Novice Non-Native English Language Teachers' Imaginary and Actual Decision Making and Pedagogical Reasoning: Student and Personal Features*

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Abstract

Two of the central concepts in teaching skills are decision making and pedagogical reasoning. Taking benefit from the dearth of studies on teachers' actual or real-world decisions, this study aimed to respond to this invitation by keeping track of novice Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' decisions in two different times using six research-oriented teaching scenarios reflecting the student and personal features. Furthermore, their pedagogical reasoning was also attended to once through their responses to imaginary teaching scenarios and once through their actual classroom decisions. The participants comprised of ten novice Iranian EFL (six female and four male) teachers with an age range of 19 to 25 and a male experienced teacher, aged 30, who acted as a researcher-as-participant and was only accountable for the novices' real-world reasoning. The data were collected through utilizing a total of six teaching scenarios, classroom observation, and video stimulated recalls. The findings, obtained through conversation analysis and pertinent vignettes and excerpts, revealed that the participants underwent a change in their decisions in two of the three scenarios reflecting the student features, while an approximate conformity could be observed in all scenarios mirroring personal features. It was revealed that whenever the teachers' reasoning changed, their decisions underwent some changes as well. In addition, the findings showed that the flow of conversation in the classroom could be strongly influenced by the teachers' decisions. A number of implications and recommendations for further research are also pinpointed.

Introduction

Decision making and pedagogical reasoning are viewed as two of the central notions undergirding teaching skills (Richards, Li, & Tang, 2001). Attempting to improve in these skills is of high significance for teachers because they are constantly encountering situations where they are to make online pedagogical decisions, and more importantly they are responsible for backing them pedagogically as well. To put it more simply, Smith and Loughran (2017) indicated that pedagogical reasoning informs teachers' decisions made in different situations and makes provision for teachers to ensure about the possible changes they can apply in their practice, how they should make the changes, and more importantly why they should do so. That Johnson and Golombek (2020) argued that more attention should be granted to the reasoning behind teacher educators' decisions imposes the same pressure on teachers to develop themselves in informing their decisions. This is because the responsibility of delivering the materials is put on the shoulders of teachers who work "in multifaceted and demanding instructional contexts" (Johnson & Golombek, 2020, p. 117). Therefore, teachers must equip themselves with context-appropriate and effective decisions and be able to defend them when requested.

Teachers' decisions have proven to be influential in shaping successful teaching (Lloyd, 2019) and subsequently students' academic achievement (Südkamp, Kaiser, & Möller, 2014). Teaching, regardless of its degree of success, is influenced by some factors that teachers inevitably take into account when making decisions in different situations. Excluding teaching experience, Lloyd (2019) synopsized such identified factors under four principal features, namely student, contextual, pedagogical, and personal ones. This shows that students both are influenced by teachers' pedagogical decisions (Südkamp et al., 2014) and influence them (Lloyd, 2019). In addition, Lloyd (2019) reported that the variable of student features with its specific subcategories was the most frequently cited feature among all the participants. Thus, in the present study, student features were given much weight when designing the teaching scenarios (i.e., situations that

might occur in the classroom context and are used to check the participants' responses in both imaginary and actual contexts). Among the other three features, the one leading the researchers to reach the focus of this study was personal features because this study is part of a major project, and student and personal (i.e., teacher) features proved to be more pertinent pairs than student and any of the other features.

In addition, despite the substantial role of experience in teachers' decisions (e.g., Borko, Roberts, & Shavelson, 2008; Vanlommel, Van Gasse, Vanhoof, & Van Petegem, 2017), this study merely explored how novice Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers would respond to the teaching scenarios in two different situations: once in an imaginary phase and once in the actual real-world classroom context. Providing a negligible difference in the subcategories of these four features between novice and experienced teachers in Lloyd's (2019) study justified the researchers' choice of only novice teachers. Furthermore, no dialogic assistance was planned to inform the novices' teachers, so any interaction between less and more experienced teachers was found pointless. Of course, this study benefited from one experienced teacher with ten years of teaching experience, but his main contribution, at this phase, was extracting the novices' pedagogical reasoning for their actual real-world classroom decisions. This means that no interactively mediated help was offered to assist the participants in becoming more professionally developed because the study purely attempted to disclose and compare their imaginary and actual pedagogical decisions and reasoning together.

