

## ESP Lesson Design Through Lesson Study: Insights from a School-University Partnership in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Designing effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lessons in vocational schools remains a challenge, as teachers often struggle to source authentic materials, align content with workplace demands, and collaborate across disciplines. This study investigates the collaboration between vocational English teachers, university students, and lecturers in developing ESP lesson designs. It utilized the school–university partnership-based Lesson Study framework (Plan, Do, See) across twelve meetings in Indonesian vocational schools. A qualitative–quantitative design was employed with five English teachers, three lecturers from English education, agriculture, and farming, and thirty-five pre-service teachers. Data were collected through observations, a self-developed questionnaire that was content-validated by professors in a private university, semi-structured interviews, and field notes, and analyzed thematically and descriptively. Survey results show that over 85% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that lesson study enhanced their ESP lesson planning, improved their understanding of students’ needs, and strengthened collaboration with colleagues. Interviews and observations corroborated these findings, highlighting that lesson study fostered trust, professional community, and greater confidence in integrating authentic workplace materials. Pre-service teachers reported improved ability to connect theory with practice, while lecturers enriched lesson design with subject-specific expertise. Challenges included selecting suitable syllabus topics, sourcing authentic ESP materials, and managing online delivery. The study demonstrates that school–university partnerships through lesson study provide an effective model for enhancing ESP pedagogy and professional development, supporting teacher autonomy and preparing pre-service teachers with collaborative competencies for future careers.

**Keywords:** English for specific purposes, lesson design, school-university partnership.

### INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lesson design in vocational schools presents persistent challenges, particularly in aligning classroom instruction with the authentic demands of the workplace (Widodo, 2016; Norton, 2018). Despite increasing recognition of

the importance of context-specific instruction, many teachers continue to rely on generic textbooks or general English materials that fail to incorporate the technical vocabulary, discourse structures, and situational relevance required by vocational students (Dou et al., 2023; Fadlia et al., 2020; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020). As a result, lessons often remain disconnected from the professional communication tasks students are expected to perform in their future careers. These instructional shortcomings are further exacerbated by teachers' limited access to sustained professional development opportunities, particularly those explicitly oriented toward ESP. In vocational contexts, where English is often perceived as peripheral to technical training, such constraints reinforce the tendency to view language instruction as supplementary rather than integral to professional competence (Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Shanavas et al., 2024; Yang & Wyatt, 2021; Basturkmen, 2017; Prawiro, 2019). This disconnect also affects teacher preparation, as pre-service teachers rarely have authentic opportunities to design lessons that simultaneously integrate disciplinary content with language pedagogy (Aisyah & Wicaksono, 2018; Van Anh Dang et al., 2023). Without such experiences, they enter classrooms with limited capacity to translate pedagogical theory into practice that is both linguistically and professionally meaningful.

In response to these challenges, lesson study has emerged as a promising framework for improving ESP lesson design. Through its cyclical process of planning, teaching, observing, and reflecting, lesson study enables participants to collaboratively identify learning goals, anticipate student responses, and evaluate instructional effectiveness (Masyhud, 2018; Gallegos-Núñez et al., 2024; Hafner & Miller, 2018; Dewi, 2015; Basturkmen, 2020). Within vocational ESP contexts, lesson study is particularly valuable because it creates a collaborative space where teachers, pre-service teachers, and lecturers can design lessons that integrate authentic workplace tasks, embed technical vocabulary, and address students' professional communication needs (Islam, 2023; Norton, 2018; Kamaruddin et al., 2021). Each stage of the process contributes distinct insights: lecturers bring disciplinary expertise, teachers emphasize classroom realities, and pre-service teachers introduce innovative pedagogical strategies (Jiang et al., 2018; Sudipa et al., 2020). The implementation of open class observations and structured reflections further enhances this process by allowing participants to analyze how students engage with ESP tasks, identify instructional challenges, and collaboratively revise lesson plans for subsequent cycles (Nasiri & Khojasteh, 2024; Palalas, 2011; Chiu et al., 2021).

