The Reception of New Language Materials: A Case Study Evaluation of an EFL Textbook in Vietnamese High Schools

Nguyen Minh Tho LE

Department of Linguistics
Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University
Sydney

Submitted for the degree of
Ph. D in Linguistics

October 2011

(Part A)

Thesis structure

(PART A: BODY OF THESIS)

Thesis Structure i
Table of Contents ii
Abstract xi
Statement of Candidature xii
Acknowledgements xiii
Lists of Tables, Figures, Abbreviations and Appendices xv

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Contexts of Creation and Reception 15

Chapter 3: Literature Review 44

Chapter 4: Methodology 70

Chapter 5: Case Study 1: Rural School 87

Chapter 6: Case Study 2: Urban School 123

Chapter 7: Case Study 3: Semi-urban School 157

Chapter 8: Discussion 192

Chapter 9: Conclusion 288

References 303

(PART B: APPENDICES)

Table of contents

Thesis Structure i
Table of Contents ii
Abstract xi
Statement of Candidature xii
Acknowledgements xiii
List of Tables xv
List of Figures xvi
List of Abbreviations xvii
List of Appendices xviii

(PART A)

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY 1
1.1.1 Textbook evaluation as a research area 2
1.1.2 Textbooks and textbook evaluation in Vietnam 2
1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS 4
1.2.1 Dimensions of language materials evaluation 4
1.2.2 Perspectives of evaluation 6
1.2.3 Evaluation of Vietnamese EFL textbooks 6
1.3 REASONS FOR INTEREST IN RESEARCH TOPIC 8
1.4 AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY 10
1.4.1 Aims of study 10
1.4.2 Significance of study 11
1.5 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS 12
1.6 CONCLUSION 14

2. CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTS OF CREATION AND RECEPTION 15
2.1 CONTEXT OF CREATION 15
2.1.1 Textbook replacements in Vietnam 15
2.1.2 The creation of the textbook 17
2.1.2.1 The initiation 18
2.1.2.2 The organisation 19

2.1.2.3 The construction 21
2.1.2.4 The revision 23
2.1.3 Summary 25
2.2 CONTEXT OF RECEPTION 26
2.2.1 Socio-economic and cultural contexts 26
2.2.1.1 Socio-economic transformations 26
2.2.1.2 Cultural influence 28
2.2.1.3 Summary 31
2.2.2 Educational context 32
2.2.2.1 Vietnamese educational system 32
2.2.2.2 EFL education in Vietnam 36
2.2.2.3 Classroom usage of the textbook 39
2.2.2.4 Summary 42
2.3 CONCLUSION 42

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 44
3.1 LANGUAGE MATERIALS EVALUATION 44
3.1.1 What is materials evaluation? 44
3.1.2 Dimensions of materials evaluation 46
3.1.3 Types of materials evaluation 49
3.1.4 Summary 53
3.2 TEXTBOOK EVALUATION 54
3.2.1 Textbooks as a special category of materials 54
3.2.2 Textbook evaluation 56
3.2.3 Summary 60
3.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH 61
3.3.1 Non-Vietnamese EFL materials 61
3.3.2 Vietnamese EFL materials 65
3.3.3 Summary 67
3.4 CONCLUSION 68

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY 70
4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 70
4.1.1 Research question 70

4.1.2 Rationale 70
4.1.3 The evaluator's position 71
4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN 73
4.2.1 The nature of research 73
4.2.2 Components of case studies 74
4.2.3 Selection of cases 75
4.2.4 Research participants 77
4.2.5 Evaluation framework 78
4.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS 80
4.3.1 Questionnaires 81
4.3.1.1 For students 81
4.3.1.2 For classroom teachers 81
4.3.2 Classroom observation protocols 82
4.3.3 Interview questions 83
4.3.3.1 For students 83
4.3.3.2 For classroom teachers 83
4.3.3.3 For head teachers 84
4.3.3.4 For textbook writers 84
4.4 CONCLUSION 85

CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDY 1: RURAL SCHOOL 87
5.0 INTRODUCTION 87
5.1 CONTEXT 87
5.1.1 The school 87
5.1.2 The class 89
5.1.2.1 The students 89
5.1.2.2 Classroom layout 91
5.1.3 The teacher 91
5.1.4 Summary 92
5.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS 93
5.2.1 Student survey 93
5.2.2 Teacher survey 95
5.2.3 Summary 97
5.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION 98

5.3.1 Session 1 100
5.3.1.1 Overview 100
5.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback 100
5.3.2 Session 2 102
5.3.2.1 Overview 102
5.3.2.2 Post-lesson feedback 102
5.3.3 Session 3 103
5.3.3.1 Overview 103
5.3.3.2 Lesson proceedings: Speaking lesson 103
5.3.3.3 Post-lesson feedback 105
5.3.4 Session 4 106
5.3.4.1 Overview 106
5.3.4.2 Post-lesson feedback 106
5.3.5 Post-observation survey 107
5.3.6 Summary 109
5.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS 110
5.4.1 Classroom teacher 110
5.4.2 Head teacher 115
5.4.3 Summary 120
5.5 CONCLUSION 121

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY 2: URBAN SCHOOL 123
6.0 INTRODUCTION 123
6.1 CONTEXT 123
6.1.1 The school 123
6.1.2 The class 125
6.1.2.1 The students 125
6.1.2.2 Classroom layout 126
6.1.3 The teacher 127
6.1.4 Summary 128
6.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS 129
6.2.1 Student survey 129
6.2.2 Teacher survey 130
6.2.3 Summary 131

6.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION 132
6.3.1 Session 1 133
6.3.1.1 Overview 133
6.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback 133
6.3.2 Session 2 134
6.3.2.1 Overview 134
6.3.2.2 Lesson proceedings: Writing lesson 135
6.3.2.3 Post-lesson feedback 137
6.3.3 Session 3 138
6.3.3.1 Overview 138
6.3.3.2 Post-lesson feedback 139
6.3.4 Post-observation survey 140
6.3.5 Summary 141
6.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS 143
6.4.1 Classroom teacher 143
6.4.2 Head teacher 150
6.4.3 Summary 154
6.5 CONCLUSION 155

CHAPTER 7: CASE STUDY 3: SEMI-URBAN SCHOOL 157
7.0 INTRODUCTION 157
7.1 CONTEXT 157
7.1.1 The school 157
7.1.2 The class 159
7.1.2.1 The students 159
7.1.2.2 Classroom layout 160
7.1.3 The teacher 161
7.1.4 Summary 161
7.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS 162
7.2.1 Student survey 162
7.2.2 Teacher survey 164
7.2.3 Summary 165
7.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION 166
7.3.1 Session 1 167

7.3.1.1 Overview 167
7.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback 167
7.3.2 Session 2 168
7.3.2.1 Overview 168
7.3.2.2 Post-lesson feedback 169
7.3.3 Session 3 169
7.3.3.1 Overview 169
7.3.3.2 Post-lesson feedback 170
7.3.4 Session 4 171
7.3.4.1 Overview 171
7.3.4.2 Lesson proceedings: Speaking lesson 171
7.3.4.3 Post-lesson feedback 173
7.3.5 Post-observation survey 175
7.3.6 Summary 177
7.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS 178
7.4.1 Classroom teacher 178
7.4.2 Head teacher 182
7.4.3 Summary 189
7.5 CONCLUSION 189

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION 192
8.1 APPROACHES TO EVALUATION 192
8.1.1 Dominant paradigms 192
8.1.2 The Werner/Aoki framework adapted for textbook evaluation 196
8.2 ENDS-MEANS INTERPRETATION 198
8.2.1 Desired ends and means 198
8.2.1.1 Overriding goals 199
8.2.1.2 Specific outcomes 202
8.2.1.3 Potential opportunities 204
8.2.1.4 Summary 213
8.2.2 Actual ends and means 214
8.2.2.1 The rural case 215
8.2.2.2 The urban case 217
8.2.2.3 The semi-urban case 220

8.2.2.4 Summary 221
8.2.3 Conclusion 221
8.3 SITUATIONAL INTERPRETATION 223
8.3.1 Challenges 224
8.3.1.1 Textbook 224
8.3.1.1.1 Difficulty 224
8.3.1.1.1.1 The rural case 224
8.3.1.1.1.2 The urban case 227
8.3.1.1.1.3 The semi-urban case 228
8.3.1.1.1.4 Summary 229
8.3.1.1.2 Relevance 229
8.3.1.2 Supporting conditions 231
8.3.1.2.1 Lack of communication-oriented lessons 231
8.3.1.2.1.1 The rural case 231
8.3.1.2.1.2 The urban case 233
8.3.1.2.1.3 The semi-urban case 234
8.3.1.2.1.4 Summary 236
8.3.1.2.2 Inadequate teacher preparation 236
8.3.1.2.2.1 The rural case 237
8.3.1.2.2.2 The urban case 238
8.3.1.2.2.3 The semi-urban case 239
8.3.1.2.2.4 Summary 239
8.3.1.2.3 Exam-oriented atmosphere 240
8.3.1.2.3.1 The rural case 240
8.3.1.2.3.2 The urban case 242
8.3.1.2.3.3 The semi-urban case 243
8.3.1.2.3.4 Summary 244
8.3.1.2.4 Inadequate classroom conditions 245
8.3.1.2.4.1 Classroom fittings and layout 245
8.3.1.2.4.2 Inadequate teaching and learning aids 246
8.3.1.2.4.3 Large-sized class 246
8.3.1.2.4.4 Students of mixed levels and motivations 247
8.3.1.2.4.5 Summary 248
8.3.1.2.5 Summary of supporting conditions 248

8.3.1.3 Conclusion 248
8.3.2 Opportunities 249
8.3.3 Conclusion 252
8.4 CRITICAL EVALUATION 252
8.4.1 Critical textbook evaluation (CTE) 253
8.4.2 The textbook critically evaluated 262
8.4.2.1 Critical perspective characteristic 1 applied to the creation and reception of the textbook 263
8.4.2.1.1 Textbook creation 263
8.4.2.1.2 Textbook reception 267
8.4.2.2 Critical perspective characteristic 2 applied to the primacy of the textbook 272
8.4.2.3 Critical perspective characteristic 3 applied to the target subjects of the textbook 277
8.4.3 Conclusion to critical evaluation 284
8.5 CONCLUSION TO DISCUSSION CHAPTER 286

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION 288
9.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS 288
9.1.1 Ends-means evaluation 288
9.1.2 Situational evaluation 289
9.1.3 Critical evaluation 289
9.2 EVALUATION OF STUDY 290
9.2.1 Contributions 290
9.2.1.1 Methodological contributions 290
9.2.1.2 Theoretical contributions 291
9.2.2 Limitations 294
9.3 IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH 295
9.3.1 Textbook development 295
9.3.2 Textbook deployment 296
9.3.3 Textbook implementation 297
9.3.4 Textbook innovation 298
9.4 FUTURE RESEARCH 299
9.5 CONCLUSION 301
9.5.1 Chapter conclusion 301

9.5.2 Thesis conclusion 301

REFERENCES **..... 303**

(PART B)

APPENDICES 318

Abstract

This thesis is an evaluation of an English as a Foreign Language textbook recently introduced to Vietnamese secondary education. It investigates the textbook's creation for an understanding of why the textbook is the way it is, and its usage in three different case studies, rural, urban, and semi-urban, including explanations of why the textbook is used differently in each context. To capture an understanding of how the textbook was operationalised in the classroom and to what apparent effect, a multi-case research approach was undertaken, collecting data from students, classroom teachers, and head teachers through classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaire surveys. Concurrently, the textbook writers were interviewed about factors shaping the textbook. Following Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005), the textbook evaluation was then undertaken through three complementary lenses: ends-means (formal goals *versus* actual lessons); situational (users' views of the textbook); and critical approaches (forces influencing the textbook's creation and usage) adapting Shohamy's critical language testing principles (2001).

The findings show that despite some success, the achievement of the textbook's apparent aims was challenged by its inadequate learning opportunities, its variable difficulty for students and its lack of relevance to students' interests and needs, across all three cases. Also having an adverse effect to varying degrees in the three contexts were supporting conditions concerning teacher preparedness, testing practices and physical classroom conditions. Importantly, the textbook's effectiveness was ultimately determined by factors rooted in its creation and implementation. It was found that textbook modification, ample classroom resources, assessment reformation, and even teacher preparation were necessary but not sufficient on their own to meet the policy ambitions for the textbook. What is essential is the need to align the underlying political, educational and cultural forces towards on-site textbook users' needs, interests and circumstances.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “The Reception of New Language Materials: A Case Study Evaluation of an EFL Textbook in Vietnamese High Schools” has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help, assistance and support that I have received in the research work and the preparation of the thesis has been appropriately acknowledged.

Furthermore, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University’s Ethics Review Committee, reference number: HE24OCT2008-D06172 on 22nd December, 2008.

…….

Nguyen Minh Tho LE ()

October 2011

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people and organisations that have provided their invaluable help, assistance and support for the completion of this thesis as well as the realisation of my dream to study for a higher education degree.

