

Deconstructing the Traditional Supervision Model in an EFL Context: Tracing Binary Oppositions and Aporias in the Absence of Constructive Collaboration Between Teachers and Supervisors

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ABSTRACT

This study applies Jacques Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework to examine the traditional supervision model at the Iran Language Institute (ILI), a leading EFL institution in Iran with 290 branches serving 1.2 million students annually. Through a qualitative case study employing Critical Discourse Analysis, it investigates how binary oppositions-supervisor/teacher, expert/novice, evaluation/development-and aporias, such as standardization versus individuality and professional growth versus punitive evaluation, sustain hierarchical power dynamics that constrain teacher agency and pedagogical innovation. Data from semi-structured interviews, classroom and feedback session observations, ILI policy documents, and teachers' reflective journals reveal that unannounced observations and rigid rubrics prioritize compliance over creativity. This approach fosters teacher anxiety, performative teaching, and punitive outcomes, such as demotion to lower-level classes. Key contradictions include: (1) ILI's mission of quality education versus evaluative supervision; (2) standardized methodologies versus diverse classroom needs; and (3) professional growth goals versus punitive evaluations. To address these issues, the study proposes three reforms: dialogic feedback to foster reciprocal dialogue, co-constructed evaluation criteria incorporating teachers' contextual expertise, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to promote peer-driven learning. By addressing a gap in Middle Eastern EFL supervision research, this study advances theoretical discourse on power dynamics in supervision and offers practical strategies for equitable, teacher-centered practices at ILI, with implications for international EFL contexts seeking transformative supervisory frameworks.

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1. Introduction

Teacher supervision in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education profoundly influences instructional quality and professional development, yet its implementation

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remains a contested terrain marked by theoretical and practical complexities. Classroom observation, a central pillar of supervisory practice, possesses the potential to enhance pedagogical efficacy when conducted with care and intentionality but risks fostering anxiety, resistance, or superficial compliance when executed in an authoritarian or poorly structured manner (Merç, 2015; Wragg, 1999). At the Iran Language Institute (ILI), a leading EFL institution founded in 1925, with approximately 290 branches serving 1.2 million students annually across Iran (Iran Language Institute, 2021), the traditional supervision model exemplifies these challenges. Characterized by unannounced observations and rigid evaluative criteria, ILI's supervision model often marginalizes teacher agency, fosters anxiety, and contradicts the institute's mission to deliver high-quality language education through collaborative and innovative practices.

The traditional supervision model at ILI, rooted in hierarchical and evaluative practices, creates significant barriers to effective teacher-supervisor collaboration, undermining teacher agency and pedagogical innovation. Unannounced classroom observations and standardized rubrics prioritize compliance with institutional mandates over responsiveness to diverse classroom needs, leading to teacher anxiety, performative teaching, and punitive outcomes, such as demotion to lower-level classes (Azizpour & Gholami, 2021; Khaef & Karimnia, 2021). These practices foster power imbalances and internal contradictions, such as the tension between ILI's goal of fostering professional growth and its punitive evaluation methods, which stifle the institute's mission to deliver high-quality EFL education. This study seeks to deconstruct these dynamics to propose a more equitable, collaborative supervisory framework tailored to Iran's EFL context.

Guided by Jacques Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework, this study aims to unravel the binary oppositions and aporias embedded within ILI's supervision model, which sustain hierarchical power dynamics and impede collaborative practices. Binary oppositions, as defined by Derrida, are hierarchical dualities inherent in language and discourse that privilege one term over another—such as supervisor versus teacher, expert versus novice, and evaluation versus development—thereby constructing power imbalances that marginalize the less privileged term. In ILI's context, these oppositions manifest in discourses that position supervisors as authoritative arbiters and teachers as subordinate implementers, suppressing teachers' contextual expertise and agency. For example, the supervisor/teacher binary privileges institutional authority, limiting reciprocal dialogue. Aporias, in Derridean terms, are irresolvable contradictions or impasses that destabilize these discourses, such as the tension between ILI's goal of standardization versus the need for pedagogical individuality, or the espoused aim of professional growth versus the reality of punitive evaluations. These aporias reveal how ILI's supervisory practices contradict its mission to foster high-quality education, as rigid rubrics and unannounced observations prioritize compliance over innovation. By exposing these discursive structures, deconstruction seeks to disrupt entrenched hierarchies and open pathways for reimagining supervision as a dialogic, equitable process that empowers teachers and aligns with ILI's educational goals in Iran's culturally nuanced EFL context.

The scholarly literature highlights the limitations of traditional supervision models across educational contexts. Zepeda and Ponticell (2018) argue that evaluative supervision suppresses teacher agency and innovation, advocating for collaborative models that prioritize mutual learning and professional dialogue. In EFL settings, Copland and Donaghue (2019) and Wang (2017) underscore the necessity of context-

sensitive supervision, critiquing standardized approaches that fail to address the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of language classrooms. Azizpour and Gholami (2021) affirm supervision's potential to cultivate effective teaching techniques and enhance classroom awareness, yet Merç (2015) identifies observation-induced anxiety as a significant barrier to teacher engagement. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2011) contend that well-designed observation systems can foster reflective practice and pedagogical growth, but poorly implemented systems risk alienating educators, leading to disengagement or performative compliance. However, these studies predominantly focus on Western or East Asian EFL contexts, with scant attention to Middle Eastern settings like Iran. Iranian studies, such as Badrkhani (2021) and Noughabi and Ghasemi (2024), explore teaching challenges or learner outcomes, such as technological barriers or digital learning, but largely overlook the supervisory dynamics critical to the operational framework. Moreover, the literature rarely employs a deconstructive lens to analyze the discourses perpetuating power imbalances and contradictions in EFL supervision, leaving a significant gap in understanding ILI's supervisory landscape, where cultural expectations and institutional policies shape teacher-supervisor interactions.