The two key concepts of instructional decision making and pedagogical reasoning are among the less-explored purviews of second language teacher education. The call for more in-depth research on teacher decision making by Siuty, Leko, and Knackstedt (2018) is indicative of such a demand. Furthermore, as indicated by Khatib and Saeedian (in press) there is a dearth of studies centering specifically on teacher decision making supported by pedagogical reasoning, and this is even more visible in the EFL context of Iran. The domain of decision making, of course, has by far received much attention from scholars

interested in the field (e.g., Borko et al., 2008; Kärner, Warwas, Krannich, & Weichsler, 2021; Salokangas, Wermke, & Harvey, 2020). However, they have failed to uncover "the realities of everyday classroom life" (Lloyd, 2019, p. 167) because they have all focused on its cognitive part instead.

Objective of the study

To respond to Siuty et al.'s (2018) call, this study attempted to disclose the Iranian novice EFL teachers' imaginary decision making and pedagogical reasoning to the researcher-made scenarios. The researchers also observed the teachers' real classrooms to record their decisions in identical real-world scenarios to continue the newly attended path on such teacher decisions initiated by Borko et al. (2008) and continued by Lloyd (2019), who reasonably argued that it "has historically been absent from much decision research" (p. 170)a It is noteworthy that Lloyd's (2019) study only maneuvered over novice and experienced teachers' real-world decision making. However, this study attempted to reveal the novice teachers' decision making and pedagogical reasoning through checking their responses to scenarios, which were reflective of Lloyd's (2019) set features, both imaginarily and in the actual classroom context. To address these issues, the following question guided the study.

1. What are novice English language teachers' imaginary and actual decision making and pedagogical reasoning?

Literature Review

Because teachers' decisions can have a substantial impact on students' academic achievement (Südkamp et al., 2014), and student achievement is the ultimate goal of all educational initiatives (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Tirosh, Tsamir, & Levenson, 2015), it is of high importance for teachers to participate in situations where they can reconsider and restructure their teaching practices, which in itself leads to more cogent decisions. Decisions are thus affected by teachers' teaching practices, and these practices are affected by how important teachers view their own roles as "agent(s) of change" or "decision maker(s) in the classroom" (Yoshida, 2011, p.

144). The former coveys a promising message in that it stipulates the idea that it is teachers who decide to take a forward or backward step toward their own professional development. The latter, while being influenced by how the first role is played, concerns with "students' learning experiences and educational trajectories" (Südkamp et al., 2014, p. 5); meaning teachers' decisions can directly have a constructive or detrimental influence on the path a student undergoes.

This high significance of teachers' decisions places decision-making as the fundamental skill of teaching that every single teacher should be equipped with. In the same vein, Shavelson (1973) stated that a teacher's professional life cannot be imagined without decision-making. The way teachers' decision-making process is articulated out of the complex classroom space attracted the attention of some researchers and led Lloyd (2019) to offer the four probable variables impacting teachers' decision making, namely student, contextual, pedagogical, and personal features. From among these, the student and personal features were specifically investigated in this study. The former comprised of eight subcategories from students' knowledge and ability through their motivational, social, and behavioral factors to their gender, age, and self-esteem. The latter encompassed four subcategories of the accessible time to teachers, their level of stress, preference, and confidence.

Borg (2006) believed that there is a tied connection between decision making and pedagogical reasoning. He defined teacher pedagogical reasoning as a special type of thinking that teachers own and use in their lesson plans and their real teaching practices. Through exemplifying, he justified how teachers could use pedagogical reasoning to pave their own way in fulfilling such tasks as evaluating the content of a lesson, setting special goals to be achieved upon completion of that lesson, predicting potential problems that may occur during teaching the lesson, and making context-sensitive cogent decisions to conduct the lesson and overcome those problems.

Shulman (1987), however, in line with Nyamupangedengu and Lelliott (2016) who considered pedagogical reasoning as one of the

three comprising aspects of teacher education, does not conceive of pedagogical reasoning as a plain ability that teachers possess. For him, instead, it encompasses a six-aspect process involving comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new comprehension, which will be elaborated below separately with reference to Shulman's (1987) model and partly to Starkey's (2010) adapted model. As it is clear, the process is initiated and terminated with comprehension, but "Comprehension alone is not sufficient" (p. 14)a Other aspects need to be enriched with judgment and action to expect the best out of the model.

The paucity of studies centering both on actual real-world decision making by teachers (Lloyd, 2019) and on their pedagogical reasoning underlying each instructional decision (Siuty et al. 2018), especially in the foreign context of Iran (Khatib & Saeedian, in press) motivated the researchers to conduct the present study. Through the designed scenarios influenced by Lloyd's (2019) modified student and personal features, the study aimed to initially identify the novice Iranian EFL teachers' decisions in six imaginary scenarios and how they would inform their decisions pedagogically. In addition, it strived to check the teachers' actual real-world classroom decisions through observing their classes and to unveil their pedagogical reasoning through playing the video stimulated recall for them in one-to-one sessions between the novices and the experienced teacher.