First and foremost, my appreciation goes to my supervisors, Dr. Stephen Moore and Dr. John Knox, who have been generous with their time and knowledge for my study. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Moore, who has provided me with invaluable feedback and insightful comments on every single thesis chapter in the drafting stages as well as on the thesis as a whole, my study-related funding applications, and my conference abstracts, papers and presentations. Under his supervision, I have had an opportunity to be enlightened in terms of research methodology, academic English and strategic planning for my research project.

My special thanks go to the management of all the participating schools and their local leadership for giving me permission to conduct the research activities for this study; all the students, teachers and textbook writers participating in research activities of this study; and all the people who helped with the 'gate-entry' procedures. Also, I am thankful to the supporting staff in the Linguistics Department, the Faculty of Sciences and the Higher Degree Research Office for their help and assistance. Particularly, my thanks are extended to the general director of Education Publishing House (Vietnam), who has given the permission to reproduce in this thesis several units of the textbook under study, and a close friend of mine who helped me with copyright permission grant procedures.

I acknowledge that professional editorial support was received in relation to the earlier versions of Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the dissertation and I would like to extend my thanks to the editor for his careful editing and useful feedback about academic writing. Regarding Chapters 1 and 9, I am grateful to Dr Florence Ma for insights drawn from her own PhD dissertation (Ma, 2010). Also, I would like to extend my thanks to the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee for their insightful queries (following my ethics clearance

application) that helped me to adjust my data collection procedures to meet research ethics standards; to Professor Medhi Riazi for his useful advice on statistical analysis of the survey data; and to the NATTI-accredited translator/interpreter for her sample check of and useful comment on the transcription and translation of the data.

Also, I would like to acknowledge that my study and this research project were financially supported by the Macquarie University Research Excellence Scholarship (MQRES), the Research Enhancement Fund offered by the Linguistics Department and the Postgraduate Research Fund. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers of the conferences I went to, for the feedback from such events has enriched my discussion of the findings of the study; the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia and particularly Dr. Rita Pullium for connecting me to the MQRES scholarship; my professors who were the referees for my MQRES scholarship application; and the leadership of the department and institution where I was working for creating favourable conditions for me to go abroad to pursue my study.

Furthermore, I am very thankful to all my friends who they have been very helpful in my settling in Sydney and dealing with problems that I would have been unable to address for not being physically present at home.

Finally, I am greatly indebted to my parents who have accepted their son to be far away in their senior age and have always been whole-heartedly praying the best for him. Particularly, I am grateful to my wife and my daughter, whose presence in my life away from the home country has always been invaluable support all through my study. Particularly, my wife has provided assistance with the tedious work of page formatting for the chapters of the thesis.

Certainly, any shortcomings and errors remaining in this thesis are all mine alone.

List of Tables

Table 2.1 MOET's guidelines on curricular distribution for *English 10 – Intensive Programme,* 2008-2009 41

Table 4.1 Overview of three case studies 76

Table 5.1 RHS's students and classes by type of English programme, School Year 2008-2009 89

Table 6.1 USHS's students and classes by type of English programme, School Year 2008-2009 124

Table 7.1 SSHS's students and classes by type of English programme, School Year 2008-2009 158

Table 8.1 The textbook evaluation framework adapted from Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005) 196

Table 8.2 Targeted outcomes of *English 10 – Intensive Programme* 202

Table 8.3 Requirements of knowledge and skills of related sections of Units 10-11, *English 10 – Intensive Programme* 206

Table 8.4a Principles of critical textbook evaluation adapted from critical language testing (1) 258

Table 8.4b Principles of critical textbook evaluation adapted from critical language testing (2) 259

Table 8.4c Principles of critical textbook evaluation adapted from critical language testing (3) 260

Table 8.4d Principles of critical textbook evaluation adapted from critical language testing (4) 261

Table M1.1 English learning needs of Case Study 1 students 374

Table M1.2 Most important need of English learning for Case Study 1 students 375

Table O1.1 English learning needs of Case Study 2 students 465

Table O1.2 Most important need of English learning for Case Study 2 students 466

Table O1.3 Areas of strongest focus in writing for Case Study 2 students 474

Table P1.1 English learning needs of Case Study 3 students 539

Table P1.2 Most important need of English learning for Case Study 3 students 540

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Vietnamese educational system 34
Figure 2.2 Flows of education funds in Vietnam 35
Figure 3.1 Framework for materials analysis and evaluation..... 48
Figure 3.2 Macro- and micro-evaluation in language teaching..... 57

List of Abbreviations

BAVE	Business Alliance for Vietnamese Education
CLT	Critical language testing
CPV	The Communist Party of Vietnam
CTE	Critical textbook evaluation
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
RHS	Rural High School
SRV	The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
SHSH	Selective Semi-urban High School
SOET	Service of Education and Training
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
USHS	Urban Selective High School

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Sample test items from national English examinations for students in Vietnam	318
Appendix B	Final approval of the Ethics Review Committee (human research) of Macquarie University	324
Appendix C.1*	Information statement and consent form – pre-observation questionnaire survey, classroom observation and interview – classroom teacher	326
Appendix C.2*	Information statement and consent form – questionnaire survey – students' parents/caregivers	328
Appendix C.3*	Consent form – post-lesson interview – to parents/caregivers of (selected) students	331
Appendix C.4*	Information statement and consent form – interview – head teacher	333
Appendix C.5*	Information statement and consent form – interview – textbook writer	335
Appendix D	Certification of sample check of accuracy of transcription and translation of data by a NATTI-accredited interpreter/translator	337
Appendix E*	Student pre-observation questionnaire	338
Appendix F.1*	Student post-observation questionnaire – Rural High School (RHS)	343
Appendix F.2*	Student post-observation questionnaire – Urban Selective High School (USHS)	346
Appendix F.3*	Student post-observation questionnaire – Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)	349
Appendix G*	Classroom teacher pre-observation questionnaire	352
Appendix H.1	'Lesson proceedings recorder' (for classroom observation)	360
Appendix H.2	Guidelines on collection of evidence	362
Appendix I*	Student post-lesson interview questions	364
Appendix J.1*	Classroom teacher pre- and post-lesson interview questions	365
Appendix J.2*	Classroom teacher post-observation interview questions	366
Appendix K*	Head teacher interview questions	368
Appendix L*	Textbook writer interview questions	370
Appendix M.1	Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS)	373

* The asterisk indicates the appendix has a Vietnamese counterpart but it is not included in the thesis due to excessive length.

Appendix M.2* Classroom teacher's responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS) 385

Appendix M.3 'Lesson proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS) 393

Appendix M.4* Classroom teacher post-observation interview notes – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS) 408

Appendix M.5* Head teacher interview transcript – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS) 415

Appendix N *English 10 – Intensive Programme,* Units 10, 11, 14 and 15 442

Appendix O.1 Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS) 464

Appendix O.2* Classroom teacher's responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS) 476

Appendix O.3 'Lesson proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS) 484

Appendix O.4* Classroom teacher post-observation interview transcript – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS) 491

Appendix O.5* Head teacher interview transcript – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS) 518

Appendix P.1 Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS) 538

Appendix P.2* Classroom teacher's responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS) 550

Appendix P.3 'Lesson proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS) 558

Appendix P.4* Classroom teacher post-observation interview transcript – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS) 572

Appendix P.5* Head teacher interview transcript – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS) 596

Appendix Q.1* Interview transcript – Textbook Writer 1 627

Appendix Q.2* Interview transcript – Textbook Writer 2 657

Appendix Q.3* Interview notes – Textbook Writer 3 689

Appendix R Requirements of knowledge and skills of related sections of Units 14-15, *English 10 – Intensive Programme* 700

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background to the thesis by discussing the importance of textbook evaluation as a research area and a topic of special interest in the Vietnamese context. It states the research problems concerning textbook research and evaluation and, in particular, concerning Vietnamese EFL school coursebooks. Also, the reasons for the researcher's interest in undertaking this research project are explained. Finally, the chapter presents the aims of the study and the significance of the research project along with an overview of each chapter in the thesis.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Farrell (2003, p. 2554), the textbook is a "seemingly simple learning tool" that "teachers and students throughout history have depended upon", and even in wealthy nations research "indicates that even with all the other learning materials now available, the vast majority of teachers continue to rely heavily on the textbook as their core teaching resource". In language education, textbooks have long been recognised as "a key component in most language programs" (Richards, 2001b, p. 12), being "considered the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher" (Riazi, 2003, p. 52). The position of textbooks seems to be further promoted in contexts where classroom use of coursebooks is limited to state-prescribed materials and where the primacy of textbooks as teaching materials is still maintained by socio-political and cultural traditions. This is clearly the case in Vietnamese secondary education where "textbooks are still the key teaching and learning materials in all levels of general education" (H. C. Nguyen, Hoang, Vu, Do, & Hoang, 2007, p. 27).

1.1.1 Textbook evaluation as a research area

It is due to the influential position of textbooks that there has been strong research interest in issues ranging from textbook development and adaptation to textbook evaluation. In response to such interest, in 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revised and published the *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (Pingel, 2010). As for language education, there has been an "explosion in interest in materials development for language teaching, both as 'a field of study and as a practical undertaking'", as noted by Tomlinson (2003d, p. ix). A literature review of the three decades 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s by Riazi (2003) shortlists as many as nine 'major' second/foreign language textbook evaluation schemes, including those of Cunningsworth (1995); Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979); Davison (1976); Littlejohn (1998); Sheldon (1988); Skierso (1991); Tucker (1975); Ur (1996); Williams (1983). Regarding materials evaluation, "the aspect of materials development which has received the most attention in the literature", observe Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010a, p. 7), "is evaluation".

1.1.2 Textbooks and textbook evaluation in Vietnam

Since only state-prescribed textbooks may be used as coursebooks in Vietnamese general education (Education Law of 2005, Article 29, Clause 3), there is a strong need to evaluate the worth of those limited coursebook options given their impact on an enormous number of people. According to statistics, for each year of the 2000s, there were approximately 15 million students enrolled in general education, meaning users of the state's textbooks accounted for one-fifth of Vietnam's population (Tong cuc Thong ke [General Statistics Office], 2011a, 2011b). Moreover, it would be fair to say that an equal number of parents had an indirect interest in the textbooks too given Vietnam's a strong tradition of 'a studying society' and that this tradition has been strongly promoted by the government (CPV Central Executive Committee, 2001a). Naturally, there are other stakeholders interested in textbooks beyond students and their parents, such as teachers, educational administrators, and

textbook distributors, to name a few. Thus, if other textbook stakeholders are included as well, the national textbooks can be seen to impact on nearly half of the country's population. Furthermore, textbooks have considerable significance because they are normally used to educate generations of the nation's young people (the previous textbooks, for example, had been used for twenty years) and are considered an apparent authority of knowledge (Gregory, 1994, p. 37) and basis for practice for examinations (see, for instance, Guide on Graduation Exam Review, 2009), for which success is among the strongest drivers of students' study (Bock, 2000, pp. 25-26).

In recent years, the local interest in textbook research and evaluation has been accelerated by the Vietnamese government's introduction of new textbooks in general education and its more open attitudes particularly with respect to education. An influential educator of the regime has stressed that there should be a "need to look at education not only from the viewpoint of ideological and cultural values" (M. H. Pham 2002, as cited in L. Nguyen, 2006). As a result, "more active public participation" is encouraged (Doan, 2005, p. 453). It was proposed during the 2005 debates on the draft Education Law that more than one set of textbooks should be approved to be school coursebooks (Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 348). This marked a move away from what was previously accepted as an achievement of national unification when "for the first time in several decades, in all general schools of the country, teaching was dispensed according to a single programme and with a single set of textbooks" (Tran & Nguyen, 2000, p. 224). Regarding the new textbooks, the Ministry of Education and Training made an unprecedented move by opening an online forum calling for public feedback (see MOET Announcement 254/TB-BGDDT) and conducting a textbook and curriculum evaluation process seeking opinions on the new materials from 20,000 out of the existing 35,000 secondary schools across the nation (MOET Document 2093/BGDDT-GDTrH and Ministry of Education and Training, 2008). In addition, the media proved to be very active in featuring public comments on the newly-launched textbooks; one publication

by Education Publishing House, the publisher of the new textbooks, compiled hundreds of such newspaper articles from major newspapers (see, for instance, H. D. Nguyen, Nguyen, & Hoang, 2006).

Nonetheless, there have been limited research and evaluation studies of textbooks (including EFL materials) that are currently used in contemporary Vietnamese general education. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the value of one of those recently introduced textbooks. This research project hopes to contribute to textbook research and evaluation as a field of research and especially to Vietnamese textbook development and implementation practices. For reasons of scope and the researcher's background, this study uses a case study methodology to evaluate *English 10 – Intensive Programme*, the EFL textbook prescribed for Year 10 students taking the intensive programme of English, with a special interest in the reception of the textbook in three distinctively different Vietnamese high schools.

1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS

This section will present key problems in textbook research and evaluation. Those problems are related to (1) the dimension by which language textbooks can be evaluated; (2) the perspectives of textbook stakeholders that an evaluation of textbooks should take into consideration; and (3) the distinctive features of the textbook to be evaluated. It will therefore argue for the need to use a multidimensional evaluation for textbooks.

