

LESSON STUDY FOR INCREASING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract

Teaching practice is one of compulsory subject to be taken by English Department students of Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin Solok. This subject provides an opportunity for the students to apply their skill and knowledge that they gained during their study in the real classroom environment. During this teaching practice, the students will be exposed to the real environment of teaching process and its challenge in the field of education. As a beginner, doing teaching practice is not as easy as to be done by the students. A lot of challenges and complexities are found by the students during teaching practice. Those involve preparing lesson plan, developing good classroom management, preparing materials and media, and participating in non-teaching activity. Lesson study is a good way to help students in doing teaching practice. Basically, it is a method of professional development carried out by teachers in their own schools, with their own students and colleagues, in their own classroom to improve quality of teaching and learning. The teachers work collaboratively to plan, teach, observe and analyze lessons. Applying lesson study will be beneficial for teaching practice students in guiding them about the way to teach English effectively. This paper will talk about the use of lesson study with the expectation to promote students' ability in teaching practice.

Key words: teaching practice, lesson study

Introduction

To be an English teacher, English department students should be able to have knowledge and skills in teaching English. It involves an ability to transfer knowledge to the pupils in various ways. Therefore, Educational institutions equip students in various subjects in order to improve the English language skills. One of the subjects that must be taken by the students is teaching practice. This course provides students with practical experience in teaching language in the real classroom situation. During teaching practice, the student teachers are given the opportunity to experience and 'experiment' their knowledge and skills in an authentic teaching and learning environment (Kennedy, 1996). It gives them challenge to integrate theory from what has been learned in the college and the actual situation in the classroom.

In general, teaching practice can be defined as an activity in gaining the students to have an experience in real classroom situation. It is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training which include the practical use of teaching methods, teaching strategies, teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training and practice/exercise of different activities of daily school life (Gatkal, 2013). In the teaching practice, student teachers are assigned to do several activities. First, they are required to prepare, develop, and organize resources for teaching and learning. It includes designing lesson plan, developing classroom activities, and creating appropriate media to be used in the teaching process. Second, they also have to be able to work with individual pupils, and will also organize and teach groups and whole classes to facilitate learning in pupils. Third, student teachers will be able to monitor and evaluate the work produced by the pupils. Fourth, student teachers are able to evaluate and reflect each lesson taught. Finally, they also have to familiarize him/herself with school routines and activities.

However, based on the interview's result found in the field, there are some difficulties encountered by student teachers in teaching practice. The difficulties involve delivering materials to the students, controlling classroom management, and applying teaching techniques and strategy to be appropriate with the lesson being taught. The difficulties are also supported from previous studies about teaching practice. The studies reported that the student teachers faced difficulties in some ways: organizing and managing the classroom, selecting and using appropriate method of teaching, testing grading and correcting pupils' works, doing interaction and communication with pupils, developing and using instructional materials (Morrow and Lara, 1983; Ijuiya, 1996).

Based on the difficulties above, it could be seen that the students' ability in teaching practice are still low. As beginners, they still need guidance and advice to reflect their ability during the teaching practice.

Student teachers still need improvement about experiences and actions that enables them to connect theory and practice, and to develop more sophisticated conceptions of teaching and learning. Thus, student teachers need an effective way to be helpful in increasing their ability in the teaching practice. This paper will discuss about the use of lesson study to increase students' ability in teaching practice.

Discussion

What is Lesson Study?

Lesson study is a teaching improvement and knowledge building process that has origins in Japanese elementary education (Cerbin and Kopp, 2006). Lesson study has been practiced diligently and persistently in Japan since a century ago as an effort to improve the quality of education. It has become a culture of Japanese schools, especially at the primary level so that the quality of education improves in Japan, both in cities and in villages. Since that time, Japanese Lesson Study has been adapted by various countries as a process in which teachers progressively strive to improve their teaching methods by working with other teachers to design, test, and improve lesson sequences and critique one another's teaching techniques (Baba & Nakai, 2011; Tall, 2008).