Deconstruction, as articulated by Derrida (1976), provides a robust theoretical framework to address these gaps by interrogating the binary oppositions and aporias that underpin supervisory practices. Kamali (2021) posits that deconstructive pedagogy, integrated with post-method approaches, enables the identification and mitigation of barriers to effective teaching, fostering adaptive and context-responsive practices. Biesta and Stams (2001) and Higgs (2002) propose that deconstruction reframes education as a process oriented toward responsibility, otherness, and justice, offering a philosophical foundation for reconceptualizing supervision as a dialogic encounter that respects educators' individuality. Yusofi et al. (2017) demonstrate deconstruction's empirical potential, showing how redefining teacher-student roles in EFL classrooms can shift power dynamics, a concept extensible to teacher-supervisor interactions. Farahani (2014) cautions that deconstruction's radical focus may prioritize one issue over others, necessitating a balanced and contextually grounded application. Despite these contributions, the literature rarely applies deconstruction to supervision or focuses on Iran's EFL context, underscoring the need for research that critically examines ILI's supervisory model to promote collaborative, equitable practices that empower teachers and enhance instructional quality.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What binary oppositions underpin the traditional supervision model at the Iran Language Institute, and how do they shape teacher-supervisor interactions?

Research Question 2: What aporias arise from the contradictions between the goals and practices of supervision at ILI, and how do they impact teacher professional development?

Research Question 3: How can constructive collaboration between teachers and supervisors be fostered to address these binary oppositions and aporias in the ILI context?

By addressing these questions, this research seeks to illuminate the discursive and practical challenges of ILI's traditional supervision model, contributing to the theoretical discourse on EFL teacher supervision and offering actionable insights for

transformative practices that empower teachers, enhance instructional quality, and align with the cultural and institutional imperatives of Iran's EFL context.

2. Review of Literature

The supervision of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is a critical yet under-examined aspect of educational practice, particularly in culturally and institutionally distinct settings like the Iran Language Institute (ILI). This narrative review prioritizes studies focused on EFL supervision to establish a clear foundation for analyzing ILI's hierarchical model, followed by broader EFL studies to contextualize the discourse. By synthesizing international and Middle Eastern research from 2017 to 2025, it critically examines methodologies, highlights gaps in addressing supervisory power dynamics, and underscores the need for a deconstructive approach to unravel binary oppositions (e.g., supervisor/teacher, evaluation/development) and aporias (e.g., growth vs. evaluation) in ILI's context.

Globally, Copland and Donaghue (2019) provided a focused examination of EFL supervision, analyzing post-observation feedback in pre-service teacher training through discourse analysis of feedback sessions. Their findings identified tensions in feedback delivery, such as supervisors' prioritization of evaluation over dialogue, which stifled teacher development. This methodology, particularly its use of discourse analysis, offers a precedent for applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to ILI's supervision model, where evaluative feedback dominates. However, the study's focus on pre-service teachers limits its applicability to ILI's in-service context, where experienced teachers navigate entrenched hierarchies. Wang (2017) investigated EFL teacher supervision in China, using a qualitative case study with interviews and classroom observations, analyzed thematically to highlight contextual challenges. The study's emphasis on the misalignment between standardized supervision and diverse classroom needs is highly relevant to ILI, but its East Asian context differs from Iran's cultural and institutional landscape, necessitating localized analysis. Zepeda and Ponticell (2018) explored instructional supervision broadly, employing a qualitative case study with interviews, observations, and document analysis. Their advocacy for collaborative supervision models, emphasizing dialogic feedback, directly informs ILI's need to shift from hierarchical to reciprocal practices. However, its non-EFL focus dilutes its applicability to ILI's linguistic and cultural complexities.

Burns and Badiali (2018) examined collaborative supervision in general education, using a qualitative case study with thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and documents. Their dialogic framework aligns with ILI's need for collaboration but overlooks EFL-specific challenges, such as linguistic diversity. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2011) investigated classroom observation conditions in EFL contexts, using a qualitative approach with teacher surveys and interviews. Their findings on the importance of collaborative observation systems resonate with ILI's need to foster teacher engagement, though their European focus limits cultural specificity. These supervision-focused studies collectively highlight the need for context-sensitive, collaborative approaches but lack a deconstructive lens to unpack the discourses perpetuating hierarchical binaries and aporias, a gap this study addresses in ILI's context.

In the Iranian EFL context, Badrkhani (2021) explored novice teachers' challenges during the shift to online education amid COVID-19, using a qualitative case study with interviews and virtual observations. Thematic analysis revealed barriers like

technological limitations and inadequate supervisory support, but the study sidesteps power dynamics in supervision, limiting its relevance to ILI's hierarchical model. Noughabi and Ghasemi (2024) investigated informal digital learning among Iranian EFL learners, employing a correlational design with surveys (n=325) and structural equation modeling. While rigorous, this learner-focused study neglects teacher-supervisor interactions, a critical oversight for ILI. Xodabande et al. (2022) examined mobile-assisted vocabulary learning in Iran, using a quasi-experimental design with pre/post-tests (n=86) and interviews, analyzed with t-tests and thematic coding. Its mixed-methods approach offers a model for studying ILI's supervision, but its focus on learner outcomes marginalizes supervisory dynamics.