Method

Participants

Of the initial cohort of 15 contacted teachers in two English language institutes in Marivan, Kurdistan, Iran, 13 agreed to take part in the study after the aims and expectations of the researchers had been introduced to them. However, one teacher failed to meet one of the inclusion criteria, namely teaching experience of less than three years. Two others also left the study; one because of personal reasons and the other due to quitting jobs. This means ten teachers (six females and four males) finally contributed to the fulfilment of this study. It is worth noting that all the participants' mother tongue was Kurdish. Following Farrell's

(2012) definition of novice teachers, the researchers only recruited those with less than three years of teaching experience. Of course, the second researcher, aged 30, acted as the only experienced participant of the study with ten years of teaching experience so that the novice teachers' pedagogical reasoning for their real-world decisions could be recorded as well. In fact, he played the role of researcher-as-participant, which is recommended by (Probst, 2016) and aligns with the qualitative studies' nature (Nassaji, 2020). Table 1 depicts that the participants age ranged from 19 to 25, and all but two teachers had taught for no more than one year. These two enjoyed less than two years of experience at the outset of the study as well. Prior to commencing the data collection, a consent form underscoring the anonymity of the participants and their remarks and contributions was handed in to them. In the same vein, to protect their identity, a number attached to the capital T letter (e.g., T1, T2, …., T9, and T10) is used to refer to the teachers. It is noteworthy that the order of tabulating the participants was based on their time of agreement to partake in the study.

Table 1
The Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants (age)	Gender	Experience (years/months)
Researcher* (30)	Male	10 years and 6 months
T1** (25)	Female	1 year and 9 months
T2 (22)	Female	1 year and 2 months
T3 (22)	Female	3 months
T4 (20)	Female	4 months
T5 (19)	Male	4 months
T6 (20)	Female	6 months
T7 (19)	Male	3 months
T8 (20)	Female	10 months
T9 (20)	Male	3 months
T10 (20)	Male	8 months

* *Note.* He is interchangeably referred to as researcher-as-participant
** *Note*. T1 stands for Teacher 1. The rest is true for the others.

Instrumentations
Three instruments, namely classroom observation, teaching scenarios,

and video stimulated recalls, came into play to accomplish the aims of the study. Before the commencement of the study, a number of already-recorded classes from the non-participants were collected from the institute manager. Having analytically observed them, the researcher-as-participant designed a number of scenarios based on the most frequently recurrent classroom episodes meeting the subcategories of Lloyd's (2019) student and personal features. Each scenario comprised of three parts: The thorough explanation of the scenario followed by two questions of '*what decision do you make?*' and '*why do you decide so?*'. The designed scenarios were used for revealing the novice teachers' possible or probably ideal responses to those situations. In addition, they guided the researcher-as-participant who sought for the representation of the scenarios in the real-world classroom contexts so that he could extract pertinent actual scenarios. These extracted scenarios acted as video stimulated recalls and helped uncovering the teachers' pedagogical reasoning for their actual decisions. Video stimulated recalls are considered as both "a particularly useful data-led reflective tool" by Walsh and Mann (2015, p. 12) and as the methodology to understand teachers' reflections about their actual performance by Martinelle (2020).

Procedures

The first step before the official commencement of collecting the data was to prove the participants and all their contributions confidential; thus, an ethical clearance was sought from them. Next, the process of designing the required teaching scenarios was initiated by analyzing the non-participants' recorded class videos to keep track of the most recurrent episodes. Out of these frequently repeated episodes, the tentative teaching scenarios following the guidelines of Lloyd's (2019) student and personal features were designed. Then, these extracted scenarios were given to a panel of three experts in the field, who commented to have an equal number of scenarios for each feature. This resulted in amalgamating some of them, which in turn led to both modifying Lloyd's features and reducing the number of the finalized scenarios to six – three for the student features (i.e., students'

proficiency level, behavior, and motivation) and three for the personal features (i.e., teacher agency, rapport, and personality traits).

The scenarios were distributed among the participants who were to imagine them and provide imaginary or non-real-world decisions and reasoning for them. This was followed by observing and recording their classes, out of which the real-world classroom decisions representing the designed scenarios were extracted. The researcher-as-participant, who was accountable for collecting the data, cut the actual classroom scenarios from the participants' analyzed classes using a specific video cutter software program. They were finally sent out to the first researcher, who is an expert in the field, to approve of so that the one-to-one sessions between the experienced teacher and the novices could be started. Aiming to disclose the novice teachers' pedagogical reasoning, these sessions were guided by the extracted video stimulated recalls, which acted as catalyzers in enabling the teachers to remember what they had actually performed in their classes.

