Iranian Senior High School EFL Teachers' Perspectives of Lesson Study: Perceiving Challenges, Hindrances, and Benefits

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article Type: **Research Article** **Received:** **23/10/2021** **Accepted:** **15/03/2022**	Today, Lesson Study (LS) is a prerequisite to the professional development of teachers in high school settings. The present study aims to figure out how Iranian language teachers' attitudes towards LS can motivate their engagement or denial of joining LS projects. The study is also driven by the desire to discover the obstacles to achieving LS from the perspective of language teachers in Iran. A research design on explanatory sequential mixed methods was used. The instruments used to collect the data consisted of questionnaires at the quantitative stage along with language teachers' reflection notes and semi-structured interviews during the qualitative phase of the study. A total of 206 senior high school language teachers participated in the first phase of the study, of which 14 participated in the interview, and 20 wrote reflection notes for the second phase of the research. The instrument used to analyze the data in the quantitative phase was SPSS software and, at the qualitative step, MAXQDA software. The result of both quantitative and qualitative findings draws attention to the importance of mentoring high school EFL teachers to be able to complete LS and puts emphasis on the beneficial role of Lesson Study. These findings can have implications for EFL teachers, school officials, EFL teacher educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to pave the way for attaching importance to LS as a teachers' development approach. In terms of the limitations of this study, follow-up studies can mitigate the limitations of this research by replicating it using a larger sample of teachers teaching different levels of students in different classes for a much longer duration.

1. Introduction

The literature suggests that teachers are expected to play a more active role in evaluating, researching, and improving learning and teaching within a classroom context (Demir et al., 2011). The Lesson Study (LS) as a teacher-directed survey at the primary school level has a long history in Japan. While Lesson Study originated in Japan, it did not become firmly established until the mid-1960s. By the middle of the 1960s, LS has been rightly developed as an in-service teacher education strategy (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2012). Japanese Lesson Study has become a widespread travel reform after Hiebert and Stigler (1999) wrote for the first time about the Japanese Lesson Study as a paradigm of improving teaching methods in the US (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). Recently, Lesson Study has been carried out with practitioners and future teachers in some countries including China, the United States, and the Philippines. However, their use has produced mixed results. Lesson Study is a school-based, teacher-driven, teamwork inquiry for teachers to pose questions on their students, their methodologies, the relationship between student learning and teaching effectiveness, the observation of professional development, and the examination of teaching and students' motivation, progress, and engagement (Tasker, 2014). Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (1978) and the theory of cultural-historical activity (Engestrom, 2001) were theoretical frameworks used to understand the interaction of EFL teachers with their school students and administrators and to trace the cognitive development of teachers (Tasker, 2014). Lesson Study has been used to further develop the skills of teachers such as research and lesson planning (Hiebert et al., 2004 as cited in Larssen et al., 2017). Through Lesson Study teachers may be able to try out new pedagogical methods, leading to greater efficacy of the conclusions.

Despite a lot of research into the function of LS to promote teachers' professional growth, little is known about how language teachers think about Lesson Study or their professional development in senior high schools in Iran. Some arguments indicate that there is a lack of research to clarify the Iranian senior high school EFL teachers' views on the impediments to conducting the Lesson Study and their potential challenges. Also, it is not clear whether Lesson Study contexts support and contribute to improving their students' satisfaction, and learning; and providing them with professional knowledge and development or not. It is quite likely that only some Iranian researchers have focused on the nature of implementation of the Lesson Study model in EFL classrooms from senior high school EFL teachers' points of view; therefore, the present study will be an attempt to recognize and analyze the challenges EFL teachers may have to deal with during the implementation of Lesson Study in their educational or cultural

settings. Consequently, curriculum designers and school administrations may provide more opportunities for senior high school EFL teachers to join and investigate those obstacles that hinder teachers' collaborations and design in-service Lesson Study training courses. To this end, the following research questions were addressed:

> 1. In EFL teachers' general perspectives, what are the potential challenges, and possible problems, and hindrances for not subscribing to Lesson Study in senior high school EFL classes in Iran alongside its perceived benefits?

> 2. What are Iranian senior high school EFL teachers' viewpoints about the presence of a mentor or a research expert in the success of engaging in Lesson Study?

2. Literature Review

Lesson study (jugyou kenkyuu) is a powerful type of teacher enquiry that has been in use in Japan for more than one hundred years (Yoshida, 2000; Lewis et al., 2006). Lesson Study is where teachers meet to determine actual problems, collect and read literature on the problematic issue, after that initiate a research lesson that applies the ideas learned from the reading process. That research lesson is then taught by one of the teachers to a live set of learners as other teachers are watching – an event to which, in Japan, individuals from outside the school can be invited. It ends with group insights into student learning that did or did not occur in the lesson, and typically, a group presentation of their project to the wider professional community. The adaptations of the Japanese LS have established themselves in Australia, the UK and the USA, for instance. In these settings, LS projects similarly emphasize students' reflections and problem solving. Research on LS reveals that one of the most exciting effects of LS is to support teachers to broaden the intervention in their teaching (Cajkler & Wood, 2016b). Another important outcome of previous research is the progression of reflective pedagogical method through LS. This line of research demonstrated that LS fosters teacher engagement in self-examining accountability (Olteanu, 2017; Soto Gómez et al., 2016), which modifies the teachers' understanding of students' learning "because the problems they study make sense for their local educational context" (Tasker, 2011, p. 221).