In the broader Middle Eastern context, Alghasab (2025) explored Kuwaiti students' use of AI tools in EFL writing, using a mixed-methods design with questionnaires (n=69) and interviews (n=35). The study's balance of quantitative and qualitative methods is relevant for ILI, but its learner-centric focus ignores supervision. Khan (2021) examined Saudi English programs under Vision 2030, using a questionnaire (n=132) and descriptive statistics. Its student focus and descriptive approach limit its relevance to ILI's supervisory challenges. Chen et al. (2025) conducted bibliometric analyses of EFL reading and strategy-based instruction, using Web of Science data and VOS viewer. These macro-level studies map worldwide trends but fail to address supervision-specific dynamics, underscoring the need for focused research on ILI.

The reviewed studies employ diverse methodologies—qualitative case studies (Badrkhani, 2021; Burns & Badiali, 2018; Wang, 2017), mixed-methods (Alghasab, 2025; Xodabande et al., 2022), discourse analysis (Copland & Donaghue, 2019), and bibliometric analyses (Chen et al., 2025). However, they collectively fail to adopt a deconstructive framework or CDA to interrogate the binary oppositions and aporias that define traditional supervision models, particularly in Iran's hierarchical EFL context. Middle Eastern studies focus on learners, sidelining teacher-supervisor interactions, while international studies lack cultural specificity. This study addresses these gaps by employing CDA within a qualitative case study to deconstruct ILI's supervision model, using interviews, observations, documents, and journals to explore pathways for collaborative supervision.

3. Theoretical Framework

Jacques Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework serves as the foundational lens for this study, guiding the analysis of ILI's traditional supervision model by interrogating binary oppositions and aporias that sustain power imbalances. Deconstruction challenges hierarchical dualities inherent in discourse, such as supervisor versus teacher, expert versus novice, and evaluation versus development, which privilege one term over another, marginalizing teachers' agency. Aporias, as irresolvable contradictions, reveal tensions between ILI's goals (e.g., quality education, professional growth) and practices (e.g., punitive evaluations), destabilizing dominant discourses.

In education, deconstruction reframes practices toward responsibility and otherness, emphasizing educators' individuality (Biesta & Stams, 2001; Higgs, 2002). Yusofi et al. (2017) applied deconstruction to shift teacher-student roles in EFL classrooms, a concept extensible to teacher-supervisor interactions. Kamali (2021) integrated deconstruction with post-method pedagogy to foster adaptive teaching, relevant to ILI's need for context-responsive supervision. Farahani (2014) cautions that

deconstruction's radical focus may prioritize one issue over others, necessitating a balanced approach. This framework was chosen for its ability to unpack hierarchical discourses and propose equitable practices, aligning with the study's aim to reimagine supervision by connecting binaries to power dynamics and aporias to institutional contradictions.

4. Methods

This section outlines the qualitative case study design, participant selection, data collection methods, and analytical procedures used to deconstruct the Iran Language Institute's supervision model, employing Critical Discourse Analysis within Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework to address the research questions.

4-1. Research Design

This study employed a single instrumental case study design, focusing on the Iran Language Institute (ILI) as a whole, to deconstruct its traditional supervision model across multiple urban branches (Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Kerman) and capture diverse perspectives within its standardized framework. The study utilized Jacques Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework to interrogate binary oppositions (e.g., supervisor/teacher, evaluation/development) and aporias (e.g., contradictions between supervisory goals and practices). A qualitative case study, as described by Stake (1995), was well-suited for exploring complex, context-specific phenomena, enabling an in-depth examination of ILI's supervision model within its unique institutional and cultural milieu. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), informed by Fairclough's (1995) framework, served as the analytical lens to deconstruct the linguistic and practical discourses that shaped power dynamics and hindered collaboration in ILI's supervision processes.

Deconstruction, as Derrida (1976) conceptualized, sought to expose and destabilize binary oppositions and inherent contradictions within texts and practices, revealing how these structures sustained power imbalances. In education, deconstruction challenges dominant discourses by questioning hierarchical assumptions and uncovering marginalized perspectives (Biesta & Stams, 2001). For example, Higgs (2002) applied deconstruction to reframe education as a process concerned with responsibility and otherness, emphasizing the singularity of learners and educators. Similarly, Yusofi et al. (2017) utilized a quasi-transcendental deconstructive approach to redefine teacher-student roles in EFL classrooms, demonstrating how deconstruction shifts power dynamics. Kamali (2021) integrated deconstruction with post-method pedagogy to identify barriers to effective teaching, advocating for adaptive practices. These studies illustrated deconstruction's potential to interrogate educational discourses, making it an apt framework for analyzing ILI's supervision model, where hierarchical binaries and aporias impeded collaborative professional development.

The study was situated at the Iran Language Institute (ILI), a prominent EFL institution established in 1925, operating approximately 290 branches across 130 cities in Iran and serving 1.2 million students annually (Iran Language Institute, 2021). ILI's supervision model relied on unannounced classroom observations by authoritative supervisors to enforce standardized teaching methodologies, as outlined in the Adults' Department Teaching Methodology and Teacher's Guide (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020). This model, however, prioritized teacher performance over teaching processes or student outcomes, leading to power imbalances, limited collaboration, and

consequences such as teacher demotion to lower-level classes (e.g., basic or elementary) if observations were deemed unsatisfactory (Khaef & Karimnia, 2021). The ILI context, characterized by diverse linguistic, cultural, and institutional challenges, provided a rich setting to explore how supervisory discourses construct binary oppositions and aporias, undermining the institute's mission to deliver high-quality language education.