The success of lesson study depends greatly on strong institutional collaboration that supports teachers and sustains innovation (Zappa-Hollman, 2018; Supunya, 2023; Chong & Kong, 2012; Jaleniauskiene et al., 2019; Norton, 2018). While lesson study provides a mechanism for reflective practice, school-university partnerships establish the broader conditions in which such collaboration can thrive (Jakhelln & Postholm, 2022; Adeoye et al., 2023). Within these partnerships, teachers contribute classroom realities, lecturers provide disciplinary expertise, and pre-service teachers connect pedagogical theory with emerging professional practice (Nasri et al., 2022; Farrell, 2021). Embedding lesson study into such partnerships, as emphasized by Halász and Sin (2022) and Ng and Chan (2012), helps move instructional design beyond isolated initiatives and ensures that improvement efforts are collaborative, sustainable, and grounded in the realities of vocational education. In this way, lesson study and school-university partnerships work in tandem: the former structures cycles of reflective practice, while the latter supplies the institutional support and collective

expertise needed to translate reflection into meaningful and lasting pedagogical change (Ma & Green, 2023; Zappa-Hollman, 2018; Logan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Existing research underscores that lesson study, particularly when integrated with English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and supported by school–university partnerships, enhances both student learning and teacher professional growth. In the Indonesian context, Suryati et al. (2022) found that lesson study significantly improved students' grammar and speaking skills while being positively perceived by stakeholders, though teachers faced implementation challenges. Complementing this, Masyhud (2018) showed that lesson study in ESP contexts promoted critical thinking and active participation, reinforcing its value for both teachers and learners. Broader evidence also highlights its role in strengthening teacher self-efficacy and collaborative learning (Chong & Kong, 2012), while studies on syllabus and lesson plan design emphasize the need to align ESP instruction with occupational and disciplinary demands (Sudipa et al., 2020; Gallegos-Núñez et al., 2024). At the institutional level, school–university partnerships are shown to create enabling conditions for sustainable professional development and curriculum innovation (Adeoye et al., 2023; Farrell, 2021), with Nasri et al. (2022) further stressing that teachers' positive perceptions of such partnerships are key to bridging theoretical knowledge with practical classroom realities.

Although lesson study has been widely shown to enhance students' language skills, foster teacher professional development, and encourage collaboration, little is known about its role in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where lesson design must align closely with disciplinary and professional needs. Most existing work has focused on general English instruction or curriculum design without examining how collaborative lesson study can directly support ESP lesson planning. This leaves a gap in understanding how school–university partnerships might sustain the development of contextually relevant ESP lessons by bridging theoretical insights from universities with the practical realities of schools. Addressing this, the present study offers novelty by positioning lesson study within a school–university partnership and involving pre-service teachers, in-service English teachers, and university lecturers from different subject areas, thereby creating a distinctive collaborative platform for lesson design. The study aims to explore the collaborative process of lesson study in ESP lesson development, investigate teachers' experiences and perceptions of designing lessons through this approach, and evaluate the efficacy of lesson study in producing effective and professionally relevant ESP lesson designs.

## METHOD

A qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of how lesson study contributes to the development of ESP lesson design within a school–university partnership. Qualitative design is particularly suitable for exploring processes, perceptions, and experiences in natural settings, as it allows researchers to capture participants' voices and interpret meanings from their perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants consisted of five English teachers in vocational schools, selected purposively based on their education, prior involvement in lesson study, subject matter expertise, accomplishments, and recommendations from school authorities. Additionally, three university lecturers from diverse academic backgrounds (English language teaching, agriculture, and farming) and 35 pre-service teachers who had completed two phases of

their practicum in schools participated, representing a varied pool of stakeholders. Such purposive sampling is consistent with qualitative research principles that emphasize selecting information-rich cases to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation ([Patton, 2015](#)).