On the word of Dotger (2015), initial LS practices date back to the second half of the nineteenth century in Japan as a means by which educators qualify all teachers to study the transformative nature of collaborative development (Baba, 2007). Researchers like Stigler and Hiebert (1999) and Lewis (2004) founded LS in western education in the 1990s. In tandem with Dikilitas' assertion (2015), prior studies show that LS is different from

conventional professional development format both in form and content. Zhang et al. (2018) emphasize that teachers who participate in the LS process greatly benefit from the observation phase, even if they are not teaching.

Sitton (2006) examined teachers' perceptiveness of the influence of LS on their instructional and content knowledge. With a population of 32 teachers, the research concentrated on teachers' satisfaction with the LS in an elementary school. The study found that the participants were satisfied with LS as an appropriate model of teacher professional development. Mitcheltree (2006) also concludes that during the LS process teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge are boosted. Additionally, Meyer (2006) found that teacher content awareness has grown due to the collaborative nature of LS. She mentioned that while there is strong evidence that the LS has a positive impact on student engagement, complete assurance of students' performance arising directly from the LS must be notified.

Demirbulak (2011) explored the result of using LS model in training EFL teacher-researchers to develop their skills in planning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lessons. Participants followed an LS model of micro-teaching and they were expected to do a research based on this experience. By engaging in reflexive practice structured by LS, participants were assisted in designing and reviewing research lessons with a critical program. The results revealed a higher reflexivity and teacher awareness.

Tan-Chia et al. (2013) used LS as a scaffold and mediator while renewing a curriculum in English language education. They used LS as a method to enhance the professional ability of language teachers to implement teaching strategies at the same time as teaching the modified version of the Singapore curriculum for teaching English. In their mixed-methods analysis, they considerably focused on the links between the LS and the implementation of the national curriculum. The results showed that the LS was an efficient means of linking the knowledge of the subjects taught by teachers to the new content of the curriculum. By linking theory and practice in a practice-oriented model, the LS offered teachers a framework to map and implement their theoretical knowledge. The study also reported that the mindset of participating teachers changed with the exclusive focus on learning rather than teaching; teachers were able to abandon the teacher-centered vision and gain an understanding of the teacher who supports and guides the students, as expected under the new national policy.

Using qualitative research, Neow Ngang and Chap Sam (2015) did research to investigate the role of principal support in the LS process in schools. The objective of their research was to enquire into how supportive school administrators are in carrying out the LS. Qualitative data were

gathered through extensive interviews with the nine primary school senior managers from three types of schools in Malaysia. Their findings indicated that changes occurred at those schools before and after the LS cycles had been done as participants used appropriate teaching strategies and alternative approaches which support students' needs and ideas, improving professional growth, assisting and correcting mistakes made by other team members. Besides, administrators also provided support by realizing time and preparing the materials needed. From their points of view, LS successfully made drastic changes among the teachers.

Wood and Cajkler (2015) employed a version adapted from LS model used by student teachers and their mentors in a teacher education program for soon-to-be teachers of modern languages and geography. The findings indicated most student teachers and mentors were involved in a reflective process in which the complexity of teaching was explored. Some mentors refused to accept breaking the chains of conventional roles, dominating the discourse as advisors, so the traditional approach to mentoring persisted.

A further study on CALL was carried out by Lander (2015) in the context of teaching foreign languages at the university level in the Japanese context. The LS was used as a model to help teachers and students perform better through online technology. The results indicated that the LS can be useful in introducing new approaches and techniques as long as it is effectively implemented. In particular, the communicative framework promoted by LS model can create transformative professional development for language teachers who are expected to keep pace with evolving innovations in education. Nami et al. (2016) examined the role of LS practices in teachers' professional growth in the computer-assisted language learning area. A total of 5 EFL teachers volunteered to participate in the study and the responses were analyzed using reflective journals and interview questions. The data analysis demonstrated that pre-service teachers' time shortage and other external commitments, inadequate background, and insufficient experience were the major challenges in preparing a lesson plan. In addition, the analysis of the participants' responses showed that they believe in the positive role of LS in directing EFL teachers to use technology according to the lesson plan they had developed. The findings also revealed that the participants were willing to receive constructive and helpful feedback on their LS, among which they tended to get negative feedback, in contrast to positive ones, from their peers and mentors.

Koutsouris et al. (2016) intended to include university lecturers in novel LS (through video conferencing) to collaboratively work around three key research lessons. The participants were divided into two groups and the data were analyzed using a discourse analysis framework. The findings showed that despite some technical challenges such as internet disconnection

and some members' low computer literacy, the members had smooth and successful communication. This was also argued that distance-linking technology had the potential to provide more effective support to teachers and to engage them in the instruction.

Cajkler and Wood (2016b) highlighted the relationship between mentors and pre-service teachers in an LS project in modern languages in the UK. The study of the learning results of pre-service teachers and mentors supported the view that they were benefitting from a reflective practice conducted by the LS. Increased knowledge on collaborative teaching and learning was also discussed as participants developed a "pedagogic literacy", that is, sustainability professional development along a continuum (Cajkler & Wood, 2016b, p. 94). Similarly, a study by Cajkler et al. (2013) had carried out in a similar context investigated the collaborative nature of LS for pre-service teachers and their mentors. The results specified that the model of LS promotes professional development not just for pre-service teachers, but for all those involved involving their mentors and experienced teachers.

In a study on how LS influenced the professional development of three EFL instructors and the EFL teaching, Coskun (2017) affirmed that student learning helps EFL educators to be more aware of the problems that arise in teaching practice and be proactive in resolving these problems. The revision of the research lessons to overcome the students' learning problems helped the LS team members to improve their pedagogic proficiency by finding out further about the class dynamics and the students. On the other hand, a critical concern was raised regarding the potential to convince more EFL instructors to engage in professional development based on LS.

