



## A Phenomenological Analysis of Lesson Study: Implications for Persian-as-a-second language (PSL) Learners' Autonomy

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### Extended Abstract:

Lesson study is a recent development in Education to boost the quality of learning, but it has not received the attention it deserves in Iran. Given that the lesson study has been adapted from Japan, it is essential to examine and study its implementation and examine the strengths and weaknesses in the educational systems of different countries (Fujii, 2019; Saito, 2012; Stigler & Hiebert, 2016). Considering that lesson study has become a long-standing tradition in the Japanese educational system, and school reform and teacher education centers, the results of studies of (Emamipour & Khakbaz, 2019, Khakbaz et al., 2009, Maleki Arzin Abadi, 2016; Sobhani, 2018) showed that lesson study in Iran differs in style and implementation from that of the Japanese model and other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to study the experiences of practitioners qualitatively. Teachers sometimes face administrative difficulties and obstacles in the implementation and use of lesson study. Identifying these barriers and problems is only possible through their own experiences.

This phenomenological study was conducted at the headquarters of education in East Azarbaijan, Tabriz, Iran. The headquarters of education in Tabriz is an organization with five branches. It has about 670 primary schools, 145,000

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enrolled grade 1-6 students, and 3,600 primary teachers throughout Tabriz in (2018-2019) (Headquarters of education of East Azarbaijan, 2020). The participants were 15 primary teachers selected through purposeful sampling, as this was the number at which “saturation” of the data was reached. After the 15<sup>th</sup> interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. The primary purpose of this research was to study the experiences of teachers regarding lesson study. We selected primary school teachers who were in the lesson study team. They participated voluntarily. We provided a privacy consent agreement to protect the rights, autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants. They were fully informed of all aspects of the study, and their ways of involvement in the research. We reserved them an unconditional right of withdrawal at any time without giving any reason, obtained permission to use their data in any scientific platform such as international journals and conferences, and promised to conceal their identifiable information in the results. The research was carried out in the academic year of (2018-19). The study participants, participating in the interview voluntarily, had more than ten years of teaching experience at elementary schools. Furthermore, they had participated in the conferences in the field twice and in-service lesson study courses. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using the inductive thematic analysis, as one of the best-known methods for analyzing and reporting themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To analyze the data, interview transcripts were read several times independently by the research team member to minimize researcher bias. Next, open coding was used, and initial codes were generated and grouped into categories according to their similarities. Then, emergent themes were extracted, and a comprehensive analysis was done to examine how the themes contributed to an understanding of the data. Finally, each team members reviewed each other's codes and themes. To ensure the reliability of the coding and classification process of themes, Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated ,and it was .85.

Based on the results of the interviews, eight main themes were extracted: The perception of lesson study; insufficient teacher knowledge of the lesson study; low collaboration in the lesson study; the existence of administrative limitations in the lesson study; lack of motivation in teachers; improvement of teacher-related factors; the development of collaboration; and improvement of facilities. The results suggest that teachers are not necessarily well prepared for this innovative technique, but they suggest several strategies to improve the quality of this technique in classrooms. The findings can be used for identifying problems, improving administration methods of lesson study in schools, the removal of obstacles and developing the knowledge and skills of lesson study.

The findings of the present study showed that teachers are not satisfied with the way lesson study is implemented in schools, and they are not well prepared for it. However, it should be noted that lesson study as a method of professional development is only theoretically discussed among teachers, and the educational system has not paid serious attention to it; most importantly, teachers and school agents do not yet view it as an improvement of teachers' professional development.

The study's findings may carry some implications for teachers' professional development, learner autonomy, and PSL teacher action research. Teachers need to keep abreast of the latest methodological developments in the field to be able to help their students to be autonomous learners. To do so, teachers can draw on lesson study as a methodological option to share their ideas with other teachers which they can benefit from and observe how these ideas work with their students.

***Keywords:*** Perceptions, Professional Development, Teachers' experiences

## 1. Introduction

The accountability of, and commitment to, teachers' continuous professional learning are vital for the advancement of educational reforms, improvement of educational practices, and performance of students (Akiba & Liang, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998; Desimone, 2009; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Various methods have been introduced regarding teachers' professional development. One of the practical ways in the professional development of teachers is lesson study. Lesson study has been utilized for more than a century for Japanese teachers' professional development and in other countries of the world (Fernandez, 2010). Lesson study, as an influential professional learning model, assists teachers to change themselves and accommodate reform-based teaching (Doig & Groves, 2011; Lewis, 2015; Perry & Lewis, 2009; Stigler & Hiebert, 2009). The results of the Third International Math and Science Study indicated that lesson study could be used as a powerful model in teachers' professional development (Saito & Atencio, 2013). The results of the study by Stigler and Hiebert (2009) indicated that the main factor in the success of the Japanese educational system is the use of lesson study methods in teachers' professional development. Following the results of this research, a lesson study was carried out at 325 schools in 32 states of the American country for four years. In addition to the United States, China, Hong Kong, Germany, UK, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, and Iran also conducted studies in this regard (Sobhani, 2018).

