



Examining Teachers as Researchers: EAP Teachers' Views on Experiencing the Lesson Study Model

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Abstract

The Lesson Study approach, a subdivision of inquiry-based instruction, is majorly centered on EFL/ESL teachers' professional development through placing a requirement on them to act as classroom researchers. This approach has become increasingly popular in various academic environments and holds a promising potential as a gateway to teachers' career advancement. The current study, accordingly, applies the Lesson Study approach as its foundation, with the aim of providing an improved comprehension on the ways educator growth is made via social setting and team-teaching among instructors when participating in research initiative; it also investigates the ways such learning results in changes to instructors' perceptions on the model itself as well as the consequent teaching alterations. Five Iranian EFL instructors participated in a 12-week Lesson Study program. The data were collected through pre- and post-interviews, reflective journal writings, and field notes from the researcher to assess the effect of the program on their professional development. Findings imply that the instructors' perceptions regarding practice were favorable both prior to and subsequent to the study. Even though the instructors were somehow concerned at the beginning since they had not experienced a similar approach beforehand, it turned out that working through a Lesson Study process satisfied their demands and helped them learn more and gain a better understanding of how to teach better and improve their perceptions of teaching. They also believed that as a result of the collaboration, experience sharing, self-reflection and peer observation along with critical discussions on how to improve the students' learning process, the approach greatly contributed to their professional and personal development. Findings of this study suggest that the Lesson Study model enhances EFL instructors' professional development and collaborative work. Moreover, it highlights the importance of peer collaboration in fostering reflective teaching and improving instructional methods, leading to better student learning outcomes.

Keywords: inquiry-based instruction, lesson study, professional development, teacher development

1. Introduction

At different points in their careers, teachers have distinct requirements, which have a propensity to alter in line with shifts in the demands of the institutions or schools where they work (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Teachers are urged to keep up to date by these changing criteria since teacher education should not be seen as a procedure that begins and concludes with accredited programs like teacher training courses but rather as an ongoing one. Further professional development is necessary since such teacher training programs simply cannot be anticipated to adequately equip individuals to handle every single difficulty they will encounter in the course of their employment.

As a result of reforms and innovations, professional development has become increasingly important as a tool to give teachers a chance to connect their teaching objectives to the needs of their learners for better learning (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003). Due to these reforms and innovations, teachers' roles in the classroom have changed as they've started to adopt new curricula, assessments, methodologies, and approaches, among other things. In other words, the more the changes in teacher roles exist, the more teachers are required to keep up with the latest trends, so that they can improve and professionally develop (Turhan & Arıkan, 2009).

Reformers offer in-service education sessions to teachers in such contexts as one-time workshops, conferences, or seminars with experts coming from somewhere outside the institute who have little knowledge of the context the teachers is working in; such training is much like a prescription given to a teacher and includes a lot of seemingly unrelated tips and advice, having little to offer to the teachers and encouraging a sense of workplace isolation (Lieberman & Mace, 2010; Meyer, 2005; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Nevertheless, Kotelawala (2012) and Gutierrez (2015) discovered that professional development for teachers is more inclined to occur where cooperative inquiry, reflection, and teaching are encouraged.

Lesson Study (LS) is becoming more and more popular internationally as a model contributing to high-grade professional growth that connects teacher performance and teacher learning (Doig & Groves, 2011). In improving the quality of the teachers' teaching practice, LS requires joint planning, observation of peers, dialogue with other teachers, reflection, and re-teaching (Darling-Hamond & McLaughlin, 2011; Kotelawala, 2012). An extensive amount of research on the impact of LS on fostering teachers' professional development has emerged as a result of the aforementioned growing international interest in the approach (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006; Kotelawala, 2012; Nami et al., 2016; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004).

LS was developed in Japan and has attracted considerable interest in the United States, and it is primarily used for conventional education. As a result, only a small number of studies (Gutierrez, 2015; Hurd & Licciardo-Musso, 2005; Nashruddin & Nurrachman, 2016) exist that discuss its use in contexts where English is being taught as a foreign language. Accordingly, the present research seeks to provide insight into the advantages of using LS with language institute teachers for ascertaining whether the approach can help develop the teachers professionally and accordingly change their perceptions and beliefs concerning the LS model of teacher development as well as the way they teach in their classrooms. In order to understand the ways teacher development is influenced by the social setting and teachers' cooperation, as well as how teachers' learning results in shifts in their perceptions on how teaching should be done and on the LS approach, the results of the current study are worthy of attention.