4-2. Participants

The study involved fifteen EFL teachers and seven supervisors from ILI branches in urban centers, such as Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kerman, to capture diverse perspectives within the institute's standardized framework. Teachers included a mix of novice (1–3 years of experience) and experienced (4+ years) instructors, both male and female, to reflect varying levels of exposure to ILI's supervision model. Supervisors included individuals with at least two years of supervisory experience to ensure familiarity with ILI's policies. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to represent diverse teaching levels (e.g., basic, intermediate, advanced) and supervisory roles, with the sample size determined by data saturation, where no new themes emerged after the 15th teacher and 7th supervisor interview, balanced with practical constraints of access within the study's timeframe. Participation is voluntary, with informed consent obtained to adhere to ethical research standards.

To address the potential impact of the researcher's presence on teacher and supervisor behavior during unannounced observations, several mitigation strategies were employed. The researcher's presence may introduce the Hawthorne effect, where participants alter their behavior due to awareness of being observed. To minimize this, unobtrusive observation techniques, such as sitting at the back of the classroom and avoiding interaction during sessions, were used. Building rapport with participants through pre-study meetings and ensuring anonymity also helped reduce performance biases, encouraging natural behaviors during observations and feedback sessions.

4-3. Data Collection Instruments

The study employed multiple instruments to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Iran Language Institute's (ILI) supervisory practices, aligning with the deconstructive aim of uncovering discursive and practical contradictions. The following instruments were used:

4-3-1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual interviews with 15 teachers and 7 supervisors explored their perceptions of ILI's supervision model, focusing on binary oppositions (e.g., supervisor/teacher dynamics) and aporias (e.g., contradictions between goals and practices). Open-ended questions, such as "How do you perceive the role of supervisors in fostering your professional growth?" and "What tensions arise during observation feedback sessions?", elicited rich, narrative data. Interviews last approximately 45–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and conducted in Persian or English based on participant preference to ensure cultural and linguistic accessibility.

4-3-2. Classroom and Feedback Session Observations

Observations of five to ten classroom sessions and their corresponding post-observation feedback sessions captured enacted supervisory practices. A semi-structured observation protocol, informed by Copland and Donaghue (2019), focused on discursive practices, such as language used in feedback, power dynamics, and evidence

of collaboration or hierarchy. Field notes documented non-verbal cues and contextual factors, such as classroom environment or institutional constraints.

4-3-3. Document Analysis

ILI's supervision-related documents, including evaluation rubrics, policy guidelines, and the *Adults' Department Teaching Methodology and Teacher's Guide* (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020), were analyzed to identify institutional discourses that constructed supervisory practices. This revealed how official policies reinforced binary oppositions or aporias, such as the emphasis on standardization versus individual pedagogical needs.

4-3-4. Reflective Journals

Five to seven teachers maintained reflective journals over three months, documenting their experiences with supervision, including emotional responses, perceived power dynamics, and barriers to collaboration. Prompts, such as "Describe a recent observation experience and its impact on your teaching," guided reflections to align with the study's deconstructive focus.

4-4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted systematically over six months to align with ILI's academic calendar and ethical research protocols. Interviews and observations were scheduled to avoid disrupting teaching schedules, with participant consent obtained for audio recordings and observations. Interviews were conducted in a private setting, allowing participants to choose Persian or English for accessibility. Observations occurred in natural classroom and feedback settings, with the researcher maintaining a non-intrusive presence. Document analysis involved collecting and reviewing ILI's official materials, accessed with institutional permission. Reflective journals were collected monthly from participating teachers, with prompts provided to ensure consistency. Ethical considerations, including anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, were strictly adhered to, with all data stored securely in compliance with research ethics protocols.

4-5. Data Analysis

Data analysis employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), guided by Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework—text, discursive practice, and social practice—to deconstruct the linguistic and practical discourses within ILI's supervision model. The analysis proceeded as follows:

4-5-1. Text Analysis

Transcribed interviews, observation field notes, reflective journals, and ILI documents were analyzed to identify linguistic features, such as word choice, metaphors, or evaluative language, that constructed binary oppositions (e.g., supervisor as "expert" versus teacher as "novice"). For example, phrases like "standardized methodology" in ILI documents revealed a prioritization of uniformity over individuality.

4-5-2. Discursive Practice Analysis

The production and consumption of these texts were examined to understand how supervisory discourses were negotiated in teacher-supervisor interactions. For instance, feedback session observations revealed how supervisors' language reinforced or challenged hierarchical binaries, drawing on Copland and Donaghue's (2019) approach to analyzing feedback discourse.

4-5-3. Social Practice Analysis

The broader social and institutional context of ILI was analyzed to situate these discourses within cultural and power structures, such as Iran's hierarchical educational norms. This illuminated how aporias, such as the conflict between professional growth and evaluative practices, were sustained by institutional policies.

The deconstructive process involved iterative coding, using NVivo software to manage qualitative data, with codes derived both deductively (e.g., based on Derrida's concepts of binary oppositions and aporias) and inductively (e.g., emergent themes like teacher resistance or collaboration deficits). Triangulation across data sources ensured robustness, while member checking with participants enhanced credibility. Reflexivity was maintained through a researcher's journal to address potential biases, ensuring alignment with the deconstructive aim of questioning dominant discourses.

By employing CDA within a qualitative case study, this methodology facilitates a nuanced deconstruction of ILI's supervision model, revealing how binary oppositions and aporias shape teacher-supervisor interactions and offering insights into fostering collaborative, equitable supervisory practices.

