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The Implementation of Lesson Study in English Language Learning: A Case Study

Wakhid Nashruddin

Syekh Nurjati State Islamic Institute, Cirebon
wahid1n@yahoo.co.id

Dian Nurrachman

State Islamic University 'Sunan Gunung Jati' Bandung
diannurrachman@gmail.com

Abstract

Lesson Study as a growing interest in the education world has attracted educators, experts, and professionals in the area to make use of it in improving the lessons—it also happens in Indonesia. Originally applied in the teaching of mathematics in Japan, now it turns to be used in other fields, and English is one of them. This paper highlights the guideline on Lesson Study and pictures its application in a private senior high school in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The adaptation of Lesson Study is interesting since Japan and Indonesia have different cultural background. How Lesson Study is usually implemented in Japan and the US and how it is applied in Indonesia will be seen here. As this is a case study, it will only focus on a school and the result should not be used to generalize Lesson Study applications in Indonesia. Interview and observation were instruments used in this study. The interview was used to gain information on how Lesson Study was normally conducted and observation (and the researchers' involvements) was used to see the real implementation of Lesson Study. What happened during the implementation of Lesson Study and during the teaching and learning process become a great attention here.

Keywords: lesson study, English, implementation

A. Introduction

Education is one of the main pillars in any countries to develop nation character building. This is reasonable since education constructs human to be more human, to be more realistic, and to be more care to others. As Slattery (2006) put it, education is a deep conviction that there is significance for our survival. However, this kind of mission is not without problems. Education is also a system in which various problems can be made of by people within the system itself. As long as these people are actively interwoven, so long the system will face some problems, and people will not ever cease to talking and debating its existence as well—starting from the fundamentally philosophical things to the technical-operational ones. Many educational issues are pointed mainly to the efforts of how we find the best way to achieve highly regarded education in terms of creating better human resources, whether academically, socially, personally, and/or vocationally.

Indonesia has been for long time practicing the teaching and learning process which tends to be conventional ways through teacher-centered rather than student-centered. The result of such teaching and learning process wholly did not give contribution more for improving the quality process and student's achievement.

One of the most current educational issues which are interesting to discuss is Lesson Study, which has appeared as the alternative to handle the problem of teaching and learning practices. Seemingly, 'Lesson Study' can become alternative way to gear and blow the wind of change into the better and effective improvement in the context of teaching and learning process in Indonesia. Hollingsworth and Oliver (2005) states that lesson study is a model of teacher learning that was initiated in Japan. It involves small groups of teachers meeting regularly to engage in a collaborative process of lesson planning, implementation, evaluation and refinement.

Chassels et al (2009) found that Japanese lesson study provides opportunities for teacher candidates to build professional learning communities, to deepen understanding of curriculum and pedagogy, and to develop habits of critical observation, analysis, and reflection. Although benefits of lesson study are numerous and significant, our research identified implementation challenges related to time, practicum placements, and the professional development of associate teachers. The benefits include the development of teacher candidates' new insights into the needs of students, an increased awareness of different teaching strategies, and the importance of collaboration. The challenges are mainly focused on the issue of time and school administrative structures that impede teacher collaboration.

Meanwhile, Arani et al (2010) found that the Japanese model of lesson study supported schools in managing micro-level educational reform in practice, bringing teachers together to learn from each other and to develop the school's capacity for promoting learning and fostering shared values. Lesson study should be understood as both regular practice and as process, and that problems will not be resolved after a single session. Effective lesson study follows the teaching of pupils and their progress over a long period of time. This kind of long term and continuous research orientation situates lesson study at the heart of school culture.

Doig and Groves (2011) stated that Lesson study offers teachers the opportunity to develop professional communities of inquiry, with ownership of the improvement effort, a commitment to inquiry, shared goals, and a sense of

responsibility to their colleagues and students. The process of learning can evolve over time with teachers beginning by weaving “some of the simpler components of lesson study (such as collaborative lesson planning) in with their existing practices, and only later ... [grasping] the significance of other ideas such as developing a lesson rationale and documenting their own learning”. Lesson Study enables teachers to build on their efforts and refine their understandings.

The current study reports how the application of Lesson Study in a private senior high school in Malang, East Java Indonesia was conducted. The description on the process of Lesson Study answers this question. The next question raised was why the process went in that way. The two questions were the focus of this study.