1.2.1 Dimensions of language materials evaluation

The literature on language materials evaluation suggests that materials can be evaluated in terms of the learning opportunities they provide; how those opportunities are matched with the textbook's aims; and the extent to which materials are appropriate for their users in a particular target situation of use. These terms of evaluation help to measure the 'theoretical worth' and 'empirical worth' of materials (Breen 1989, as cited in Rea-Dickins &

Germaine, 1992, p. 30, 2001, p. 256). In relation to when materials can be evaluated, there are pre-, whilst- and post-use evaluations. Whereas pre-use evaluation mainly predicts whether materials will be appropriate with particular learners in a particular setting and post-use evaluation provides indicators of the achievements of materials, whilst-use evaluation yields empirical results showing how materials are being used and to what apparent effect. Evaluation can be undertaken for different reasons, namely formative, illuminative, and summative. While formative evaluation is typically carried out to contribute to the development of materials and summative evaluation serves the interest in "evaluating the achievements at the end of a substantial period of time" (Rea-Dickins, 1995, p. 1), illuminative evaluation helps to explore what it is about materials that are effective or ineffective, appropriate or inappropriate in reference to a particular group of learners in a particular setting for materials improvement and professional development. Furthermore, evaluation can be done for reasons of accountability, curriculum development and betterment, and self-development for teachers and other language teaching professionals (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 2001, p. 253).

It follows, therefore, that a materials evaluation that is interested in seeking to learn about the extent to which materials actually work in the classroom and in what way their effectiveness and appropriateness can be improved for development purposes should adopt a whilst-use evaluation that is oriented to illuminative and self-development purposes. These are the areas of interest in this study, which evaluates *English 10 – Intensive Programme* for "information about *how* it is being used, by whom, under what conditions, in which situations and principally, with what effects" because "addressing these questions will involve us in gathering information which we may subsequently use to bring about immediate improvements and thus develop further the syllabus, the *textbook* [emphasis added], the course, or aspects of classroom practice" (Rea-Dickins, 1995, p. 2).

1.2.2 Perspectives of evaluation

There are a wide variety of textbook stakeholders from whose perspectives materials can be evaluated. The most obvious are the perspectives of "the people who come into contact with" the materials under evaluation (Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 16). These 'people' include students and teachers because they are the direct users of the materials and thereby have hands-on experience of the value of the materials in relation to their needs, interests and circumstances (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998, p. 112; Lyons, 2003, pp. 490-491; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 25). In addition, there are other stakeholders whose views are also important, such as programme administrators (Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 3), the evaluators (Tomlinson, 2008c, p. 18; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, pp. 1-3) and materials developers (who might help to reveal why materials are as they are). Ideally, the more perspectives that are taken into consideration, the more complete the evaluation will be; yet for reasons related to the scope and specific interest of the evaluation, the evaluator should be selective in order to have a research design that can best address their research questions, for "the problem defines the methods used, not vice versa" (Parlett & Hamilton 1972, as cited in Jacobs, 2000). In this thesis, the stakeholders who were consulted for their feedback on the textbook under evaluation and its usage were students and teachers using the textbook, head teachers as institutional administrators, and textbook writers as creators of the textbook.

1.2.3 Evaluation of Vietnamese EFL textbooks

While the evaluation of language textbooks can certainly draw on the literature of language materials evaluation, it should be emphasised that textbooks are significantly different from 'regular' materials in a number of ways. The key difference is that language textbooks may be intended to teach not only languages but also to serve the general aims of the educational policies being implemented in their particular contexts of use (Roberts, 1996, p. 382). Adapting the words of Gonzalez (2003, p. 128), textbooks as part of national language policies are not created and deployed in a 'vacuum' but within a social context.

Those forces are related to the context-specific features of the cultural, educational, and socio-political environment in which textbooks are used. In recent years, there have been issues emerging to be addressed by textbook research and evaluation including "the rapid growth of the market for *electronic educational media*, the *diversification and regionalisation of textbook production* in many areas of the globe, and the continuing trend to introducing *educational standards* and *quality criteria* [emphasis in original] educational media have to meet" (Pingel, 2010, p. 5). It is for these reasons that Lyons (2003, p. 490) states: "A textbook is not simply a textbook".

Therefore, context-sensitive factors will have to be taken into consideration in examining the value of EFL textbooks currently used in the Vietnamese context. Regarding the evaluation of *English 10 – Intensive Programme*, those factors are very significant because the textbook is intended to teach English as a foreign language and the target users are students (and their teachers) in secondary education. As will be further explained in Chapter 2, the textbook's purpose is not to teach 'survival' English as do many commercial materials but to serve the educational aims of the nation. This difference is important because any topical or methodological knowledge perceived to lead to, in the words of Pennycook (1994, p. 171), 'trivialization of language teaching', is not tolerated. Given the state's control, the textbook is to provide its students with opportunities to learn "English while maintaining the national identity", which can be seen as a distinctive strength of 'in-country coursebooks' (Bao, 2008, pp. 264; 266-267). Also, as a coursebook to be used for students at school, the textbook is expected to be, in the words of Tomlinson (1998, as cited in 2003b), 'sanitised' in terms of the knowledge it presents. It should be noted that the government control over textbooks is very strong in the Vietnamese context, regarding both the creation and implementation of teaching/learning materials (see Chapter 2 for a discussion in depth of these constraints). In addition, the textbook is intended to be used in an environment quite typical of the Asian context, as observed by Kirkpatrick (2002, p. 214), "where the great

majority of English language teachers are local non-native speaker teachers" and the students "are local school children learning English primarily because it is part of the national curriculum".

Therefore, it is necessary to apply an evaluation framework that enables a wide-angle examination of the textbook, not only in terms of the textbook's merit or its worth in relation to a certain classroom setting but also in terms of its teachability as defined by the underlying forces existing in its contexts of creation and reception. To serve these triple evaluation interests, the evaluation framework proposed by Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005), which is based on the social epistemology of Jurgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism, proves to be a most appropriate model to adopt for textbook evaluation. Based on this framework, evaluation as a 'sense-making' activity will include ends-means, situational, and critical forms of sense-making (Norris, 1993, p. 103).

It is worthwhile to note that the framework proposed by Werner and Aoki draws upon Harbermas' tri-paradigmatic conceptions (Aoki, 1989, p. 5). As elaborated by Norris (1993, pp. 103-104), the ends-means form of 'sense-making' corresponds to the empirical analytic constitutive interests, the evaluation paradigm to the interpretive constitutive interests and the critical paradigm to the critical-theoretic constitutive interests. For this study, however, the main influences are Werner and Aoki rather than Harbemas himself.

1.3 REASONS FOR INTEREST IN RESEARCH TOPIC

The researcher's interest in the present study was originally triggered by his involvement in the creation of the *Intensive English* textbook series and later driven by the perceived shortage of and demand for research-based textbook research and evaluation in his national context (as briefed in Section 1.1.2). Thus, the study has also been strongly defined by the researcher's own background.

Following Vietnam's introduction of the new version school textbooks in 2002, there have been heated public debates on the value of the new materials and, as a result, the need for professionalism in the research and evaluation of textbooks became clear. It has also become evident that there is a strong demand for textbook development and evaluation expertise, a widely perceived problem in Southeast Asia where "countries seriously lack professional course developers and… there has not been adequate training in materials development" (as reported in Bao, 2008, p. 276).

From a personal perspective, as a member of the writing team for the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook, prior and during the creation of the textbook and others in its series, the researcher did his own 'research' in textbook development based on the limited literature available at his university and his impressionistic evaluations of commercial EFL coursebooks widely available in local bookstores, which, as indicated in Bao (2008, p. 265), are apparently very popular with Vietnamese teachers. The researcher had nothing else to rely on except his own experience as a language learner and teacher of language materials, the contributions from other co-writers, who like him did not have any textbook development experience, and later on the feedback from the internal evaluators of the textbook. It was recognised by the researcher even at that time that he would have been able to make more contributions in completing the several units he was assigned to write if he had had some expertise in language materials development. Following the deployment of the new textbooks there was critical feedback from the media that suggested the need for improved textbook development and evaluation. In addition, during this time, terms like 'quality assurance', 'educational accreditation', 'curriculum/programme evaluation' and 'materials evaluation' became 'buzz' words possibly as a result of the emerging needs for educational accountability in Vietnam. The interests in materials development and evaluation consequently became stronger as the researcher asked himself, "Why not evaluate the very textbooks he had contributed to create?". An evaluation that can provide deep insights into

the textbook and its usage in actual classrooms would be very useful for the revision of the textbooks currently in use and the development of the next generation of textbooks. Also, the evaluation from the perspective of a textbook writer is unique not simply because it could reveal what was actually taking place 'behind the scenes' but because it would be an account of the worth of the textbook from the perspective of an 'insider' in the textbook's creation, a position not readily available to other evaluators.

1.4 AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

1.4.1 Aims of study

This study aims to evaluate the worth of the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook in relation to its target situation of use. Its research question is "How appropriate is the textbook *English 10 – Intensive Programme* to the target situation of use?". This aim is comprised of three evaluation undertakings:

1. To examine the value of the textbook in isolation and in relation to its actual usage in the classroom
2. To investigate the value of the textbook from the points of view of the teachers and students by whom it was operationalised in their classroom.
3. To look into the underlying forces of the contexts of creation and use of the textbook to explain why it is the way is and why it was used in the way it was used.

It is necessary to clarify here that this study employs a qualitative research design and instead of attempting to provide quantifiable measurements of the value of the textbook, it takes an interest in learning how the textbook was operationalised in different contexts and how the operationalisation was affected by the local situations and shaped by the overall educational, socio-political and cultural systems in which the textbook was created, deployed, and implemented. In this study, as pointed out by Scriven (1993, p. 36), 'evaluation' rather

than ‘measurement’ is undertaken because of the complexities in terms of the large number of goals of the textbook, its lack of specifications in behavioural terms; the relative importance of the goals; and the necessity of relating the textbook’s achievements to dimensions that are not part of the goals.

Another point to be clarified at the outset is that the primary concern of this study is with the Student Book, which, strictly speaking from an administrative viewpoint, is the only material recognised as a textbook prescribed to be used in the classroom by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET Directive Document 6631/BGDĐT-GDTrH). Not seen as ‘textbooks’ are the accompanying Work Book and Teacher’s Book, which do not have the same position and scrutiny as the Student Book. As all three books are closely related, however, the study will also take into consideration the Work Book and the Teacher Book where necessary.

1.4.2 Significance of study

This study is significant in a number of ways. First, the employment of the three-dimensional evaluation framework has enabled an examination of the value of the textbook not only in relation to its classroom operationalisation and in consideration of the views of its users but also with respect to the underlying forces defining the textbook and its usage. The evaluation from those three complementary lenses yields a more comprehensive account of the relative worth of the textbook, which would not have been possible by means of traditional evaluation approaches. In particular, the critical textbook evaluation (CTE) principles adapted from the critical language testing (CLT) principles (Shohamy, 2001) provides a rigourously critical evaluation of the textbook based on recent developments in critical applied linguistics.

Second, this study is significant because of its innovative research design, involving multiple case studies, methods and sources. While the case studies provide insights into the usage of the textbook in three distinctively different contexts, the use of multiple research

methods enables the collection of different types of data that in turn enhance triangulation. The evaluation therefore considers not only perceptions of the textbook's effectiveness and appropriateness but also evidence of the textbook usage from multiple perspectives, including not only direct users of the textbook inside the classroom (i.e. students and classroom teachers) but also programme administrators within the schools concerned (i.e. head teachers) and writers of the textbook. The classroom observation and especially post-lesson feedback offer opportunities to learn about the details of the textbook's operationalisation in each particular lesson.

This study is also important because of its implications. By investigating the value of the textbook firstly in its contexts of use and then tracing the underlying causes for why the textbook is the way it is and why it was used in the way it was used, the study can offer useful recommendations on the different stages of a textbook innovation project including development, deployment and implementation.

Finally, it is the evaluation of an EFL textbook expressly developed for the Vietnamese secondary education that has added significance to the study. While relying on the global literature of language materials and evaluation for the examination of the worth of *English 10 – Intensive Programme*, the study can contribute valuable results to the ELT community in Vietnam. The results of this study, which are locally specific and evidence-based research, can also contribute to enrich the global literature of language materials development and evaluation. If these aims can be realised by this study, the dual interests of glocalisation of English language teaching can be well served.

1.5 PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This section provides previews of the chapters in the thesis. Chapter 1 has provided the background of the study regarding textbook evaluation as a research area and as a topic of interest in Vietnam; a statement of problems regarding textbook evaluation in terms of evaluation dimensions and textbook stakeholders' perspectives; and Vietnamese EFL

textbook evaluation. Also, it has provided the reasons for the researcher to undertake this research project as well as the aim of study and the significance of the evaluation.

The next two chapters will establish the 'niche' for this study. Chapter 2 will present the context of creation of the textbook under evaluation for an understanding of where the textbook came from by examining the history of textbook replacements in Vietnam and then the creation of this particular textbook series. Also, the circumstances in which the textbook was deployed will be presented and analysed for an understanding of how the textbook is likely to be received and used. Chapter 3 will then review the relevant literature on language materials evaluation, textbook research, and previous EFL materials evaluations. .

