



## **Learner-guided Lesson Study? A New Perspective in EFL Argumentative Writing Development**

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### **Introduction**

Lesson study is a collaborative teaching cycle which comprises plan, do and see. In the planning stage, teachers collaboratively work to prepare innovative lesson plan designs. In the do stage, they implement a set of innovative teaching and learning activities based on the collective designed lesson plan. In the see stage, they meet together to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and learning activities applied in the classroom. In this stage, they usually discuss what learning activities work and do not work for the teaching improvement (Arifani et al., 2020; Khokhotva & Albizuri, 2019). The unprecedented acceptance of lesson study in educational contexts has endeavored researchers to integrate this collective teaching strategy within English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) instruction to help second language (L2) teachers improve their teaching (Alwadi et al., 2020; Arifani et al., 2020; Coşkun, 2017; Karabuğa & Ilin, 2019; Lander, 2015). However, in a comprehensive review of the available research using the lesson study approach, we found some methodological shortcomings. These included that the efforts of teacher-led lesson study to enhance learners' learning process has not been adequately acknowledged. In the teacher-led lesson study, for example, the innovative learning activities designed by the group of teachers are better than those made by the individual teacher but again, its effectiveness to keep the students learning is still questionable since there is no clear connection between learners' learning diversity and needs. Regarding those paradigms, Wood and Cajkler (2016) asserted that the mismatch between the designed learning activities and learners' learning preferences, experiences and diversity are probably the main causes of lesson study failures. The changes of lesson planning in each meeting and their learning progress as determinant factors in promoting the success of learning are rarely taken into account.

However, a few studies have examined learner-led lesson study as a new perspective of lesson study in the EFL context. A study conducted by Tamura and Uesugi (2019) is considered as a stepping stone in



implementing a new qualitative paradigm of student-led lesson study (SLS) by looking at learners' self-regulated learning perspective in the field of science. So far, no attempts have been made on how SLS provides new insight on learners' argumentative writing by assessing EFL learners' argumentative construction process rather than learners' writing product. Moreover, previous research (Arifani et al., 2020; Susanto et al., 2020) only uncovers the effectiveness of lesson study without involving learners in the lesson study activities. This LS aims to examine the effectiveness of learner-led lesson study in the argumentative writing course and how students' argumentative writing develops through involving students in the lesson study activities.

## Literature Review

### Learner-led Lesson Study: Theoretical Framework

Previously the term lesson study only referred to teacher collaborative activities involving collaborative lesson plan design, implementation of collaborative teaching, and collaborative reflective activities with the purpose of instructional improvements but that definition has changed since Tamura and Uesugi (2019) introduced their insightful ideas on a different view of a lesson study through learner lesson study or learner-led lesson study. These new terms emerge as a reaction toward the unsatisfactory results of the teacher lesson study which are more collaborative teacher-driven contemplation rather than collaborative learner-driven perspectives although they are derived from the same approaches of teaching-learning communities and collaborative teacher learning (Grossman et al., 2001; Stoll et al., 2006). Moreover, during the teacher-led lesson study students' learning interactions are restricted while they are understanding the teachers' instruction. Learners are not involved in the whole lesson study process from designing their learning objective, selecting relevant sources, reflecting and addressing their learning difficulties and progress. During teacher-led lesson study, scaffolding is merely not optimal learning interaction between teacher and learners. Stemming from teacher learning communities (Grossman et al., 2001; Stoll et al., 2006) and scaffolding frameworks (van de Pol et al., 2015; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) this study tries to implement learner-led lesson study to address this lacuna.

### Argumentative Writing Research

Argumentative writing is one of the writing genres which is typically offered at the tertiary level including in the second language (L2) domain. The common objectives of argumentative writing are designed to elaborate learners' reasoned point of view to support or speak against a certain issue or topic by involving learners' cognitive, linguistic rules, and innovative reasoning abilities (Ramoroka, 2017). Because of its complexities, both L2 teachers and learners at the tertiary level consider it as the most challenging skill to teach and learn (Arsanjani & Faghih, 2015; Awada et al., 2020; Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018; Martin, 2009; Taylor et al., 2019). That is why many researchers have attempted to improve the quality of teaching to foster EFL learners' argumentative writing quality using innovative strategies.