Another prominent study by Caarata and Haley (2018) noted the use of LS in integrating language content and literacy in immersive French-Canadian environments. They discussed how collaborative lesson and curriculum planning during the LS cycle helped participants structure their existing knowledge and connect it to their real classroom context, although they initially struggled to determine which literacy and language constituents were related to focus on as planning content-based teaching. In addition, the authors provided evidence of the potential of the collaborative model to maximize teacher learning. The collaborative character of LS model was tailored to learning theories such as communities of practice and situated learning.

To include the results of the already existing studies on language teaching, Norton (2018) examined the potential of LS for English for specific purposes teacher professional development and the degree to which they can improve student and teacher learning. Fifty ESP teachers at primary,

secondary, and tertiary levels of education have volunteered to participate in this study. The data analysis implied that ESP teachers believe in the significant role of LS in developing their collaboration with others and peers by sharing their experiences and posing their opinions, helping them to get new insights about student learning, e.g., by paying more attention to students' learning styles and their affective variables, increase their risk-taking to exert more class practices and enhance their teaching and learning by making lessons more interactive and involving the real world and trying more techniques in instructional classes.

A number of approaches have been attempted outside Japan, for example in the US, Singapore, Canada, and the majority on the teaching of mathematics. A smaller number have looked at science teaching and some have had a different focus, for example, Rock (2003) on elementary school social studies, Sims and Walsh (2009) on early childhood education, Tsui and Law (2007) on teaching Chinese in Hong Kong and Leavy (2010) work with primary teachers in Ireland. However, there is no logic that LS cannot be utilized in those subjects that use inquiry-based learning processes (Lewis & Murata, 2006). Thus, teachers from many content areas such as foreign language teaching are also able to examine their methods critically and share their ideas with other teachers. School-based LS can join EFL teachers together in investigating the influence of their daily practice on the schools' long-term development (Lewis & Hurd, 2011).

An international review of LS research shows the potential of LS for strengthening content-based language teaching, such as Von Esch and Kavanagh (2018) in the USA; Ceallaigh et al. (2018) in the Republic of Ireland, and Cammaratay Haley (2018) in Canada. The authors have clearly shown that the LS framework, which allows a group of teachers to target student learning in a given research lesson, provides a recursive process for joint observation, review, and development of that lesson. This process helps language teachers to reconcile content and language so they can develop greater awareness of the language or create content-based practice communities of teachers (Cammarata & Haley, 2018).

Reviewing the history of LS' arrival in Iran indicated that it is about a decade. However, it has not been entered into practice in senior high school EFL classes during this decade. The methods that Iranian EFL teachers are used are severely limited, and Iranian teaching has no system in place for getting better. Previous studies have shown that the reasons for the lack of literature are linked to such key issues as LS has recently been introduced instead of being monitored or implied (e.g., Alipour, 2018). It requires teacher-researchers to undertake such studies, and their involvement demands an official movement that can allow teachers to take part. However, many education specialists believe that providing opportunities for EFL teachers

should be an essential part of any educational reform effort as well as appropriate support structures that foster the essential work to continuously improve teaching practice (Rock & Wilson, 2005). LS can assist Iranian senior high school EFL teachers in this change.

3. Method

This study employed a mixed-methods design, the explanatory sequential design, to pinpoint Iranian senior high school EFL teachers' percipience of Lesson Study. An explanatory sequential design was beneficial for the present research to provide an in-depth explanation of the quantitative findings. Additionally, concurrent procedures of using questionnaire and qualitative data (semi-structured interviews and reflection notes) in present study provide a thorough analysis of the current research problems. The most important attraction of mixed methods research lies in the fact that the outcomes of one method can be used to shed light on another method (Greene et al., 1989). Through both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the researcher could make the most of both paradigms.

3.1. Participants

The questionnaires sent to senior high school EFL teachers online using an online survey tool (Google Doc) and responses were received from 206 Iranian senior high school language teachers (116 females and 90 males). They had a range of teaching experiences from below four years to above 25 years. 35% of the EFL teachers held a Master's degree, 14% Ph.D. Most of them held a BA degree in TEFL (49%). The qualitative phase (interviews) of the study was composed of nine females (64%) and five males (35%) for a total of 14 participants. Of these 206 senior high school language teachers who participated in the first phase of the study, 20 teachers wrote reflection notes and sent them to the researcher. As a basic ethical criterion, they were made aware of issues of anonymity.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

To probe into Iranian senior high school EFL teachers' perception of Lesson Study, data were collected from three sources: (1) questionnaires which were delivered online (To prepare the questionnaires, the assigned materials and associated literature were reviewed; the items were piloted on 44 Iranian EFL teachers teaching English in senior high schools around the country. It was also given to four experts to pass their judgments on the questionnaire items. The questionnaire was confirmed as valid by the university professors, and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient reported for this questionnaire was .82, which is considered a high index.); (2) semi-structured interviews and (3) reflection notes written by the 20 Iranian EFL teachers who voluntarily wrote reflective notes.

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Procedures in Compiling Quantitative Data

Since in this study the explanatory sequential design was used, in which quantitative data are collected first and subsequently qualitative data (Ary et al., 2017), at the outset, the quantitative data was collected through an online questionnaire followed by interviews and reflection notes.

The online questionnaire, which was designed to mostly identify language teachers' standpoints of doing Lesson Study in Iran, and the perceived hindrances to participating and implementing Lesson Study, more significantly their views toward the presence of a mentor in the Lesson Study cycle, and social and institutional support, was completed by 206 EFL teachers in Iran between March and July 2021.