Data Analysis

Conversation analysis was used to analyze the data. After the novice Iranian EFL teachers' minds were stimulated to recall their actual and real-world decisions and were asked to defend them, the interactions between them and the researcher-as-participant were analyzed by conversation analysis. Walsh's (2011) transcription conventions (attached in Appendix A) were used to facilitate and unity transcribing the interactions. A panel of three experts in the field were requested to leave their comments on the extracted interactions to ensure their dependability (Nassaji, 2020). The intercoder agreement, being commonly referred to as "good practice in qualitative analysis," (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020, p. 1), was guaranteed by applying all their recommended modifications. To give weight to the credibility of the study, the research-oriented way of member checking was made use of (Nassaji, 2020). To do so, prior to using the researchers' interpretations for research purposes, the findings were sent back to the participants and their opinions about them was sought for. This way the inclusiveness of the interpretations could be enhanced as well. To

confirm the transferability of the data, the researchers have attempted to include as many vignettes and excerpts as permitted by the journal word limits and declare to provide more for interested scholars who send an email request.

Results

The data collected through distributing the imaginary scenarios among the novice teachers prior to observing their classes were used to address a part of the following research question. To make the comparison between the teachers' decisions and reasoning in imaginary and actual scenarios tangible, their imaginary responses to the determined scenarios have been followed by their actual ones immediately after each scenario in the student and personal features.

(1) What are novice English language teachers' imaginary and actual decision making and pedagogical reasoning?

In a non-interactive manner, the collected vignettes revealed the novice Iranian EFL teachers' decisions (bold font) and pedagogical reasoning (underlined) to make presenting the data more academic (Martin et al., 2017). Prior to presenting the vignettes, an overall description of the teachers' decision and/or reasoning commonalities has been jotted down. Upon failing to locate a similarity, the explanation of each teacher's responses has been preceded by the pertinent vignette. Instead of verbatim statements, the key points declared in the written scenarios or interactions have been used to both save space and make the analysis easier (Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2020). To protect the identity of the teachers, they have been referred to as T1, T2, T3, …, and T10. For the second part of the first research question, the teachers' actual classroom decisions and their reasoning for each scenario inspired by the stimulated recall videos have been reported to uncover their possible matches or mismatches with the imaginary ones.

Student Features

The first scenario in student features, namely *dealing with heterogeneous classes*, attempted to determine how the novice teachers could handle classes with students of various proficiency levels in a way

all students benefit from it. Except for T2, all the teachers declared they would request the institute manager to rerun another placement test and assign the learners in appropriate classes according to their proficiency level. This was because they believed running such a class was impossible, and any upcoming failure from the learners would place the blame on the teachers. T1, on the other hand, seemed to have a strategy to cope with the challenge. She would go for grouping the learners in such a way that each group consisted of a high and a low achiever.

In reality, six teachers, who were cognizant of the learners' proficiency level differences, explained the materials at hand at least twice. They argued that they were responsible for all the learners, and disregarding low achievers would ruin their rights. Without getting a confirmation check, three of the teachers [T1, T7, and T9] repeated the taught materials only if the learners asked for that. For them, no questions from the learners would be interpreted as the ease of the materials for them; thus, repetition would only waste the class time. T3 was the only teacher, who somehow performed what she had imagined to do in the imaginary phase. She started scolding the institute furiously for placing the current learners in one class and informed the researcher of her requesting the institute manager for putting the learners in different classes. Her mere reason for this was losing her temper because of the differences in the learners' proficiency levels.

By setting the second scenario, *coping with undisciplined learners*, the researchers intended to see the way learners' behavior would be treated by the teachers. In the imaginary phase, T7 and T10 declared that they would opt for a punishment, bombarding the latecomer with numerous content-related questions. They believed that traditional ways of punishment are not effective anymore, but this way of punishment could lead the learner toward being better. The other eight teachers would ask the latecomer for the reason behind his tardiness mainly because of warning the student to be more punctual in the future. Some of these teachers would ask for the reason for the sheer sake of knowing the reason because being late can happen to everyone. Based on vignette 1, T4 would decide to ask why the learner has not arrived

on time and want him to stay focused for the rest of the class, and her reasoning would only be setting the context for him to keep up with the class.