Chapter 4 will describe in detail the methodology employed in this research project. After stating the research question along with the rationale for the research and the researcher's position, the chapter will present and justify the legitimacy of the research design of the study by explaining the nature of the research, the components and selection of case studies and research participants, and the evaluation framework. In addition, the various data collection instruments used for this research will also be described.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will present the three case studies profiling the classroom operationalisation of *English 10 – Intensive Programme* in three distinctively different contexts. Respectively focusing on the implementation of the textbook in a rural, an urban and a semi-urban school, the three chapters will describe how the textbook was used in each setting. In addition, the views of the students and teachers on the textbook's actual usage in their own contexts will also be reported and analysed.

Chapter 8 will then discuss and evaluate the findings from the three case studies profiled in the three preceding chapters and will relate the interpretations of the textbook's relative worth to its contexts of creation and use. In this chapter, the textbook will be evaluated through three complementary lenses, namely ends-means, situational, and critical evaluation approaches. Regarding the critical evaluation of the textbook, the CTE principles

adapted from the CLT principles will be employed and the textbook writers' opinions will be introduced and discussed.

Finally, Chapter 9 will summarise the main findings of the research project, its contributions and limitations before presenting the implications of the study along with suggestions for future research.

1.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the background of the study has been provided with reference to textbook evaluation as a research area and an emerging topic of special interest and significance in Vietnam. It has also stated problems in textbook research and evaluation concerning the dimensions and the perspectives of evaluation and in particular evaluation of Vietnamese EFL school textbooks. Importantly, it has been flagged that an evaluation of textbooks will need to examine not only their theoretical and empirical worth but also their relative worth in relation to the underlying forces conditioning textbooks and their usage. The reasons for conducting this research project, the aims and the significance of this study along with a preview of the chapters in the thesis have also been presented.

In the next chapter, the contexts of creation and reception of the textbook under evaluation will be provided for a better understanding of the broad factors shaping the textbook and its usage.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTS OF CREATION AND RECEPTION

Any textbook bears the imprint of the many people, policies and processes involved in its creation. Likewise, how the textbook is actually used by its readers is determined by a number of factors including cultural, economic and educational circumstances. This chapter provides a background description and analysis of the contexts in which the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook under evaluation was created and received. To begin, a review of school textbook replacements in recent Vietnamese history will be provided. Following this will be a preliminary discussion of why the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook is the way it is by considering how it was initiated and created, and how its actual usage is likely to be affected by the contextual factors of the broad context in which it is deployed. Next, an account of the developmental progression of the textbook from its initiation to its construction will be provided. The chapter then continues with a description of the context in which the textbook was to be received. It will be shown that this context can be defined by educational factors in particular, as well as socio-economic changes and cultural influences. The chapter will then conclude with a summary of the key points raised.

2.1 CONTEXT OF CREATION

2.1.1 Textbook replacements in Vietnam

Since 1945, when Vietnam was liberated from French colonial domination, there have been five occasions when the Vietnamese primary and secondary education textbooks were replaced: 1945, 1955, 1964, 1981, and 2002. The first occasion followed the 1945 August Revolution in Vietnam and saw the replacement of the French textbooks with Vietnamese textbooks. The Vietnamese-language textbooks were produced within two months of the revolution due to the urgent demands of the new post-revolution society (as reported in Vuong Ha & The Uyen, 2008). The materials, generally referred to as the “Hoang Xuan Han Program” (X. T. Nguyen, 1994, p. 238), were used for 10 years in Northern Vietnam and up

to 20 years in Southern Vietnam (as reported in Vuong Ha & The Uyen, 2008). One year after the Geneva Convention (1954), when Vietnam was formally divided into the North and South regions, the government of the Vietnam Democratic Republic in the North deployed new textbooks which took half a year to write (as reported in Vuong Ha & The Uyen, 2008) and which were designed to service socialist education principles (D. H. Nguyen, 2007, p. 159). In South Vietnam, it was not until ten years after the Geneva Convention that the 1964 National Education Conference initiated a new generation of textbooks along with the creation of a new centre responsible for producing "newer kinds of educational materials all the way from elementary to secondary levels" (SarDesai, 2001, p. 1555).

In 1975, when the nation reunified after the North claimed victory, the 1955 Marxist-oriented textbooks being used in the North were rolled out nationwide, replacing the textbooks being used in the South (Duiker, 1995, p. 185; Jamieson, 1993, p. 363). Six years later, after the new regime was well established, a state-level replacement of textbooks was carried out throughout the now Socialist Republic of Vietnam, starting from the school year 1981-1982 (SarDesai, 2001, p. 1558; SRV National Assembly Res. No. 40/2000/QH10, 2000; N. H. Vu et al., 2007, p. 267). Initiated by Resolution 14-NQ/TW of the Politburo of the Central Communist Party of Vietnam concerning nation-wide educational reform to support the progress towards socialism (D. H. Nguyen, 2007, p. 171), the so-called 'reformed textbooks' were introduced incrementally, starting from Year 1 and finishing at Year 12, in 1992 (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, 1996, p. 7; K. Tran & Nguyen, 2000, p. 224).

A decade later, in 2002, another generation of new textbooks was introduced. According to resolution No. 40/2000/QH10 of the SRV 10th National Assembly (SRV National Assembly Res. No. 40/2000/QH10, 2000), the new textbooks were to be introduced incrementally, starting with Year 1 and Year 6 in the school year 2002-2003 and proceeding

to the next Years in the school years that followed. The introduction of these new textbooks was concluded in 2007-2008.

The key difference between the most recent textbook introduction and the other introductions was what triggered the deployment. While the 1945, 1955, 1964, 1975 and 1981 textbook replacements were mainly driven by the presence of a new regime, the 2002 textbook deployment was apparently a reaction to "the national construction and defence demands, and the rapid and strong social economic, and science and technology developments in general, as well as developments in education in particular" (Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 14/2001/CT-TTg, 2001, researcher's translation).[1] Another difference was that of administration. While the other textbook deployments were basically implemented as a whole (i.e., being comprehensive replacements of the books for all year levels), the two most recent deployments (1981 and 2002) were done incrementally, albeit with a minor difference between them: whereas the former replacement (1981) started from Year 1 and proceeded year-by-year to Year 12, thus taking a decade, the latter (2002) began concurrently at Years 1 and 6 and proceeded to the terminal year of the levels concerned; that is, primary and secondary education, taking seven years to complete (K. P. Nguyen, 2006, p. 91). In addition, whereas the other generations of textbooks were written by a small team of writers in a relatively short time, the 2002 textbooks were created by many writers over half a decade. The chemistry textbooks, for instance, were prepared by 12 teams of writers, 12 examination committees, and 64 piloting commissions (Vuong Ha & The Uyen, 2008).

2.1.2 The creation of the textbook

This section will look back upon the process of developing the textbook from the initiation to the organisation and then through the construction and revision of it. The information provided is based on, apart from the official documents, the knowledge of the

[1] All the citations from the references with titles in Vietnamese are the researcher's own translations.

researcher who was involved in the textbook writing project as a co-writer and on the interviews as well as personal communication with other textbook writers.

2.1.2.1 The initiation

The 2002 textbook innovation (from which the *Intensive English Programme* textbook series eventually emerged) was ordered by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), as, according to the Vietnamese Constitution, the nation is under the leadership of the Party (SRV Constitution 1992 - Amended 2001, Article 4). Moreover, the CPV has the power to decide on the direction of all major reforms in the country. As for education matters, "the Central Committee and the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam decide "the line and strategic orientation" of the changes to be implemented (SarDesai, 2001, p. 1561). As a result, the textbook innovation was put forward as part of the master plan of the national 2001-2010 socio-economic strategies presented by the Eighth CPV Central Executive Committee at the Ninth CPV Congress as part of the requirement for action on the development targets set out for the decade (CPV Central Executive Committee, 2001a, Section V; 2; H. C. Nguyen, Hoang, Vu, Do, & Hoang, 2007, p. 4).

"Prompt action must be taken", urged the CPV report (CPV Central Executive Committee, 2001b, Section V; 1) "to design new curricula and create and deploy textbooks for general education that are congruent with the demands of the new developments". As the previous textbooks had been in use for nearly two decades, they were failing to meet the requirements arising from the industrialisation and modernisation reforms undertaken by the nation (H. C. Nguyen, et al., 2007, p. 4). A plan was accordingly proposed by the Minister of Education and Training to the SRV National Assembly, and the Assembly finally came up with Resolution No. 40/2000/QH10 in 2000 on the revision of the educational curricula and textbooks. As the implementer of the central policies, the government issued Directive No. 14/2001/CT-TTg to the Ministry of Education and Training and the relevant administrations,

specifying the assignments to be carried out and the support to be provided according to their functions.

Notably, the government ordered that the primary educational aims of the new education curricula and textbooks were to facilitate the education of the students in such a way as to strengthen their pride in Vietnamese people and in *socialist ideals* (Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 14/2001/CT-TTg, 2001 [emphasis added]). It is perhaps due to these political orientations that Vietnam teaching materials that are not produced by government agencies stand little chance of becoming school coursebooks. The creation of the textbooks, as noted by Salomon and Vu (2007, p. 349), "has emphatically not meant any foreign interference in the writing process". During the late 1990s, in relation to the initiative and funding of the Business Alliance for Vietnamese Education (BAVE), a number of writers were sent to the University of California, Los Angeles to undertake a textbook writing apprenticeship. It was there that they wrote a series of EFL textbooks for Years 6 to 9 called *English for Vietnam* (T. H. Cao, personal communication, October 2, 2009). The material, however, was not stamped for national use (B. Nguyen & Crabbe, 1999), although the reasons for this were not related to the textbooks' quality. The government seemed more willing to have textbooks that were 'internally' initiated rather than fine tune for use the BAVE books, despite the implication that it would entail loans from overseas for the project (H. T. Nguyen, 2006).

2.1.2.2 The organisation

The implementation of the new textbook writing project was undertaken mainly by the Ministry of Education and Training and its units: the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, the Education Publishing House, and the (ministerial) Department of Secondary Education. The institute was responsible for designing the curricula; the publisher was in charge of recruiting writers, organising the writing, and publishing the textbooks; and the department organised the evaluation of the drafts and facilitated the classroom trial of,

and the teacher training for, those materials. Moreover, provincial authorities were responsible for the introduction of the new curricula and textbooks to their local schools.

The writers and the editors were directly involved in the actual creation of the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook. No public announcement was made for the recruitment of writers – the process was done mostly through recommendation – and there was no official competition commissioned to create the textbooks. The team comprised three writers of the replaced textbooks, two from a teachers' training college, two from universities, and three from secondary schools. The participation of the 'veterans' was needed as they were expected to bring with them experience in constructing the previous textbooks. Though previously the writers may have sometimes taught at a secondary institution, only two of them could claim to have intensive high school teaching experience. None of writers had formal training in textbook writing or materials development. The editors were in-house staff at the Education Publishing House and they took over the administrative duties of the project and were responsible for the page-setting and formatting of the materials. Due to the 'domestic' personnel involved in the writing and editing process, many people were apprehensive about the textbook's quality. For instance, one of the evaluators of foreign languages textbooks remarked on the existence of "Vietlish" in the text (as cited, for instance, in Bao Anh, 2008b).

The writers created the textbook based on the curriculum drafted by the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, which basically outlined the content components and the methodological orientation of the textbook. There was no research-based information provided to the writers about the target students and teachers of the textbook regarding their needs and wants, the decisive factors regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching materials (Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 18), or the context in which the textbook was to be received. "Languages are learned", states Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 384), "to levels and for roles which are determined by the learners' needs". Unfortunately, as was pointed out by the media, there was no attempt on the part of the writers to investigate those needs (see, for

instance, Viet Lan & Hien Vy, 2008). Due to the failure of the writers to initiate a 'fact-finding stage' (Dubin & Olshtan, 1990) they remained poorly informed about the textbook users and the contexts of use. As a consequence, the textbook was apt to be incongruent with its users' expectations. All this lack of interest in and awareness of the significance of conducting research into the target context of learning undermined the appropriateness and effectiveness of the textbook even in its early stages of development.

2.1.2.3 The construction

Writing commenced on the textbook, *English 10 – Intensive Programme*, following the government's directive on the textbook innovation project. The writers first met during April 2002 for a broad discussion of the curriculum and how they envisaged the textbook and its units should be developed. It was unanimously agreed that a communicative teaching approach that supported a learner-centered way of teaching and learning was to be adopted for the textbook because, as noted by V. H. Dang (2006, p. 598) this was implied by the curriculum. The target outcome of this 'communicative language teaching' is to form and develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing by means of the practice of language knowledge" and teachers are required "to organise and guide students to participate actively in their learning process through individual, pair, and group work" (Tu Anh, 2006, p. 13). Each writer was then assigned particular units to write which were then to be submitted for internal feedback. During the project the writers met regularly – sometimes on a daily basis when close to submission deadlines – to review the progress of the writing and to provide feedback on each other's draft units. By January, 2003 the writers had their manuscripts completed for external review.