2. Literature Review

To enhance the quality of instruction, the LS model involves a group of teachers identifying and formulating the instructional objectives, creating a thorough lesson plan, instructing the lesson, gathering feedback afterward, drawing conclusions, and reteaching the amended lesson (Lewis, 2002b; Lewis et al., 2009; Ono & Ferreira, 2010). A thorough lesson or study plan is the end result of this collaborative approach, which provides instructors with numerous opportunities for reflecting, assessing, analyzing, exchanging, and adding up to what they know through teamwork (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005); this may help create a belief that they are now experts in language instruction (Wilms, 2003). A recent scoping review highlights that lesson study continues to be recognized globally as an effective approach for improving teacher pedagogy and student outcomes (Aryanti et al., 2024).

LS has also been identified as a framework that teachers use to identify gaps between the place the students stand at present and the place that is ideal for them to stand, and then try to find ways to close those gaps by developing research lessons that concentrate on redirecting their students' learning by making alterations to teaching practices and designing artifacts which can help the students fulfill the goals they have set (Tasker, 2014). According to Lenski and Caskey (2009), LS is considered a process involving reflection in which language instructors are required to consider what they do in class, how their students learn, and the interactions in between. This could assist the instructors to gain a thorough comprehension of the students they have, how they are actually teaching, and the job they are working at (Cerbin & Kopp; 2006).

Similar to other inquiry-based professional development models, LS is non-evaluative, collaborative, and teacher-directed. It is based on real-world classroom practices where teams of teachers attempt co-planning lessons that are focused on a specific unit of study or a particular topic (Johnson, 2009; Hiebert & Stigler, 2000). This encourages the teachers to be in control of their own professional development (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Despite the fact that the LS model prepared the ground for much research in science and mathematics teacher development, due to its predominant use in mainstream education, only a small number of studies have focused primarily on its application in ESL/EFL contexts. On this basis, Hurd and Licciardo-Mosso (2005) concentrated on how lesson study can aid instructors in the practice of differentiated teaching. The study's findings revealed that the approach treated instructors as professionals encouraging them to apply their knowledge and skills to help students succeed while also advancing their own professional knowledge. The practice fostered building of effectiveness for teachers since instructors realised that they were able to better both themselves and their pupils. It was seen as a method which encouraged teachers in becoming successful learners in a cooperative atmosphere.

Another study (Tasker, 2014) investigated the possibility of EFL teachers learning via involvement in LS in the context of teachers' professional development. The study focused primarily on the cognitive growth of teachers and noted that using the LS model to practise served as an efficient conceptual instrument which mediated teachers' learning and caused major reform. The investigation also included administrators in the procedures, and the findings highlight the critical role that administrators play in implementing change in schools.

Haghighifard and Marzban (2016), who focused on the perceptions of language teachers with regard to practically implementating LS, assert that LS techniques in teaching can benefit language instructors in improving their teaching and giving them a chance to get the qualities of professionally

developing in their career. This may be due to the model's differences from other, more traditional, practises in professional development. Through a cooperative teaching practise, teachers had the chance to become more aware of the positive and negative aspects of their instruction. Recent research has shown that lesson study significantly contributes to teachers' adaptive teaching competence and professional growth (Schipper et al., 2017).

In a similar vein, another study (Nashruddin & Nurrachman, 2016) visualised the implementation of an LS guideline in an Indonesian school in order to emphasise the guideline's importance. The study identified a number of challenges related to the model's implementation along with numerous important advantages; these included the advancements of teacher candidates' fresh perceptions into student needs, a greater appreciation for various strategies of teaching, as well as an understanding of the value of working together. Difficulties include time constraints and institutional administrative frameworks that prevented collaboration between teachers. Lesson study provides unique affordances for teacher learning, but also presents challenges that require careful navigation to maximize its benefits (Lee & Tan, 2019).

Lesson study has been successfully implemented across various disciplines and educational contexts, including rural communities, supporting teacher collaboration and inquiry (Halvorsen et al., 2020). In connection with previous studies and considering the interest in the application of LS in various settings and contexts, this investigation seeks to further explain the inspiring aspect of the lesson study program with regard to form and content; it further aims to offer an exemplary case for those who can make decisions in education regarding the possibility of adopting and performing LS as a framework for efficient and long-lasting professional development of language instructors.