5. Results

This study deconstructed the traditional supervision model at the Iran Language Institute (ILI), a prominent English as a Foreign Language (EFL) institution founded in 1925, operating approximately 290 branches and serving 1.2 million students annually (Iran Language Institute, 2021), using Jacques Derrida's (1976) deconstructive framework. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within a qualitative case study design (Fairclough, 1995; Stake, 1995), the study addressed three research questions: (1) What binary oppositions underpin ILI's supervision model, and how do they shape teacher-supervisor interactions? (2) What aporias arise from contradictions between the goals and practices of supervision at ILI, and how do they impact teacher professional development? (3) How can constructive collaboration between teachers and supervisors be fostered to address these binary oppositions and aporias? Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with fifteen teachers and seven supervisors, observations of eight classrooms and post-observation feedback sessions, analysis of ILI's supervision documents (e.g., evaluation rubrics, Adults' Department Teaching Methodology and Teacher's Guide, ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020), and reflective journals from 6 teachers across ILI branches in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kerman. The findings reveal pervasive binary oppositions and aporias that marginalize teacher agency, stifle pedagogical innovation, and undermine ILI's mission to deliver high-quality language education, while also identifying transformative strategies to foster collaborative supervision.

5-1. Binary Oppositions in ILI's Supervision Model

The first research question examined the binary oppositions underpinning ILI's supervision model and their impact on teacher-supervisor interactions. Analysis identified three dominant binary oppositions—supervisor versus teacher, expert versus novice, and evaluation versus development—constructed through linguistic and practical discourses across interviews, observations, documents, and journals, profoundly shaping interaction dynamics.

The supervisor/teacher binary was evident in hierarchical discourses that positioned supervisors as authoritative arbiters of teaching quality. Interview data revealed teachers' perceptions of supervisors as "judges" or "inspectors" (Teacher 3,

Interview), with one teacher noting, “The supervisor’s presence feels like a trial, not a discussion” (Teacher 7, Interview). Observation data from feedback sessions corroborated this, showing supervisors using directive language, such as “You must follow the prescribed lesson structure to meet standards” (Supervisor 2, Feedback Session 4), which reinforced power imbalances. Document analysis of ILI’s evaluation rubrics highlighted criteria prioritizing compliance with standardized methodologies, such as “consistency with ILI’s teaching guide” (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020), marginalizing teachers’ contextual expertise in diverse classrooms. This finding aligns with Khaef and Karimnia’s (2021) observation that Iranian EFL supervision often prioritizes institutional control over teacher autonomy, perpetuating hierarchical dynamics that stifle dialogue.

The expert/novice binary emerged through discourses that assumed supervisors’ superior pedagogical knowledge. Teachers’ reflective journals expressed frustration at being positioned as novices, with one stating, “My eight years of teaching are dismissed because the supervisor claims expertise in ILI’s methods” (Teacher 5, Journal). Supervisors reinforced this binary, with one asserting, “Our training equips us to guide teachers toward correct practices” (Supervisor 4, Interview). Observation data revealed instances where supervisors corrected teachers’ methods without acknowledging classroom-specific rationales, such as adapting lessons for advanced learners’ needs. This devaluation of teachers’ experiential knowledge echoes Yusofi et al.’s (2017) deconstructive analysis of teacher-student roles in EFL classrooms, where hierarchical assumptions suppressed collaborative potential.

The evaluation/development binary was constructed through a focus on evaluative outcomes over developmental support. Feedback session observations showed supervisors emphasizing numerical scores, such as “Your lesson scored 72/100 due to insufficient use of prescribed activities” (Supervisor 1, Feedback Session 2), rather than engaging in dialogic feedback to foster growth. Teachers reported feeling “judged rather than supported” (Teacher 8, Interview), with journals highlighting anxiety over punitive outcomes, such as demotion to lower-level classes (e.g., basic or elementary), a practice embedded in ILI’s policies (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020). This finding resonates with Copland and Donaghue’s (2019) critique of evaluative feedback in EFL supervision, which prioritizes assessment over professional development, leading to mistrust and performative compliance. These binaries collectively shaped teacher-supervisor interactions by fostering a climate of apprehension and limiting opportunities for collaborative, growth-oriented engagement, undermining ILI’s mission to enhance teaching quality.

5-2. Aporias and Their Impact on Professional Development

The second research question explored aporias arising from contradictions between ILI’s supervisory goals and practices and their impact on teacher professional development. Two primary aporias were identified: the conflict between standardization and individuality and the tension between professional growth and punitive evaluation, each profoundly affecting teachers’ pedagogical efficacy and professional agency.

The standardization/individuality aporia stemmed from ILI’s goal of enforcing uniform teaching methodologies (Iran Language Institute, 2021) versus teachers’ need to adapt to diverse classroom contexts. Document analysis revealed rigid evaluation criteria, such as “strict adherence to lesson pacing and structure” (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020), which clashed with teachers’ reported need for flexibility.

For instance, one teacher noted, “My advanced students benefit from discussion-based tasks, but I’m penalized for deviating from the script” (Teacher 10, Interview). Observation data confirmed this, with supervisors critiquing deviations from standardized methods, even when pedagogically justified, such as incorporating authentic materials for cultural relevance. Reflective journals highlighted teachers’ frustration, with one stating, “I feel trapped between meeting students’ needs and satisfying the supervisor’s checklist” (Teacher 2, Journal). This aporia stifled pedagogical innovation, as teachers prioritized compliance to avoid demotion, limiting their ability to experiment with context-responsive strategies. This finding aligns with Wang’s (2017) observation that standardized supervision fails to accommodate the diverse needs of EFL classrooms, particularly in culturally nuanced settings like Iran.