What differentiates the lesson study from other methods of professional development is the emphasis of lesson study on students' learning (Lewis & Hurd, 2011) and teachers' professional development during the teaching and learning process (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). Lesson study is the model for professional development of teachers in schools helping to advance learning culture, creating conditions for teachers to learn from one another, increasing their professional knowledge, providing feedback and reflecting on their instructional behavior, and paying more attention to the needs of students and the way to interact with them (Lewis et al., 2006; Maroofi & Karami, 2015). However, there is a growing interest in studying and expanding lesson study to examine its impact on the long-term improvement of the teaching-learning process and professional development of teachers (Dudley, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Perry & Lewis, 2009).

Research results have shown that lesson study leads to enhanced teacher collaboration in improving learning and teaching process and teacher's efficiency in teaching (Puchner & Taylor, 2006), increased teachers' motivation to use creative ways (Maroofi & Karami, 2015), continuous learning by

teachers, enhanced trust in collaborative thinking and consulting with colleagues and experts (Rock & Wilson, 2005), improved interest in lesson study method, more profound understanding of lesson study, advanced support of lesson study, increased research in lesson study, and development of the related resources and tools (Lewis et al., 2006, ). Lewis et al., for example, sought to answer the question of how teachers' professional knowledge improved through lesson study. To do this, they examined the relationship between lesson study and professional knowledge development in third-grade primary school pupils. They introduced the ability in subject knowledge (specialized knowledge), the capacity in academic knowledge, and the motivation to apply theoretical knowledge in practice as three sources of teachers' professional learning that are enhanced by lesson study. In line with this, some scholars have used the Japanese lesson study model and believe that the implementation of the Japanese model without providing the necessary background and training, teachers will face several problems (Bae et al., 2016). Fernandez et al. (2003) designed and implemented a model of lesson study with the help of Japanese teachers for primary school American teachers. The results showed that teachers face challenges such as administrative regulations, the impossibility of long-term planning, compact classes, delayed sessions, etc, in the implementation of lesson study.

Given that the lesson study has been adapted from Japan, it is essential to examine and study its implementation and examine the strengths and weaknesses in the educational systems of different countries (Fujii, 2019; Saito, 2012; Stigler & Hiebert, 2016). Considering that lesson study has become a long-standing tradition in the Japanese educational system , and school reform and teacher education centers, the results of studies of (Emamipour & Khakbaz, 2019, Khakbaz et al., 2009, Maleki Arzin Abadi, 2016; Sobhani, 2018) showed that lesson study in Iran differs in style and implementation from that of the Japanese model and other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to study the experiences of practitioners qualitatively. Teachers sometimes face administrative difficulties and obstacles in the implementation and use of lesson study. Identifying these barriers and problems is only possible through their own experiences. The present study sought to examine the experiences of primary school teachers in Tabriz to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of content teachers in Tabriz about lesson study?
2. What are the obstacles faced by content teachers in Tabriz in the implementation of the lesson study?

3. What suggestions do content teachers in Tabriz offer to improve lesson study?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical background

In this section, we try to provide readers with the theoretical underpinnings of lesson study. To do so, we first give a brief history of lesson study followed by a detailed account of lesson study in Iran. We end this section, referring to the problems Azeri-speaking students face when learning Persian in the content-based curriculum in Iran.

Yoshida coined the term “lesson study” by translating the original Japanese word “jugyokenkyu” in his thesis in 1991 (Khakbaz et al., 2009). His doctoral dissertation on lesson study in Japan, presented to the University of Chicago, helped introduce lesson study to the United States (US) (Yoshida, 1991). He is considered one of the foremost researchers and educators of lesson study in the US, and his work is heavily cited in Stigler and Hiebert's (1999, 2009) book.

Lesson study in Iran has a long history. It dates back to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when teachers formed groups and solved educational problems, similar to the Japanese study pattern (Saki, 2013). Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, several methods have been developed for involving teachers in the research process, one of which was researcher teacher (Chaichi et al. 2006). With extensive research in this area, it did not take long; the Japanese model of lesson study became common in Iran (Sarkararani, 2008) and was officially announced by the Ministry of Education in the 2011-2012 academic year. The educational system in Iran is centralized, and all methods are centrally approved and communicated to schools for implementation (Mahmoodi et al., 2016). The latest revised lesson study for the academic year 2012-2013 has been communicated to schools. The steps of lesson study in Iran include (1) forming a group; (2) problem identification and goal setting; (3) lesson design (compilation of course research); (4) execution of the first teaching, observation and reporting; (5) evaluation of the first teaching; (6) revising the lesson and correcting it; (7) implementation of the second teaching (revised lesson); (8) evaluation and rethinking of the instructional process; and (9) sharing results (Shorakai Ardakani et al., 2013).

Lesson Study in Iran is optional and voluntary (Sobhani, 2018). Groups are usually between three and six co-teachers. The teachers who are interested in doing it voluntarily implement it in a maximum of six schools in any district of education organization of towns (Office of Primary Education, 2019). The beginning of the school year in Iran is from 22 September, and the lesson study

activities will be sent to schools in mid-October. After forming groups and presenting instructional briefings, lesson study activities will be carried out from the first week of December to mid-March. In mid-April, the lesson study teams reported their activities to the education districts based on the framework of the educational organization. The headquarters of education in the provinces appreciates the selected teachers. On the first of August, a national conference on lesson study will be held. Its results will be used to modify and revise the lesson study for the next school year (Office of Primary Education, 2019).