3. Research Questions

This study examined the EFL teachers' views on experiencing the lesson study model. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the Iranian language instructors view the connection between the LS program and teacher development prior to experiencing it??
2. Does the Iranian teachers' involvement in the LS processes result in any modifications to their perceptions of the LS model or to the way they teach during the course of their professional development?

4. Method

The primary goal of the current study is to try to understand the effects of using LS with Iranian EFL instructors through examining the model from the perceptions of the teachers. This will allow practitioners to determine whether or not this practice may help EFL teachers advance professionally and cause changes in teacher perceptions and beliefs about LS as well as their actual teaching methods.

4.1. Research Design

The present studied used a qualitative research design, applying a case study approach to investigate the EFL teachers' experiences with the LS program. A qualitative design was applied because the aim was to gain in-depth insights regarding the perceptions, opinions and professional development processes of the participants in their authentic teaching context. The data were collected

through various sources: pre- and post-interviews, reflective journals and field notes. This was done so that triangulation would be made possible, thus increasing the credibility of the findings.

4.2. Participants

To accomplish its research objectives, the current study used a convenience sampling technique. Thus, in order to recruit volunteers for the current study, a letter of invitation was sent to all of the institute's teachers through the Telegram application informing them of the study's objectives, timeline, expectations, etc., and asking them to indicate whether they would like to participate or not. With a few teachers interested in learning more about the study and the procedure, an introductory meeting was scheduled, where the researcher gave a presentation. Five willing teachers who agreed to take part in the study and use the model completed a form requiring their consent to engage in the research. Table 1 displays the information about the characteristics of the five teachers who took part in the study.

Table 1

Participants of the Study

Teacher	Gender	Education	Teaching Experience
Teacher 1	Male	BA in Translation/MA in TEFL	13 years in teaching kids and adults
Teacher 2	Female	BA in TEFL/MA in TEFL	8 years in teaching adults
Teacher 3	Male	BA in TEFL	10 years in teaching adults
Teacher 4	Male	BA in English literature/MA in TEFL	15 years in teaching kids and adults
Teacher 5	Female	BA in TEFL/MA in TEFL	7 years in teaching kids and adults

4.3. Materials and Instruments

According to the research questions, three qualitative instruments were used for data collection: pre- and post-interviews with teachers who participated, teachers' reflective writings in journals, and the researcher's field notes.

The 4 questions which made up the semi-structured interviews were designed to find out how the participants defined the LS approach, what they found helpful or appealing about it, how it affected their teaching practice, and what proof they could offer for the model's efficacy prior to and following using it in the context of their teaching.

The second instrument used in this study was the reflective journals. The teachers were asked to keep reflective journals after each LS meeting was held. What they wrote in those journals included their experiences, thoughts and evaluations of the LS program. This would allow for supplementary data which could add to or explain the data emerging from the interviews.

The third instrument used in the study included the field notes of the researcher. While the study was being implemented, the researcher kept writing field notes. In these notes, there was data on teachers' engagement, group interactions and contextual factors which affected the program. These notes served as an extra source for the triangulation of findings.

4.4. Procedure

Between the pre- and post-interviews with the instructors at the beginning and conclusion of the study, the program was put into practice over the course of 12 weeks. Participants received the interview questions on paper and were asked to respond by writing, expressing their ideas and beliefs in response to the information required in the interviews. Having accomplished their answers to the interview, the answers were read over by the researcher and, if necessary, further explanation was requested, the answers to which were subsequently recorded.

Following every single meeting, for having the participants think on their experience in the LS program and reinforcing the information gathered through interviews, participating instructors were requested to have reflective journals. The teachers' evaluations were presented as excerpts that backed up what they said in the interviews. Additionally, the field notes that the researcher kept while the procedure went on with the intention of viewing the process from his own perspective were also used to support the findings from the reflective journal entries and interviews.

4.5. Statistical Analysis

One-sample t-tests were run to probe the first research question of the study that asked about the Iranian ESP teachers of computer sciences engineering acceptable level of assessment literacy. In addition, a Multivariate Analysis of Variances (MANOVA) was run to explore the second research question which asked about the Iranian ESP computer sciences engineering teachers have acceptable level of subcategories of assessment literacy.

5. Results

The results of the pre- and post-interviews were compared to determine whether the EFL teachers' perceptions had changed as a result of using the LS model. For each interview question, the following tables provide the key words that were used in the first and second interviews. The number of times these words were used prior to and subsequent to the study has also been provided in the tables.