3.3.2. Procedures in Compiling Qualitative Data

The qualitative phase of the study exploited both active interviews and reflective notes and followed a Thematic Analysis for collecting and encoding qualitative data to identify emergent categories. Due to participants' personal and workload issues and COID- 19 Pandemic issues, there was neither time nor resources to interview all the EFL teachers. Additionally, not all the EFL teachers agreed to be interviewed. The final sample size, which was 14 volunteer senior high school teachers, five males and nine females, ranging from 26 to 49 years old (mean = 36), were eventually interviewed online. The rationale behind using follow-up active interviews was to encourage the senior high school EFL teachers to critically reflect on their experiences of doing LS. The researcher wished to draw on the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and reactions of the participants to their own experiences.

The following are few examples of an interview opening questions:

What does Ls mean to you?

If you have ever done any LS, What role does it play in your professional and teaching development?

Does LS have any significant role or impact on your students' development and satisfaction?

What has LS brought to you? (What is the impact of the LS on you?)

3.4. Data Analysis

The instrument used to analyze the data in the quantitative phase was SPSS 23 software. In qualitative phase of the study, teacher reflections and interview data were analyzed by looking for similarities or differences in the

language teachers' answers using Thematic Analysis. They were all transcribed for content analysis by the researcher. More precisely, three encoding steps were performed using MAXQDA 2020 software: First line-by-line coding for the identification of emerging categories (themes); the targeted encoding to merge or reclassify the categories identified at the initial phase of the coding and axial coding for identifying inter-category relationships and add to the themes in each category. Initially, 75 categories were determined as a function of inductive coding and analysis of EFL teachers' interviews and their written reflections, which were all relevant to the research issue in this study. A comparison of themes was made to achieve a holistic view, and individual cases were examined to gain further insights and develop detailed descriptions. Lastly, three university professors who were not involved in the study were asked to comment on the weaknesses and strengths of the researcher's analysis of qualitative data, as Creswell (2008) recommends the selection of an outsider to review and report upon the evaluation as external verification. In fact, the thematic analysis was adapted to explore high school EFL teacher conceptions of Lesson Study since the qualitative approach tries to get a rich viewpoint from language teachers who are being studied and concentrates on data collection on teachers' experiences in the specific context of senior high school of Iran.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Background information on participants was derived from questions 1 through 4 of the questionnaire. The majority of the survey participants were female (56%). The most common age group was 41- 50 years old (30.6%). Years of teaching experience ranged from below 4 years to above 25 years. Most EFL teacher participants (49%) had previously obtained a BA degree.
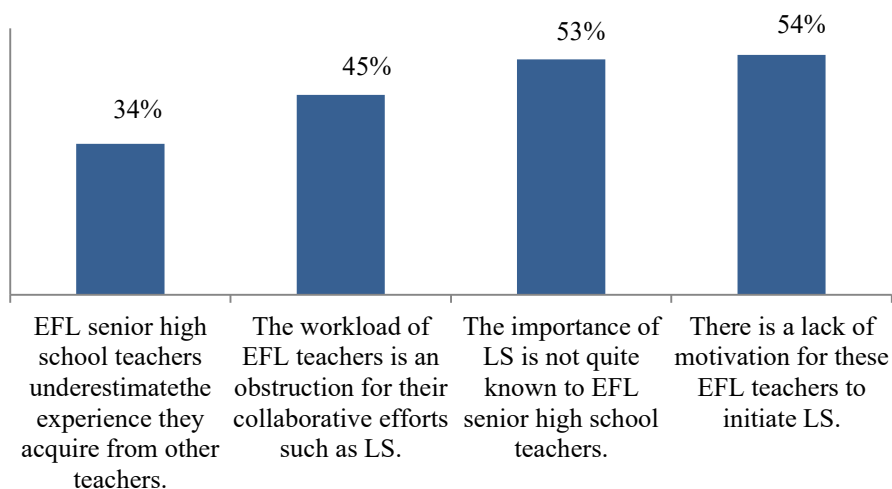
Research Question 1: In EFL teachers' general perspectives, what are the potential challenges, possible problems, and hindrances for not subscribing to Lesson Study in senior high school EFL classes in Iran alongside its perceived benefits?