Experts have given definition about lesson study in some ways. Lesson study is a teacher professional development model in which a group of teachers work collaboratively to plan a lesson, observe the lesson in a classroom with students, and analyze and discuss the student work and learning in response to the lesson (Lewis, 2002; Lewis & Hurd, 2011). It means that lesson study encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching practice through cyclical process of collaborative lesson planning, lesson observation, and lesson reflection as well as examination of students learning. Similarly, Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Mangan, & Mitchell (2007) also define lesson study as professional development practice in which teachers collaborate to develop a lesson plan, teach and observe the lesson to collect data on student learning, and use their observations to refine their lesson. From the lesson study teachers engage in to learn more about effective practices that results in improving learning outcomes for students. It will provide opportunities for teachers to bring their ideas about effective teaching to life as they learn how to carefully record student learning in order to evaluate the research lesson, the students, and their own understandings about teaching and learning (Lewis, 2002).

Lesson study involves groups of teachers meeting regularly over a period of time (ranging from several months to a year) to work on the design, implementation, testing, and improvement of one or several "research lessons" (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Research lessons are actual classroom lessons, taught to one's own students, that are: (a) focused on a specific teacher-generated problem, goal, or vision of pedagogical practice, (b) carefully planned, usually in collaboration with one or more colleagues, (c) observed by other teachers, (d) recorded for analysis and reflection, and (e) discussed by lesson study group members, other colleagues, administrators, and/or an invited commentator (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998). During that time the teachers will collaborate to develop several activities. It begins with making a detailed lesson plan. Then, they will apply it in the classroom and investigate from the teaching and learning process. It may investigate teaching and learning interaction, students' responding to the instruction, and how instruction might be further modified based on the evidence collected. Finally, they will reflect from what had been done during the teaching and learning process.

In addition, Hurd and Musso (2005) mention several activities that may be done by the teachers in team:

1. Form a lesson study group and establish norms and procedures.
2. Identify professional development goals.
3. Form goals for student learning and long-term development.
4. Collaboratively plan a "research lesson" based on immediate and long-term goals.
5. Teach the research lesson, with one team member teaching while other teachers observe and gather evidence on student learning and development.
6. Debrief the notes gathered during the lesson observation and use this evidence to revise the lesson, the unit, and the teachers' overall approach to instruction.
7. Draw conclusions about instructional strategies and student learning that can drive future practice.
8. If desired, teach the revised lesson in another classroom in order to study and improve on it again.

Applying lesson study may be beneficial in improving of quality of teaching. According to Takahashi and Yoshida (2004), lesson study is helpful for teachers in some ways. First, lesson study gives teachers the opportunity to see teaching and learning as it takes place in the classroom. It provides the context for teachers to focus their discussions on planning, implementation, observation, and reflection on classroom practice. Second, Lesson study provides an opportunity for teachers to carefully observe students during the learning process and discuss actual classroom practice. Finally, lesson study is teacher-led professional development. Dudley (2014) also argues that lesson study works because it helps teacher to: (1) see pupil learning

occurring in much sharper detail than is usually possible, (2) see the gaps between what they had assumed was happening, when pupils learned and what it actually happening, (3) find out how to plan learning which is better matched to the pupils' needs as a result, (4) do all this in the context of a supportive teaching and learning community which is strongly committed to helping pupils to learn and to the professional learning of the members of the group, (4) take these abilities into their teaching.

In sum, it can be concluded that lesson study is a method of professional development which encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practice through investigating teaching and learning in the context of an actual single class lesson. It involves an activity that requires teachers and other educators to work collaboratively to strengthen a given lesson until it has been refined as much as possible and then teach it to get powerful data about how well the lesson works.

Lesson Study Cycle

Lesson study can be applying into several phases. According to Dudley (2014), A lesson study process can be described as a cycle, a process where the group of teachers repeatedly goes through at least three 'research lessons' that are jointly planned, taught/observed and analyzed by a Lesson Study group. It means that in the cycle the teachers will do discussion in planning and setting goal, teach and observe the lesson, and reflect the lesson being taught. In other side, Ono and Ferreira (2010) provide another opinion about lesson study phases which consist of three phases, collectively referred to as "plan-do-see". The planning phase begins with the selection of the topic, and it encompasses the study of teaching materials and mapping out lesson plans. After the planning phase, a teacher conducts the study lesson based on the plan. The number of colleagues who observe the lesson varies depending on the purpose of the particular lesson study. In each case, the participants will carefully watch what the teacher and the learners do. The observers listen attentively to all contributions made by the learners, and make a note on the lesson plan of the critical remarks by and/or behaviors of the teacher and the learners in relation to achieving the lesson outcomes. The observational notes on a lesson plan serve as evidence for later discussions in a post-lesson conference or forum. Finally, the teachers will discuss from what had been done in the forum. During the forum the teacher briefly explains the intended outcomes of the lesson and the points s/he emphasized in the lesson plan. All observers are encouraged to contribute to refining and improving the lesson by asking for clarification, recognizing the strengths or good aspects and identifying the challenges. Comments on the challenges should be accompanied by suggestions and alternatives.