The experimental study conducted by Awada et al. (2020), for example, revealed that only less-skilled learners who were able to improve their advanced-level argumentative writing after they experienced a two-week implementation of mixed cooperative learning using STAD and WebQuest ITBM strategies. Next, Huang and Zhang (2020), in the search of effective strategies to foster 72 first-year learners' English argumentative writing using a genre-based approach from the non-English department in Central China, found that the genre approach is effective to improve learners' argumentative writing after the 12 weeks of intervention.

In addition, a seminal work in a search for finding an ideal strategy optimizing the roles of learners using the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) argumentative writing instruction model by Palermo and Thomson (2018) found that in their study, blended interventions using automatic writing

evaluation (AWE) system plus SRSD, and AWE plus traditional writing instruction were equally applied to assess 978 learners' argumentative writing performance in North Carolina. The results illustrated that both SRSD plus traditional writing instruction and SRSD plus AWE instructions were effective in enhancing learners' argumentative writing. Although the self-regulated strategy was well-designed based on the concept of self-directed learning the teacher interventions in applying SRSD could not fulfill students' learning needs and self-regulated learning since all activities are designed by the teachers (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Everhard & Murphy, 2015; Hartnett, 2015). Therefore, the totality in applying a self-regulated intervention model was not effective since the learners were not involved in designing learning objectives, activities, and reflection. Involving learners in the reflection process may give some beneficial information regarding learners' learning progress and suitability of learning materials with their interest. In this study, we try to involve the students in the lesson study design.

Research questions:

1. Do the two different lesson study instructions offer significant effects on the learners' argumentative writing ability? If it offers a significant effect, is there any difference in the students' learning argumentative writing ability between the EFL students who are taught using learner-led lesson study and learner-lesson study activities?
2. If at all, how do learners change/develop their argumentative writing from participating in a guided-lesson study?

## Method

### Design

This research employed a mixed-methods design. An experimental design was employed to assess the effectiveness of a guided-lesson study on students' argumentative writing abilities. A guided lesson study activity was used with the students in the experimental group. In this case, the teacher guided the students to design their learning objectives, contents, activities, reflections and set their improvement goals for one semester during their academic writing course. Conversely, the students from the control group were not guided during their lesson study activities. The teacher explained the activities of a lesson study cycle to the students. Then, the teacher asked them to do their lesson study activities such as designing learning objectives, content, activities, reflections, and setting improvements. In addition, a qualitative approach was applied to explain the development of learners' argumentative writing that could result from participating in a guided-lesson study.

### Participants and Context

The study participants were 40 EFL undergraduate students (17 males and 23 females, aged between 21 to 23) majoring in the English education department from a private university in Indonesia. This university had been implementing a lesson study program funded by the Ministry of Education from 2015 to 2018. From 2018 until now, the university continued its lesson study program funded internally by the university. This program has also been disseminated to secondary schools as one of the best practices of the university programs. During the research, the students were classified into an experimental (20 students) and a control group (20 students) using their writing scores. The two groups of students enrolled in the academic writing class in the sixth semester before they took their thesis writing class.

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of guided-lesson study, pre-test and post-test of argumentative writing following Newell et al.'s (2019) conception of claim/thesis, evidence, warrants/backing, counter argument, response to counter-argument, organization and grammar were applied before and after the implementation of one semester of guided lesson study activities. During the implementation of guided lesson study, the researchers regularly visited the classroom, read and observed learners' lesson planning, course content, learning activities, notes, and writing tasks. Discussion before and after LS were also conducted with both teachers and students regarding students' argumentative writing development/change in each meeting. In terms of the effectiveness of guided lesson study on students' argumentative writing, one-way ANOVA was applied to examine whether there was a significant difference in students' argumentative writing scores. Students' argumentative writing development during guided LS activities were thematically interpreted by the author and his research team.