In Iran, different ethnic groups live with different customs, traditions, and languages. Among different parts of Iran, the majority of non-Persian speakers are Turks. In other regions, the use of languages such as Kurdish, Lori, and Arabic, Baluchi, Gilaki, Turkmen, and Tati are widespread (Shiralipour et al., 2013). Bilingual Education has been introduced to Persian as a second language through radio, television, and other media since birth, and before entering school. Children will have acquired a few skills in the second language, and when entering primary schools, they have to begin formal education in Persian. Thus, a child who has learned his language skills at the level of speaking and listening in another language should start his education in the Persian. The students are asked to acquire such abilities at the reading and writing levels (Dadsetan & Majdabadi Farahani, 2001). Those children who enter primary schools without the slightest previous knowledge of the Persian language are forced to learn the written dimensions of language such as reading and writing, without mastering the oral aspects of the Persian language (Brahuei Moghadam, 2020).

There is no doubt that these children will not perform well in primary schools (Dashti et al., 2017). The first years of schooling are fraught with difficulties. Many of them do not understand other subjects in the following years due to a lack of fluency in the language of instruction and fall behind scientifically (Shiralipour et al., 2013). Based on documents, the students have learning disorders, and the most common type of learning disorders is reading problems or dyslexia (Dashti et al. 2017). Almost 80% of students with learning disabilities have difficulty reading (Wallace, 2005). One of the key factors influencing the academic achievement of students in our country is learning the Persian, because by learning this course, the student tries to learn other lessons. Therefore, the Persian language is the key to all school learning. One of the causes of academic achievement problems in bilingual areas may be the failure to learn Persian. Participating in lesson study can enhance teachers' expectations of students' learning opportunities, as observing lessons can reveal previously unrecognized abilities (Dudley, 2013).

## ***2.2. Empirical Studies***

Emamipour and Khakbaz (2019) reported that teachers faced three categories of challenges. Challenges before practical engagement were knowledge in the field of study, motivation to participate in lesson study, the formation of a group, and the assignment of duties of members. At the stage of the practical encountering, the challenges were the choice of the problem for the study course, the implementation of the lesson and the collection of data, the review of teaching. After the practical encounter with lesson study, challenges included the arbitration of study course plans, the publication of the results of the study course, the holding of the festival of research. In the end, a model was proposed with the purpose to reduce these challenges.

Ghanbari (2018) examined positive attitudes toward a lesson study in two groups. The beliefs of the role of lesson study in the professional development, production of professional knowledge, improvement of team and group research among teachers, familiarity with the objectives and their achievement, the nature and methods of lesson study, characteristics of the problems of lesson study, the resources of defining them, skills necessary for those involved in lesson study and applications of lesson study to the element of knowledge were extracted from the interviews done with both groups. The study results showed no significant difference between the single-grade and multi-grade teachers in terms of attitudes and knowledge lesson study. Therefore, both groups could cooperate in the process of the lesson study.

Shingphachanh (2018) reported on the initial experience of teachers in the suburb schools in applying lesson study to enhance teaching and students' learning outcomes, and their concerns regarding lesson study procedure, including time management, the format of the lesson study report, and collaboration with lesson study facilitators. The study's findings showed that school principals and administrators had an essential role in empowering teachers to engage confidently with lesson study.

Farzan Pour et al. (2017) argued that to have a successful implementation of a lesson study, principles such as attention to teamwork, interactive teaching, interactive thinking, scientific generality, teachers' characteristics, and monitoring responsibilities should be taken into account.

Soleymani and Ahmadi (2017) investigated the barriers of the lesson study. Their study revealed that organizational factors including organizational structure, organizational culture, leadership styles, technology, internal processes including information related to teachers, lack of the commitment among teachers and their personality types are among factors impeding the lesson study research at schools. The findings of the other study also revealed that organizational structure was among the most influencing, and information about the teachers was the least effective factor in the lesson study.



Namdari Pejman et al. (2017) showed that lesson study groups differ significantly in providing learning opportunities, familiarizing students with theories of learning, use of teaching aids and education supplies, interest in increasing knowledge and job skills, and encouraging students to work in groups. Other factors include the use of correct assessment methods, classroom management, and the application of learning theories.

Allah Karami and Tofani Nejad (2017) reported that teachers' understanding of lesson study is not desirable, and there was a significant positive correlation between the teachers' understanding of lesson study, psychological empowerment, and job. In addition, there was no significant difference between teachers with associate degrees, undergraduates, and graduates in the awareness of lesson study. Also, the status of female teachers in the understanding of lesson study and job performance is better than that of male teachers. Still, the difference between the two groups was not significant in psychological empowerment.

Maroofi and Karami (2015) showed that from the teachers who participated in the research, lesson study could contribute to their professional development in three areas of knowledge, skill, and attitude. Knowledge includes content knowledge, teaching knowledge, and lesson study knowledge; skills include thinking skills, teaching skills, and lesson study skills; and attitudes include tendency to cooperate, a tendency to negotiate, to gain inner satisfaction, and to create motivation and interest. The results of this study suggest that teachers can employ lesson study for their professional development and solving teaching-learning problems. They can participate actively in lesson study groups at schools.

Matanluk et al. (2013) reported that the implementation of lesson study provides a new perspective in the context of pedagogy in schools among teachers. At the same time, the implementation of lesson study also increases student participation in learning activities in the classroom. Khakbaz et al. (2009) also investigated the effect of lesson study on teachers' professional development. The results showed that the lesson study could be considered a desirable model in the professional development of teachers. Although the use of the lesson study is faced with practical problems and obstacles, for each of them, solutions can be offered.