Multiple data collection techniques were used to ensure triangulation and trustworthiness. Classroom observations and questionnaires were first conducted to explore the collaborative process of lesson study and to capture participants' perceptions and experiences in designing ESP lessons. The questionnaires were then followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected participants, allowing deeper exploration of their experiences, concerns, and values. Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective in eliciting rich, detailed narratives while maintaining enough flexibility to pursue emergent themes ([Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015](#)). Field notes were taken during observations to provide contextual insights and complement the interview and questionnaire data. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying recurring themes across observation records, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). This analytic process facilitated an integrated understanding of how lesson study functioned as a collaborative framework for developing ESP lesson design within the school–university partnership.

The questionnaire used in this study was self-developed to investigate lesson study within the ESP lesson design context, covering aspects such as background information, learning outcomes, current partnership practices, challenges of collaboration, and professional development. To ensure methodological rigor, the instrument underwent content validation by three professors from a private university, who examined the items for clarity, relevance, and representativeness of the constructs, a critical step in establishing validity for newly designed instruments ([Cohen et al., 2018](#); [Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). To enrich the findings, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with five English teachers and five pre-service teachers, allowing for deeper exploration of participants' experiences, values, and concerns. Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized for their methodological strength in balancing consistency across respondents with the flexibility to pursue emergent themes, thereby capturing both structured insights and rich, individualized narratives ([Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015](#); [Merriam & Tisdell, 2016](#)).

For data analysis, all responses were systematically organized both categorically and chronologically, providing a clear structure for identifying patterns across sources. The data were then subjected to iterative coding, a process of reviewing transcripts repeatedly to refine codes and categories, thereby enhancing analytic precision and depth ([Saldaña, 2021](#)). This approach aligns with thematic analysis procedures, where coding serves as the foundation for identifying key themes that cut across participant groups ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). The integration of questionnaire, interview, and coding processes not only strengthened the validity of findings through triangulation but also ensured that the analysis captured both breadth and depth in understanding how lesson study shaped ESP lesson design within a school–university partnership.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented based on the implementation of lesson study cycles conducted in collaboration among English teachers, lecturers, and pre-service

teachers within a school–university partnership. The data gathered from classroom observations, field notes, and interviews highlighted not only the process of planning, teaching, reflecting, and revising lessons, but also the evolving dynamics of collaboration across stakeholders. To provide a comprehensive picture, the findings are organized around the three consecutive lesson study cycles, each of which demonstrates a progression in the design, delivery, and refinement of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lessons. The following table summarizes the essential features of each cycle, including the context, model teacher, lesson focus, and key outcomes, thereby offering a clear overview of how lesson study shaped both instructional practices and professional learning.

**Table 1.** Implementation of lesson study cycles in ESP lesson design

Stage	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Plan	Mr. X developed and presented a preliminary lesson design, receiving collective feedback. The plan was treated as shared ownership.	Mrs. W prepared copies of the lesson design and worksheets for observers and students, ensuring readiness for the online class.	Ms. T presented her lesson design on landscape assessment. Participants noted that lesson study enhanced her lesson design skills.
Do	Mr. X taught “offers and suggestions” to Grade 11 Computer Engineering. Observers recorded field notes. Students learned IT procedures, security, and safety.	Mrs. W taught online with all observers present. Ms. L reminded observers to hide their self-view to reduce distraction.	Ms. T opened the class with a video, “10 Bridge Failures Explained”, and invited students to share opinions and thoughts.
See	Observers reflected on the lesson the same day, providing feedback and compliments to Mr. X.	Reflection conducted via Zoom after class. Mrs. W acknowledged participants, shared students’ reactions, and noted challenges with vocabulary input.	Ms. T reflected that teaching ESP is more demanding than general English. Students struggled with audio but used visuals and background knowledge effectively.
Redesign	Mr. X and Mrs. W revised the lesson based on feedback, incorporating collective suggestions into a new version.	Mrs. W revised the lesson using participants’ feedback and redistributed the updated design to all members.	Ms. T revised the lesson with help from pre-service teachers and shared the updated version via WhatsApp.