Vignette 1

T4: *I ask the reason for his delay, after that I want him to sit quietly in a corner and just pay attention to the class **because** I want him to be calm and not worry about his delay **so that** he can better understand his lesson.*

In reality, seven teachers asked the latecomer to justify his or her unpunctuality but finally let the learner join the class. The underlying reasons for them were not only to practically guide other learners to be present in the classroom on time but also to imply that the teacher cares about the learners' presence. In contrast, T2, T6, and T8 neglected the latecomer to abstain from the possible interruption caused by the teachers' request for any reasons.

The final scenario in student features discussed *learners' unwillingness to participate* aiming to see how the teachers motivated the learners to partake in the assigned tasks. T4 with a reasoning that did not carry any conformity with her decision would imagine changing the task at hand for the reluctant learner. T5 and T7 would go for justifying the learner through explaining the importance of the exercise at hand. While the former's reasoning seemed to be in contrast with his decision, T7 believed this way the learner would be motivated to engage in the exercise. The other teacher would assist the learner in becoming more willing to take part by simplifying the language and would also seek for the excuses undergirding their unwillingness.

The teachers actually did not perform what they claimed to do. T3 and T6 simply neglected the unwilling learners. T3 contended that no one could stop that learner from speaking Kurdish, and T6's reason was not disclosed. T8 was the only teacher who explained the importance of such exercises when he was challenged by the learner. She backed her decision through stating that the book was replete with such exercises and convincing the learner would reduce asking such questions in the

future. In an interesting situation that happened for the other seven teachers, they were all engaged in a communication in which the teachers insisted on using English, but the learners kept conveying their message (either asking questions or answering questions) in Kurdish. Their reasoning could be synopsized into the learners' lower proficiency level and their unalterable personality. For example, in one of her classes, T2 encountered a male learner whose main contributions were all delivered in his mother tongue. Because of sharing the same mother tongue, T2 also understood the learner, and despite insisting on the target language, she finally failed to get him to speak in English.

Excerpt 1. *Learners' unwillingness to participate in student features in the PRE-TEC*

12.   E: look! he just uses (2) in fact… hhmm the only thing he does is just using… continuously using hhmm=

13. T2:   =Kurdish language/Kurdish language=

14.   E: =and why do you think he's still continuing that? why
do you think he speak that much (2) in… his mother tongue?

15.   T2:   (4) because he's not good in English

16.   E: aha! another reason?

17.   T2:   (3) and… he… isn… he doesn't have confidence

In excerpt 1, the experienced teacher sought to explore why the learner continuously uses his mother tongue (in 12 and 14), and the novice teacher laid the fault on the learner's low proficiency level (in 15) and later thought of his low confidence level as another culprit (in 17).

To sum up, in the first scenario in student features the teachers' imaginary and actual classroom decisions were dramatically different because from among all the participants, only T3 actualized what she would imagine to do. In dealing with the learners' behavior, the teachers in the second scenario mainly made similar imaginary and actual decisions because they all intended to know the reason behind the learners' tardiness. Some of the teachers, of course, saw a change in their actual decision and ignored the latecomer to avoid interrupting the

other speaker. To tackle the issue of learners' reluctance in participating in the class activities, the third scenario was arisen. However, all the teachers in effect did differently from their imaginary cases. A majority of them would not even thought of allowing the learners to use Kurdish, but in fact they were involved in a normal Kurdish-English give-and-take strategy.

Personal Features

Through the first scenario, namely *not handing in the assignment despite your placing much emphasis on unacceptability of any excuses*, it could be checked whether and how the novice teachers were determined to show their power of agency. Although not determining the type of punishment clearly, T2 and T3 would go for penalizing such learners and showing the consequences of not meeting the deadlines seriously. They contended that teachers already ponder over what should be implemented in the classroom and learners should merely follow it. Seemingly the other eight teachers would represent their power by reducing some points from the allocated score to the assigned homework for those who have handed in the assignment later than the due date. They backed their decision by giving more credit to the punctual learners and avoiding making a bad habit of such tardiness in delivering assignments. For example, in vignette2, having sought for the reasons, T10 would extend the time but would set a penalty for the ones who have not been punctual in order to remind them of their responsibility as learners.

Vignette 2

T10: *I ask them to explain why they didn't do it and tell them they can give me the assignment next session, but they will get only 60 percent of the whole mark at the max* **because minor punishments/penalties would make them get back** *to doing their job as a student*

In the actual classroom setting, eight of the teachers handled the situation by extending the deadline and giving another chance to the learners, but they subtracted some points from their class activity score. They were mainly concerned about the frequency of postponing the deadlines for delivering the assignments. In a similar trend to the

imaginary responses, only T3 and T6 did not accept the learners' excuses for violating due dates and indicated that because punctuality should be practiced in the classroom, they were reluctant to grant another opportunity to them.