During the construction of the textbook the writers had to take into account a wide variety of questions surrounding pedagogical selection, cultural familiarity and practicality, as observed by Jolly and Bolitho (1997) regarding challenges facing materials developers. To cite two examples, in adopting the communicative language teaching approach the writers

decided not to promote the explicit teaching of individual sounds in English so as to ease the memory burden for students. In addition, the writers chose not to include many tasks with multiple-choice test items, opting instead to create space for communicative English activities to take place. The ongoing provincial and national examinations, however, typically included five test items on sounds and stress as virtually predefined by testing guidelines. Moreover, they had almost all of their test items in the form of multiple-choice questions (see, for instance, A. N. Nguyen, 2009, pp. 104-105 and Appendix A for samples of those test items). Although this discrepancy had the potential to trigger complaints about the 'inadequacy' of the book, the writers chose not to let the textbook be defined by exams because the textbook is to be based on the curriculum (which defines the use of communicative language teaching) and also it is hoped by the writers, who apparently believe in the necessity of the implementation of communicative language teaching, that the material as a State-sanctioned textbook will eventually lead the way in reforming the format of exams. With regard to this issue, Hall makes the reasonable observation that, as for textbook writers, "there are always constraints – the straitjacket of a centralized syllabus, the need for pupils to pass public examinations" (1995, p. 8), and this sentiment is elaborated in the statement by Tickoo (1995, p. 39): "It becomes necessary to satisfy different sets of criteria which, in some cases, do make contradictory demands."

To cite another example, a section of the textbook that turned out to be very difficult to work with was Language Focus. The aim of this section was to review the key grammar and vocabulary points of a unit, yet the difficulty lay in the extent to which the textbook itself should provide instruction on the grammar point. The anticipated problem was that users, in their particular learning situations, would vary in their needs and demands concerning the extent of explicit grammar teaching necessary. To quote Byrd (1994, p. 245), while in urban regions teaching grammar in a textbook might be condemned as "a useless, old-fashioned, noncommunicative waste of student time and energy", the chances were high that it would be

favoured and needed in rural or disadvantaged regions where students normally had to rely heavily on the textbooks for their grammar development. Undoubtedly, this issue of "measuring the value of the materials for particular learners in particular circumstances" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 9) and thereby adjusting the textbook to cater for a variety of students' needs, was a challenge for the textbook writers.

2.1.2.4 The revision

The external review was first done by the Textbook Examination Committee, comprised of teachers from high schools and lecturers from colleges and universities, especially teacher training institutions, all of whom were appointed by the Ministry of Education and Training. The committee met for five working days to provide comments on the textbook during February 2003. The writers then made corrections and adjustments based on the evaluators' feedback. Because any resistance to the proposed changes would have complicated the work, it was likely that the writers would have chosen to adjust the textbook as desired by the evaluators unless their proposed changes were clearly unreasonable. Many tasks and reading excerpts were changed at this stage following the evaluators' comments. The revised drafts were then returned to the Department of Secondary Education where the Textbook Examination Committee conducted a double check of the revisions. Subsequently, the writers had a further two weeks to make additional adjustments. Following this process the editors then worked towards finalising the drafts, which was completed by early March.

The final version was later typeset and limited copies were printed in April-May to be put before an 'opinion poll'. The poll involved asking selected high school teachers and academics for comments on the textbook, and this feedback was then handed to the editors who subsequently made the necessary adjustments to the textbook in consultation with the writers. Beginning September, 2003 the textbook was trialled in classrooms and the trialling teachers were also asked to provide feedback on the textbook. Regrettably, however, there was no consultation with the students, who were undoubtedly a key stakeholder group in

relation to the language teaching materials (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998, pp. 111-112). In addition, the revision at this stage tended to address the language mistakes of the textbook rather than the teachability of its tasks (on which the teacher feedback provided was minimal). Eventually, the school year 2006-2007 saw the national deployment of *English 10 – Intensive Programme*.

Due to changes in the government's master plan, however, the writers had to make unexpected changes to the textbook during the last stage of its development. In mid-2005, the new education law (to take effect from 2006) was enacted. The law retained the stipulation present in the previous law that, in Vietnam, only one textbook could be used for each year level in a school subject (Education Law of 2005, Article 29, Clause 3; Article 118, Clause 1, Point d). Yet, there were two different textbook drafts of supposedly equal level written by two different teams with the intention to create competition and to allow for the concurrence of multiple textbooks (M. T. Nguyen as cited in "'Monopolising' textbook creation", 2006, p. 89). Therefore, in accordance with the law, one of the textbooks would have to be withdrawn from the curriculum. The final selection would have been an extremely difficult decision to justify given the textbooks were perceived to be of similar quality, and the relationship with the writers would also have been adversely affected (Tu Anh, personal communication, July 3, 2009).

As a way to satisfactorily resolve the issue it was decided that one of the two textbooks was to be elevated to a higher level to avoid any legal infringement. It was argued that it was not the case that there were two different textbooks (of the same subject) for one year level; rather, the two textbooks were for two different levels in the one grade level. In other words, there were two different programmes for students of two different levels. The concurrent existence of two textbooks for two programmes was readily accepted because it was not unequivocally prohibited by law and it helped to avoid the dilemma noted above. Importantly, it also supported the *phan ban* (stream-based education) scheme to be

implemented (as reported in "'Monopolising' Textbook Creation", 2006, p. 89) in which students were encouraged to choose a number of school subjects as their areas of concentration and study the subjects intensively. With regard to English, for example, students who chose to study English as a core subject would study the higher level textbooks (called *Chuong trinh Nang cao*, "Intensive programme") whereas the other students would use the lower level textbooks (called *Chuong trinh Chuan*, "Regular Programme"). This meant that the terms "intensive programme" and "regular programme" were now being coined in relation to student subject choices.

Perceived to be at a slightly higher level, the textbook under evaluation was promoted for use in the intensive programme. As a result, the writers had to make certain modifications to make it markedly different from the other textbook at least in terms of language difficulty. Also, the curricula were modified so as to accommodate the two textbooks, and this explains why the curricula published in 2006 were quite different to the earlier versions.

2.1.3 Summary

There were four important factors shaping the creation of the *English 10 Intensive Programme* textbook under evaluation. First, the textbook had to fulfil the obligations of State-prescribed teaching material in the national education curriculum. This meant it was necessarily oriented to political and national aims while responding to the demands of teaching English to the young generation in an emerging economy. Second, because the textbook was written by an all-Vietnamese team – none of whom were formally trained in textbook writing or materials development – it would struggle to gain the trust of its users or members of the broader community. Third, prior to the textbook writing process there had been no research conducted by the curriculum designers or the textbook writers on the target users of the textbook, which had implications for the topics of interest to be included and the appropriateness of tasks. (This factor was arguably a serious mistake made during the textbook development that could have been avoided.) Fourth, the textbook's integrity and

coherence was weakened as it had to undergo abrupt changes in response to the changed master plan. All these factors then cast a shadow over the potential effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook.

Having outlined the details regarding the creation of the textbook, the following section will provide a profile of the context in which the textbook was deployed.

2.2 CONTEXT OF RECEPTION

This section will present the context in which the textbook under evaluation was received. The presentation will start with influences of the broad socio-economic and cultural situations before it describes the educational context. The term 'reception', which is adopted from Hasan (1989, pp. 102-103), refers to the contextual features shaping the implementation and thus, ultimately, the worth of the textbook under evaluation.

2.2.1 Socio-economic and cultural contexts

In this section the context in which the textbook was received is examined. Particular focus is given to the socio-economic transformations taking place when the textbook was deployed, as well as the persuasive cultural influences at that time. The educational context is treated separately in Section 2.2.2.

2.2.1.1 Socio-economic transformations

Up to the time the textbook innovation was initiated, EFL educational practices throughout Vietnam had been substantially transformed as the nation was increasing its integration into and its economic ties with the world community. Prior to the 1986 *doi moi* (renovation) policy, there was no practical need for learning the language, as communication with the West was minimal and the learning of English was generally regarded as nostalgia for an association with the enemies of the past (Wright, 2002, p. 235). With the enactment of the 1987 Foreign Investment Law, however, foreign investment from multinationals and assistance projects from international organisations made improving the Vietnamese people's foreign language skills one of the essential requirements "for Vietnam's successful

incorporation in the world economic market" (Wright, 2002, p. 226; 238). Blowing in with these winds of change was ELT expertise in the form of human resources, materials and connections with professional organisations such as the British Council, the United States Information Agency, and the Australia International Education Foundation. Simultaneously, hundreds of Vietnamese were sent abroad for TESOL study in an attempt to meet the anticipated rapidly increasing needs of English language education (Do, 1999). Shapiro (1995, pp. 75-76) does not overstate the point in remarking that *doi moi* revolutionised foreign languages training in Vietnam in terms of the availability of foreign teachers and materials, the upgrading of foreign language tests, and an increase in opportunities for academics to study abroad.

In addition, when the trade embargo was lifted from Vietnam and the nation joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asian Free Trade Area (AFTA), and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the demand for English competence became stronger. For instance, the ASEAN Charter, as noted by Kirkpatrick (2011, p. 214) "promotes a linguistic monopoly for English stating that 'the working language of ASEAN shall be English'". On the one hand, the cessation of the trade embargo in 1994 (Luong, 2003, p. 2) meant that communication with international companies and organisations increased. Moreover, the influx of these entities to set up offices in Vietnam encouraged the learning of English, the proficiency of which was normally required as a prerequisite in employment vacancy advertisements. On the other hand, as the language used by the business groups cited above is mostly English or Chinese (Wright, 2002, p. 239), the Vietnamese government became aware of the significance of promoting English language education. Economic success stories like that of Singapore, whose economic success was credited in part to its ESL education, was seen as a model example to emulate. By 1994, following the national survey of foreign language needs in 1993 (Do, 1999, p. 2), the government issued an unprecedented directive on the teaching of foreign languages (exclusively English in practice) to public

servants and administrators (T. G. Nguyen, 2006, p. 12; Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 422-TTG, 1994).

During the 1990s and into the 2000s the social movement towards English language acquisition continued to grow stronger. With the introduction of the new textbooks, followed by Vietnam's accession into the World Trade Organisation in 2007, there was even further impetus for English learning, not only in tertiary education institutions, but also in secondary and primary level classes. Indeed, propelled by the demand to integrate into the world economy and the view that English was the global language, EFL education became a matter of concern for every household in Vietnam (T. G. Nguyen, 2006; Vu, 2007).

2.2.1.2 Cultural influence

There are a number of contextual and cultural conditions shaping Vietnamese ELT education that may problematise the transferability of the communicative language teaching approach to the Vietnamese classroom, an inevitable problem that arises when Western knowledge, in the words of Pennycook (1989), "produced within a particular configuration of social, cultural, economic, political, and historical circumstances", is imposed in a non-Western context. First, like in most countries where the influence of Confucianism remains strong, ELT in Vietnam, particularly in secondary schools, "is generally thought of as a process of accumulating knowledge" (Phuoc 1999, as cited in T. H. A. Nguyen, 2002, p. 7). It is observed by Salomon and Vu (2007, p. 347) that the Confucian traditions together with current ideologies "share an insistence on the importance of assimilating a body of knowledge received in a few reference books". Accepted as the 'reference books' being referred to, textbooks are generally supposed to have an unquestioned role in transmitting to students what should be learned, as remarked by a teacher (N. H. Nguyen, 2008). This exalted status of textbooks, as will be further noted in Section 2.2.2.3, is backed up by current education law.

Second, strict observance of grammatical rules and an interest in the nuances of meaning of individual words is normally appreciated, possibly as a result of a millennium of learning Chinese Classics (Gregory, 1994, p. 45). As for English learning, this mentality is coupled with teachers' limited proficiency, leading to reluctance to teach the aural and oral skills in the classroom. As observed by Gregory (1994, p. 47), not many Vietnamese teachers really have "the confidence and authority to model language for the students" as do their native-speaker colleagues and thus tend to "defer to the authority of the textbook". An attempt to continuously communicate in English with students over a 45-minute period will not only be arduous, but may also put the teacher, who is "supposed to set a good example for others, especially his students" (Vuong, 1980, p. 78), at risk of damaging his or her reputation if the performance is not good enough. Many teachers therefore will normally refrain from taking the risk. Le and Barnard (2009, p. 24) observe: "When the new curriculum, which requires teachers to have reasonably good communicative competence in English, was first introduced, many teachers were not sufficiently competent to deliver the curriculum".

Third, Vietnamese students appear to be reluctant to take a trial and error approach to learning because of the general expectation that learners should demonstrate accuracy in using a foreign language. In reference to Vietnamese learners, Tomlinson and Bao (2004, p. 209), note: "Interview data also show that many students' extreme desire for correctness plays a part in making them feel inadequate and powerless in the classroom." This mindset may make students inhibited and, in the long run, impede their desire to practice communication skills. Another factor contributing to their reluctance is that proactive and energised attempts at English speaking practice tend to be viewed by peers as boasting. Vuong (1980, p. 73) observes: "Students usually did not volunteer the answers unless they were asked to do so as their cultural heritage taught them to be humble and such an act could be very well interpreted by others as showing off." This mentality, as observed by Pham (2007, p. 200), is one of the "cultural constraints characterised by beliefs about teacher and

student roles, and classroom relationships". Moreover, "negotiation of meaning in the Vietnamese classroom might occur more readily in response to a teacher's questions when students are allowed to call out ideas in chorus, rather than being asked to express themselves as individuals, in pairs, or small groups" (Pham, 2005, p. 8). Constrained by all this "communal mentality and fear of breaking norms" (Bao, 2007, p. 214), most Vietnamese students tend to be reticent in the class.