4.1.1. Quantitative Results

To answer this research question, the following figures (Figures 1 to 3) and tables (Tables 1 to 5) present what possible hindrances are to using Lesson Study in English classes, mainly based on the viewpoints of those EFL teachers who have never done Lesson Study. As illustrated in Figures 1-4, these barriers to not subscribing to Lesson Study projects can be attributed to three groups: personal, education, and context (cultural setting):
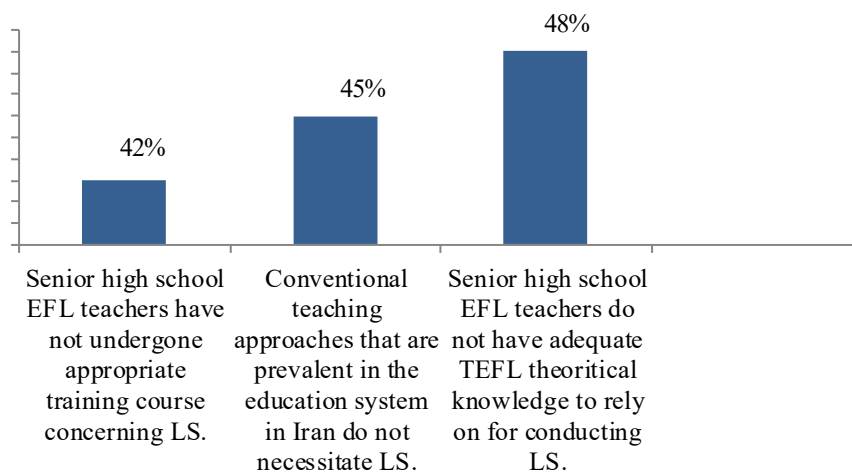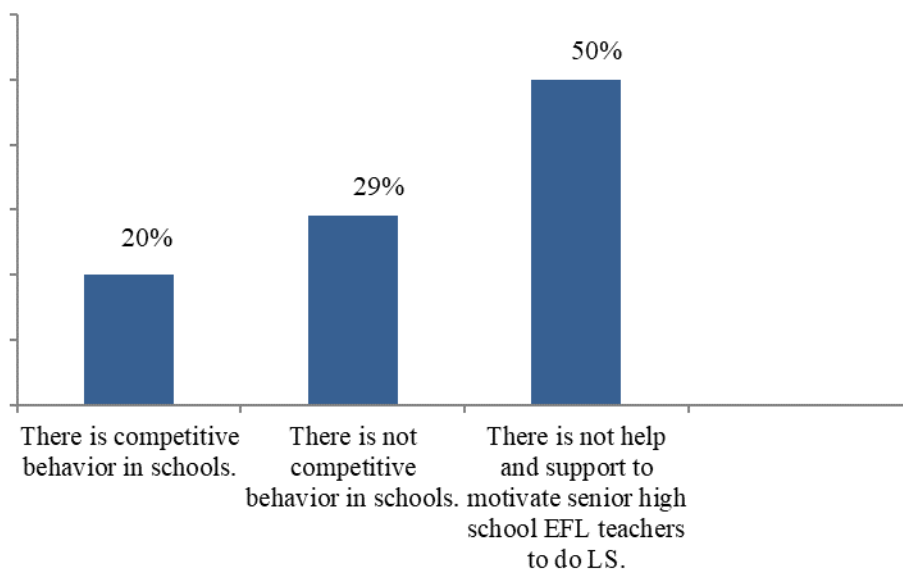
Figure 1

Personal Hindrances for Conducting LS in EFL Classes

34%	45%	53%	54%
EFL senior high school teachers underestimate the experience they acquire from other teachers.	The workload of EFL teachers is an obstruction for their collaborative efforts such as LS.	The importance of LS is not quite known to EFL senior high school teachers.	There is a lack of motivation for these EFL teachers to initiate LS.

Figure 2

Educational Hindrances for Conducting LS in EFL Classes

42%	45%	48%
Senior high school EFL teachers have not undergone appropriate training course concerning LS.	Conventional teaching approaches that are prevalent in the education system in Iran do not necessitate LS.	Senior high school EFL teachers do not have adequate TEFL theoritical knowledge to rely on for conducting LS.

Figure 3

Context Hindrances for Conducting LS in EFL Classes

As seen in figures 1 to 3, the most frequently cited barrier to hindering EFL teachers' ability to participate in LS or continue doing Lesson Study was lack of personal motivation (54%). The level of practical interest in doing Lesson Study is minimal. The importance of Lesson Study is not entirely known to senior high school EFL teachers was the next (53%). Competitive behavior in senior high schools and underestimating what the teachers acquire from their colleagues were said the least frequent (34%, 20%). 48% of senior high school teachers pointed to a lack of adequate theoretical knowledge as also a key reason for not conducting Lesson Study in language classes in Iran.

The school context (inquiry culture in schools) barriers for doing Lesson Study are being discussed through the following tables. As illustrated in Tables 1 to 5, about 70% of EFL teachers highlighted that teachers don't talk about Lesson Study in their schools, and they don't do Lesson Study (55%). No opportunities to share or present the results of their Lesson Study in academic conferences, and beliefs in their findings of Lesson Study will not be of value to anyone might be the reason for their viewpoints. Above 43% of teachers believed that EFL teachers have no access to published Lesson Study projects as a source of further research and study, and surprisingly, only 9% said that teachers read published Lesson Study and research. That is why most EFL teachers' participants disagree (about 39%)

on having opportunities to learn about current Lesson Study and research (Table 2). The other two research culture obstacles for not engaging Lesson Study projects in EFL teachers' points of views are "not considering Lesson Study as an essential part of teachers' jobs" (Table 3) and, "principals' perspective toward teachers' engagement with Lesson Study and, their direct profound expression of support" (Table 4). It seems that their efforts are not acknowledged by school managers.

Table 1

General Attitudes toward LS in the Participants' Context

Items	Percent		
	No	Maybe	Yes
1. Teachers talk about LS.	70.9	16.6	12.6
2. EFL teachers do LS themselves.	55	33.8	11.3
3. Teachers have access to research books, journals, and their colleague LS.	37.7	43.7	18.5
4. Teachers read published LS and research.	43.7	47	9.3

Table 2

Teachers Have Opportunities to Learn about Current LS and Research

Strongly Agree	4.6
Strongly Disagree	15.2
Neutral	15.9
Agree	25.2
Disagree	39.1
Total	100.0

Table 3

Teachers Feel that Doing LS is an Essential Part of Their Job

Strongly Agree	4.6
Neutral	13.2
Agree	16.6
Strongly Disagree	22.5
Disagree	43.0
Total	100.0

Table 4

The Principal Encourages Teachers to Do LS

Strongly Agree	1.3
Strongly Disagree	14.6
Agree	17.2
Neutral	21.2
Disagree	45.7
Total	100.0

Table 5

I Would Not Trust Other Teachers to Do LS with Me

Strongly Agree	6.0
Neutral	13.9
Strongly Disagree	17.2
Agree	19.2
Disagree	43.7
Total	100.0

4.1.2. Qualitative Results

40% of EFL teacher participants claimed to have done Lesson Study before. An individual interview was conducted by telephone or online interview (with senior high school EFL teachers) to obtain EFL teachers' understanding of LS after doing LS. The interviews were in both Persian and English and each interview was approximately 20-30 minutes in length. EFL teachers completing the questionnaire were also asked if they would like to participate in the following phase of the study in which their views would be explored in more detail by sending them some questions as prompts to write their reflective notes. Interviewed teachers and wrote their notes in case they would like as well. Reflections and interviews from EFL teachers indicated that they might encounter barriers to implementing the Lesson Study in their class. From these qualitative data, 29 main themes around barriers to conducting Lesson Study emerged. The excerpts below are some examples of teachers' notes:

"LS is time-consuming." "I am most challenged by the lack of time to participate in collaborative exercises with colleagues, to be honest."