As the literature reviewed above shows, lesson study can affect the performance of teachers and achievement of students, but what previous studies have failed to examine is to do with the very fact that the implementation of this innovative technique may differ considerably from one country to another country. Therefore, the present study fills this gap, analyzing the experiences and perceptions of teachers concerning the problems and difficulties they encounter when attempting to implement this technique.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

This phenomenological study was conducted at the headquarters of education in East Azarbaijan, Tabriz, Iran. The headquarters of education in Tabriz is an organization with five branches. It has about 670 primary schools, 145,000 enrolled grade 1-6 students, and 3,600 primary teachers throughout Tabriz in (2018-2019) (Headquarters of education of East Azarbaijan, 2020). The participants were 15 primary teachers selected through purposeful sampling, as this was the number at which “saturation” of the data was reached. After the 15<sup>th</sup> interview, there were no new themes generated from the interviews. The primary purpose of this research was to study the experiences of teachers regarding lesson study.

We selected primary school teachers who were in the lesson study team. They participated voluntarily. We provided a privacy consent agreement to protect the rights, autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants. They were fully informed of all aspects of the study, and their ways of involvement in the research. We reserved them an unconditional right of withdrawal at any time without giving any reason, obtained permission to use their data in any scientific platform such as international journals and conferences, and promised to conceal their identifiable information in the results. The details of the characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. The research was carried out in the academic year of (2018-19). The study participants, participating in the interview voluntarily, had more than ten years of teaching experience at elementary schools. Furthermore, they had participated in the conferences in the field twice and in-service lesson study courses.

Table 1  
*Details of the Interviewees*

Inter viewee	Gender	Teaching experience	Lesson Study experience	Field of Study	Degree of education	Interview duration
Inter viewee1	Male	7	16	Educational Psychology	Master's	50 minutes
Inter viewee2	Female	9	15	Elementary	Bachelor	60 minutes

Inter viewee3	male	5	1	3	Education General Psychology	Masters	5minutes	4
Inter viewee4	female	4	1	5	Elementary Education	Bachelor	10minutes	4
Inter viewee5	female	2	1	5	Elementary Education	Bachelor	5minutes	4
Inter viewee6	male	1	2	3	Elementary Education	Bachelor	5minutes	4
Inter viewee7	female	6	1	5	Elementary Education	Bachelor	10minutes	5
Inter viewee8	male	3	1	6	Education	Bachelor	5minutes	4
Inter viewee9	female	2	1	4	Curriculum Studies	Masters	10minutes	5
Inter viewee10	female	4	1	7	Education	Bachelor	5minutes	4
Inter viewee11	female	2	1	7	Education	Bachelor	10minutes	4
Inter viewee12	male	5	1	2	Education	Masters	5minutes	4
Inter viewee13	male	8	2	3	Curriculum Studies	Masters	10minutes	4
Inter viewee14	female	4	1	4	Elementary Education	Bachelor	10minutes	6
Inter viewee15	male	3	2	2	Family Counselling	Masters	5minutes	3

### 3.2. Instrumentation and Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using the inductive thematic analysis, as one of the best-known methods for analyzing and reporting themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To analyze the data, interview transcripts were read several times independently by the research team member to minimize researcher bias. Next, open coding was used, and initial codes were generated and grouped into categories according to their similarities. Then, emergent themes were extracted, and a comprehensive analysis was done to examine how the themes contributed to an understanding of the data. Finally, each team members reviewed each other's codes and themes. To ensure the reliability of the coding and classification process of themes, Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated ,and it was .85.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this section, we report the findings of the study. We have organized this section, using the research questions to present the results one by one.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Investigation of the First Research Question: Teachers' Perceptions of Lesson Study

Teachers had different perceptions of lesson study. Some defined it as a group teaching method, some as sharing experiences, and some as the best practice for professional development. Through content analysis of the interviews, three sub-themes were extracted, which are shown in Table 2. These subthemes are fully explained in the following paragraphs.

Table 2

*Main and Sub-themes of Teachers' Perceptions of Lesson Study*

Main theme	Sub-themes
Perceptions of lesson study	A. Lesson study as a participatory activity B. Lesson study as a problem-solving activity C. Lesson study as professional development of teachers

Lesson study is a process in which 3 to 6 teachers collaboratively teach and share their activity experiences. In lesson study, teachers practice in groups, exchange their perspectives, and learn from each other. They also engage students in their research and, in fact, research activities. According to interviewee 2, "Teachers have experienced that they should share in lesson study." According to interviewee 5, "for example, in the first year of my work teaching to the first grade in a primary school, I used Ms. Safarzadeh's experiences; this is Lesson study." Interviewee 4 stated that "In the lesson study, teachers teach with the help of each other and learn a new teaching method using their colleagues." Interviewee 13 believed that "In some lessons, teaching methods are inappropriate and not all the class members can learn that lesson, but in lesson study, a context is provided in which 4 or 5 teachers can teach in some parts using one another's experiences and correct their own mistakes." Interviewee 7 stated that "Lesson study has a group mode. Teaching was originally done individually; but in the lesson study, all teachers cooperate, and by doing several teachings, problems are solved."