Fourth, student learning is in some ways defined by the traditions of 'a studying society' (CPV Central Executive Committee, 2001a, Section V; 1) that Vietnam is seeking to promote, as recently urged by the deputy prime minister (as cited in Ha Huong). Academic success is greatly valued as a demonstration both of Confucian traditions and the current ideologies (Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 347). It appears, however, that success is conventionally equated to exam scores and, ultimately, a degree (Vuong, 1980, p. 69). Also, the (English) exams that filter students into degree programmes, as noted in Section 2.1.2.3, are in the form of multiple-choice tests encouraging content memorisation and recognition rather than communicative competence as desired by the textbook (see Appendix A for samples of those test items). Indeed, Bock (2000, p. 25) reports: "Most students seem to be concerned with passing exams, most of which do not test for communicative competence."

Fifth, the Vietnamese seem to differ very much from Westerners in their thinking and in the way that they express themselves. Tran (1999, p. 3) notes that a major challenge facing Vietnamese students studying in Australia is that "Western society prefers evidence to be presented in a logical order with no digression, while Vietnamese people tend to form a circular argument structure". Also, there remain differences in small talk for socialisation that many students negatively transfer from their mother tongue, which may become a problem for Vietnamese learners when they communicate in English. For example:

> One's job is a conversation starter in Australia and questions are more about the nature of the work and how the person feels about the job. A more explicit attempt is often made in Vietnamese

conversation to find out about the person's status through questions about their job. This can result in miscommunication in what begins as a friendly chat (Wise, 1991, p. 446).

The generalisations above are not meant to depict Vietnamese learners as incapable of learning communicative English. Much has changed in the economy, science and technology in Vietnam, and in Vietnamese students themselves (H. C. Nguyen, et al., 2007, pp. 5-6). In particular, since the adoption of the market-oriented economy following *doi moi*, many more people are now learning English for practical purposes rather than just for fun or abstract benefits. Also, just like in any society, the young generation tends to disregard some traditions and take on new values. Because Vietnam is a country with a relatively young population (H. D. Pham & Nguyen, 1998, pp. 292-294; Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 346) as "more than half of Vietnamese have been born since 1975" (Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 358), meaning the oldest of this generation was 25 years of age by the time the creation of the new textbooks was incepted, this tendency becomes very likely. A recent study by Luu (2010, p. 71) suggests that now "Vietnamese learners are open to change". Indeed, a case study of a Vietnamese classroom lesson by Bao (2003, p. 188) reiterates that learner competence in the classroom should not be underestimated. Furthermore, the availability of the Internet, multimedia-aided learning materials, and books from foreign publishers has facilitated the capacity for students to have a variety of sources of language input and reference. "This youth, and especially the urban elite", observe Salomon and Vu (2007, p. 359), "also wants to 'belong to the world' via the Internet". No longer is it the case, as it was nearly two decades ago, that "the only reliable input that learners of English in Vietnam can get is from textbooks and the teachers" (X. T. Tran, 1991, p. 182).

2.2.1.3 Summary

The situation in which the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook was deployed was quite favourable for the teaching and learning of English. English was becoming a key tool for personal advancement and success, and English proficiency was a much needed attribute in a country that was integrating into the world community requiring personnel

capable of communicating in English. Nevertheless, as a result of cultural influences, there were challenges to the use of a textbook. Vietnamese learners appeared to be reliant on old practices that were not conducive to the new approach developed by the textbook. For example, being overly reliant on what textbooks offer, being absorbed in the discrete points of language, being too reserved to 'play' with language practice, and being too degree-oriented were practices that diverged from what the new textbook could offer.

2.2.2 Educational context

2.2.2.1 Vietnamese educational system

As this study is about a school textbook for use in Year 10, it is helpful to provide an overview of the Vietnamese education system. Figure 2.1 shows that Vietnamese mainstream general education includes three levels: primary education (Years 1-5); lower secondary education (Years 6-9); and upper secondary education (Years 10-12). Children start primary school education at six years of age. It is both free and compulsory given the national policy of primary education universalisation since 1991 (SarDesai, 2001; K. Tran & Nguyen, 2000, p. 225). Between the levels of education there are admission exams and/or selection processes which are designed to help with the placement of students into schools with different fees, reputations and locations. With regard to upper secondary education in particular, students are placed on the basis of their results in the lower secondary education graduation exams, their residence and, in many cases, their results from the Year 10 entry exams. Unlike in the past, students represent strictly homogenous groups in terms of age, 15 years of age when entering Year 10 as stipulated by the educational policy (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b, p. 7), and are aged 16 during their year of completion. In addition, pre-school education precedes mainstream schooling, which by turn, is followed by tertiary education. Alongside general education is technical and vocational education.

An understanding of the key institutional stakeholders in secondary education in Vietnam is also useful to appreciate the complexity of the country's educational context. As

the highest educational authority, the Ministry of Education and Training is mainly responsible for academic matters and has considerable influence on curriculum development and implementation, and national test administration. However, other fundamental issues such as the teaching personnel and the finances of high schools are mainly at the discretion of local authorities (National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, 1996, p. 1561; SarDesai, 2001). As shown in Figure 2.2, secondary schools funding comes from the provincial and municipal people's committees' budgets via the (local) department of education and training, which is itself under the control of the provincial authorities. In other words, the financial resources for operations of high schools are provided by the provincial authorities (Education Law of 2005, Article 4). Therefore, though not actually related to the writing of the textbooks, the provincial authorities played an influential role in the deployment of the materials, for they were the decision-makers for the budgets and organisers of such things as the training of teachers and the upgrading of facilities that were needed for the new curriculum (Government Directive 459/CP-KG, 2002, Point 2.đ; Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 14/2001/CT-TTg, 2001, pp. 3-4, Point 9).

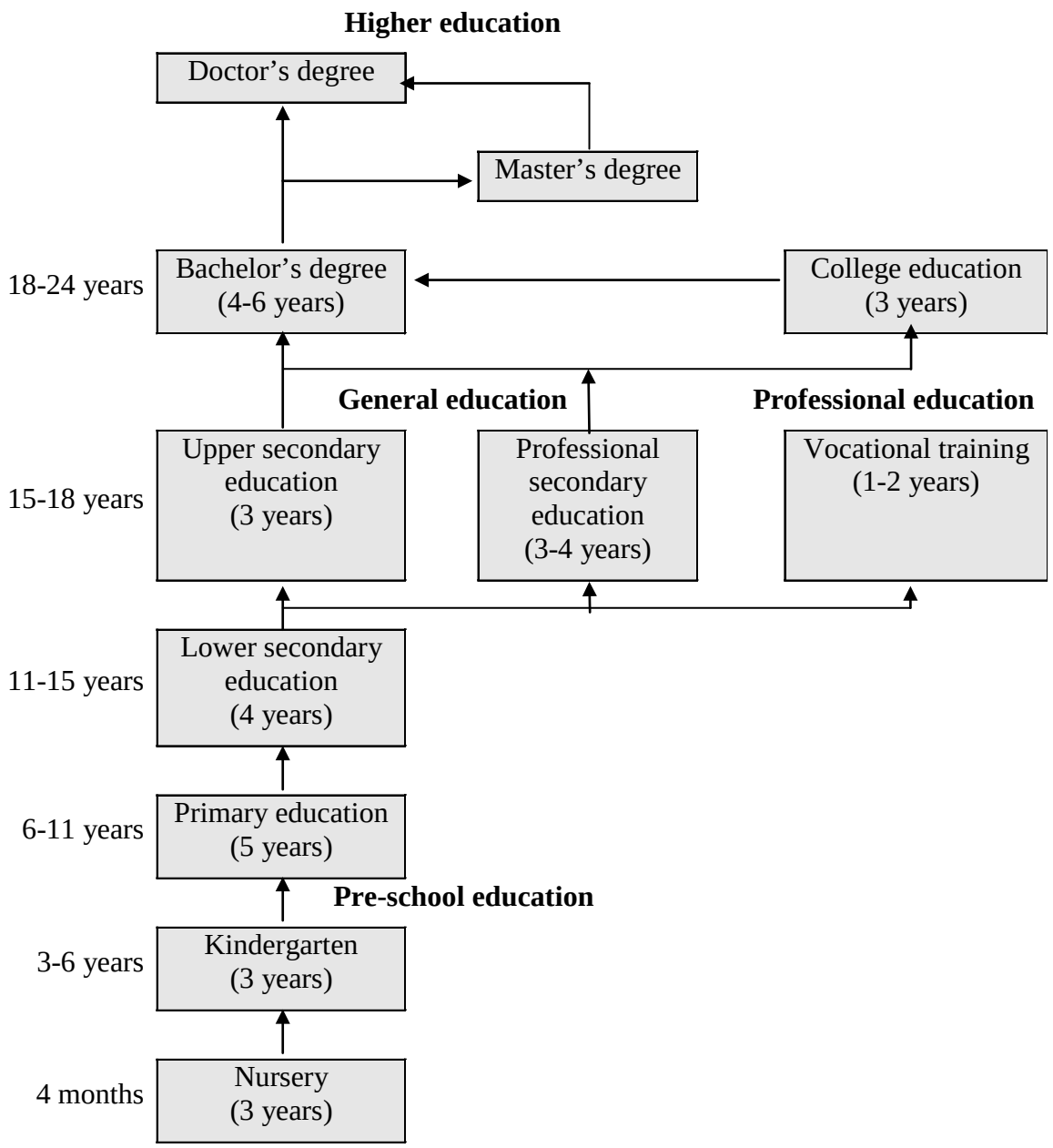


Figure 2.1. The Vietnamese educational system. Adapted from National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (1996, p. 60); L. Nguyen (2006); SarDesai (2001); and Tran and Nguyen (2000, pp. 228-229).

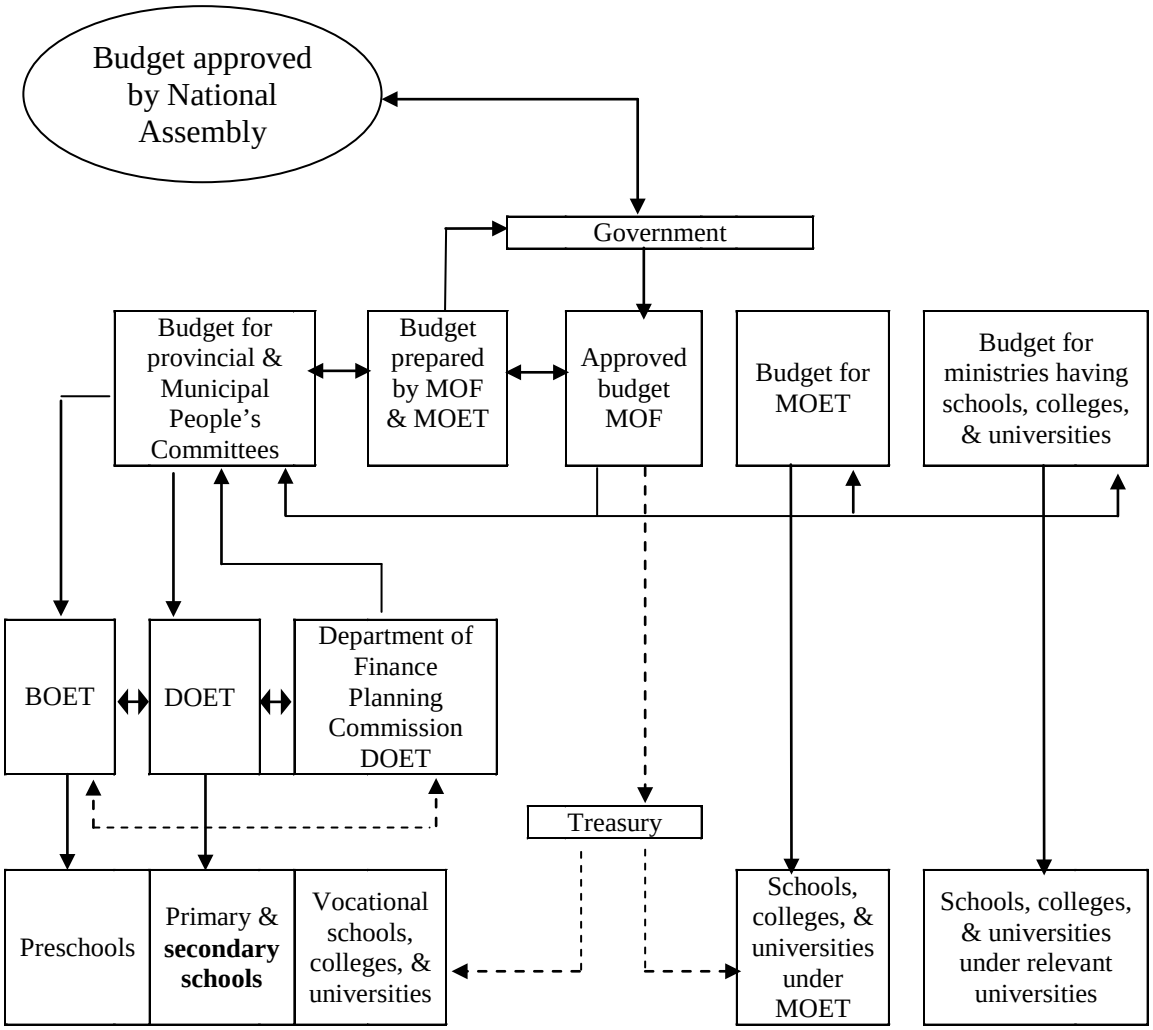


Figure 2.2. Flows of education funds in Vietnam. MOF: Ministry of Finance; MOET: Ministry of Education and Training; DOET: Department of Education and Training (provincial level); BOET: Bureau of Education and Training (district level). From Pham and Nguyen (1998, p. 333).