"Most of us are disappointed by the reluctance of principals to contribute or a very simple support!"

"To tell the truth, documenting LS is difficult for me and, I think, for most of my colleagues."

"There are professional problems for doing LS, I suppose."

Lack of necessary skills for doing demanding teamwork research, a burden on a lot of related work, negative attitude to Lesson Study and its results, the existence of a lot of social responsibilities, not having teamwork spirit, fear of using new and innovative approaches are all personal obstacles for joining to Lesson Study group in EFL teachers' beliefs. Based on these qualitative results, the barriers to conducting and subscribing to Lesson Study in EFL classes in Iran would appear to be more attitudinal (e.g. lack of interest, motivation, and commitment) rather than the result of external

constraints. The most important ones are time constraints and personal attitude (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Hindrances of Doing LS in EFL Teachers' Views (MAXQDA Output)
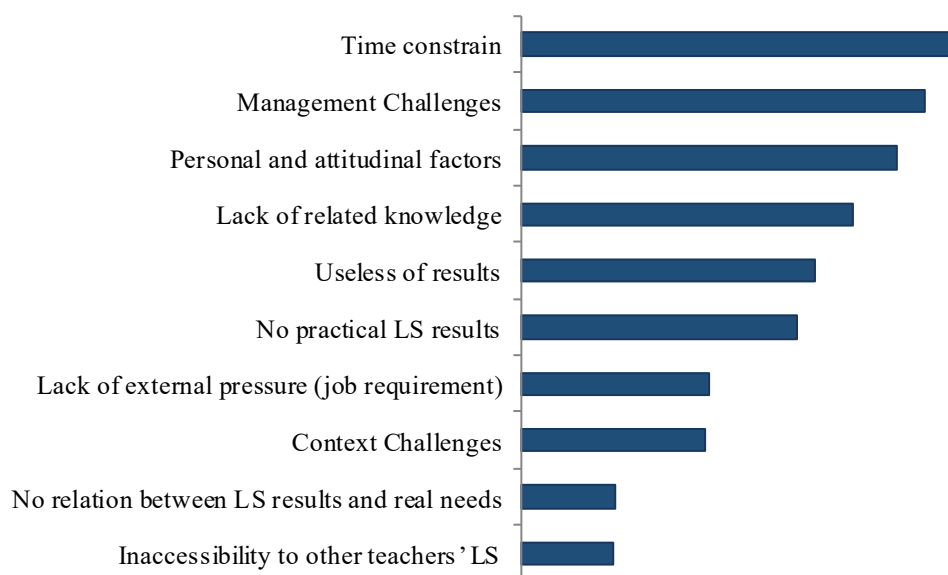
Insufficiency of support from managers was the next theme that emerged as an impediment to the completion of Lesson Study in schools. The lack of encouragement runs counter to teachers' enthusiasm for engagement with research projects like Lesson Study. They believed that Lesson Study findings are not acknowledged by school leaders. In teachers' views, principals play an important leadership role in motivating senior high school teachers. Administrators' enthusiasm and beliefs about the Lesson Study process can have significant effects on how EFL teachers view and participate in Lesson Study. Principals' negative attitudes to Lesson Study may have a potent influence over the extent to which EFL teachers motivate to engage in Lesson Study.

The next emerging sub-themes were all related to the lack of essential knowledge of Lesson Study, such as lack of the general and primary information about Lesson Study, lack of knowledge about the usefulness of the Lesson Study, lack of knowledge about research and research methodology, and lack of statistical analysis skill. The last sub-themes in their views were useless of Lesson Study results/ no practical results, job requirement, research culture (context challenges), no actual relationship between Lesson Study and real needs of their students, and inaccessibility to

other EFL teachers' Lesson Study results, which all can be categorized as hindrances, the main category (Figure 4).

4.1.3 Advantages of Using Lesson Study from the Perspective of EFL Teachers

In the interviews, the participants mostly talked about their student's needs in a language class and how they developed constructive collaborative relationships with their coworkers (what they had rarely experienced before). The answers were organized through open, axial, and selective coding.

The interview analysis provided an insight into how senior EFL teachers saw teaching the foreign language while conducting their Lesson Study. It seems that teachers associated their Lesson Study engagement with the difficulties they encountered in their teaching processes like their students' engagement in Speaking or Writing tasks in the classroom. They corroborate the impact of their Lesson Study project on their students' learning, its current and future impact on teaching-learning interaction as well as on wider domains. The teachers' comments concerning their strong motivation to do Lesson Study revealed that their engagement was determined with the goal of improving their teaching practices, and particularly by solving their students' language learning problems.

Students' related challenges were the most frequent codes that emerged in teachers' interviews. The following code series emerged from teachers' interview excerpts primarily focused on collaboration opportunities. The third code group that emerged from teachers' interview excerpts seemed to be more personal and attitudinal standpoints toward Lesson Study. The two last code groups that emerged from teachers' interview excerpts and their reflective notes were more professional and pedagogical features of Lesson Study. The benefits of doing Lesson Study then were put into five main themes (Figure 6): students and their needs, developing constructive collaboration, personal reasons, professional reasons, and pedagogical reasons.