The questions used in the interview were as follows:

Question 1: What is your definition of Lesson Study for a person who has not yet heard of it?

Question 2: What features of Lesson Study do you find to be the most advantageous or appealing, and why?

Question 3: Has "lesson study" had, or will it have any impact on you as a teacher? How?

Question 4: If you believe that Lesson Study is useful or beneficial, what do you expect to observe and achieve after its implementation? What sort of evidence?

In the two interviews, question number one attempted to determine how the instructors defined lesson study prior to and following its implementation. The findings of the comparison of the key terms pertaining to the first question that were taken from the two interviews have been provided in Table 2.

Table 2*Main Points Mentioned in The Pre and Post Interviews - Frequencies*

Points mentioned	Frequencies	
	Pre	Post
Teacher cooperation	2	6
Help in coping with challenges	3	4
Creating plans for lessons	2	4
Discussing points to make lessons better	2	1
Holding purposeful meetings	1	1
Improving teacher efficiency	1	2
Requiring students to be more responsible	1	1
Changing format of the lesson to be more helpful to learners	1	3
Trying to avoid isolation at work matters	2	0

As Table 3 indicates lesson study can chiefly be seen as a stance of teacher cooperation. Participants in the interviews primarily emphasized the cooperative aspect which were involved. An example of the texts supporting this idea will follow.

Teacher 3: I guess it mainly means that a few teachers come together to cooperate and solve any sort of problems they face during teaching their classes. (Pre)

Teacher 5: The meaning of lesson study to me concerns the idea of collaboration among teachers who are working in the same context and aim to make learning more effective through discussing and group thoughts and group work generally. (Post)

Table 3 also shows us that the issue of solving problems, or coping with challenges was yet another aspect that most teachers mentioned both prior to and subsequent to the practice of the lesson study in their teaching processes. A number of the teachers, however, expressed that the process mostly involves the gathering of the teachers to meet and discuss how lessons ought to be planned.

Teacher 1: This activity is not something very special or novel. It actually involves a kind of planning for lessons that is majorly student centered and considers the increase in analyzing student needs and planning for the optimization of their learning. (Pre)

Teacher 4: We work as a team to plan for our next session, term, and improve our way of teaching in general. We discuss things, find solutions and plan to improve our practice in the long run. (Pre)

Regarding what was mentioned in Table 3, it can be said that the main points mentioned involve the meetings of teachers together, with the aim of bringing forth the problems they have in teaching, then cooperating to tackle those problems by planning future lessons collectively. Such planning was done both before and after practicing the model.

Question number two in both interviews sought to elicit the most advantageous and appealing part of the suggested model both prior to and subsequent to having it implemented in the teachers' teaching practice. In this regard, the main ideas which emerged have been presented in the next table along with their frequencies.

Table 3*Beneficial and Appealing Parts of LS Program - Frequencies*

Points mentioned	Frequencies	
	Pre	Post
Cooperation among teachers	5	3
Idea sharing	1	4
Mentioning experiences	0	3
Professional Development	3	1
Student-centeredness	3	2
Trying to avoid isolation	0	4
Chances opening up horizons to learn more and more	2	3
Good for finding what is lacking	1	3
Promoting teacher discussions	2	0
Increase in teaching quality and efficiency	2	2
Increased responsibility at work	1	2

As indicated in Table 4, most interviewees considered the lesson study as being beneficial in creating an atmosphere of cooperation among teachers. The participants seemingly appreciated the chance of helping each other, supporting them and also receiving other teachers' support before and after the study was actually carried out.

Teacher 2: The part I like most is the aspect of being able to work together in a constructive way. This togetherness makes you enjoy your workplace and learn from other peoples' experiences. It also gives you a chance to help others in a collaborative interchange. (Pre)

Teacher 5: I believe that the most advantageous part of this program is that we come together and work together. As a person who had recently joined the institute, I found it very useful to have the chance to ask many questions and also tell others about my own experiences which I brought from the outside. (Post)

Table 4 also suggests that the chance for teachers to share their ideas was considered as interesting and desirable, while providing an advantageous ground for cooperation.