The implementation of lesson study across three cycles revealed a gradual yet consistent development in both pedagogical practices and professional collaboration among teachers, lecturers, and pre-service teachers. Each cycle followed the Plan–Do–See–Redesign framework, but with varying emphases that collectively contributed to improving lesson quality and teacher learning. In the first cycle, the focus was on fostering a sense of collective ownership of the lesson design. Mr. X, the first model teacher, led the lesson on IT procedures, security, and safety, while participants engaged actively in observing and reflecting on his teaching. The redesign process demonstrated how shared accountability and joint revision could enhance both the content and delivery of the lesson. The second



cycle highlighted the adaptation of lesson study to an online environment. Mrs. W, as the model teacher, implemented the revised design through digital platforms, and the reflection stage revealed the complexities of online lesson delivery. Despite technical limitations, such as difficulties in maximizing students' exposure to semi-technical vocabulary, the process encouraged collaborative problem-solving and resulted in a further refined lesson plan. The third cycle expanded the scope of lesson study by integrating more creative and context-specific ESP content. Ms. T's lesson on landscape assessment, supported by a video on "Bridge Failures," engaged students in applying their background knowledge to authentic problems. While comprehension challenges emerged—particularly in processing technical language from the video—students responded actively by analyzing visuals and contributing their opinions. The redesign phase illustrated how reflective insights and peer collaboration enabled Ms. T to revise and distribute the improved lesson design more widely through digital platforms.

**Table 2.** The outcome of the lesson study perceived by the participants

Item	Statement	N	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD	Variance
1.	I have learned new teaching approaches for the future	0	62.5	37.5	4.38	0.490	0.240
2.	I can prepare lessons which are more suitable for my students	0	60.0	40.0	4.40	0.496	0.246
3.	I have improved my understanding of my students' abilities and needs	2.5	62.5	35.0	4.33	0.526	0.276
4.	I have increased my ESP knowledge	2.5	62.5	35.0	4.33	0.526	0.276
5.	I can decide what I want my students to understand and be able to do at the end of class	0	70.0	30.0	4.30	0.464	0.215
6.	I can anticipate students' thinking and activities in planning a lesson	15.0	57.5	27.5	4.13	0.648	0.420
7.	My competency in developing lesson design has improved	0	77.5	22.5	4.23	0.423	0.179
8.	I can get ESP teaching material easily during lesson study	0	52.5	47.5	4.48	0.506	0.256
9.	I can prepare authentic material for my ESP class	25.0	57.5	17.5	3.93	0.656	0.430
10.	I can develop ESP learning assessment for my students	0	80.0	20.0	4.20	0.405	0.164
11.	My ability to assess student learning through observation has improved	7.5	60.0	32.5	4.25	0.588	0.346
12.	Lesson Study gives me a better understanding of students' thinking	20.0	45.0	35.0	4.15	0.736	0.541
13.	Practicing Lesson Study has had an impact on my ESP lesson planning	2.5	10.0	87.5	4.85	0.427	0.182
14.	I think more about my students while planning lessons	0	75.0	25.0	4.25	0.439	0.192

The results presented in Table 2 reveal that participants generally perceived the lesson study as highly beneficial for their professional growth and classroom practices. Across all fourteen outcome items, the majority of respondents selected *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*, indicating consistent positive perceptions. The mean scores, which range between 3.93 and 4.85, reinforce this trend by showing that participants leaned toward strong endorsement of the benefits of lesson study. A notable outcome is the strong agreement on the impact of lesson study in shaping ESP lesson planning (O13,  $M = 4.85$ ), where 87.5% of participants strongly agreed that the process enhanced their ability to design effective ESP lessons. Similarly, high levels of agreement were reported for learning new teaching approaches (O1,  $M = 4.38$ ), preparing suitable lessons (O2,  $M = 4.40$ ), and accessing ESP teaching materials easily during the study (O8,  $M = 4.48$ ). These findings suggest that lesson study not only enriched teaching knowledge but also provided practical avenues for integrating authentic ESP materials.

