surveillance, accountability can be improved by identifying super-performers through observing classes. TP16 states:

Managers cannot be optimistic about teaching performance by leaving classes without supervision. Similarly, they should not be pessimistic by putting everyone under tight control through surveillance. They should be realistic and this can be done through non-judgmental classroom observation that aims at identifying super-performers and awarding and promoting them for their superior language teaching skills and strategies. This strategy not only inspires professionalism in language teaching, it also creates conditions that are conducive to learning, teaching and growth.

Ensuring Learner Safety

Ensuring learner security against outsiders and intruders is another unjustified reason for putting teachers under surveillance. Schoolmasters claim that parents trust us by putting their kids in our school; therefore, we have to ensure parents that their children are in good hands. They claim that installing surveillance cameras enables them to identify possible intruders, which may happen

to be kidnappers and vandals. Nonetheless, participants believe that surveillance is unjustified since it goes beyond ensuring learner security. TP4 explains:

I personally believe that under the pretext of ensuring learner security against possible crimes, they use surveillance to control teachers. If this is not the case, the use of closed-circuit cameras should be limited to the corridors. When surveillance enters the classroom, it sure aims at controlling teachers rather than the criminals. I do believe in surveillance but it should be limited to corridors and playground.

Participants reject surveillance because they consider supervisors as hypocrites. They believe that they are dishonest since they actually use surveillance to ensure conformity, or the degree to which teachers conform to the procedures presented in the TTC, but they claim that they are installed to ensure learner security. Clarifying what the underlying reason for surveillance is, TP5 adds:

This language school does not tolerate any divergence from the procedure prescribed in the training course. The supervisor does not major in TEFL. Thus, he has a reductionist view of language teaching, through surveillance he makes sure that everybody teaches the way he thinks it fits. He is a hypocrite since he never says what he does and never does what he says. He has summarized the whole history of language teaching into a pre-fabricated recipe which is applicable across varied contexts and he uses surveillance to ensure conformity with the recipe. I sure know that surveillance does not aim to ensure security.

Discussion and Conclusion

The iterative data collection and analyses of the practitioners' perceptions of surveillance yielded two superordinate categories: (1) the debilitating effects of surveillance on teaching and learning; and (2) unjustified rationales for surveillance. The first superordinate category, together with its subcategories, i.e., practitioners' rationales for rejecting surveillance, is compatible with conceptualizing teaching as a reflective process (Farrell, 2018; Freeman, 2016; Wallace, 1996), while the second superordinate category and its subordinate ones, i.e., schoolmasters and supervisors' unjustified rationales for surveillance, are compatible with viewing teaching as a labor process (Braverman, 1974).

When teaching is conceptualized as a labor process, teachers are considered as technicians who do what they are told to do. Language schools which prescribe a recipe for teaching practice during TTCs and install closed-circuit cameras to ensure that language teachers follow their recipe conceptualize language teaching as a labor process. On the other hand, the participants of this study seem to see language teaching as a reflective process. In other words, they believe that instead of following the procedure prescribed during the TTC, they should exercise their professional autonomy, use techniques that are rooted in principles of first and second language acquisition, reflect on their practice and change them to better respond to the learners' needs and individual

differences; hence, there is a conflict of interest between language teachers and managers.

The way the participants contributing to this study conceptualize their profession is supported by Oxford (1998) who maintains that “the language teacher must exert strong control over both the curriculum and the students” (p. 25), whereas the way managers and supervisors conceptualize language teaching in the research context is known as a labor process, which considers teachers as ‘consumers of new pedagogical approaches (Littler & Salaman, 1982). It is also supported by Taylorism. For Taylor, efficient production in factory depends on managers who figure out the most efficient modes of practice for workers in the form of a recipe to be executed (Au, 2011). Following Taylor, the managers and supervisors mentioned in this study believe that they can improve teaching efficiency by tightly controlling how to teach through TTCs and ensuring uniformity of practice and conformity with the recipe presented in TTCs through monitoring the teaching practice via video surveillance.

To sum up, teachers contributing to the findings of this data-driven study believe that managers’ rationales for video surveillance of classroom practice is not justified. Despite their opposing views on surveillance, however, both groups strive for improving teaching and learning efficacy. This goal can be achieved if they negotiate their rationales rather than take the truth value of their perspectives for granted; hence, it is suggested that:

1. managers and supervisors take the findings of this study and other data-driven studies that voice teachers’ concerns over video surveillance into consideration to come up with more informed decisions concerning the use of closed-circuit cameras;
2. teachers communicate their concerns over video surveillance with the managers and supervisors rather than complaining about how this technology negatively affects their teaching practice;
3. other interested researchers explore managers’ and supervisors’ perceptions of surveillance which complements the findings of this study.

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