2.2.2.2 EFL education in Vietnam

As noted earlier in Section 2.2.1.1, the push for English language learning started to become very strong following the political, social, and economic changes that commenced in 1986. By 2003, English was the dominant foreign language in general education, accounting for 98.5% of total school students (Hoang, Nguyen, & Hoang, 2006, p. 17). Hill (as cited in Bruthiaux, 2008, p. 140) contends that "In Vietnam, English is now almost universally taught at secondary level." With regard to lower secondary education in particular – where many students would be users of the *English 10 Intensive Programme* textbook under evaluation – there was a dominance of English learners as indicated by the overwhelming percentage of English teachers (99.1%) in comparison to teachers of other foreign languages (L. Nguyen, as cited in T. M. H. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007, p. 164).

As a result of the drive by the Ministry of Education and Training, foreign languages (exclusively English in practice) have become a compulsory subject for Years 6-12 at lower and upper secondary education institutions since the school year 2006-2007 (H. C. Nguyen, 2007, p. 43). While there are a number of students in rural areas who have not studied English prior to upper secondary education, most students will have been learning English at school for four years by the time they reach Year 10, as English lessons start from Year 6, when the students are 11 years of age. This commencement age is slightly younger than the age for students in Japan, but is slightly older than the age for students in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea, and China (Nunan, 2003, p. 594). Importantly, many children in Vietnam, with good parental support, may start learning English in private classes at Year 1.

Though the required foreign languages in educational institutions are broadly defined as those that are "commonly used in international transactions" (Education Law of 2005, Article 7, Clause 3), English is assuming an exalted status among other foreign languages given that the language is the key to success in education, business and promotion, even in the public sector. Indeed, the motivation to learn English was further pushed by the

governmental Directive No. 422/TTg (Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 422-TTG, 1994) on strengthened education of foreign languages for public servants and administrators (T. G. Nguyen, 2006). In recent years, the government has begun to make EFL instruction compulsory from Year 3 primary education (T. M. H. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007, p. 170; as reported in 2009). Furthermore, it is proposed in the national project "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national educational system in 2008-2020" (see, for instance, Kieu Oanh, 2006; H. T. Nguyen, 2006), that apart from foreign language learning as a compulsory subject, students from Year 6 are allowed to choose and learn a second foreign language as an elective. In turn, this is regarded as a policy directive which is likely to further raise the number of English language learners.

Despite such changes in favour of English language education, there are several important constraints to note about the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam. First, there are two distinctive features in relation to the position of English in Vietnam. While for many young people it is a tool for advancement, it is not a 'must' for survival. As noted by Alptekin (in H. H. Pham, 2005, p. 6), English is used in Vietnam for "instrumental reasons such as professional contacts, academic studies, and commercial pursuits". Also, the vast majority of English learners share the same mother tongue, Vietnamese, making it difficult to insist on English use in the classroom. Despite the current existence of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, the Vietnamese account for 87% of the population (X. T. Nguyen, 1994, p. 230). Because students of various ethnic backgrounds are not mixed in the classroom, in most cases classmates share the same mother tongue. As observed by Pham (2005, p. 5), "in Vietnam, students learning English have no immediate need to use English in the classroom. They all share the same mother tongue".

Second, state-approved textbooks like *English 10 – Intensive Programme* are the only teaching materials on which schooling shall be based, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education and Training guidelines No. 9893/BGDDT-GDTrH, dated 6 September 2006 (H.

C. Nguyen, 2007, p. 43) and by law (Education Law of 2005, Article 29, Clause 3). However, despite the availability of two programmes, the textbook choice limitations make it impossible to cater to the different levels, needs and interests of the students and teachers in the different educational contexts across the country. As a result, there have been calls for permission to be given for the concurrent use of multiple textbooks, preferably those produced by other publishers apart from the State publisher, to form a pool of options from which the users can choose (Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 348). Politically, however, the authorities are not yet ready to grant a license for the official use of material created by 'outsiders'. Precaution, it seems, is a political necessity as the English language is a sensitive subject in Vietnam given, as noted by the deputy head of the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming (as cited in Kieu Oanh, 2006), the dislike of the language by some people who still associate it with a recent enemy.

Third, the teaching force and classroom conditions are apparently inadequate for the effective use of the new textbooks. Indeed, these issues are identified as problems to be urgently addressed for the implementation of educational innovation in Vietnam (Do, 2006, p. 9; as reported in Kieu Oanh, 2006; Le & Barnard, 2009, pp. 22-23). Regarding teachers in particular, according to a report by the Department of Upper Secondary Education on the training of foreign languages teachers, the situation was not particularly promising at the time of the introduction of the new textbooks:

> "The current English teaching force is composed of *teachers trained via a variety of sources* [emphasis added]. The employment or hire of these staff has been done in quite a rush and that has caused imbalance between teachers of English and those of other foreign languages, and, additionally, it has granted no guarantee of the quality of English teaching and learning". (as cited in H. T. Nguyen, 2006)

The italics are euphemistic references to teachers who have not received formal education in English, including possibly those from open universities, Russian teachers 'retrained' into English teachers, or teachers with a *cao dang* (junior college) degree being

upgraded to *dai hoc* (university), as noted by Hoang et al. (2006, p. 97). Indeed, according to H. C. Nguyen (2007, p. 45), the contemporary EFL teaching force was insufficient in number and uncertain in quality. Unfortunately, the teacher training needed for the use of textbooks was reportedly inadequate and perfunctory (see, for instance, Phan, 2009). Worse, even among the qualified teachers, teaching dedication is perhaps not always evident given the uncompetitive official pay and the availability of higher income earning jobs outside school. Indeed, there is not yet a scheme to fully involve the teaching staff with attractive or at least satisfactory pay (Duiker, 1995, p. 189; Hoang, as cited in Thanh Ha, 2009).

2.2.2.3 Classroom usage of the textbook

The classroom usage of *English 10 – Intensive Programme*, just like that of the other textbooks, is defined by the curricular distribution guidelines promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training (see, for instance, MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines). Table 2.1 shows that the English intensive programme course for Year 10 students is comprised of 140 45-minute periods, of which 93.9% is for actual teaching and 6.1% for administration and review of tests and exams. Each of the 16 units of the textbook is given seven periods and each of the four consolidation lessons after every two units is allocated two periods. While teachers may swap the sections of the books, textbook-based instruction is enforced (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b, p. 8). Indeed, the Ministry of Education and Training issued a directive to local services of education and training specifying the textbooks that are required be used in local schools (see, for instance, Ministerial Directive Document 6631/BGDĐT-GDTrH, 2008). As for underprivileged areas, however, provincial departments of education and training, and even teachers, may customise the textbook (MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines, p. 7; Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 20). On a weekly basis, English is taught for four periods (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006a, p. 7), the largest time allocation for a subject, equal to that of Vietnamese. The textbook is to be covered within 37 weeks of actual teaching during the

academic year starting in September of one year and ending in May of the next. In addition, school principals may want to add several periods with the *chu de tu chon bam sat* (elective curriculum-based lessons) teaching scheme that requires the teacher "to review, systematise, and reinforce the knowledge and skills studied, but not to present new knowledge" (MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines, p. 3).

In practice, those curricular regulations are to be strictly observed because national exam questions are based on the textbooks and this observance is part of the teacher performance appraisal scheme. The textbook therefore becomes the focal point of concern and textbook-based teaching becomes dominant. However, this "power-coercive" model (Chin 1967 as cited in Le & Barnard, 2009, p. 20) may unwittingly and gradually turn classroom lessons into an exercise in teaching the textbook, not the students, which, as pointed out by Savova (2009), is a significant issue of concern in ESOL education.

It should be noted that the language of instruction in the English classroom is yet to be specified by any official policy. In the meantime, English is presumed to be used as much as possible by the teacher and students in their lessons whereas Vietnamese could also be used if needed. Legally speaking, if the Education Law is referred to, Vietnamese is specified as "the official language to be used in schools and other educational institutions". It seems that a government policy enforcing the use of English in the English lessons would arguably play a significant role in promoting the use of English on the part the teacher and students.

Table 2.1

MOET's Guidelines on Curricular Distribution for English 10 – Intensive Programme, *2008-2009*

	Unit	Content	No. of periods
SEMESTER 1		Study skills/ assessment	1
	1	School Talks	7
	2	People's Background	7
		Test & review of test	2
	3	Daily Activities	7
	4	Special Education and Technology	7
		Consolidation 1	2
		Test & review of test	2
	5	Technology	7
	6	School Outdoor Activities	7
		Test & review of test	2
	7	The Mass Media	7
	8	Life in the Community	7
		Consolidation 2	2
		Review and end-of-semester 1 exam	5
SEMESTER 2	9	Undersea World	7
	10	Conservation	7
		Test & review of test	2
	11	National Parks	7
	12	Music	7
		Consolidation 3	2
		Test & review of test	2
	13	Theater and Movies	7
	14	The World Cup	7
		Test & review of test	2
	15	The Pacific Rim	7
	16	Historical Places	7
		Consolidation 4	2
		Review and end-of-semester 2 exam	2
		TOTAL	140

From MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines (pp. 13-14)

2.2.2.4 Summary

In conjunction with the increasingly favourable attitude in Vietnamese society towards learning the English language, the teaching of English at schools in the country has undergone dramatic changes, at least in terms of the overwhelming number of students learning the language. The importance of English education has been demonstrated through government-issued policies that encouraged officials and school children to learn the English language. However, the effectiveness of the textbook which has been deployed to facilitate the language learning process is subject to many challenges. These include a number of contextual factors relating to the position of English in Vietnamese society, the insistence on State-prescribed textbooks only to facilitate the language learning process, and inadequate teaching and classroom capacity. The first factor refers to the belief that it is not imperative for Vietnamese students to be able to communicate in English for their everyday language needs. In turn, the second factor implies that English language learning is confined to what is available in the State's textbooks, regardless of the differences in the needs, interests and learning styles of students. Moreover, it draws attention to the way in which the primary focus is on the teaching materials rather than the learners. Finally, the third challenge raises the question of the extent to which the textbook is implementable in the classroom.

2.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an insight into the creation and reception contexts of *English 10 – Intensive Programme.* It was revealed that there was great potential for the textbook to be well received in schools because the social conditions were generally favourable for the teaching and learning of English. However, there also existed many unfavourable aspects to the textbook creation and reception that undermined the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook. Chief among these unfavourable circumstances were the way in which the textbook's development and implementation was conducted, as well as the cultural influences and specific social and educational contexts in which the textbook was

deployed. What this chapter has shown is that the perceived credibility and relevance of the textbook was adversely impacted by these factors, and that they were subsequently aggravated by the poor classroom conditions in which the textbook was to be used.

Having provided an outline of the creation and reception contexts of the textbook, the following chapter will provide a review of the literature concerned with the evaluation of language learning materials.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 2 we gained an understanding of the contexts of creation and reception of the *Intensive English Programme* textbook used in contemporary Vietnamese high schools. Now we turn our attention in Chapter 3 to a review of the literature on language learning materials in general and textbook evaluation in particular. Following a working definition of learning materials evaluation, the first section examines the dimensions by which learning materials can be evaluated and then discusses the types of evaluation that can be done. In the second section the characteristics that establish textbooks as a special category of learning materials are explored, and it is subsequently argued that textbook evaluation should be approached from multiple dimensions. The third section of the chapter reviews the evaluations of EFL learning materials and the research 'niche' for this study is established. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the key points.

3.1 LANGUAGE MATERIALS EVALUATION

3.1.1 What is materials evaluation?

According to Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, p. 1), "materials evaluation involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials by making judgments about the effect of the materials on *the people using them* [emphasis added]". This definition implies that not only should the value of the materials under evaluation be measured, but, as suggested by Tomlinson (2003c, p. 16), the evaluation should take into account "the people who come into contact with them".

First and foremost, "the people who come into contact with them" are principally their direct users (or "school inhabitants" (Werner & Rothe, 1979, p. 3)) such as teachers and students. Regarding the significance of teachers, Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992, p. 25) state: "It is the teacher, rather than the 'tester' or the evaluation 'expert', who has the most

information about specific classroom contexts". Concerning students, they equally deserve being consulted for their opinions about the materials they are using (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998, p. 112), for they are the primary 'clients' of the materials consumed. In practice, students, whose voices are even less audible than teachers', are likely to have their wants and true needs ignored. Therefore, what is important is that the evaluation of materials be informed by at least these two key groups of users, without whom the researcher as an outside evaluator would find it difficult to understand fully the teaching and learning contexts. "The evaluation of a language learning program, or the materials used to teach it," maintains Low (as cited in Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 34), "involves more viewpoints than that of the 'independent' outside observer".