The data also demonstrate positive developments in participants' pedagogical competencies. For instance, most respondents agreed that their capacity to decide clear learning goals (O5,  $M = 4.30$ ), anticipate student thinking (O6,  $M = 4.13$ ), and improve observation-based assessment skills (O11,  $M = 4.25$ ) increased throughout the process. Such outcomes reflect the iterative planning, observation, and reflection cycles of lesson study that encouraged teachers to align lessons more closely with student needs and to refine their instructional strategies. Despite these strengths, some areas show relative challenges. Preparing authentic ESP materials (O9) received the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.93$ ), with 25% of respondents remaining neutral. This indicates that while lesson study provided structure and collaboration, the availability and adaptation of authentic resources remained a persistent issue. Similarly, understanding students' thinking (O12,  $M = 4.15$ ) was less strongly endorsed compared to other areas, suggesting that more support may be needed in developing strategies to probe deeper into students' cognitive processes.

**Table 3.** Professional development experienced by participants

Item	Statement	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
1.	I have created a strong sense of teacher community	–	75.0	25.0	4.25	0.439	0.192
2.	Lesson Study is an effective model of professional development for me	–	92.5	7.5	4.08	0.267	0.071
3.	I have reduced feelings of professional isolation	35.0	57.5	7.5	3.73	0.599	0.358
4.	I have improved my collaboration with my colleagues	7.5	57.5	35.0	4.28	0.599	0.358
5.	By practicing Lesson Study, I have found ways to help my students learn	12.5	72.5	15.0	4.03	0.530	0.281
6.	Practicing Lesson Study has had little impact on my instruction	15.0	55.0	30.0	4.15	0.662	0.438
7.	I feel more confident about matching my teaching to my students' needs	–	80.0	20.0	4.20	0.405	0.164

8.	I feel more effective in my teaching	–	80.0	20.0	4.20	0.405	0.164
9.	I feel more confident about continuing to improve my teaching	35.0	62.5	2.5	3.68	0.526	0.276
10.	Practicing Lesson Study has made me feel less isolated from other teachers	40.0	60.0	–	3.60	0.496	0.246
11.	It is worthwhile to have other teachers observe in my classroom	57.5	40.0	2.5	3.45	0.552	0.305

The findings in Table 3 demonstrate that lesson study played a pivotal role in enhancing teachers' and pre-service teachers' professional development. First, the responses highlight that lesson study fostered a strong sense of teacher community, with all participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that it created collegial bonds and collaborative engagement. This is further reinforced by the fact that over 90% of participants recognized lesson study as an effective professional development model, suggesting that the approach was not only valued but also viewed as practically beneficial for improving teaching practices. Collaboration emerged as a central theme in the data. A large majority (92.5%) reported that their collaboration with colleagues improved, demonstrating how lesson study broke down professional silos and encouraged shared ownership of teaching practices. Alongside this, participants expressed that through the cycles they had discovered new ways to support student learning (87.5%) and developed greater confidence in matching lessons to students' needs (100%). These findings indicate that lesson study provided a platform for reflective and adaptive teaching, which is essential in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts.

The results also show improvements in teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness. Eighty percent of participants felt more effective in their teaching and confident in aligning their instruction with students' needs. Additionally, 62.5% agreed and 2.5% strongly agreed that they were confident in continuing to improve their teaching, showing how lesson study nurtured a mindset of ongoing professional growth. Nonetheless, the findings also reveal areas requiring further attention. A considerable proportion of participants reported only partial success in reducing feelings of professional isolation (35–40% neutral responses), suggesting that while collaboration within the lesson study group was strong, broader collegial integration may still be limited. Moreover, the practice of having peers observe lessons was met with mixed perceptions, with 57.5% neutral and only 42.5% supportive. This indicates some hesitation among teachers about the role of peer observation, which may relate to cultural or professional norms regarding classroom privacy.