## Findings and Discussion

One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene's tests were used to calculate the normality and the homogeneity as the primary requirements before estimating the significant differences of students' argumentative writing scores between the two different interventions. The results of the normality test indicate significant values of 286 and 0.179 between the two cohorts. Next, the results of the homogeneity test reveal that the data distributions between the two groups are 0.159 indicating the two groups are homogeneous indicating the range scores between the two groups were not too far apart. Therefore, both experimental and control group had equal scores in their writing abilities.

Research Question (RQ1): Do the two different lesson studies instructions offer significant effects on the learners' argumentative writing ability? If it offers a significant effect, is there any difference in the students' learning argumentative writing ability between the EFL students who are taught using learner-guided lesson study and learner-lesson study activities?

Descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests were applied to explain the impact of guided-lesson study implementation. As described in Table 2, the mean scores of each argumentative category are elaborated after the experiment.

TABLE 1  
*Students' Argumentative Writing Test Results*

Dimension	Learner-Guided Lesson Study			Learner Lesson Study		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
Claim/Thesis statement	2.74	3.68	0.94	2.71	3.12	0.41
Warrants/backing	2.76	3.86	1.1	2.65	2.89	0.17
Organizations and grammar	2.91	3.98	1.07	2.97	2.97	0
Counter argument	2.96	3.54	0.56	2.86	2.89	0.03
Response to counterargument	2.86	3.52	0.68	2.68	2.82	0.21
	14.23	18.58	4.35	13.87	14.69	0.82

Table 1 shows the mean scores for the learners' argumentative writing. Those who were taught using the learner-guided lesson study approach scored 18.58 overall for argumentative categories with a mean change in score of 4.35, which were greater than the mean scores and improvements of those learners taught using the unguided-lesson study approach (14.69 with a mean change of 0.82).

Specifically, for the results of the learner-guided lesson study group for all five argumentative categories, organization and grammatical terms (3.98) showed higher scores than the other argumentative categories/elements, indicating that organization and grammatical terms were the easiest areas to learn in

the argumentative writing. The lowest scores, meanwhile, were observed for response to counter-argument (3.52), implying that response to counter-argument was the most challenging element to learn.

TABLE 2  
*Students' Argumentative Writing Test Results*

	Levene's test				Mean Score	Mean Difference
	F	Sig	t	Sig. (2 Tailed)		
Equal variances assumed	2.157	.145	5.025	.000	18.58	4.35
Equal variances not assumed			5.045	.000	14.69	4.35

Table 2 presents the results of an independent sample t-test, indicating the significance level (sig. 2-tailed)  $.000 < 0.05$ . It can therefore be assumed that there was a noticeable difference between the learners' scores for argumentative writing when taught using the guided-lesson study. Regarding these findings, Tamura and Uesugi (2019) reported that the involvement of learners in LS could enhance students' learning. Since Tamura and Uesugi (2019) employed a case study in the field of science, this study adds its positive contribution of involving learners in LS in the field of foreign language learning.

Research Question (RQ2): How do learners change/develop their argumentative writing from participating in a guided-lesson study?

### **Guided-planning and Acting in Their Lesson**

The target unit of this lesson planning was "the conception of argumentative writing involving thesis, evidence, backing, counter argument, organization and language focus. The teacher suggested that each leader write down "what he/she wanted to learn from the argumentative elements" on the left side of the lesson plan, "what the leader would strive to do" and "what he/she should do to make the team act in that way on the right side of the lesson plan.