Lesson study is also a process in which teachers solve students' learning issues. In examining learning problems and issues and solving the issues of learning, teachers pay attention to various solutions and, by testing different solutions, they choose the one that solves the educational situation and enhances the effectiveness of learning. The lesson study is a problem-solving process.

Therefore, in the first step, the problem the members of the lesson study are interested in solving or have difficulty in teaching, or the one that students have difficulty in learning, is selected. Interviewee 6 said that “In my opinion, lesson study is to critique and examine a lesson that has an educational problem and solve it with the help of other teachers.” Interviewee 4 believed that “In lesson study, we come up with a solution which solves a learning problem.” According to interviewee 1, “We do lesson study to solve a problem that most of the students are having problems with so that we can solve the students’ learning problem.” Interviewee 15 stated that “In lesson study, we use different educational, and learning solutions that solve a learning problem.” According to interviewee 7, “There are many different solutions for students’ learning problems; the effectiveness of these solutions requires paying attention to students and their families and schools, all of which should be addressed in the lesson study.”

Finally, in a lesson study, teachers develop themselves professionally and administer the tasks, share experiences, criticize the colleagues' teaching, write their lesson plans based on student's learning difficulties and perform them in groups and revise them based on feedback. Interviewees 2, 4, and 8 commented that “We first read about the subject we want to do lesson study on, and then write a lesson plan to teach in the classroom and to find lesson plan problems and solve educational problems. Then, we administer the tasks in the team, and each person takes responsibility, and we study the subject such that one person teaches. Two people criticize her teaching.” Interviewees 6, 10, and 11 said that “We taught in the classroom and our colleagues critiqued our work. In the end, we watched the recorded videos, identified the problems of the lesson plan, and after determination of weaknesses of the lesson plan, we wrote a new lesson plan.” Interviewees 2 and 13 remarked: “We write a new lesson plan again and continue this process until the goal is achieved so that the educational problem is solved. The students will learn the content well.” Interviewees 3 and 15 stated that “We implement the new lesson plan to make sure that the problem is solved and that the lesson plan is also critiqued. If there are no other problems, the plan is accepted and applied in classrooms.” Interviewee 10 noted: “After the implementation of the lesson plan and reviewing it, we write a report and then share the obtained results with other colleagues so that they can use the results of our work in their teaching.”

#### ***4.2. Investigation of the Second Research Question: Teachers’ Problems in the Implementation of Lesson Study***

In response to the research question, four main themes were extracted, as shown in Table 3 and explained in this section.

Table 3  
*The Main Themes and Sub-themes Related to the Problems and Obstacles in the Implementation of Lesson Study*

umber	N	Main theme	Sub-theme
1		Insufficient teacher knowledge of the lesson study	A. Lack of sufficient and practical training of the lesson study to teachers B. Lack of practical manual of the lesson study
2		Low collaboration in the lesson study	A. Low collaboration among teachers B. The low collaboration of parents with teachers C. The low collaboration of the school with teachers D. The low collaboration of the Department of Education District
3		Operational limitations in the lesson study	A. lack of special place for running lesson study B. The Limited time for doing the lesson study C. Financial limit for doing the lesson study D. Lack of enough equipment
4		Insufficient motivation in teachers	A. Lack of Iranian model of lesson study B. Not using the results of the lesson study C. Lack of financial incentives

One of the barriers and problems teachers face in conducting the lesson study is the insufficient knowledge of teachers. Teachers have inadequate knowledge about lesson study, its purpose and philosophy, its functions, and how to conduct it. This is related to two factors and includes two sub-themes: lack of training the lesson study to teachers, and lack of practice manual of the lesson study.

Firstly, according to teachers, there are no workshops, or briefing sessions, for them to increase their knowledge and information in the field of lesson study, and the training courses are offered in an entirely theoretical way. The interviewees 9 and 15 argued that “they had not been previously informed about lesson study and had no familiarity with the topic.” According to interviewee 3, “There have been no practical training workshops on lesson study so far, and teachers do not know the lesson study.” Secondly, there are no

practical guidebooks that can help teachers how to do lesson study. Interviewee 6 stated: "Teachers should already have been practically involved in lesson study and have a textbook for the practical implementation of lesson study, but unfortunately, this has been overlooked." Interviewee 2 added that "In the lesson study we conducted, our information was limited, and we had no training classes, textbooks, and resources for guidance." According to interviewee 15, "There are some books by domestic authors or some books that have been translated, but they mostly deal with the historical and theoretical perspective of lesson study."

Low collaboration in the study lesson was the second main barrier. There is very little collaboration between teachers, parents, and especially principals with the lesson study teams, and this low collaboration resulted in many difficulties in the lesson study. These include irregularities in performing lesson study and inconsistencies in the implementation of various stages of lesson study, and opposition to its performance. This theme has the following four sub-themes: The low collaboration of some teachers; the low collaboration of the school with teachers; the low collaboration of parents with teachers; and the low collaboration of the Education organization with teachers.

Low cooperation among teachers causes them not to be able to collaborate and exchange experience and knowledge with each other. This lack of cooperation is due to factors such as the low motivation and expertise in teachers and administrative constraints. Interviewees 2 and 14 asserted that "The colleagues were not interested and the cooperation between teachers were low; lesson study should be regional rather than across a school so that teachers in one district could cooperate with each other to facilitate the implementation of lesson study." Similarly, interviewees 7 and 15 stated that "In our school, only four teachers were willing to work together to do the lesson study; teachers do not cooperate with each other and do not share their knowledge and experience with their colleagues."