As figure 6 illustrates, 25% felt that participation in Lesson Study greatly achieved the objective of focusing on their students' achievement and learning (LS focuses on students' learning and outcome"). They felt that their understanding of the language learning needs of their students had increased; therefore, they could better engage their students in the language learning process. Results of qualitative data identified the senior high school EFL teachers who had participated in an LS design felt that the process meaningfully had an effect on their teaching as well as the ability to trial new teaching strategies and resources. Improving their language skills and

teaching skills, as well as admitting the risk of making use of innovative approaches, were two core themes extracted from teachers' interviews.

Figure 6

*Categorizations of the Benefits of LS in Senior High School EFL Teachers(MAXQDA Output)*
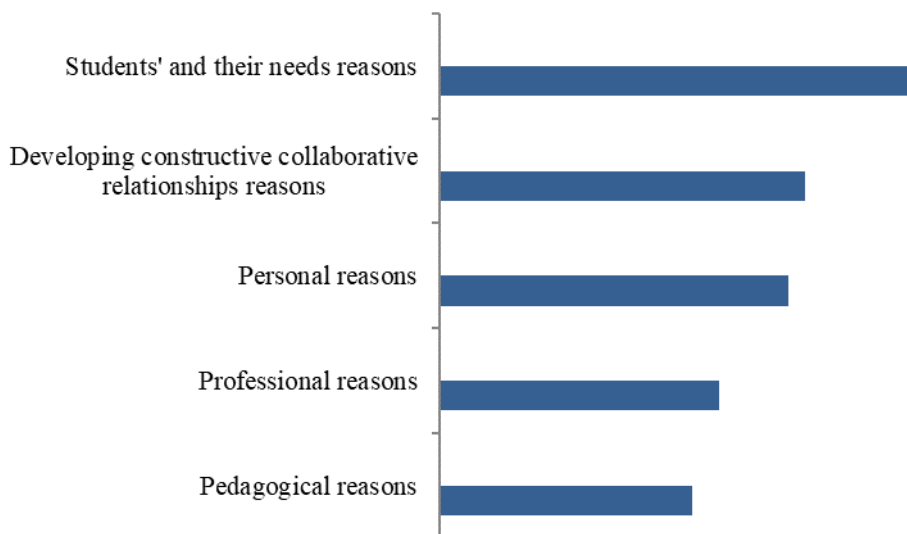
Research Question 2: What are Iranian senior high school EFL teachers' viewpoints about the presence of a mentor or a research expert in the success of engaging in Lesson Study?

To answer research question 2, the following figure (Figure 7) is presented to indicate the importance of the presence of a research mentor during the Lesson Study process in senior high school teachers' views. Answers to this research question are summarized in figure 7. The answers are given in descending order based on the percentage of senior high school teachers who believed that the presence of a research supervisor during the Lesson Study cycle is very important. 37 % of EFL teachers highlighted the central role an expert mentor plays in documenting, reporting, and writing the final results of Lesson Study projects (Figure 7).

Figure 7

The presence of a research mentor (expert) or supervisor during LS in teachers 'view
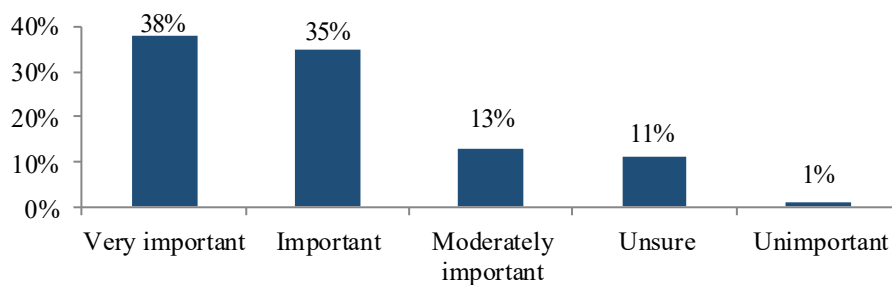
No internal or external expert support for conducting Lesson Study was one of the significant challenges for senior high school EFL teachers. Over 35% of the teachers emphasized that the importance of the presence of an advisor or a research mentor in EFL teachers' success for engaging in LS is underestimated (As an obstacle for engagement with Lesson Study). They do need frequent interaction with a research expert to address probable problems and obstacles during developing the Lesson Study project. In their points of view, a research mentor's assessment and constructive feedback guide their research goals relative to their Lesson Study.

4.2. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to elucidate the general attitudes of Iranian senior high school language teachers with regard to Lesson Study and fathomed impediments to using that in language classrooms. The results suggest that cooperating with collaborators improves language teachers' understanding of the learning needs of students, teaching approaches, and subject matter knowledge, which is directly related to Dudley (2014), who believes that Lesson Study has the potential to create safe and trustworthy environments for teachers to acquire knowledge based on research and experience from their peers. The findings showed that Lesson Study is not part of a teacher's profession and the worth of it seemed to be relative. These results go beyond previous reports, demonstrating the necessity to investigate and support the identity of language teachers as researchers. The teachers in this study believed that Lesson Study engagement is limited in Iran and not supported and encouraged. Unavailability of enough time to organize Lesson Study, insufficient knowledge of Lesson Study and analyzing data, not knowing how to put in writing a publishable article, no access to related journals, no mentor support, inadequate support from the management and numerous responsibilities were as influential hindrances to participate in Lesson Study Process. Although different inhibitors were reported by the Iranian language teachers, including personal, educational, and cultural barriers, the most notable ones are time constraints and personal mindset.