Furthermore, Lewis (2009) provides some steps in doing lesson study. The steps are study curriculum and formulate goals, plan research lesson, conduct research lesson, Reflect on research lesson and planning process. The detailed description from Lewis idea can be seen below:

1. Build a lesson study group
 - a. Recruit members for a lesson study group
 - b. Develop a shared understanding of lesson study
 - c. Share ideas about high-quality professional learning, and use them to
 - d. create ground rules for the group
 - e. Establish group norms
 - f. Make a specific time commitment and set a schedule of meetings.
2. Focus the group's inquiry
 - a. Agree on a research theme (main aim) that captures long-term goals for students.
 - b. Choose a subject area (e.g., science, social studies) if this is not already decided.
 - c. Begin to identify a particular topic, unit, and lesson for study.
3. Study the topic and plan the research lesson
 - a. Study standards, existing lessons, and research related to unit/lesson of interest, consulting "knowledgeable others" if possible.
 - b. Plan the research lesson, taking care to think about long-term goals as well as your specific goals for the lesson and unit.
 - c. Write a detailed teaching-learning plan.
 - d. Write a data collection plan as part of the instructional plan, specifying the data to be collected.
 - e. Conduct and discuss the research lesson
 - f. Collect data as planned.
 - g. Conduct a post lesson discussion, following a structured agenda with designated facilitator and note taker.
 - h. Focus discussion on the data collected at the research lesson.
 - i. (Revise lesson and have another team member reteach the revised lesson in another classroom if desired.)

5. Reflect and plan the next steps

- a. Consolidate what you learned (about the subject matter, student thinking, instruction, and other facets). Summarize in a presentation or in writing.
- b. Discuss what worked well in the lesson study process and what would like to change next time around.

Based on the theories proposed from the experts above, there are several phases that need to be followed in conducting lesson study. Here, I would like to draw the phases into a cycle in the figure 1 below.

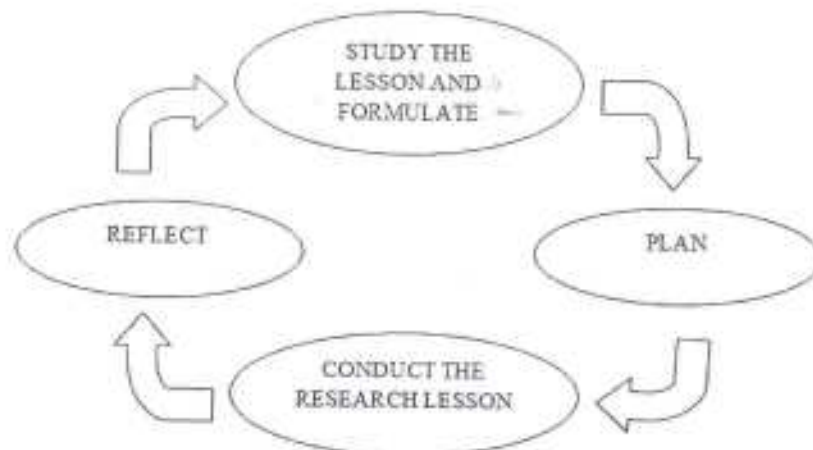


Figure 1. Lesson Study Cycle

From the figure 1 above, it can be seen that lesson study begins with building team for lesson study. The team usually consists of 3-6 teachers from same discipline. The teachers will work collaboratively to share ideas about using lesson study in improving quality of teaching. Then, they continue to the activity in formulating learning goals. These goals are appropriate with the goals provided in the curriculum and standard. After that, they will select a course and topic for students learning. The topic may be one of interest to the teachers; usually that poses problems for the students. According to Takashi and Yoshida (2004), there are several ways that can be followed in choosing a topic for lesson study. First, choose topic which is most difficult for the students. Second, determine the most difficult or uncomfortable topic to teach among the group members of teacher. Finally, choose topics that are important in the curriculum, and think about the topic as a unit of lessons instead of a single lesson.