This paper is, then, intended to be one of the contributions in relation to the discussion of such particular issue which is developed together with the real context of Lesson Study practiced in the school that we observed, that is, a private senior high school in Malang, Indonesia. In it, we tried to describe Lesson Study not only as a philosophical issue which is worthy and interesting to discuss but also as a practical way to improve our learning. By observing the particular language learning, more especially the English language learning which is fully practicing the Lesson Study itself, we hope that this paper will be insightful for those who have strong desire borrowing Brown’s term “to change the wind and to shift the sands”. However, since this paper is limited only to the context of English language learning, so we do not pretend that the result of our observation and discussion can be applied in any classroom contexts, rather, we just want to show that the example of Lesson Study practiced at this school is precious and can be a model for another context.

To provide the readers with a clear idea on the research, a definition on Lesson Study is provided. Lesson Study is an action from teachers to understand, to learn, and to identify phenomena in a lesson by means of preparing the lesson together, observing the lesson together (with the presence of other sides, e.g. principle, parents) while one of them teaching the lesson, and reporting their observation of the lesson for everybody to study in a conference.

B. Literature Review

1. The Principles of Lesson Study

Lesson Study is firstly developed by primary teachers in Japan, which is called as *kenkyu jugyo* in Japanese language. Makoto Yoshida is regarded as who introduced the *kenkyu jugyo*. It was firstly applied in Mathematics. The success of Japanese teachers in developing Lesson Study is, then, followed by some other countries, including the United States of America. In the U.S., Lesson Study was introduced by Catherine Lewis, who had been conducting research on Lesson Study since 1993 in Japan. In Indonesia, Lesson Study is a nowadays issue as well to be socialized as an alternative model for improving student’s achievement in every subject. It probably does not provide real strategies or techniques in improving students’ achievement in a lesson, but this can be done by studying factors that contribute to the students’ successfulness in their learning. Lesson Study provides inputs and insights for teacher so that they can better their teaching resulting to the students’ betterment in learning.

Hollingsworth and Oliver (2005) states that the key to the lesson study work is the hypothesising of anticipated student responses, the testing of those hypotheses, and

the refinement of the lesson design. The groups typically meet weekly or bi-weekly for several hours and focus on only a few lessons over the year with the aim of perfecting them.

Lesson Study is not a strategy or a method in teaching and learning process, rather, an effort to build and improve the teaching and learning process by a group of teachers collaboratively and continually, especially in planning, doing, observing, and reporting the teaching and learning process result. Lesson Study is not a temporary project, but the never-ending activities in applying the principles of Total Quality Management as a recovery process based on evidence of Lesson Study. Mulyana in Sudrajat (2008) describes that Lesson Study is as a model of educator's professional development through a collaborative and mutual learning. Meanwhile, Catherine Lewis in Sudrajat (2008) describes that:

“Lesson Study is a simple idea. If you want to improve instruction, what could be more obvious than collaborating with fellow teachers to plan, observe, and reflect on lessons? While it may be a simple idea, Lesson Study is a complex process, supported by collaborative goal setting, careful data collection on student learning, and protocols that enable productive discussion of difficult issues”.

Catherine Lewis in Sudrajat (2008) also describes the essential characteristics of Lesson Study that she acquired from the observation's result in Japan. They are, among others:

- a) Long-work together with same purposes;
- b) Focus on the important materials or subjects;
- c) Studying the students effectively; and
- d) Direct learning observation.

Related to the application of Lesson Study, Baba (2007) identifies two types of Lesson Study, they are a school-based Lesson Study (in-school training) and teachers' union-based Lesson Study or, in Indonesian context, an MGMP-based Lesson Study (MGMP as teachers' union is a forum for teachers teaching the same subject to share anything concerning with that particular subject). For the first, it is implemented by all of teachers from any subjects and led by the principal. Whereas, an MGMP-based Lesson Study is the forum to implement Lesson Study based on the problems identified by teachers in that forum. The present paper reports the application of the first type of Lesson Study. It was conducted in a school that teachers in that school should (normally) participate in.

The basic philosophy of Lesson Study is that “evidence of effective classroom practice is proved only in the classroom” (Tabaka, 2007). That is why the application of Lesson Study is very classroom-based. The observation in the implementation of the lesson planned in the teaching process becomes central to the successfulness of learning and teaching. In the next part of this paper, the stages of Lesson Study will be discussed, and it is based on the philosophy.