Teacher 1: I found it very interesting and, generally good, to be able to share what was on my mind. After expressing what I didn't like about a special activity we were required to do after all listening exercises, I found that a few other people had the same idea, and we thus came to a conclusion to omit it altogether. We shared what was on our minds, and we reached a logical outcome. It was really appealing to me. (Pre)

Most of the teachers also liked the experience because it helped them step out of the isolation they had prior to the program and could now easily talk to others teachers, learn from them and find faster solutions to the problems they had before the program was conducted. This helpful part of the program had not been mentioned in the pre-interviews which were carried out prior to the program.

One other point which should be mentioned here is that before the LS program was held, some of the teachers expected that the times they would devote to discussions with their colleagues during the meeting sessions would be helpful and improve the learning of their students as well as their own teaching efficiency; however, such issues were not mentioned after the LS program was applied in their workplace. Finally, in the pre-program interviews, it had not been said that such a program would help

teachers increase the degree of responsibility they had at their jobs, but in the post-stage interviews, this point was mentioned.

Teacher 3: A number of us teachers will sit and talk about the difficulties, problems and challenges we have when teaching classes and the individuals in them. I guess the quality of our teaching will improve quite a lot as a result of such a program. (Pre)

Overall, Table 4 suggests that the application of the lesson study program was expected to promote cooperation, increase professional development, as well as enhance teachers' teaching quality before the program started.

Question number three in the pre-program interview asked whether the participants expected the program to have any specific influence on them. The same question in the post-program required them to mention if LS affected their teaching and ideas or not. The following table summarizes the main ideas elicited from the interviews regarding the third question.

Table 5

Influences on Teaching - Frequencies

Points mentioned	Frequencies	
	Pre	Post
Thinking more deeply	4	5
More frequently seeking solutions	4	0
Causing shifts in ideas about teaching	0	2
Welcoming cooperation	0	3
Tolerating matters more than in the past	2	0
Questioning matters more to make things better	2	0
Becoming more flexible in dealing with different classes	1	0
Becoming more self-assured	0	1

As it can be seen Table 5, before the study took place, the interviewees had expected the program to have influences on their teaching practices. The answers they provided in the second interview indicated that they actually realized those expectations since they expressed different ideas about the effect of the program on how they taught in the second interview. It was observed that most of the teacher interviewees said that they expected the lesson study would cause them to become deeper thinkers with regard to how they taught. They mentioned that the program had caused them to think more deeply about themselves, how they taught and their beliefs about how teaching ought to be carried out in the second interview.

Teacher 1: I hope the program will have an effect on the time I devote to thinking about the classes I teach and how I teach them. Speaking with colleagues will most probably make me think from different perspectives. (Pre)

Teacher 4: I guess the program persuaded me into becoming a more reflective teacher since now, I almost always think about the different things I do in class. (Post)

Moreover, the teachers said that they would become more focused on finding solutions since the lesson study program included teacher discussions aimed at finding problems and solving them through collaboration. This was before they took part in the program. However, no one mentioned such a point in the second interview.

Teacher 5: It would be great to always be looking for finding the problems which can sometimes be not that much clear or notable. Even better than that is the next stage which involves finding solutions to fix the possible damages being caused by those problems. (Pre)

One next effect of the program concerned the fact that there were changes in the teachers' beliefs concerning the very concept of teaching when the program was finished. Even though none of the participants had expected such shifts in thought to occur prior to their new experience, at the end, they said that they would change how they taught from then on. In the same manner, a number of the teachers mentioned that they would discuss issues more often with their coworkers and get support from them regarding their teaching practices. Such an idea was not among their expectation before the study started.

As the fifth table indicates, some of the participants had expected to become more tolerant, criticize their current ways of doing things and to expand what they learnt from that in a way that would cover the other classes they taught. However, such expectations were not mentioned again in the second interviews which were done after the program.

Teacher 2: What we will go through, I guess, will help us have more toleration, and be more able to reflect on our teaching. I think that's because we will have discussions with other teachers about many details which would otherwise be ignored. When you listen to other people, you sometimes criticize your own way of thought, even if you do not mention it to others. This is because sometimes people say things that simply didn't come to your own mind. This, in itself will make you more tolerant, I guess. (Pre)

Finally, one of the participants expressed satisfaction of the experience since the process had helped her boost her self-confidence, since knowing more details of something would help her gaining more control over her teaching. This was an unexpected outcome mentioned in the second interview, however, since it had not been mentioned as an expectation in the first one.