The leader prepared the lesson plan based on the teacher's guidance. Students' lesson plan illustrated the students made their learning objectives, namely identifying characteristics of argumentative writing, understanding argumentative elements and writing an acceptable argumentative essay from various sources. During the formulation of learning objectives, the problem came up when they started writing their thesis statement. An example of a thesis statement from one of the LS teams wrote:

*Online learning may only replace the formality of offline learning because education doesn't only learn about knowledge but education must include the student's soft-skills, behaviour and attitude.*

The excerpts indicated students' inability to formulate an acceptable thesis while they were implementing the lesson. After the teacher asked the students to find out the unclear phrases, then some students raised their hands and gave their opinions. One student mentioned, "I think the phrase of ... replace formality of offline learning ... did not refer to a specific reference. It made your thesis less focused." Another student underlined the phrase... knowledge, soft skill, and attitude become the central issue of your claim. Then, the revision was written into:

*Okay, it seems that I have to revise it into, the key to success to online learning relies on students' knowledge, soft skills and attitude. I think this revised version sounds acceptable.*

The above scripts indicate how the students translated teacher guiding questions and instructions to amend unacceptable thesis statements into more acceptable ones. The study also revealed teachers' successful efforts to facilitate students' learning through effective instruction. The findings indicate that scaffolding activities through guiding question could promote students' learning. This study reported a

similar finding to Awada et al. (2020) which reported that mixed cooperative learning using STAD and WebQuest ITBM strategies could enhance students' argumentative writing. The findings of this study were different from previous LS studies (Arifani et al., 2020; Tamura & Uesugi, 2019). Previous findings did not report guided-lesson plans and learning activities during lesson study activities. This study adds its contribution on guided planning could develop students' understanding of argumentative elements.

### **Guided-observing and Reflecting on Their Lesson**

Lesson study observation was conducted by the team leader from each lesson study group. Each leader observed another LS team to ascertain how students from different LS teams learned the elements of argumentative writing. The teachers monitor all learning processes during the leader's observation and the team's writing activities. The purpose of visiting other LS teams aimed to promote students' learning. For example, when the leader-student from the different groups came to observe the first LS team, the teacher found how interactive dialogue improved students' writing. Teacher 1 wrote:

*So, give some evidence why online learning should rely on the three dimensions of knowledge, soft skill, and attitude. You have to elaborate one by one in detail the three components, namely knowledge, soft skills, and attitude.*

This interactive dialogue among students and leaders illustrated their understanding of warrant, backing and counterargument conceptions. Although the student's argumentation was not built under strong reasons at least they were aware of the characteristic of each argumentative element. The following original scripts present how the student developed their argument before he got comments.

*“... Student's soft skill, attitude and behaviour are the aims of education. Every student can get those things in face-to-face learning but hard online. The balance among students' knowledge, soft skills and attitude are necessary for students' outline. It can be proof of core competence in each curriculum. If we focus on the knowledge, I think google is smarter to give knowledge. I have a neighbour that has a kid, who school through online learning and I a little asked him about his experience in online learning. From his answer and attitude, he is more knowledgeable about what is trending in the Tok-Tok than his learning material ...”*

The students' argumentation did not reflect an acceptable conception of each argumentative element because no reasons were presented in his paragraph. In addition, the student also had poor organization and language issues. After gaining some comments from his leader and other leaders from different LS teams, the students then make some amendments to his paragraph. Figure 1 illustrates students' improvement of the warrant, backing and organization.

“... Attitude is the priority that student must have beside knowledge and soft-skills, because attitude will be firstly seen by people before they know their knowledge. The ingenuity of people also can be seen by their attitude. If in education or learning system the teacher only transfers knowledge, I think Google is smarter to give a knowledge. Attitude that are usually given by teacher in face-to-face learning can't be realized in online learning because they are only facing their device and only listen each other. In the face-to-face learning, they will be able to face, communicate and interact to each other. During the learning they will be able to see how the teacher will treat the students, how a teacher 's tone in communicating when addressing a questions, appraisal and contentment toward his students. In the contrary, in online learning, they will only be able to see their face and listen to each other. They cannot see how one will react during the learning; this will be even worse when some of them do not activate their camera. They will not know what others are actually doing out there during the learning process...”