2. The Stages of Lesson Study

As defined in the previous section, Lesson Study involves a group of teachers, learning or studying a lesson. Santyasa (2009) proposes four stages in conducting Lesson Study, they are, 1) Goal-Setting and Planning, 2) Research Lesson, 3) Lesson Discussion, and 4) Consolidation of Learning. Meanwhile, Cerbin & Kopp provide six steps in which the core of the Lesson Study is the same with Santyasa's. Cerbin & Kopp (2006) point out steps of conducting Lesson Study as follow:

- a) Form a Team: 3-6 people with similar teaching interests are identified.
- b) Develop Student Learning Goals: Team members discuss what they would like students to learn as a result of the lesson.
- c) Plan the Research Lesson: Teachers design a lesson to achieve the learning goals, anticipating how students will respond.
- d) Gather Evidence of Student Learning: One team member teaches the lesson while others observe, collecting evidence of student learning.
- e) Analyze Evidence of Learning: The team discusses the results and assesses progress made toward learning goals.
- f) Repeat the Process: The group revises the lesson, repeating steps 2-5 as necessary, and shares findings.

In the interim, Lewis in Santyasa (2009) describes the collaborative stages into 1) planning, 2) observing, and 3) reflecting toward the lesson itself. In other words, Lesson Study has three steps: plan, do, and reflect (Panduan Pelaksanaan Lesson Study, 2009). Moreover, Lewis states that Lesson Study is a complex process supported by the collaborative works, the accuracy of data collection on students' activities and behaviors, and the agreements which provides opportunity for further productive discussion about current issues. As what mentioned before, Lesson Study is a cyclical-continuous activities which has practical implication in education. Such cycle can be figured as in figure 1.

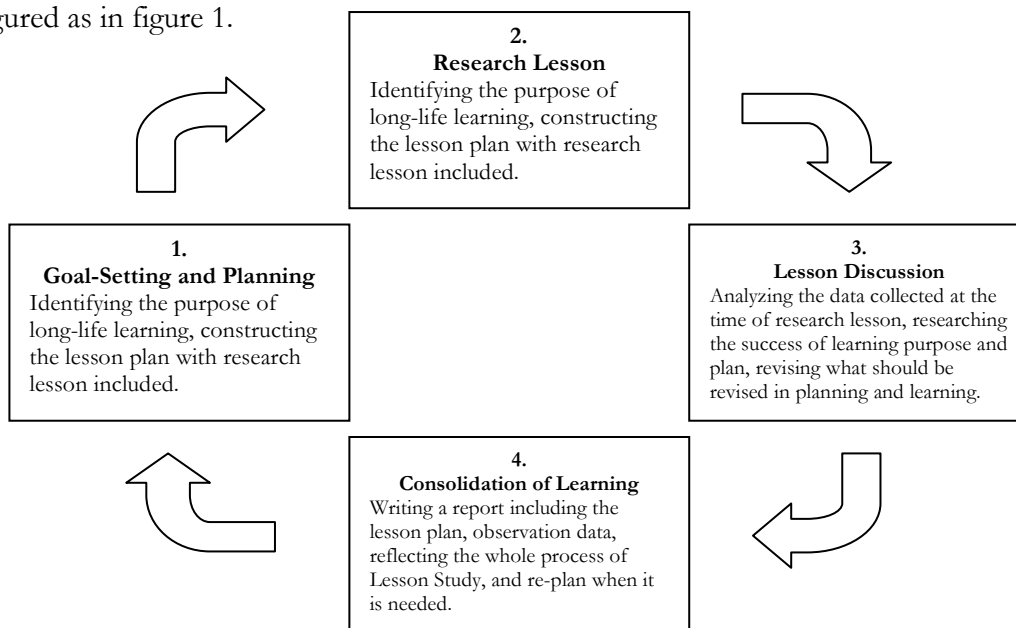


Figure 1: Lesson Study Cycle (Adapted from Santyasa, 2009)

C. Research Methodology

The investigation used a case study approach. This was done by involving the researchers in the application of Lesson Study—as the case to study. The idea was to see Lesson Study as a phenomenon and to seek a subject that applied the phenomena.

The subjects of the study were English teachers, their students, and the school stake holder from a private senior high school in Malang. For ethical purpose, the setting is not mentioned specifically here. Two English teachers were involved here. One was as the teacher-implementer and another was as an observer. The students were the students of X grade. However, no stake holders were present at that time. This will be explained in the next section of the paper.