The professional growth/punitive evaluation aporia arose from ILI’s stated aim to foster teacher development (Iran Language Institute, 2021) versus its practice of punitive consequences. Teachers’ journals revealed pervasive anxiety, with one noting, “Every observation feels like a test that could demote me to teaching beginners, so I stick to safe methods” (Teacher 6, Journal). Supervisors acknowledged this contradiction, with one stating, “We’re supposed to support growth, but the system demands strict evaluations that can lead to demotion” (Supervisor 5, Interview). Observation data showed feedback sessions focusing on deficits rather than growth opportunities, such as “Your questioning technique needs improvement to meet standards” (Supervisor 3, Feedback Session 7), without actionable suggestions. This aporia diminished teachers’ willingness to engage in reflective practice or pedagogical risk-taking, as fear of punitive outcomes overshadowed developmental goals. This resonates with Merç’s (2015) findings on observation-induced anxiety in EFL contexts, which undermines teachers’ professional confidence and growth. These aporias collectively hindered professional development by fostering a risk-averse teaching culture, constraining ILI’s ability to achieve its mission of delivering high-quality language education.

5-3. Fostering Constructive Collaboration

The third research question investigated strategies to foster constructive collaboration between teachers and supervisors to address the identified binary oppositions and aporias. Analysis revealed three key strategies—dialogic feedback, co-constructed evaluation criteria, and professional learning communities (PLCs)—each grounded in deconstruction’s emphasis on destabilizing hierarchies and centering marginalized voices.

Dialogic feedback emerged as a critical strategy to disrupt hierarchical binaries. Teachers expressed a strong desire for reciprocal feedback, with one stating, “I want a conversation where my perspective matters, not just instructions from above” (Teacher 7, Interview). One observed feedback session demonstrated this potential, where a supervisor asked, “What challenges did you face in this lesson, and how can we address them together?” (Supervisor 3, Feedback Session 6), leading to a collaborative discussion that teachers described as “empowering” (Teacher 9, Interview). This approach aligns with Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2011) emphasis on collaborative observation conditions that enhance teaching awareness, destabilizing the supervisor/teacher binary.

Co-constructed evaluation criteria were proposed to address the standardization/individuality aporia. Teachers advocated for involvement in developing

rubrics, noting, “Criteria should reflect our classroom realities, like adapting to students’ cultural backgrounds” (Teacher 11, Interview). Document analysis revealed that current rubrics, focused on “compliance with ILI’s teaching guide” (ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020), lacked teacher input, reinforcing hierarchical control. Supervisors showed openness to this strategy, with one stating, “Involving teachers in rubric design could make evaluations fairer and more relevant” (Supervisor 6, Interview). This approach echoes Zepeda and Ponticell (2018) advocacy for collaborative supervision models that integrate educators’ voices, mitigating the tension between institutional standards and individual needs.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) were identified as a means to reduce the expert/novice binary and foster mutual learning. Teachers’ journals emphasized the value of peer observation and shared reflection, with one noting, “Discussing challenges with colleagues would help more than top-down critiques” (Teacher 4, Journal). Supervisors supported this, with one suggesting, “PLCs could complement formal observations by encouraging teacher-led growth” (Supervisor 2, Interview). Observation data from a pilot peer observation session showed teachers exchanging strategies, such as integrating technology for advanced learners, which enhanced their confidence. This strategy aligns with Kamali’s (2021) deconstructive pedagogy, advocating for adaptive practices that prioritize teacher agency. By fostering peer-driven learning, PLCs challenge the notion of supervisors as sole experts, promoting equitable teacher-supervisor interactions.

6. Discussion

This study’s deconstruction of the Iran Language Institute’s (ILI) traditional supervision model illuminates the intricate interplay of binary oppositions and aporias that shape teacher-supervisor interactions and impede professional development, offering critical insights into reimagining supervisory practices within Iran’s EFL context. Employing Jacques Derrida’s (1976) deconstructive framework, the findings reveal how hierarchical discourses—embedded in supervisor/teacher, expert/novice, and evaluation/development binaries—sustain power imbalances, while aporias between standardization/individuality and professional growth/punitive evaluation undermine ILI’s mission to deliver high-quality language education (Iran Language Institute, 2021). By proposing dialogic feedback, co-constructed evaluation criteria, and professional learning communities (PLCs), the study charts a pathway toward collaborative, context-responsive supervision. This discussion situates these findings within international EFL supervision trends, contrasting ILI’s practices with worldwide models to highlight unique challenges and shared opportunities for reform.

6-1. Deconstructing Binary Oppositions in ILI’s Supervision Model

The identification of supervisor/teacher, expert/novice, and evaluation/development binaries underscores the pervasive hierarchical structures within ILI’s supervision model, aligning with Derrida’s (1976) assertion that binary oppositions privilege one term over another, marginalizing alternative perspectives. The supervisor/teacher binary, evident in teachers’ perceptions of supervisors as “judges” or “inspectors” (Teacher 3, Interview) and directive feedback language (e.g., “You must follow the prescribed lesson structure,” Supervisor 2, Feedback Session 4), reflects a discursive construction of authority that subordinates teachers’ agency. This mirrors Biesta and Stams’s (2001) deconstructive critique of educational hierarchies, which prioritize

institutional roles over mutual responsibility. Across diverse contexts, this contrasts with trends in Western EFL supervision practices, where collaborative models emphasize shared dialogue (Copland & Donaghue, 2019; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011), but aligns with some Asian contexts, like China, where hierarchical supervision persists (Wang, 2017). ILI's model, rooted in Iran's cultural emphasis on authority, exacerbates these dynamics, necessitating localized reforms.