In some cases, parents, due to the lack of knowledge about lesson study and its benefits, are dissatisfied with the implementation of lesson study and do not agree with the presence of their children in extracurricular activities. As aptly put by interviewee 10, "Sometimes parents were unaware of lesson study and said that you teach one subject several times." Interviewees 1 and 12 also added that "Parents resist more presence of their children in the classroom or extracurricular classes to conduct lesson study."

Due to the administrative constraints and lack of plans to carry out the lesson study by teachers, as well as the lack of justification for school principals and assistants, and in other words, lack of guidelines or instructions for school assistants and principals, they do not cooperate with teachers in this regard or even prevent them from doing so. Interviewee 5 stated that "The school principal and deputy principal need to be justified to cooperate with teachers in the lesson

study; last year, the principal and deputy prevented doing this.” Interviewee 11 also commented that “The school principal and deputy principal refused to provide us with facilities to do the lesson study, and they did not provide us with a classroom for lesson study and said that their lesson study had caused disorder at our school.”

The low collaboration of the Ministry of Education’s Regional Office has various aspects, some of which include the lack of creating motivation in teachers, lack of strategies for training teachers, lack of time and space and funds for lesson study, lack of plans for teachers’ communication with each other. According to interviewee 12, “The Ministry of Education should be in collaboration with teachers and schools and provide us with funding and facilities, but last year, they did not support at all.” In the same vein, interviewee 14 noted that “the Organization of Education of the East Azerbaijan and Ministry of Education’s Regional Office 5 did not collaborate with us; they neither provided us with facilities nor guided us to conduct the lesson study.” Ironically, interviewee 1 said that “They just sent the regulations and held the festivals at the end of the school year.”

Operational rules in the lesson study included the third obstacle. Such rules were related to the implementation processes and are most likely to affect other aspects of the lesson study. Operational limitations included lack of a special place for running lesson study; the limited time for doing the lesson study; financial constraints; and lack of sufficient equipment. These sub-themes are explained in the following paragraphs.

Teachers do not have a place like a classroom or a training hall to do the lesson study, and the use of other classrooms leads to irregularities in holding normal classes and dissatisfaction of parents, managers, and the students themselves. Interviewees 1, 4, and 15 ensured that “There are no classes and places where we can do the necessary teamwork and activities.” Interviewees 6 and 7 also agreed, stating that “The lack of a specific classroom for lesson study led us to use the classrooms, and the change in the classrooms of students caused disorder and dissatisfaction. The weekly school schedule is disrupted.”

Time constraint refers to teachers’ not having enough time. As no separate time has been considered for lesson study and teachers have to use the teaching time, this leads to delays in the regular curriculum schedule and disorder in-class sessions. The interviewee remarked that “We did not have enough time, because last year we wanted to attend the competitions, but the headteacher did not give us enough time, and this will probably have more difficulties if it is to be implemented in the classroom time.” Interviewee 3 also asserted that “In the one month that we worked on the lesson study, we delayed four or five lessons in our coursework and schedule, because we had to take the class time and do the lesson study.”



No fund is allocated to the lesson study, and the costs spent by teachers are not paid to them. This reduced the willingness of teachers to do lesson study and resulted in other problems. As Interviewees 4 and 9 noted, "Most of us had financial problems, and we spent money on typing and recording videos from our income." Similarly, interviewees 8 and 3 remarked that "There is no separate funding available to teachers to do the lesson study, and even the initial costs are paid by the teacher."

Equipment constraint means that teaching aids and facilities such as projectors, computers, camcorders, etc., are not provided to teachers, and they have to provide them for themselves. According to interviewee 8, "Facilities and projectors were few in our school and not available to us." Interviewee 9 also stated that "Our problem was the lack of projectors and computers that we were unable to provide them ourselves, and this reduced the quality of our lesson study." Interviewee 15 was very critical, complaining that "In most cases, a projector is needed for the presentation, and a camera is needed for recording videos and reviewing them, but the equipment is not available in schools, and we had to use mobile phones which did not have the desired quality."

The fourth category of difficulties in implementing lesson study relates to the low level of motivation in teachers. It is related to three sub-themes based on content analysis of the interviews, which include lack of Iranian model of lesson study; not using the results of lesson study; and lack of financial incentives.

Insufficient knowledge of teachers in the field of lesson study and its advantages cause them not to be encouraged to pursue lesson study because inadequate knowledge and information make them unaware of the necessities and benefits of lesson study. Interviewees 2, 9, and 15 stated that "First, our knowledge was little and our colleagues had little interest in attending lesson study; the sole goal was to participate in competitions and festivals of the Department of Education. The principals and some teachers in prestigious schools also did not have enough knowledge of the lesson study. Translated Japanese model is not suitable for our educational system and curriculum." Interviewee 3 also asserted that "When a teacher's knowledge of a subject is little, he/she will not be aware of its necessity and will have no incentive to pursue and use it to solve educational problems; lesson study is one example of this." Interviewees 1, 4, 5, 7, and 12 unanimously agreed that "In the seminars, different models of research model are presented. Still, we did not see a practical and suitable model for teachers."