Question number 4 of the interviews mostly considered the advantages the teachers expected to take out of the LS program. In the second interviews, naturally, the same question addressed any advantages the teachers thought they had reaped after the group experience. Frequencies of the main ideas expressed in the two interviews have been provided in Table 6.

Table 6

Evidence for the Beneficial Outcomes – Frequencies

Points mentioned	Frequencies	
	Pre	Post
Student approval (from feedback)	4	5
Teacher satisfaction	0	2
Teachers' commitment	3	0
Teacher belief changes	0	3
Self-evaluation on the teachers' side	2	2

The participants provided proof for the advantages of using the program, as shown in Table 6, primarily in the form of positive comments from their students both before and after the program. It was noted that several of the interviewees hoped to witness a rise in their students' enthusiasm and motivation when they implemented the collaboratively produced model of teaching. Ultimately, all

participants claimed that they saw that the teaching performed effectively when applied. This conclusion stemmed from the good comments they obtained from their language learners.

Teacher 2: Naturally, I want to observe that the learners are paying attention and taking part in the lessons. When teaching in the class, they are enthusiastic and lively. (Pre)

Teacher 4: As we observed the students during our teaching, they were more engaged and they recognized that they could participate more, and their remarks demonstrated that they were enjoying the lesson. (Post)

The fact that the language instructors were satisfied with the study's outcome is another piece of evidence that they offered. Furthermore, several of the interviewees anticipated that teacher commitment would rise since they believed the procedure would boost their passion. At the end of the study, however, none of them mentioned anything about commitment when pointing to proof of the advantages of the program.

Teacher 3: Increasing dedication is the kind of proof I expect since I think that teachers should become more committed or passionate for the learning to be effective. (Pre)

At the end of the study, participants said they could point to the shifts in their beliefs as proof that the program was effective and beneficial, as seen in Table 6. According to the teachers, they started doing things that they were unable to try before participating in the LS program. At the start of the study, none of the participants mentioned the shift in opinions.

Finally, as seeking proof for the advantages of the program prior to the study, a participant mentioned that she aimed to make sure she would be able to assess herself with regard to her teaching methods, views, and practices.

Teacher 1: Through self-evaluation, I believe we educators will start to recognize our flaws and work to improve. (Pre)

Teacher 2: I gained a lot of knowledge for my own teaching, therefore it truly worked for me. I looked inward and considered my own teaching approach.

If Table 6 is fully examined, it becomes clear that the participants primarily cited receiving encouraging comments from their learners as proof that the program was effective for them.

6. Discussion

The present study's first aim was to find out how the participant teachers viewed the LS program both prior to and subsequent to putting it into actual practice. The results indicated that most of the teachers saw it as a process which involved teachers' cooperation and work on how to solve problems they found during their teaching practices. It is noteworthy that when defining the LS program, the majority of the participants used the same concepts—working together as a group and solving problems. Research in the field of professional development emphasizes that collaboration among teachers is a significant matter, contributing to successful learning/teaching and teacher satisfaction as such collaboration is viewed as a contributing factor in school reform, as well as in helping teachers distance themselves from being isolated (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

The same point has been emphasized by the participants of the present study, since they mentioned that they liked being able to collaborate through the program and expected to experience

changes in the way they taught. In this sense, teacher isolation can be lessened and a shared view on how to enhance teaching and student gain through a methodical and reliable manner can be developed by cooperation through an LS program (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004).

Additionally, as stated before the implementation of the program, a number of the teachers characterize the program at the conclusion as a procedure for creating a lesson plan by peer collaboration and discussion. Lesson planning, which is one of the fundamental tenets of the LS program (Doig & Groves, 2011), should not be thought of as a time-consuming process that involves improving a simple lesson plan. In order to be perceived as an effective use of resources, lesson planning could instead be considered as a means of advancing the professional community's and teachers' beliefs and knowledge (Lewis et al., 2009). The LS program was the participants' first actual encounter with collaborative planning in this study, and they believed that their perceptions, encounters, and actions helped their group create the final outcome, which was consistent with earlier research.

Along with the aforementioned main ideas, there are also teachers who view the LS program as a process that unites teachers with a shared goal to be accomplished through cooperation. With the aid of the LS program, instructors can create professional networks that are committed to inquiry, feel accountable to their peers and students, and take ownership of the reform endeavor (Lewis et al., 2009). Additionally, the program starts with teachers establishing an aim for their learners that they hope to accomplish by teaching in the class. This goal is then pursued through research lessons that serve as investigations into instructional methodologies that could lead to the objective's accomplishment (Fernandez, 2002). In order to stimulate the students and encourage their engagement in class activities, the teachers in this study discussed the issues that hinder successful teaching and jointly decided to make the learning material more relevant to the students.