In the second scenario, the teachers were supposed to *deal with new learners at the beginning of terms*. It aimed to see how the teachers could build rapport with the newcomers and ease the conditions for them to get along with the other learners. Although the ways were not clearly defined, seven teachers would make an endeavor to build a good relationship with new attendees to make them feel relaxed to participate in the class discussions. T5 and T10 would try to familiarize the newcomers with the general class procedures and rules so that the feeling of being afraid is alleviated and they make sure their status is not at risk. T4 would tackle the issue by not differentiating between the old and new learners to increase their motivation in the new class.

In practice, like the imaginary responses, none of the teachers introduced themselves. A majority of them asked the learners to introduce themselves, but while some asked both old and new ones, some others only asked the new ones to do so. They demanded that the learners explain some demographic information about themselves so that they get familiar with one another and their proficiency level is determined by their teacher. T4 and T7 simply jumped to starting the class with any introductory speech, but they were requested by the old learners to ask the new ones some introductory questions. They informed their decision by stating that they had forgotten to do so or they suffered from a high degree of stress stopping them to think of such a way. In the same vein, claiming that she was negatively affected by her verbal argument with her mother, T6 just started the class as though she had already instructed the learners for a number of sessions.

The final scenario targeted at the novice teachers' reactions to the times when there is *a contradiction between what you think is true and what actually happens in the classroom*. Among all the participants, only T2, T3, and T10 would nullify the learners' requests or what they actually are performing. Regardless of the conditions, they just obligate

the learners to follow what they have dictated. While T3 failed to support her decision, the other two considered themselves as teachers and controllers of the classroom and that their plans were to be taken seriously. The other teachers would all take learners' requests into account, and the difference would only lie on setting conditions for accepting them or not. Being logical and harmless for the whole class were the requirements demanded by T1, T7, T8, and T9. Except for T9, who seemed to be seeking for excuses to admonish the learners, T1, T7, and T8 mentioned constructive reasons to back their decisions. The other three teachers, valuing mutual respect and seeking for satisfaction, would also continue what the learners desired.

Five of the teachers accepted to modify their plan according to the learners' interest so that they could benefit from that more by seeing themselves in a more comfortable setting. T4, T5, T7, T8, and T10 all disagreed with the objections and stated that the learners did not know the value or importance of their teachers' plan on which a lot time had been spent. T5 scolded them for being too hasty in judgement, or he was sure of his plan. Based on excerpt 2, asking the learners to pay attention to the definition of different words about fashion and match them with some pictures, T10 was contradicted by a female learner who objected to why they should know those differences.

Excerpt 2. *A contradiction between what you think is true and what actually happens in the classroom in personal features in the PRE-TEC*

1.   E: so you said at first do this… then do this then we will check

the answers (2) this is what you said! let's see (**watching the related video stimulated recall in which the learner in Kurdish asks, 'what are the uses of these words and figures?' and T10 explains everything in Kurdish to the whole class to justify the reason**) and this is it… you think it is good and it is important for them to know that but the students… still have a big! question mark

2.   T10:   (**happily**) so she was convinced

3.   E: yeah! finally you convinced her that the exercise (3)

but…

you had to say the reason… yeah?=

4.   T10:   =yeah! yeah she was really! unsure about why should learn

this subject

5.   E: aha

6.   T10:   and she clearly didn't know how to use them and these vocabulary is going to be useful for them so ((2))=

7.   E: and do you think you fixed the problem? maybe that was a

question other teachers also had but they (**thinking about the word**) didn't dare to ask

8.   T10:   I think it was necessary and she will never ask these questions anymore

9.   E: and why didn't you skip it? and provided all that explanation in Kurdish?

10.   T10:   well, it's not good to do what students say. I am the teacher

and I know something that they do not know.

Based on excerpt 2, T10 agreed to justify why doing those types of exercises is of high significance for those who intend to learn a foreign language. He expressed all his words in Kurdish when he was convincing the learners, but he was satisfied with the result of his long speech about learning culture and language simultaneously (in 2) and analyzed what he had done again (in 4). He found that explanation necessary to persuade the learners about such exercises in the future (in 8). Regarding the reason underpinning his decision, T10 declared that he is the one who is responsible for controlling the class (in 10).