**Table 4.** Meaning-oriented learning experienced by participants

Item	Statement	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
1.	I analyse why the students don't understand something; I think about how different lessons relate to each other	–	72.5	27.5	4.28	0.452	0.204



2.	I try to understand why certain teaching methods work	35.0	50.0	15.0	3.80	0.687	0.472
3.	I try to understand how students learn	12.5	50.0	37.5	4.25	0.670	0.449
4.	As a result of my participation in Lesson Study, the students seem better able to respond to each other's ideas during class discussions	–	55.0	45.0	4.45	0.504	0.254
5.	Lesson Study has had little impact on my students' ability to respond to each other's ideas during class discussions	12.5	67.5	20.0	4.08	0.572	0.328

The results in Table 4 highlight that the Lesson Study framework significantly enhanced participants' orientation toward meaning-focused teaching and reflection. A large proportion of participants (72.5% agreed, 27.5% strongly agreed) indicated that they analyzed why students did not understand certain lessons and considered how lessons interrelate (M1, mean = 4.28). This suggests that teachers developed a habit of examining underlying causes of learning difficulties and linking instructional content more coherently across lessons. Similarly, over half of the participants (50% agreed, 37.5% strongly agreed) reported actively trying to understand how students learn (M3, mean = 4.25), underscoring a shift toward deeper pedagogical reflection. Although fewer participants strongly agreed that they tried to understand why certain teaching methods worked (M2, mean = 3.80), the majority (50% agreement) still engaged in this practice, suggesting room for further development in teachers' methodological awareness. The outcomes also reveal positive effects on student interactions. More than half of the participants agreed (55%) and 45% strongly agreed that Lesson Study participation improved students' ability to respond to one another's ideas in class discussions (M4, mean = 4.45). Conversely, when asked if Lesson Study had little impact on student interaction (M5), 67.5% disagreed with the statement, while only 20% strongly agreed, indicating that most teachers perceived a tangible benefit for classroom dialogue (mean = 4.08).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Lesson Study played a transformative role in enhancing both ESP lesson design and the professional growth of vocational school teachers. Teachers reported significant improvement in designing lessons that integrated authentic workplace materials and aligned more closely with students' specific needs. This supports the argument that ESP pedagogy must remain learner- and context-driven to ensure relevance and effectiveness (Basturkmen, 2017; Hafner & Miller, 2018). Collaboration with university lecturers and pre-service teachers enriched lesson planning with updated theoretical insights and subject-specific knowledge, helping bridge the persistent gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom realities in ESP pedagogy (Gallegos-Núñez et al., 2024; Widodo, 2016). These outcomes highlight how Lesson Study functions not only as a site for practical strategy development but also as a means of grounding teaching in conceptual knowledge, enabling teachers to adapt their designs in response to evolving student needs.

Lesson Study also emerged as a robust professional development model. Teachers experienced greater confidence in adapting lessons, overcame feelings of professional isolation, and developed stronger membership within a collaborative community of practice. This is consistent with scholarship showing that school–university partnerships and professional learning communities enhance teacher efficacy and autonomy (Adeoye et al., 2023; Chong & Kong, 2012; Farrell, 2021). The iterative cycle of observation, reflection, and refinement promoted collegiality and trust, moving teachers away from fragmented, one-off training models toward more sustained and practice-embedded inquiry. Such characteristics align with Aisyah and Wicaksono's (2018) call for long-term, collaborative professional development in ESP that empowers teachers to meaningfully reshape their instructional practices.