Beside knowledge, soft-skills is necessary for students to get in education purpose. Student's soft-skills can be public speaking, self-confidence, teamwork, etc. The balance between student's knowledge and their soft-skill is needed for student's outline. It can be evidenced in core competence in each curriculum. In online learning system, we have limit to implement it because we are not able to communicate directly to each other. In my experience, I've seen teacher that asks their student to do presentation but it can't 100% train their soft-skills because a lot of the student still reading when they are presenting their material and I believe that the students are asked to do presentation directly (offline) they still hard to convey the information that will be presented. If it's what happens in the offline or face-to-face learning, I cannot imagine what it is in an online learning.

The last one is students' behaviour in online learning have changed nowadays. A lot of impact that we can see in online learning, during the pandemic especially the students' behaviour. As long as online learning, students are being lazy than in face-to-face learning. It happens because students don't use their smartphone wisely. They change their brain with their smartphone to think in online learning because the teacher cannot handle that. In learning process, examination, homework, students use the internet to do that without re-thinking or understanding the material. They only copy paste the answer from the internet. The device and internet that are supposed to be tools in online learning become a worst thing that change student's behaviour...”

Figure 1. Student's writing development.

In the revised version of his writing, he separated the ideas into three different sections; attitudes, soft skills, and behaviour. In the first elaboration, he wrote that attitude was more important compared to knowledge and soft skills for two strong reasons. He also added some counterclaim that Google was even smarter in transferring knowledge compared to the teacher if the aim of learning is only to transfer knowledge. A comparison was also given to provide a warrant/backing toward the argument he has. He urged that both, teachers and students, would be able to learn some good values during face-to-face learning as they could see, communicate, and interact directly. He wrote his arguments into:

*... In my experience, I've seen teachers that ask their student to do the presentations but it can't 100% train their soft-skills because a lot of the students still reading when they are presenting their material and I believe that the students are asked to do a presentation indirectly (offline) they still hard to convey the information that conveys the information that will be presented. If it's what happens in offline or face-to-face learning, I cannot imagine what it is in online learning...*

In the last section, he showed how the students' behavior changed as they became even lazier in completing their tasks. He mentioned that during online learning, students did not use their gadgets wisely. He emphasized this misuse has been the worst to change the students' behaviour toward the essence of learning as he urged that those devices should have been the tools in online learning, but in fact, the students used them as a means of dropping their responsibility in learning and the teacher could not do anything about it. These examples of the learning progress indicated the impact of collaborative learning during lesson study. Therefore, the findings strengthen the idea of social interaction or collaborative learning between team leader, teacher, and LS team could enhance students learning (Awada et al., 2020; Tamura & Uesugi, 2019).

## Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of learners' guided lesson study on EFL students' argumentative writing abilities and development. The findings of this study proved that EFL students' argumentative writing scored higher marks when the learners were involved in a lesson study compared to those students who were taught using an unguided lesson study approach. Guided-lesson planning, implementing and

reflecting help learners become aware of the goals of learning argumentative elements and step-by-step, this strategy could enhance students' argumentative writing development. The findings suggest that learner-guided lesson study is a suitable form of collaborative teaching activity for EFL teachers to enhance students' learning of argumentative knowledge and practice. The learners found collaborative small-group discussions within the umbrella of lesson study activities from pre-, whilst-and post-learning collaboration with the teachers and peers were helpful for all students to construct their understanding on specific areas of argumentative writing they did not understand. Learners' participation in lesson study could support them more on how to learn than how to memorize the learning contents. This study also clarified that observing others' learning progress and collaboratively reflecting on their learning processes with peers and teachers provide mutual feedback and awareness of positive aspects of their learning development.

Consequently, it is recommended that EFL teachers consider incorporating learner-guided lesson study into their EFL classroom activities. Previous studies on learners' involvement in lesson study in EFL settings has been relatively insufficient, so it becomes a milestone for further research related to the topic. In the future, we also hope to develop similar research involving different students and teachers from different cultural backgrounds is worth pursuing.

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