To sum up, the last three scenarios reflecting teachers' power of agency, rapport and personality traits were assigned to personal features. The first scenario, attempting to check the teachers' decision when learners fail to hand in the assigned homework before the appointed time, proved that novices would mainly prefer to display their power of agency by lowering the score for such learners. They informed

their decision by the importance of distinguishing learners who meet the deadlines from those who are not concerned about the due date. Except for one teacher (i.e., T6), all others actually put their imaginary response to the this scenario in practice again. The second scenario in the personal features coped with starting a class with a combination of new and old learners. Interestingly, none of the teachers introduced themselves. However, inquiring the learners to introduce themselves was the most frequent decision among the participants in both imaginary and actual phases because they mainly found rapport building essential for continuing the class. The final scenario dealt with a relatively recurrent situation when learners intend to do something other than what their teacher has stated. All, but three, would imagine having no problem with changing their plan and running it based on the learners' requests or interests; of course, some with setting conditions and some without. In practice, agreeing to change the plan was favored by half of the teachers who saw more comfort and effectiveness in the modified plan. The other half simply followed their plan and refused the suggested one due to the preparation time spent on that or the learners' hasty judgement about the result.

Discussion

Benefiting from Lloyd's (2019) modified student and personal features, this study aimed to at first identify the novice Iranian EFL teachers' decision making and pedagogical reasoning for the designed scenarios on an imaginary basis and then compare them with their actual real-world ones. The comparison facilitated finding the matches and mismatches in the teachers' responses to the scenarios in these two different times. The findings revealed that only in one of the scenarios in student features did the teachers make similar decisions and reasons. This means their imaginary and real-world performance and their subsequent justifications were completely different in the other two scenarios. The differences in the teachers' responses in the two investigated times could be justified by the reasons they provided, which is in line with Smith and Loughran's (2017) explanation about the effect of pedagogical reasoning on informing teachers' decision

making. Therefore, teachers' decisions speak to their reasoning, which is in turn shaped and reshaped by some variables like students' knowledge or proficiency level, behavior, and motivation, at least in this study. It is argued that such factors shape the foundations of the teachers' reasoning and decisions because during the video stimulated recall sessions a number of extracted situations were visually played back, and the novices backed themselves using the identical reasons they had initially written. For instance, most of the teachers would imagine themselves demanding a reason from the latecomer and actually did so in reality merely because of knowing the reason and conveying the importance of the class to the students. In addition, It is claimed that these variables are reshaping as well because in agreement with Khatib and Saeedian (in press) the teachers in effect performed differently from the imaginary situation at least in two of the scenarios in student features.

As in Lloyd's (2019) study, the most frequent reasoning behind the novice EFL teachers concerned the students they instructed. Some decisions were made mainly because of the students' knowledge or proficiency level, behavior, and motivation. Although in Lloyd's (2019) study, age and gender were reported to be influential as well, they were not included in this study because of not being cited by the participants. For example, at the imaginary phase, the teachers referred to the intolerability of differences in students' proficiency levels when running a heterogeneous class because of the plausible low outcomes of their students and the subsequent blame from parents and the institute manager. This was untrue of nine of the teachers whose reasoning got them to tackle the problem by re-explaining the materials either automatically or upon the students' request. Of course, one reason for not considering age and gender as contributing factors in the teachers' decisions might lie in the nature of the designed scenarios.

The findings showed that the teachers' decisions could strongly influence the flow of conversation in the classroom as well. In the first scenario in student features, T3's decision about reprimanding the whole institute for holding such a class with students of different

proficiency level resulted in giving away the chance of any communication even after her speech came to an end. Seemingly, all he students, even the more used-to-be active ones, had lost their motivation and did not show any interest in the afterward classroom discussions. This mirrors the findings of the previously conducted studies by Walsh (2011) and Khatib and Saeedian (in press). Furthermore, the association between the teachers' decisions and their impacts of the students' performance was also confirmed by Südkamp et al. (2014).

The last discrepancy between the Iranian novice teachers' real-word and imaginary decisions concerned their codeswitching, which was not even thought of in the imaginary scenario but proved inevitable when overcoming the real-world one. None of the teachers would even imagine shifting to their mother tongue as a means of fixing the issue of students' reticence or reluctance to participate in the class, but some of them did so, though with some disinclination, in practice. This corroborates the finding of Khatib and Saeedian (in press) and Saeedian (in press), who concluded that codeswitching is a means of accomplishing Iranian EFL teachers' designated pedagogic goals. In general, the findings suggest that codeswitching in learners-teacher interactions in an EFL context could either be because of the complexity of the situation that demands teachers to do so to confront the challenge or be rooted from learners' insistence on delivering their message in their mother tongue.