There were two instruments used during the investigation. Observations were conducted for capturing two data. The first was the implementation of the Lesson Study, and the second was for the teaching and learning process during the Lesson Study. Another instrument was unstructured interview. It functions to gain information on how the process of Lesson Study was conducted.

D. The Implementation of Lesson Study Observed

The application of Lesson Study observed was school-based or (borrowing Baba's term) in-school training. It is quite different with its real “version” in Japan. However, it is similar in term of it has planning the lesson, trying out the plan, observing (teacher(s) and “outsiders” observation during the teaching time), and debriefing after the implementation of the plan.

Referring to Lewis' stages on Lesson Study, there should be three stages. *First*, Lesson Study normally starts with forming a team to conduct a Lesson Study. This team then discusses the problem to solve in the Lesson Study activity. Together, they prepare a lesson plan. They try to solve the problem by planning the teaching activity carefully. The *next* step is when a member of the team then becomes a model teacher performing the action while other members observe what happens during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

After testing the lesson plan, the team gathers again and discusses the findings. They *analyze* the strengths and the weaknesses of the plan. The process of teaching and learning is the main focus of the discussion. The model teacher telling the problems s/he faces during the implementation of the plan. The *final stage* is the reflection of the whole process and reporting the Lesson Study. Not all of these steps of Lesson Study were reflected in the implementation of Lesson Study in this observed school.

From the observation and interview, the researchers found out that Lesson Study in this school was rather different with what we have been discussed in the previous section. The first difference is that there was no “special team” in preparing what lesson to study. It was only a regular teaching schedule. The teacher himself prepares the plan and everything he needs in the teaching and learning activity.

“No, we do not make a team for Lesson study, just one teacher prepare his/her lesson.” (Teacher/Interview)

So the teacher acts as the planner and also as the model. In such condition, a purpose of Lesson Study—that is gaining as many preparations as possible for the

students learning—could not be achieved. This stage should be one of the powers of Lesson Study. By working together, a group of teachers can provide richer and better preparation.

Secondly, three observers were present in the Lesson Study, a teacher coordinator and the researchers. The reason why there were only three observers was because other teachers were busy or responsible with their own classes.

“The vice headmaster is going for pilgrimage to Mecca, and no other teacher replace him. We do not invite anybody, parents, or experts.” (Teacher/Interview)

This is fairly different with what the researchers understand about Lesson Study. In fact, in a Lesson Study, there should be more observers such as the headmaster and also the expert(s) from outside of the school. The more observers present, the more insights will be gained from the Lesson Study. However, this is not too important when the reference is only to fulfill the three stages.

The last stage was reflection stage. In the end of the teaching and learning process, the teacher and the observers discuss the result of the implementation of the plan, talking about the strengths and the weaknesses of the plan applied. The reflection stage was done in a small talk; not in a conference. The time allotted was only about 15 minutes since it was done in the break time. This seemed not to work effectively since the limitation of time.

“We usually just talk and discuss things during the Lesson Study session in the break time. No special meeting session for reflection.” (Teacher/Interview)

The teacher started telling his experience teaching using the plan, and then continued by the teacher coordinator. The focus of the discussion by them was the difficulty as well as mistakes during the implementation of the plan. On the other hand, we—as the observers—focused more on the strengths and the benefits of teaching using that plan. The strengths and the weaknesses of the teachers’ teaching by means of implemented plan were discussed. These things are revealed in the next section.

E. The Teaching and Learning Observed

In line with the strengths and the weaknesses of the plan applied, we have to consider—again—that the Lesson Study observed was rather different with its real ‘version’. This affected our observation then, that teaching and learning process itself put its own context ‘in betwixt’; in the middle of real Lesson Study and the adapted one. The following is our observation result in terms of the teaching and learning process, including the strengths and weaknesses of such teaching model.

The interconnection between Lesson Plan and its implementation

In this part, we observed that the lesson plan had actually a good and ideal plan. However, as what mentioned it before, this lesson plan was constructed by the teacher, not collaboratively constructed by a team as ideally expected in the real Lesson Study. In practice, as well as in written form, the lesson did not consider the process of teaching. It means that the whole process of learning did not give direct transfer of knowledge, whereas the topic was about “Reading Procedure” indeed. The teacher

arranged the classroom instruction by a 'game' only, derived from the text that was read by students. This made students did not really understand of what had been instructed, since—seemingly—the teacher also could not control students well from its beginning.