Considering the teachers' conceptions from another aspect, they expressed that the program helped them improve their teaching abilities. According to Gutierrez (2015), we learn when there is a context, and when there is a social setting; this is the reason for the fact that teachers learn and update themselves in the very classrooms they teach. Within this framework, the LS program can help teachers enhance their teaching by fostering teacher networks through the provision of instructional materials and assisting in the growth of teachers' expertise (Lewis et al., 2009). Just like there is development in teacher skills as a result of implementing the program, students also have their own share of benefits to take; they become more responsible with regard to their learning, and through modifying lessons with student needs in mind, those who are less active in taking responsibilities are encouraged to take a more active role. Such a viewpoint on the role of students in the teachers' minds set the foundations of the lessons held during the program.

The second question that was intended to be answered through the interviews was how teachers perceived the programs most useful or interesting characteristics both prior to and following their applying it in their local setting. It was very interesting that although it was not mentioned at the start of the study, the participants said at the end that they liked the program because it gave them a chance to express their thoughts and experiences, which helped them create an ideal teaching session. Richer and more varied ideas are made possible by the instructors' sharing, examining, negotiating, and decision-making throughout the LS program, a condition which cannot be achieved if there is no sense of teamwork (Tasker, 2014).

At the end of the process, the participants considered peer cooperation to be among the most beneficial components of the program, which is consistent with their initial judgments prior to the implementation of the program. A very noteworthy part of the program is that teachers work together to do action research in order to enhance the caliber of their teaching (Ono & Ferreira, 2010).

Following the study's adoption, the teachers believed that the program was pleasing because it helped them triumph over the loneliness they felt at language institutes, despite their initial statements that it might help them by promoting a learner-centered method of instruction and aiding in professional development. Similar results about teachers feeling isolated in their profession have been reported in other research (e.g., Beatty, 1999; Little, 1982; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

Furthermore, others (Meyer, 2005) note that because teaching denotes a mostly solitary job, there are very few chances for two teachers to form a strong bond. Accordingly, working together with colleagues to address shared issues and potential solutions is advised in order to foster relationships and conversation that can help to lessen feelings of loneliness and empower educators as experts (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The LS program, as a cooperative form of professional development, provides a setting for educators to create a network of support where they may collaborate, exchange experiences, broaden their horizons, and advance their careers (Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Lewis, 2002a). Teachers can develop their expertise, provide it for others, and ultimately create a more thorough body of knowledge at their job through collaboration (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005).

A further point to note about the attractive and beneficial features of the program from the viewpoints of the teachers after the implementation is that the participants saw the practice as a chance to examine and assess their teaching, as well as identify their weaknesses, through group discussions and observation of the research lesson. Because the LS program does not center on a single person, teamwork encourages teachers to share their critiques with their peers. In addition, instructors can develop their evaluations of their teaching methods by participating in ongoing, constructive, and cooperative self-evaluation and debates, similar to those found in the LS approach (Gutierrez, 2015).

Turning to the second research question, which addressed the influences of the LS program on teaching practices, the findings showed that the program primarily encouraged teachers to think about their teaching at both the beginning and the conclusion of the study. After participating in the program, the teachers said they started to doubt every action they took since they were able to examine, consider, and question each stage of their teaching practice as well as their own process of learning. Just like Takahashi and Yoshida (2004) had found, in this study, it was found that since the program places students at the center of the process and requires educators to closely monitor how they learn and have conversations about real classroom practice, which was not evident at the start of the study, the instructors reported changes in their teaching views thanks to participating in the study. Teachers evolve from traditionally viewing teaching as consisting of suggesting and advising students how to see things, to a teaching process that helps students take charge of how they should think and learn. This is because focusing primarily on students and real instructional methods jointly results in teachers revising their teaching practices (Harle, 2008).

Additionally, the participants said that because they could see the advantages of working with colleagues, practicing the LS program sparked an interest to interact with other teachers. According to Rock and Wilson (2005), collaborating professionally means an individual, along with other teachers whose degree of experience varies, work like a team and analyze what they do in class through

implementing a research lesson. Teachers who participated in this study may have been persuaded to willingly work together with their colleagues in the classes they will have in the future and for their professional development since they saw how the process enhances teaching methods and student learning.