The other category of features why the teachers did what they did concerned the personal aspects. The teachers' idiosyncratic characteristics allowed them to speak out *who* they were as teachers and what beliefs and values they held for their practice. The analysis of the data revealed that why the teachers sometimes implemented a specific practice lied in the teacher agency or power, the concern about the type of interaction they had and its possible effect on the teachers' rapport building, and their personality traits that informed their practice. Lloyd (2019) identified four features showcasing the personal attributes that impact teachers' decisionsn Among them were confidence and stress level that were not referred to by the teachers although they could be

expected because of their low experience. Teacher agency and rapport were the other two characteristics that shaped the personal features in Lloyd's (2019) study to which the designed scenarios could be related. The final teaching scenario could mirror the teachers' personality traits when encountering contradiction between what they instruct to be done and what learners do in practice.

Regarding the personal features, the teachers made identical decisions and provided similar reasons in two of the scenarios. In the third scenario, a conformity could be observed in half of the teachers' responses, but the other half changed their plan of action when seeing the contradiction between what they believed was worth doing and what was actually being done by the learners. The commonalities between the teachers' responses in the personal features support Smith and Loughran (2017) as the participants did not undergo any changes in their reasoning, and no change in their real-world decisions could be expected as well.

Unlike a number of studies like Borko et al. (2008), Kärner et al. (2021), and Salokangas et al. (2020), which were not concerned with classroom realities, this study took into account the real-life conditions affecting the teachers' decisionse The discrepancies between the teachers' decisions and justifications behind them in the imaginary and actual scenarios showed how different factors could negatively or positively impact the teachers' performance. This is not considered in studies that do investigate such realities, including the just-mentioned ones.

Conclusion and Implication

Through using video stimulated recalls, this study aimed to fill a void in the field as called for by Lloyd (2019). She underlined the paucity of research on "the realities of everyday classroom life" (p. 167). Accordingly, this study attempted to initially keep a record of ten novice Iranian EFL teachers' imaginary decisions and reasoning in a total of six scenarios and then compare them with what they actually performed in the real-world classroom settings. Unlike Lloyd (2019) with her mere focus on real-world decisions, this study both focused on

the teachers' imaginary or non-real-world decisions and traced their pedagogical reasoning in both situations.

A number of incongruities were noticed in the teachers' decision making and pedagogical reasoning, but they were left unnoticed and no attempt was made to tackle them. This could have even been improved if the participants had been offered a teacher education program, endeavoring to fill the disclosed gaps in the teachers' ideals and real classroom practice. The findings support the idea by Smith and Loughran (2017) that teachers go through some changes in their decisions if their pedagogical reasoning changes. In the same vein, the participants who changed their decision in the student features defended their decision using a reason other than that of the imaginary case. This means their decisions underwent some changes whenever their reasoning changed.

The present findings are derived from only novice EFL teachers because it used Lloyd's (2019) results, which did not reveal considerable differences between the variables affecting the experienced and novice teachers' decisions. Exposing the novices to experienced teachers would make for emergence of different decisions from the participants in this EFL context. In addition, more numbers of recorded and analyzed real-world scenarios over a long time period, not just one as in this study, would help depicting a deeper picture of our understanding of the changes the participants would like to undergo or resist. This could even be reached without donating a time to a teacher education program. With that, it could more probably be more fruitful for the participants and direct them toward more professionalism in their decisions and more determination in their reasoning. Owing to the imposed popularity of online mediums caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and successively facilitation of conducting borderless research, future researchers are recommended to compare two groups of teachers in two EFL and English as a second language (ESL) settings to see the differences between their decisions and reasoning. The final shortcoming on which more research should be undertaken is not offering any dialogic assistance from a more experienced teacher to the

novices. In other words, enriching studies in this purview could be assured to a great extent if a sociocultural perspective is offered.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions; adopted from Walsh's (2011, p. 216)

T: - teacher
L: - learner (not identified)
LI, L2, etc: - identified learner
LL: - several learners at once or the whole class
- overlapping or simultaneous utterances by more than one learner
 [do you understand?]
[I see]   - overlap between teacher and learner
- turn continues, or one turn follows another without any pause.
- pause of one second or less marked by three periods.
(4)   - silence; length given in seconds
?   - rising intonation − question or other
!   - emphatic speech: falling intonation
- unintelligible 4 seconds a stretch of unintelligible speech with the length given in seconds
Paul, Peter, Mary   - capitals are only used for proper nouns
 T organises groups   - editor's comments (in bold type)