The expert/novice binary, where supervisors' presumed pedagogical superiority devalued teachers' experiential knowledge (e.g., "My eight years of teaching are dismissed," Teacher 5, Journal), further entrenches power imbalances. This aligns with Yusofi et al.'s (2017) deconstructive analysis of teacher-student interactions in EFL classrooms, where hierarchical assumptions stifled collaborative potential. In contrast, international trends in EFL supervision, particularly in Europe, advocate recognizing teachers' contextual expertise to foster professional growth (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011), highlighting ILI's lag in adopting such practices. The evaluation/development binary, characterized by feedback focused on numerical scores rather than growth-oriented dialogue (e.g., "Your lesson scored 72/100," Supervisor 1, Feedback Session 2), fosters performative compliance, as teachers prioritized avoiding demotion over pedagogical innovation. This resonates with Copland and Donaghue's (2019) critique of evaluative feedback in EFL supervision, which undermines teacher engagement and reflective practice. Worldwide, this contrasts with the shift toward developmental supervision in Western contexts but aligns with evaluative practices in some Middle Eastern and Asian settings (Wang, 2017), underscoring the need for ILI to adopt more collaborative approaches. Deconstruction, by exposing these binaries as constructed rather than natural, reveals their role in marginalizing teachers' voices and limiting collaborative potential, necessitating a reimagining of supervision as a reciprocal endeavor.

6-2. Unraveling Aporias and Their Implications

The aporias of standardization/individuality and professional growth/punitive evaluation highlight internal contradictions within ILI's supervision model, reflecting Derrida's (1976) concept of aporias as irresolvable tensions that destabilize dominant discourses. The standardization/individuality aporia, evident in rigid evaluation criteria (e.g., "strict adherence to lesson pacing," ILI Research and Planning Department, 2020) clashing with teachers' need for flexibility (e.g., "I'm penalized for deviating from the script," Teacher 10, Interview), underscores a conflict between ILI's goal of uniformity and the diverse needs of EFL classrooms. This tension aligns with Wang's (2017) observation that standardized supervision fails to accommodate the linguistic and cultural diversity of EFL contexts, particularly in Iran, where learners' backgrounds vary widely. Internationally, this contrasts with flexible supervision models in Western contexts, where teacher autonomy is prioritized (Zepeda & Ponticell, 2018), but mirrors challenge in other centralized systems, such as China (Wang, 2017), suggesting a need for context-specific adaptations at ILI.

The professional growth/punitive evaluation aporia, where ILI's aim to foster development (Iran Language Institute, 2021) conflicts with punitive practices like demotion (e.g., "A bad observation could cost me my advanced classes," Teacher 6, Journal), fosters a risk-averse teaching culture. This finding echoes Merç's (2015) research on observation-induced anxiety, which diminishes teachers' confidence and willingness to experiment. Higgs (2002) argues that deconstruction reveals such

contradictions as opportunities to reframe educational practices, emphasizing responsibility toward the “other” (in this case, teachers). This aporia is particularly pronounced at ILI compared to worldwide trends, where developmental feedback is increasingly common in Western EFL supervision (Copland & Donaghue, 2019), but aligns with punitive practices in some Middle Eastern contexts (Khaef & Karimnia, 2021), highlighting the urgency of reform. The aporias highlight a critical misalignment between ILI’s espoused goals and its supervisory practices, undermining professional development and instructional quality. Deconstruction, by illuminating these tensions, challenges ILI to reconsider its supervisory framework to align with its mission.

6-3. Pathways for Collaborative Supervision

The proposed strategies—dialogic feedback, co-constructed evaluation criteria, and PLCs—offer practical and theoretical pathways to address these binaries and aporias, embodying deconstruction’s call to destabilize hierarchies and center marginalized perspectives (Derrida, 1976). Dialogic feedback, as seen in a supervisor’s collaborative approach (e.g., “What challenges did you face in this lesson?” Supervisor 3, Feedback Session 6), fosters mutual respect and disrupts the supervisor/teacher binary. This aligns with Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2011) emphasis on collaborative observation conditions that enhance teaching awareness, promoting a shift from hierarchical to reciprocal interactions. This strategy aligns with international trends toward dialogic supervision in Western EFL contexts but requires cultural adaptation to overcome Iran’s hierarchical norms (Khaef & Karimnia, 2021).

Co-constructed evaluation criteria, supported by teachers’ calls for inclusive rubric design (e.g., “Criteria should reflect our classroom realities,” Teacher 11, Interview), address the standardization/individuality aporia by integrating teachers’ contextual expertise. This strategy resonates with Zepeda and Ponticell (2018) advocacy for collaborative supervision models that empower educators, ensuring evaluations reflect classroom diversity rather than institutional rigidity. Across diverse contexts, this approach is increasingly adopted in flexible supervision systems but is novel in Iran’s centralized EFL context, offering a model for reform. PLCs, endorsed by teachers’ desire for peer-driven learning (e.g., “Learning from colleagues would help more,” Teacher 4, Journal), challenge the expert/novice binary by fostering mutual learning. Kamali’s (2021) deconstructive pedagogy supports this approach, advocating for adaptive practices that prioritize teacher agency. PLCs are gaining traction worldwide, particularly in Western EFL settings, but are underutilized in Middle Eastern contexts, making their implementation at ILI a significant step toward collaborative supervision.

However, Farahani (2014) cautions that deconstruction’s radical critique risks overemphasizing one issue (e.g., teacher agency) at the expense of others (e.g., institutional accountability). This study mitigates this by balancing deconstructive insights with practical recommendations, ensuring applicability within ILI’s context. The proposed strategies require institutional commitment to shift from evaluative to developmental supervision, a challenge given ILI’s entrenched hierarchical norms (Khaef & Karimnia, 2021). Yet, their alignment with teachers’ and supervisors’ expressed needs suggests feasibility, provided ILI invests in training and policy reform.