The results of the study by Rock and Wilson (2005), which showed that teachers who took part in the program felt empowered and more professionally self-confident, are also consistent with the assertion made by one of the teachers of this study regarding self-confidence: that experiencing the program helped us see our many abilities and become more reassured of ourselves. This individual believes that the experience helped her reach a state of self-belief which led to her achieving of what she aimed for, much like it was found in another study (Wilms, 2003), suggesting that the application of the LS program leads to teachers feeling like they are experts. Lesson study has also been found to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and adaptive teaching behaviors, supporting their ongoing professional development (Schipper et al., 2018).

The participants were asked to provide information in the written reflections and interviews to support the second research question, which sought to understand how using the program affected their views and their instruction. According to the findings, educators expressed pleasure with the procedure, and the students' comments support the claim that the experiment was worthwhile and fulfilled their expectations. According to the teachers, the approach was successful because of the learners' growing excitement and active engagement in research courses. The LS approach gives teachers the chance to watch and gain a better awareness of how specific learners learn, where they struggle, what modifications take place, as well as how they perceive concepts, and it is this type of information which can then be used to directly improve the lesson (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006). Recent studies confirm that professional development programs, including lesson study, can positively shift EFL teachers' beliefs about instructional practices such as corrective feedback (Van Ha & Murray, 2020).

In yet another definition (Lenski & Caskey, 2009), LS is seen as a path to professional development strategy that encourages educators to evaluate their own teaching practices through a cycle of collaborative lesson design, classroom observing, and student learning analysis. According to Rock and Wilson (2005), in order to collaboratively develop and execute future lessons, the LS approach already seeks to encourage teachers to think more deeply by using the points they gained from research-based courses. In this way, participants of the present study appear to think back on their teaching methods through analyzing what they saw during research lessons and trying to adjust their instructional strategies accordingly.

7. Conclusions

According to the results of the first series of interviews, the language instructors expressed a favorable opinion of the LS program and anticipated that it would benefit them in a number of ways before they actually used it, even though it would be their first encounter. The participants anticipated that the program would give them a fresh viewpoint, boost their self-assurance as educators, and enhance their instructional techniques and expertise through peer collaboration.

Considering the data of the second series of interviews, it is evident that the participants benefited from the program because they primarily discussed its advantages. The method

seems to have fulfilled what they wanted, improved their knowledge, beliefs, and methods of instruction, and aided in their professional and personal growth.

One of the study's main implications, when taken as a whole, is that its approach to teacher development and instructional effectiveness is evidence-based. As Wilson and Berne (1999) put it, traditionally looking at professional development, with its workshops and seminars which are presented as prescriptions with a lot of advice and tips, teachers are not given the chance to examine their students and their work closely, nor are they given evidence of how the learners learn or even the changes that occur as a result of the changes they make in the classroom. However, compared to data gathered from quizzes and examinations, in the LS approach, the observations made during research lessons offer valuable insights into student learning, and the data can be immediately applied to improving the lesson; this is because LS model is an evidence-based approach to teacher development and teaching improvement (Cerbin & Kopp, 2006). As a result, people who plan or coordinate professional development activities must be aware that the procedure should provide evidence to educators and other researchers for the effects it may have in practice.

The final conclusion pertaining to the second research question concerns the understanding of developing a profound awareness of students through peer collaboration during the program's practice procedure. Teachers can see that learners will be learning more effectively and engaging more keenly when provided with modifications that meet the needs they have, as was done in the current study, by having conversations with peers, watching students during the study's classes, and providing constructive comments. This conclusion highlights how important it is to keep students' unique learning needs at the center of professional development efforts, focus on them from various angles, and demonstrate collaborative action to address such demands (Hurd & Licciardo-Musso, 2005).

Finally, there were limitations on the current investigation. Due to its qualitative nature, it only included a small number of individuals. Future studies could look at how a LS approach might be seen in other educational settings with larger cohorts of language instructors from various backgrounds. Additionally, using further research to analyze the effects of the lesson study approach and to monitor possible results and evaluate the model's long-term effectiveness will certainly make using such a professional development model more substantial.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors have conducted the study, collected data, analyzed and interpreted the data, and written up the manuscript.

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Competing Interests

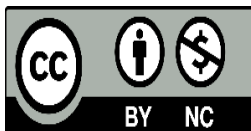
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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