Beyond technical growth, participants demonstrated a shift toward reflective and meaning-oriented teaching. Teachers became increasingly aware of why students struggled with particular concepts and how pedagogical decisions influenced engagement. This reflective stance enhanced their professional reasoning and classroom practices, as students showed stronger involvement in peer interactions and discussions. These findings resonate with prior work identifying reflective practice as a central driver of sustainable ESP pedagogy and innovation (Jiang et al., 2018; Dou et al., 2023). By embedding cycles of planning, observation, and reflection, Lesson Study nurtured a culture where both teachers and students actively co-constructed meaningful learning experiences.

However, the study also identified persistent challenges. Teachers faced difficulties in selecting ESP syllabus topics, sourcing authentic and industry-relevant materials, and managing the demands of online lesson delivery. These obstacles reflect systemic constraints in vocational education, such as rigid curricula, limited access to resources, and the difficulty of aligning English instruction with rapidly evolving workplace requirements (Dewi, 2015; Fadlia et al., 2020; Islam, 2023). Even so, the collaborative and cross-institutional structure of Lesson Study allowed participants to pool resources, share expertise, and collectively find solutions. This outcome reinforces recent research highlighting the potential of school–university partnerships to bridge resource and knowledge gaps in teacher development (Halász & Sin, 2022; Nasri et al., 2022; Jakhelln & Postholm, 2022).

A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how Lesson Study within a school–university partnership framework fosters teacher agency and reciprocal learning. In-service teachers, pre-service teachers, and university lecturers engaged in productive cross-role dialogues that echoed Ye's (2024) notion of “equal partnerships,” in which educators collaborate as critical friends rather than in hierarchical roles. This structure encouraged distributed leadership, shared responsibility, and autonomy in professional learning. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) further strengthened this dynamic, offering a platform for sustained inquiry, experimentation, and pedagogical refinement (Al Masaeid et al., 2021; Sarmiento-Márquez et al., 2023). Teachers' growth was not only evident in self-reports but also substantiated by survey data, which showed a high level of agreement that Lesson Study improved lesson planning, strengthened understanding of student needs, and deepened ESP knowledge. Nevertheless, some teachers expressed concerns about the emotional and time pressures associated with public lesson observations and the stress of meeting institutional expectations. These concerns mirror broader challenges documented

in the literature regarding the sustainability of partnerships under resource limitations and cultural constraints (Adeoye et al., 2023; Waters et al., 2021). Addressing these concerns will require continued institutional support and policy alignment to ensure that Lesson Study can be sustained beyond pilot stages and embedded into ongoing professional learning systems.

## CONCLUSION

The study revealed that Lesson Study played a transformative role in enhancing ESP lesson design and professional growth among vocational school teachers. Through collaborative planning, observation, and reflection, teachers became more capable of integrating authentic workplace materials, tailoring lessons to student needs, and connecting classroom practice with broader professional knowledge. This process also reduced feelings of isolation and built a stronger sense of professional community. Teachers grew more confident in adapting instruction and more reflective about why students struggled and how teaching choices shaped learning outcomes. In turn, classroom interactions became richer, with greater student engagement and collaboration. At the same time, challenges emerged in selecting suitable ESP topics, sourcing authentic materials, and adapting lessons for online teaching. These difficulties reflected broader systemic issues such as curriculum rigidity and resource limitations. However, the collaborative nature of Lesson Study helped teachers mitigate some of these obstacles by sharing expertise and resources across schools and universities.

However, this study was limited by its small sample size and its focus on a single regional context, which restricts generalizability. The reliance on self-reported data may have introduced subjectivity, and the relatively short intervention period made it difficult to capture long-term changes in teaching practice and student outcomes. Future studies could involve larger and more diverse teacher groups across different vocational fields to strengthen generalizability. Longitudinal designs would help capture the sustained effects of Lesson Study on both teaching practice and student achievement. Comparative studies across online, hybrid, and face-to-face settings would also be valuable. Finally, incorporating student perspectives and examining institutional or policy support for Lesson Study could provide a fuller understanding of its impact and sustainability.

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