“Teacher cannot control the class. The teaching is just ordinary teaching activity, nothing special.” (Researcher #1' notes)

“The students keep talking while the teacher is talking. Lack of classroom management skills.” (Researcher #2' notes)

Meanwhile, the reading material used at the time was also still comprehended by, both teacher and students, literally. It was seen from the teacher's used of grammar-translation method (GTM) as his effort to make students comprehend what the text says about. As we observed, the teacher asked students to translate the text paragraphs per each. And when students did not give the correct translation, the teacher helped them by translating it. Such this model was actually contradictory with the approach he used for, that is the Contextual Teaching and Learning with cooperative learning model.

The teaching and learning process

Actually, if we signify the term teaching and learning as the interactive process between teacher and students, in which the process of 'take' and 'give' is directly implied, so this kind of teaching and learning process was not on that straight. This is the weakness of the model implemented, since in every teaching and learning process, the transfer of knowledge might be put in the first purpose, even for the skills one. As we observed, almost all instructions were formatted in 'game', whereas, the game itself should be put only as a trigger, not for all classroom instructions.

“The purpose of the learning is not clear. What skills are targeted are not seen to be practiced” (Researcher#1' notes)

“The game is fun, but the purpose is not clear. Just running come to the front of the class, matching pictures, and guessing what words are in pieces of papers does not make any sense in actively learning a language.” (Researcher#2)

However, there was also the strength of this model of learning, that is, by playing the game almost in all instructions, so that students were triggered/encouraged to be involved within the classroom activities. At least, the students felt comfortable in learning English, since they liked the game eagerly.

“After all, students can pay attention to the lesson because of the games.” (Researcher#1' notes)

The teacher's performance and students' response

In general, students were actually familiar with the teacher, and it made them felt comfortable to be taught by the teacher. On the one hand, this familiarity had its

own strength to encourage students to learn. On the other, this was not appropriately good since the real Lesson Study uses the model teacher as pointed by the team to see how well the teacher implements the lesson plan.

Concerning with students' response, especially when the teacher was describing the instruction for 'today' lesson, we observed that students were aware to that. Even though, there were also students who kept talking with their friends. This, we think, is rather a kind of uneasiness in learning English than from the teacher's factor.

Anyhow, since the classroom instruction was more game oriented than teaching oriented, so the classroom management should be one of priorities to consider as well. For instance, as we observed that space was crowded by students' tables and chairs, so the solution is to put aside first those when the game begins and rearrange those after finished.

Teacher applying games in the classroom, from our observation, can provide fun and relax atmosphere in the learning process in the classroom. However, at least two considerations should be made. Firstly, game is not the purpose of the learning. When a teacher uses game as the main material, the purpose of the teaching and learning will be blur. Students cannot find the objectives of their learning. When it happens, the purpose of the lesson can be unclear. Secondly, the involvement of the students should be fair. Some games only need a small number of players. This can be difficult when usually, in Indonesia, there are about 30 to 40 students in a class. Many schools even have more students. When these two issues considered, the teaching and learning English which is facilitated by games can be fruitful.

F. Reflection and Conclusion

Lesson Study as a school project involves many people working directly to the learning and teaching process (teachers, headmaster, students) and those who do not relate to it directly (parents, experts). The planning provides guidance on the teaching and learning process that will be observed. It should be in groups to make sure that many contributions and opinions will support the design of lesson plan best suits to the observed lesson. In the next step (doing/observing), a model teacher does the plan, teaches the class while other group members observe the application of the plan. This is important since it is the perfect time to see directly and deeply every phenomenon in student-learning activities (Panduan Pelaksanaan Lesson Study, 2009). The reflection stage is, in the end, to look back into the Lesson Study process on the plan and do stages, to see the teaching and learning activities with a deeper and broader understanding towards elaboration of planning and observation data (Panduan Pelaksanaan Lesson Study, 2009).

As a new perspective, Lesson Study becomes important, not only in the teaching and learning mathematics and sciences, but also in other subjects. What most important is to do it in the correct way, so that the result of the Lesson Study will be maximum and be able to contribute to the identification of what is going on during a class and to offer a solution for problems await while keeping good values recorded by observers. By applying Lesson Study, school-based or teachers' union-based one, teachers and students can get the benefit from a Lesson Study for the betterment of a subject teaching and learning.

However, this very small case study shows that English teachers in Indonesia may have not fully aware of the use of Lesson Study in developing teachers' ability in developing and delivering lessons. Further study can be directed to the training of Lesson Study and see how the implementation of "true" Lesson Study can benefit the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia.

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