After that, teachers continue to the next phase of lesson study. This phase is called plan. During this step, teachers will collaborate in creating the research lesson. In planning a lesson, teachers share their previous experiences teaching the topic, and discuss possible ways to address the lesson goal. Besides that, teachers also predict how students are likely to respond to specific questions, problems and exercises (Cerbin and Kopp, 2006). In addition, Takashi and Yoshida (2004) mention that the teachers must be able to investigate everything related to planning phase. The investigation involve: (1) a variety of teaching and learning materials, such as curriculum, textbooks, and worksheet, (2) a variety of teaching methods, (3) the process of students learning, including students' typical misunderstandings, mistakes, and anticipated solutions to problems, as well as how teachers can react to them, (4) the state of students' learning, and (5) research related to the topic. Teachers try to put themselves in the position of a student and imagine what it would be like to experience the material and lesson activities as a novice, an approach that fosters the development of pedagogical content knowledge.

The next phase, the teachers continue to do research lesson. In this phase, one member of the team teaches the lesson and other members play role as observer. The observers focus on how students respond to the lesson which was designed by the team. The observers may focus on students thinking during the lesson; how they make sense of the material, what kinds of difficulties they have, how they answer questions, and how their thinking changes during the lesson (Cerbin and Kopp, 2006). In knowing the students' response, the observer can record detailed field notes during the teaching lesson and use checklist or rubrics to monitor student's engagement. To collect the most useful data, observers must adhere to the following guidelines: 1) Collect data with the lesson goal in mind, 2) Use the lesson plan, seating chart, and work sheets to record observations, 3) Document student learning processes, including the ideas for solving

the problem, common misunderstandings the students had, and how and when their understanding changed (Takashi and Yoshida, 2004).

Finally, the teachers may go on reflection. In this phase the team discuss about the research lesson. This is the important phase of the lesson study process because it facilitates and captures the teacher's reflections about the lesson and about broader issues of teaching and learning (Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Mangan, & Mitchell, 2007). The focus of reflection is the discussion about the learning that has taken place and the ways in which the lesson might be improved. In doing the discussion, it is chaired by the principal of the school, with an 'outsider', often an academic from the local university, being invited to comment at the end of the discussion. (Doig and Groves, 2011). It means that there are some people who are assigned in this phase: principal/facilitator and a final commentator. The reflection begins with the teacher's comment on his/her teaching. He/she addresses how the lesson went, what difficult decision he or she made during the lesson, and what he or she would like to discuss with participants. A member of the planning team then explains the lesson plan. The teacher's comments and the lesson-plan explanation are meant to set the focus and tone of the discussion. Afterward, there are comments from other observers, based on their detailed notes of the lesson. Next, the discussion is open to all participants, beginning with a focus on the topics of discussion, then gradually opening up to a more general discussion. Finally, a final commentator is given an opportunity to summarize the session.

Implementing Lesson Study for Teaching Practice

Lesson study is not only can be used for professional teacher, but also for student teachers who are doing teaching practice. The student teachers still need improvement to make good quality in teaching. The use of lesson study will be helpful in guiding them to do teaching practice. As cited by Myers (2012), the creation and implementation of a "lesson study" provide the opportunity for messy and challenging real-life teaching experiences that encourage student teachers to connect theory and practice, and to integrate new and previous learning, both essential components of the reflective process. She also adds that lesson study is helpful for student teachers in some ways:

1. Through the lesson study process, colleagues work together to determine what is important for students to understand about the content, and to figure out how to best teach this content.
2. Through this process, student teachers think critically about teaching and learning, discover gaps in their own knowledge, and acquire the needed information, either through each other or through content specialists.
3. It also provides a less-structured learning environment, which prompts student teachers to explore what they think is important, and includes a collaborative component, which allows participants to see other points of view.
4. Additionally, the cyclical nature of lesson study allows student teachers to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development, and reshape past experiences with the intent of improving practice.