Time limitation has always been considered the most important hindrance in doing research in schools. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1999) regard time as one of the critical aspects when teachers gather to do research because they "need sufficient chunks of time in which to work and sufficient longevity as a group over time" (p. 294). In the same line, Wong and Firkins (2005) acknowledge research as a character of expertise of teachers and affirm that "educational authorities need to allocate resources to schools by way of time" (p. 69).

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed that attitudinal barriers are another major impediment to the completion of the Lesson Study. Lack of motivation to do Lesson Study and commendation were commonly mentioned challenges to teachers' efforts to participate in LS. Worries that performing LS will make teaching difficulties known to school heads, colleagues and students, a persuasion that conclusions will not be appreciated by anyone, not receiving any appreciable reward for their participation in time-consuming Lesson study projects, negative viewpoints of principals to teachers' Lesson Study and its value, and no interest to be observed are all operating as obstacles in high school contexts. These findings confirm that beliefs about the value of Lesson Study are soundly linked to the teachers' perspective than to a perception of Lesson Study furthering their existing education and knowledge.

Apart from the mentioned obstacles, lack of support from management and education offices was mentioned as serious challenge hindering teachers' effective and permanent practice of LS. In the context of senior high schools, the establishment of an appropriate procedure and supervision for language teachers is an urgent need if the Lesson Study is to be extended. In this regard, both principals and a knowledgeable research mentor play a vital role in increasing the Lesson Study engagement of the language teachers. More than ever, language teachers need training and mentoring as they go through LS process and access to state-of-the-art research resources in Lesson Study projects. The notion of mentoring is appropriately bringing into being, and mentorship itself is a fairly shared technique within educational systems throughout the world. It is a widespread method that can assist in improving the practice of a teacher. A similar pattern of results was obtained in Bjuland and Mosvold (2015), who heightened the significance of a qualified research facilitator to mentor teachers during Lesson Study cycles. They pointed out that teachers in initial training and inexperienced teachers may have difficulty observing students' learning. Similarly, in senior high school language teachers' beliefs, the presence of a mentor during Lesson Study cycles can exert a noteworthy influence on the extent to which they join in LS frequently.

Regarding the benefits of employing LS in language teachers' interpretation, most of the language teachers believed in the advantages of Lesson Study, particularly becoming more aware of the specific language and learning needs of their students and the cooperative reflection, which are consistent with Ylonen and Norwich (2013) results. Overall, the findings are in accordance with the findings reported by Lott's study (2006) and Wood's results (2017). Lott's study (2006) concludes that joining a Lesson Study project may well increase students' accomplishments. In the procedure of Lesson Study, teachers pay extensive focus on students' language learning as

monitoring a collaborative instruction (Wood, 2017). This signifies that improving teachers' learning through participation in Lesson Study projects could potentially make better the performance of their students. In particular, Lesson Study mediates professional maturity, which is consistent with Lewis et al (2009) and Rock & Wilson (2005).

To summarize, the aforementioned findings discussed in the present study indicate that Lesson Study assists EFL teachers to upgrade teaching approaches using cooperative team planning and observing students' language learning process, and focusing on the learning requirements of their students. Long-lasting use of the Lesson Study would bring about significant long-standing progress in students' exam results. Though Lesson Study combines a number of advantageous components for an efficient professional development policy, there are contextual concerns and numerous challenges affecting teachers' participation and continued practice of Lesson Study in Iran. Motivating teachers to conduct Lesson Study in their classroom is linked to attitudes concerning the value of the Lesson Study aftereffects. This could also be enlightened via teacher conceptions of Lesson Study profits. It undeniably underscores that accomplishing Lesson Study demands adequate knowledge, a positive state of mind, and acceptance of limitations. Moreover, the educational settings of high schools should create more opportunities for Iranian language teachers to collaborate. Albeit the analysis of EFL teachers' perspectives of Lesson Study may not be simply generalized to other contexts, they act out as encouraging attainments in the context of language learning in senior high schools of Iran.

5. Conclusion and Implication

There can be value in gaining a better understanding of the impact of teachers' professional improvement. Through Lesson Study, the significance and value of what teachers do are emphasized as well as what they need to know in order for students to learn. Regarding the advantages of Lesson Study, this study gives proof of two major contributions in the areas of EFL and teacher research. First, continued involvement in Lesson Study may contribute to the development of teacher learning. Second, the students' performance is influenced and affected by effective teacher collaboration while working together on the learning needs of the learners, which in turn enhances individual teacher performance (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). However, finding support for longstanding professional learning paradigms (teachers' research, action research and, Lesson Study projects) is always a challenge (support of well-informed teacher professionals, school support for Lesson Study, sufficient time to run-through Lesson Study).

The conclusions of the present study confirm the view that continuing instructional investigation team working can be especially indispensable in supporting high school language teachers' development. It may be necessary to modify Iran's educational culture to provide greater support to teachers who are interested in learning from cooperative groupings like Lesson Study and overcoming cultural obstructions. School heads are expected to share their leadership in a role of collaboration besides researcher teachers to improve learning opportunities for students. This research could also benefit policy-makers in education since the findings can be taken into account in the provision of resources to the school, assigning teachers' prerequisites and their ongoing developmental plans. Mentoring teacher research through the establishment of a Teacher Research Support Centre (TRSC Plan) by contracting with universities can pave the way for many start-ups in the field of joint research by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in Iran and hence improving the educational system. Last but not the least, the findings of this research may be of importance to all teachers when they are trying to improve the way they teach in the classroom, their students' learning, their methods, and the education system in general.

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