Usually, the results of the lesson study carried out by teachers are not used, and the teachers themselves cannot use them due to the lack of time and facilities, and equipment. For example, Interviewee 6 told us that "The results of our last year lesson study were archived and were not used at all." According to interviewee 8, "We cannot make any use of our results because of lack of time

and facilities.” Interviewee 15 also noted that “The results of lesson study are more for the festival rather than for its effective use in teaching-learning process; in the teaching-learning process, teachers cannot or do not want to use them due to limitations.”

Teachers stated that they faced some problems such as temporal, spatial, financial incentives. The teachers conducting lesson study feel no differences between themselves and the teachers who do not do the study, and thus they are not encouraged to do the lesson study. Interviewee 9 complained that “Last year we were not given even a certificate of merit and there were no distinctions between us and the rest of the teachers. We were more disappointed.” Interviewees 12 and 14 stated that “Last year we ranked first and we expected an encouragement, but nobody even thanked us with a certificate of merit. The fact is that this year, I will not attend the lesson study.” Interviewee 15 also cited similar problems: “Last year we spent 85 days on lesson study, and we were going to teach a group. Unfortunately, we presented 300 slides in one session for them, and they neither appreciated our activities nor asked us to finish it fast; for a group of 14 people who worked 85 days on lesson study, they only allocated ten million rials, which was less than 1000,000 rials per person.”

#### ***4.3. Investigation of the Third Research Question: Teachers’ suggestions to improve lesson study***

The third research question posed in this study was related to the teachers’ suggestions made to improve lesson study in Iran. Table 4 shows the themes and sub-themes identified through interviews with teachers.

Table 4: Main Themes and Sub-themes related to Strategies for the Implementation of Lesson Study

<b>umber</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
1		Improvement of teacher-related factors	A. Providing practical training and workshops B. Practical teaching of lesson study to teachers C. Disseminating the results and providing feedback
2		Expanding collaboration	A. Increasing collaboration inside schools B. Increasing collaboration out of schools A. Allocation of funding B. Allocation of enough time
3		Improvement of facilities	C. Establishment of a lesson study room equipped with educational facilities D. Employing an alternate teacher

Improvement of teacher-related factors was the first suggestion teachers made. As the teachers have stated, no practical training in lesson study has been provided to them. Teachers have little knowledge and skills in lesson study and in how to do it. For instance, interviewees 12 and 13 stated that “If training is held, our knowledge increases. If teachers are aware of the necessity and importance of lesson study, they will be willing to do it.” Teachers also complained about not being provided with feedback. They noted that the information obtained from lesson study and their videos should not be archived, but they should be used by other teachers in the process of lesson studies as well as in resolving the educational problems of different classes; this can be done by sharing the information obtained from lesson study in a school. Also, teachers who do lesson studies should become aware of the quality of their work. Teachers’ lesson study should be evaluated, and the weaknesses should be removed and the strengths reinforced. For example, interviewee 13 noted that “Teachers’ lesson studies should not be archived but should be available in CD format to other colleagues.”

Development of collaboration was the second suggestion made by teachers to boost lesson study. Increased collaboration enables teachers to build productive relationships with each other and to be able to work effectively with students’ parents and school principals, and deputies, as well as the District Educational Department.

Increased teacher collaboration helps teachers use the experiences and knowledge of each other and overcome the problems of education. This can be done by increasing the number of teachers in the teams. Increased cooperation between the school principals and deputies with teachers will cause them to provide the teachers with the school equipment and facilities to carry out lesson study and not prevent them from doing so. This can be done by justifying the school deputies and principals or adopting administrative solutions. Interviewee 1 aptly put that “although most of the managers, headteachers, and their assistants support lesson studies, they do not take it seriously. The most experienced managers and their assistants state that the existing educational system cannot be improved. We are not going to be developed like Japan.”

Increased cooperation of the Educational Department with teachers will make it easier for teachers to solve their problems, and administrative coordination will be done for the use of teachers from other schools and universities. Interviewees 1, 12, and 13: “The organization of Education should be in coordination with teachers and schools and provide us with funding and facilities; most experts in the organization of Education have a pessimistic view of innovation and still do not accept lesson study as an effective method; they do not support lesson study because of the costs and resistance of families.”

The third suggestion that teachers made dealt with improving facilities. Schools should provide the least necessary facilities for doing lesson study,

including time, space, funding, and equipment. The organization of Education should consider financial resources for lesson study and allocate some funds to it so that teachers can cover the required costs of doing lesson study. Interviewees 4, 14, and 15 complained that “Last year we mostly had financial problems; some funds must be considered for lesson study; they do not even provide us with a budget for a catering cast and they say that families have to provide it; the families in this district are not in good financial conditions and do not support the schools.”

Teachers should also be given adequate time apart from their teaching time (extra time on a teaching day) to conduct lesson study without concerns about delays in curriculum or students’ disorder in the school schedule. Interviewees 1 and 6 noted that “teachers should be given enough time to do lesson study at times rather than class time.” Creating a lesson study room will integrate the activities of teachers as the lack of extra space at schools makes it difficult for the teachers in the lesson study group to hold their meetings. On the other hand, this room should have the necessary facilities and equipment for lesson study. Interviewees 8 and 11, for example, explained that “There must be a place at schools where teachers can form groups and do not have a problem of place.”