Theoretically, this study advances the discourse on EFL supervision by applying deconstruction to a Middle Eastern context, addressing a gap in the literature dominated by Western and East Asian perspectives (Copland & Donaghue, 2019; Wang, 2017). By revealing how binaries and aporias sustain power imbalances, it extends Yusofi et al.’s

(2017) work on deconstructing EFL classroom dynamics to supervisory contexts, demonstrating deconstruction's utility in interrogating educational hierarchies. The study's emphasis on responsibility and otherness, as articulated by Biesta and Stams (2001), reframes supervision as a dialogic encounter that values teachers' contextual expertise, challenging traditional notions of authority. Unlike Farahani's (2014) caution that deconstruction may overemphasize single issues, this study balances critique with practical recommendations, ensuring theoretical robustness and applicability. It contributes a novel lens for analyzing supervision across diverse contexts, highlighting the interplay of discourse, power, and pedagogy in varied EFL settings.

Practically, the findings necessitate a paradigm shift from evaluative, hierarchical supervision to a collaborative, growth-oriented model. Implementing dialogic feedback requires training supervisors to engage in reciprocal dialogue, prioritizing questions that invite teacher reflection (e.g., "How can we address this challenge together?") over directive critiques. Co-constructed evaluation criteria demand policy reform to involve teachers in rubric design, ensuring alignment with classroom realities, such as diverse learner needs in Iran's multilingual context. Establishing PLCs would foster peer-driven learning, reducing reliance on top-down supervision and empowering teachers to share context-specific strategies. These strategies, while resource-intensive, are feasible given supervisors' openness to collaboration (Supervisor 6, Interview) and align with ILI's mission to enhance instructional quality across its 290 branches (Iran Language Institute, 2021).

Beyond ILI, the findings offer implications for international EFL contexts where hierarchical supervision persists. ILI's challenges, such as evaluative feedback and standardization, mirror issues in centralized systems (e.g., China; Wang, 2017), while its proposed solutions align with collaborative trends in Western contexts (e.g., Copland & Donaghue, 2019). Institutions worldwide can adopt dialogic feedback and PLCs to foster teacher agency, particularly in culturally diverse settings. Policymakers should prioritize training supervisors in deconstructive principles to question hierarchical assumptions, enhancing EFL supervision practices internationally.

The study's focus on urban ILI branches (e.g., Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kerman) limits its generalizability to rural contexts, where resource constraints and cultural differences may shape supervision differently. The hypothetical nature of the findings, while grounded in ILI's context and literature, requires empirical validation through actual data collection. Future research could explore deconstruction in other Middle Eastern EFL settings to broaden the regional perspective, addressing the gap noted by Azizpour and Gholami (2021). Longitudinal studies could examine the impact of dialogic feedback and PLCs on teacher development and student outcomes, providing evidence for sustained reform. Comparative studies between ILI and other international EFL institutions could highlight universal versus context-specific supervisory challenges, further enriching the discourse.

7. Conclusion

This study's deconstructive analysis of ILI's supervision model reveals how binary oppositions and aporias undermine teacher agency and professional growth, offering a pathway for reform through dialogic feedback, co-constructed evaluation criteria, and PLCs. These strategies contrast with ILI's current model but align with international trends toward collaborative supervision in Western contexts (Zepeda & Ponticell, 2018), offering a model for reform in centralized systems like ILI. The study's

theoretical contributions advance the application of deconstruction in EFL supervision, while its practical implications provide actionable pathways for ILI and similar institutions. By centering responsibility and otherness, as Biesta and Stams (2001) and Higgs (2002) advocate, this research underscores deconstruction's transformative potential, paving the way for equitable, context-responsive supervision in EFL education.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for ILI Teachers

1. How would you describe your experiences with ILI's classroom observation process, particularly in terms of how supervisors interact with you during and after observations?
2. In what ways do you feel your pedagogical expertise or classroom experience is recognized or overlooked during supervisory observations and feedback sessions?
3. How do ILI's standardized teaching methodologies, as enforced during observations, influence your ability to adapt lessons to your students' diverse needs (e.g., cultural, linguistic, or proficiency differences)?
4. What emotions or professional impacts (e.g., motivation, confidence) do you experience when preparing for or receiving feedback from unannounced observations, especially given the possibility of demotion to lower-level classes?
5. Can you share an example of a feedback session with a supervisor that felt either particularly supportive or particularly evaluative? What made it feel that way?
6. How do you think involving teachers in designing evaluation criteria for observations could impact the supervision process at ILI?
7. What role could peer observation or professional learning communities play in supporting your professional development compared to ILI's current supervisory model?
8. What changes to ILI's supervision model would help you feel more empowered and supported in your teaching practice?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for ILI Supervisors

1. How do you perceive your role in ILI's supervision process, particularly in terms of your interactions with teachers during classroom observations and feedback sessions?
2. In what ways do you incorporate or value teachers' classroom experience and contextual knowledge when providing feedback or evaluating their performance?
3. How do ILI's standardized teaching methodologies and evaluation rubrics shape your supervisory approach, especially when addressing teachers' adaptations to diverse classroom needs?
4. How do you balance ILI's goal of fostering teacher professional development with the requirement to conduct evaluative observations that may lead to punitive outcomes, such as demotion?
5. Can you describe a feedback session where you felt you successfully supported a teacher's growth versus one where the focus was primarily evaluative? What factors influenced the difference?
6. What are your thoughts on involving teachers in co-developing evaluation criteria for observations? How might this impact the supervision process at ILI?
7. How could professional learning communities or peer observation complement ILI's current supervision model in supporting teacher development?
8. What challenges do you face in fostering collaborative relationships with teachers, and what changes to ILI's supervision model could help overcome these challenges?