Thus, I will discuss about the implementation lesson study for student teacher in teaching practice. As mentioned previously, Teaching Practice aims to provide student teachers with practical experience in teaching in school. Student teachers will give chance to teach in the classroom according to the timetable provided to them by the school. During practice teaching, the students are guided by cooperating teacher, appointed by the school and college supervisor. They will guide, assist and advise the student teachers in planning, observe teaching, and provide evaluation of all lessons observed. The implementation of lesson study in teaching practice can be drawn in the figure 2.

For the lesson study, student teachers are placed in groups ranging in size from three to five. Besides that there are also cooperating teacher and college supervisor included in the lesson study. For the first step, they are introduced to the lesson study cycle and required to complete one lesson study sequence, which included collaboratively creating a study lesson, implementing and observing the lesson, debriefing the lesson, and revising it. After that, they collaborate together to formulate learning goals and objectives to be achieved based on curriculum.

After formulating learning goals and objectives, the lesson study team continues to design 'research lesson'. They will design learning to achieve the objectives in the form of learning tools, including lesson plan (RPP). This activity is done collaboratively between student teachers, college supervisor, and cooperating teacher. They share ideas, discuss and work together on planning good teaching. Such an environment gives opportunity for student teachers to develop professional language and collaborative skills.

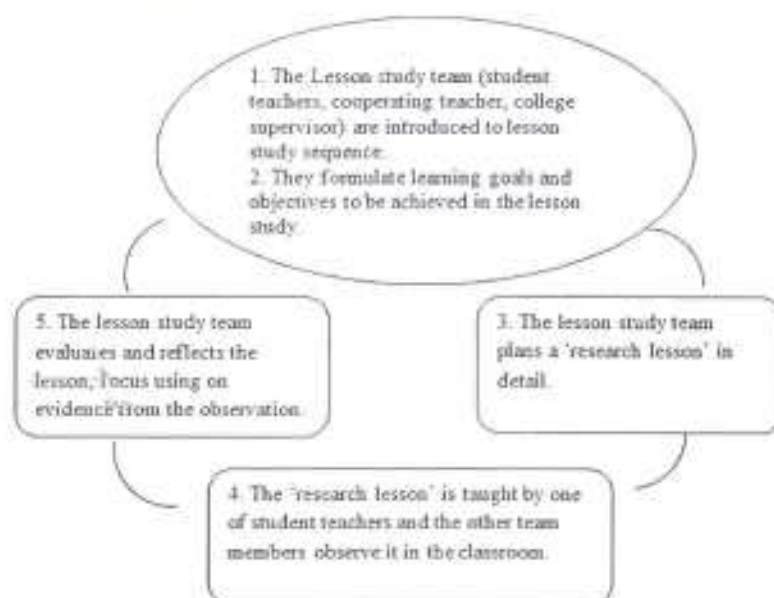


Figure 2. Lesson Study Cycle in Teaching Practice

Afterwards, it comes to the teaching and observing phase. One member of student teachers will teach in a specific single classroom and the other team members will observe the teaching and learning process. The observers take notes on what the teacher and the students are doing and saying and collect evidence of student thinking. The purpose of the observation is to gather data about the effectiveness of the lesson.

After implementing the learning and watching, all those involved in the activity of observation do reflection to discuss the assessed learning and refine. In this reflection stage, the discussion is not intended to comment on the activities of teacher when implementing the learning, but more focused on the observation of the behavior of students during the learning process in the classroom. The discussion is chaired by cooperating teacher. It begins with giving an opportunity for student teacher who had taught in the research lesson. She/he is given time to explain his/her intention to the lesson as well as his/her impression of what was successful and what was less successful in the lesson. After this, there are comments from observers based on their detailed notes of the lesson. Finally, there is also final comment from college advisor who draws out implications relating to the particular lesson and learning and teaching more generally.

Conclusion

Having discussed about lesson study and teaching practice above, it can be concluded that lesson study may be helpful in guiding student teachers to do teaching practice. Therefore, the student teachers and the educational institution can develop a lesson study sequence to increase the quality of teaching during the teaching practice. Lesson study gives an opportunity for student teachers to have a lot of experience in teaching by working collaboratively with colleagues in planning, observing, and reflecting their teaching. Moreover, lesson study allows student teachers to take a central role as investigators of their own classroom practices and become life-long autonomous thinkers and researchers of teaching and learning in the classroom. By engaging in the lesson study process the teacher students take part in creating a learning community where the focus is on the pupils learning of a specific content.

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