Employing a substitute teacher reduces disorder in schools and parents’ dissatisfaction because when a teacher leaves the classroom to attend the lesson study group meeting, and when there is a substitute teacher, the class will not remain without a teacher, and no other problems arise. Interviewees 1, 3, and 7 ensured us that “There should be a substitute teacher at schools so that when we leave the classroom to attend lesson study, he/she will be present in the class and there will be no disorder in the class.”

## **4.2. Discussion**

One of the new ways in educational reform and professional development is lesson study. This innovation has been introduced in Iran for almost two decades and has been widely considered at schools in the last decade. Teachers believe that lesson study is a collaborative activity in which they engage in collaborative teaching and share their experiences in teaching and training and issues related to education aiming to solve learning problems and to expand teachers’ professional characteristics. In lesson study, in addition to theoretical foundations of teaching and learning, teachers learn scientific and practical skills related to the teaching-learning process, evaluation of their teaching methods, self-assessment, and teaching activities. Teachers collectively select the subject under study and, in a collaborative manner in groups, formulate the research plan related to it and evaluate the related conducted educational activities in detail.

Using this method, teachers engage students in their research and they research simultaneously with practice (Farzan pour et al., 2017; Khakbaz et al., 2009). In this way, teachers' professional characteristics are developed. Teachers face numerous issues in this process. Resolving the problems related to implementing the lesson study process leads to the professional development of teachers. Although teachers carry out the lesson study, they have not profoundly understood its process and need practical training in this area (Allah Karami & Tofani Nejad, 2017; Sobhani, 2018).

On the other hand, in some cases, school principals and deputies and the Educational Department do not cooperate with schools. They view lesson study not as a significant step in professional development of teachers, but as an innovative certificate to participate in top teaching festivals. As a result, lesson study has not yet found its proper position among principals and families, and most of the time, families disagree with holding extra classes. School principals fail to incorporate lesson study into the school curriculum when organizing their plans, and even curriculum planners do not mention lesson study in the process of development of curricula and set of learning and teaching activities. These have caused lesson study not to be at the center of the teaching-learning process. To resolve these problems, teachers' suggestions, as the findings of the present study show, improve the lesson study. These recommendations included providing a substitute teacher, equipping schools with conference rooms, and providing practical training.

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

The findings of the present study showed that teachers are not satisfied with the way lesson study is implemented in schools, and they are not well prepared for it. However, it should be noted that lesson study as a method of professional development is only theoretically discussed among teachers, and the educational system has not paid serious attention to it; most importantly, teachers and school agents do not yet view it as an improvement of teachers' professional development.

The study's findings may carry some implications for teachers' professional development, learner autonomy, and PSL teacher action research. Teachers need to keep abreast of the latest methodological developments in the field to be able to help their students to be autonomous learners. To do so, teachers can draw on lesson study as a methodological option to share their ideas with other teachers which they can benefit from and observe how these ideas work with their students.

In addition to teacher professionalism and learner autonomy, language teachers teaching Persian as a second language in classrooms experiment with many novel ideas, using the innovative technique of lesson study. Through

collaboration and cooperation with students, they may realize some activates work better for them, and some others may be unproductive. Therefore, participating in lesson study can enhance teachers' expectations of students' learning opportunities, as observing lessons can reveal previously unrecognized abilities.

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تحلیل پدیدارشناختی درس پژوهی: دلالت‌هایی بر استقلال یادگیرندگان زبان فارسی به عنوان زبان دوم



## تحلیل پدیدارشناختی درس پژوهی: دلالت‌هایی بر مستقل بار آوردن زبان آموزان فارسی به عنوان زبان دوم (پژوهشی)

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### چکیده

هدف اصلی پژوهش حاضر بررسی تجارب معلمان دوره ابتدایی در زمینه‌ی درس پژوهی دلالت‌هایی بر مستقل بار آوردن زبان آموزان فارسی به عنوان زبان دوم می‌باشد. این پژوهش از نوع کیفی و پدیدارشناسی است. جامعه آماری شامل معلمان دوره ابتدایی شهر تبریز بود. براساس روش نمونه‌گیری غیراحتمالی هدفمند با ۱۵ نفر از معلمان مصاحبه نیمه سازمان یافته انجام گرفت. جهت دستیابی به روایی سؤالات مصاحبه از نظر اساتید و همچنین متخصصان درس پژوهی و برای پایایی داده‌های پژوهش از روش مطالعه مکرر، مقایسه مستمر داده‌ها، خلاصه‌سازی و دسته‌بندی استفاده شده است. روش تجزیه و تحلیل مورد استفاده، روش پیشنهادی اسمیت است. بر اساس نتایج مصاحبه‌ها، ۸ مضمون اصلی شامل: برداشت از درس پژوهی، نبود دانش کافی معلمان از درس پژوهی، همکاری کمتر در انجام درس پژوهی، وجود محدودیت‌های اجرایی درس پژوهشی، نبود انگیزه در معلمان، بهبود عوامل مربوط به معلم، گسترش همکاری، بهبود امکانات استخراج شد. نتایج پژوهش حاضر می‌تواند در جهت شناخت مشکلات درس پژوهی، بهبود شیوه‌های اجرای درس پژوهی در مدارس ابتدایی و رفع موانع و توسعه دانش و مهارت‌های درس پژوهی مؤثر باشد.

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