It should be noted that those involved in making judgments about the impact of materials are not limited to teachers and students but also include a wide variety of stakeholders such as the government, funding authorities, policy-makers, educational bureaucrats, and even competitors (see Kiely & Rea-Dickins 2005, p. 202-203). However, any attempt to embrace the viewpoints of as many stakeholders as possible should be followed with caution because, as, noted by Weiss (1986, p.144), "[it] will not ensure that appropriate relevant information is collected nor increase the use of evaluation results".

In addition, the contexts of use of the materials need to be taken into consideration. It is suggested that materials development should take into consideration "local criteria" that "relate to the actual or potential environment of use" (Toml,inson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 9). It is perhaps for this reason that, according to Bao (2003, p. 170), "scholarly concern has recently begun to highlight the need to bring materials closer to local cultures", and that "materials localisation" was emerging as a term within ELT circles. While investigating the textbook evaluation schemes of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Riazi (2003, p. 66) suggests that towards the end of the second millennium the major question in evaluating and selecting materials is: "To what extent are the materials sensitive to the situation?". As presented in the

following sections, learning materials evaluation is seen not simply as an evaluation of the materials concerned, but rather as a consideration of those materials in relation to their context of use.

Here it is worth noting the distinction between *materials evaluation* and *materials analysis*. The primary concern of materials analysis is with what the materials under consideration have to offer rather than how they are actually used in a particular setting and what effects the use of the materials creates, though the results from the analysis may form the basis for the evaluation of the materials. The two undertakings are differentiated by Littlejohn (1998, p. 191): "Analysing materials, it must be recognised, is quite a different matter from analysing 'materials-in-action'".

3.1.2 Dimensions of materials evaluation

A review of the relevant literature indicates that there are generally two dimensions on which materials evaluation can be undertaken. According to Littlejohn (1998, p. 204), they include the analysis of the materials concerned and the analysis of their target situation of use as shown in Figure 3-1. On the one hand, the materials concerned are evaluated in reference to a set of criteria deemed relevant to determine their *theoretical* worth. The results will provide information about (1) the nature of the materials, (2) what they require from the users, and (3) their implications. On the other hand, the evaluation of materials is done through an analysis of the target situation of use to determine their *empirical* worth. This analysis will allow insights into (1) the classroom, (2) the course (including proposed aims, content, methodology, and evaluation), and, importantly, (3) the teachers and students. The results will then be matched to see how appropriate the materials actually are given the favourable and unfavourable conditions of the context of use. These two dimensions are closely related to the evaluations of, respectively, "materials-as-workplan" and "materials-in-process", in Breen's three-phase materials evaluation model (as cited in Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 30; 2001, p. 256).

Prior to and following from Littlejohn, there are other authors who propose somewhat different materials evaluation frameworks. The differences, as observed by Riazi (2003, pp. 65-66), are partly due to "the swings of linguistic fashion" and the extent to which for teacher evaluators the frameworks are "practical and handy for teachers". For example, Grant (1989, pp. 119-128) proposes three stages of materials evaluation: initial evaluation; detailed evaluation; and in-use evaluation. Whereas initial evaluation is to filter out obviously unsuitable materials, detailed evaluation seeks to learn whether the short-listed materials are most likely to suit students, the teacher and the syllabus, and in-use evaluation is an inquiry to see whether the materials work in the classroom. The first and the second stages are what Littlejohn calls 'materials analysis'. Regarding the evaluation of Vietnamese textbooks, Nguyen and Crabbe (1999), taking the involvement of users as the defining criterion, suggest that materials can be analysed on three levels: materials as a set of potential learning opportunities; materials in use by the individual; and materials in use by a group of learners under the leadership of a teacher. For the first level, the analysis seeks to know what is offered to, and required of, the users by the materials. For the second level, the interest is directed to the question how an individual user of the books "processes materials, remembers vocabulary, absorbs patterns…" (Nguyen & Crabbe, 1999, p. 6). For the third level, the analysis serves to see how the teacher as a classroom manager and as a leader in learning makes learning with the materials happen. While the first and the second levels of analysis are again quite similar to Littlejohn's "materials analysis", the third level appears to neglect the contextual factors, other than the teacher, that may well affect the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook. Moreover, if the item being evaluated is a textbook, which is normally not intended as self-study material, the second level analysis does not appear likely to bring about meaningful results.

Despite different points or degrees of emphasis, materials analysis frameworks are essentially concerned with the predictive/theoretical worth and the empirical worth of the

materials. Regarding the predictive/theoretical worth, the analysis of materials is initially to be undertaken with an examination of the presupposed nature of language learning, and then specifically in relation to the aims and objectives on which the materials were based (Hutchinson, 1987, pp. 37-38). According to Tomlinson (1999, as cited in Tomlinson 2003c, p. 16), this analysis of materials "asks questions about what the materials contain, what they aim to achieve, and what they ask learners to do". In other words, while the first question is interested in the input available in the materials, the second question is oriented to the intended output, and the third question is focussed on the possible learning processes in between. This analysis can be used for "internal evaluation of the materials" (McDonough & Shaw, 2003, p. 59), which is expected "to see how far the materials in question match up to what the author claims, as well as to the aims and objectives of a *given* teaching program". The results of the analysis then provide insight into the issues under consideration such as "how well they reflect the principles by which they have been written" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 29).

Analysis of target situation of use
- The cultural context
- The institution
- The course (proposed aims, content, methodology, & means of evaluation)
- The teachers
- The learners

Materials analysis
From *analysis:*
1. What is their explicit nature?
2. What is required of users?
3. What is implied by their use?

To *description*
Aspects of design
Aspects of publication

Match & evaluation
How appropriate are the aspects of design and the aspects of publication to the target situation of use?

Figure 3.1. Framework for materials analysis and evaluation. Adapted from Littlejohn (1998, p. 204).

However, the ultimate question is not whether textbook materials are rated as inadequate or excellent themselves; what counts is whether they are suitable as coursebooks in relation to a specific population of users in particular circumstances. Roberts (1996, p. 382) emphasises; "Evaluation is directed not so much towards the selection of 'good' materials as measured by some absolute standard, but of *appropriate* ones." It follows that the findings of the first analysis are to be analysed in reference to the context in which the materials are used to determine the empirical worth. "Materials evaluation", states Hutchinson (1987, p. 41), "is essentially a matching process in which the needs and assumptions of a particular teaching-learning context are matched to available solutions". The evaluator is urged to refrain from using criteria for evaluation of textbooks until requirements in a specific teaching situation have been specified (Hasan & Esmat, 2002, p. 3). Hence, the guide on choosing ELT materials provided by Breen and Candlin (1987, pp. 13-28) not only lists questions as to the *usefulness* of materials by themselves (i.e., theoretical worth), but also suggests "criteria for the choice and use of materials in ways which are sensitive to classroom language learning" (i.e., empirical worth). Likewise, regarding coursebooks evaluation in particular, Cunningsworth (1995, pp. 15-17) poses questions which are concerned with matching the aims and objectives of the language programme with the learners' needs, learning conditions and learning purposes, both in the present as well as in the future.

3.1.3 Types of materials evaluation

Materials evaluation can be classified according to the time and the purpose of the evaluation. Where time is the principal criterion, pre-, whilst-, and post-use evaluations may be considered; whereas for purpose as the principal criterion, there are three evaluation categories: summative, formative, and illuminative.

Ellis (1998, pp. 220-222) and Cunningsworth (1995, p. 14) distinguish *before*- from *after*-programme evaluation. According to these scholars, before-evaluation uses a set of criteria to decide whether or not to adopt, and, if needed, to adapt certain material, whereas

after-use evaluation aims to see whether the materials work or not given the experience of using the materials by a certain point of time. Because of this, before- and after-program evaluations are also respectively called predictive and retrospective evaluation (Ellis, 1997). In reference to the time during which the use of materials is in progress, there is whilst-use evaluation (Cunningsworth, 1995; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). While pre-use evaluation is undertaken to assess the potential of the learning material, and post-use evaluation is normally undertaken to estimate the worth of the materials at a significant end point in its use, whilst-use evaluation "involves measuring the value of materials whilst using them or whilst observing them being used" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 4).

Of the three types of evaluation, pre-use evaluation, being predictive, is likely to be more subjective and less reliable than whilst-use evaluation (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 4). No matter whether it is, in the words of Tomlinson (2003c, p. 23) 'context-free', 'context-influenced' or 'context-dependent', the evaluator of pre-use evaluation is detached from the context of use. Regarding 'context-free' evaluation in particular, it is arguably an 'armchair' application of criteria to sets of materials (Roberts, 1996, p. 377). Therefore, pre-use evaluation cannot be a major part of an evaluation that aims to come up with evidence-based conclusions regarding the use of learning materials, although it may provide helpful indications as to the worth of the materials. Regarding post-use evaluation, it is difficult to conduct such an evaluation on a school textbook whose actual effects on the users are not readily distinguishable from those of other factors shaping the usage of the textbook. "It will be very difficult", warns Tomlinson (2003c, p. 26), "to separate such variables as teacher effectiveness, parental support, language exposure outside the classroom, and intrinsic motivation". Furthermore, post-use evaluation is more for accountability purposes.

Meanwhile, whilst-use evaluation allows the evaluator to learn how the materials are actually used in a particular classroom and to what apparent effect, and thus best serves self-development purposes. In addition, it is possibly more within the capacity of the researcher,

who is undertaking the research project within a time frame for an academic degree. Furthermore, the category of whilst-use evaluation proves to be a reasonable choice when the material under study has not reached a critical end point of use. It should be admitted, however, that this evaluation approach is "limited to measuring what is observable" and "cannot claim to measure what is happening in the learners' brain" (Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 24), an interesting yet challenging research issue that, from a different perspective, is raised by Pingel (2009, p. 67), who encourages textbook research to address "the connotations which a text may evoke in the student's mind".

As previously stated, where 'purpose' is the categorising criterion, the three evaluation options are formative, summative, and illuminative. Finch and Crunkilton distinguish the two first categories as follows:

Formative evaluation is used to improve materials while they are being formulated and developed… typically conducted by someone such as a curriculum developer who is familiar with the materials and/or worked closely with them. *Summative evaluation,* on the other hand, involves the examination of a completed item to determine its impact on the potential consumer. (1989, p. 288)

Formative evaluation therefore typically takes place in the stages of materials creation; whereas summative evaluation is nearer to the end, typically in stages of reporting, for instance, the useability of the materials in question. When aiming to discover the experiences of insiders, illuminative evaluation sheds light onto the intricacies of the use of materials that could have been missed by the other two evaluation types. From the perspective of programme evaluation, illuminative evaluation is concerned with the issue of "how different aspects of the program work or are being implemented" (Richards, 2001a, p. 289). Methodologically, illuminative evaluation is more about "description and interpretation than measurement and prediction" (Parlett & Hamilton, as cited in Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005, p. 32). Indeed, according to Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1992, p. 26), illuminative evaluation is

“definitely not concerned with measurement” and its focus is “more on the process and less on the product”

In light of the three types of evaluation above, there are three principal reasons for evaluation to be undertaken: (1) accountability; (2) curriculum development and betterment; and (3) self-development (of teachers and other language teaching professionals, Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 2001, p. 253). Accountability-oriented evaluation is essentially summative as it tries to determine “whether there has been value for money” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 24). It implies cost-effectiveness and includes both contractual accountability and professional accountability (Weir & Roberts, 1994, p. 4). Methodologically, it uses predominantly statistical instruments and analysis techniques (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, pp. 24; 56-58). In contrast, evaluations with curriculum development betterment as well as self-development purposes are both development-oriented. Such evaluations are essentially formative and/or illuminative, and they “may be largely descriptive and qualitative, and need not entail tests, measurements and inferences about curriculum quality from statistical data” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, pp. 25; 58-66). The evaluation takes into account the environment of the classroom in relation to “the social organization of the classroom, the textbooks, the mode(s) of teacher presentation, and the resources available to the teacher” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 27).

From a textbook creator’s perspective taking self-development as a primary purpose, illuminative evaluation appears to be the most appropriate materials evaluation type for research. This is because the evaluation seeks to explore the actual use of materials in particular situations and the contextual factors, universal or unique, shaping and defining their usage. This approach is quite compatible with the whilst-use evaluation orientation as the primary area of concern for both is not with measurement, but with seeking evidence for, and providing insights into, the actual usage of materials. Alternatively, formative evaluation is a more appropriate choice for evaluations done while the materials are still in the stages of

development. Lastly, the summative evaluation type appears to provide relevant results once the materials have completed their life cycle of use and/or for accountability purposes.

If an illuminative whilst-use evaluation approach is adopted, classroom observation will arguably be an effective and powerful tool as it helps to bring about the strongest evidence for evaluative conclusions of materials' worth. This is because it is through lessons in which the textbook under evaluation is used that the extent to which the potential of the textbook is demonstrated. Being "the crucible" (Allwright & Bailey, 1994, p. 18), the classroom is where, in the words of Opuku-Amankwa (2010, p. 315), "the challenges posed by 'classroom ecology' (Bloch, 2002)" are empirically revealed. Emphatically, the use of classroom observation in materials evaluation have produced insights into the classroom dynamics as shown by Park (2010) and Pryor (2010). It is classroom 'test-runs' that have pointed out, as remarked by Harwood (2010, p. 8), how many materials have been (could be) modified. Concerning materials evaluation, unfortunately, there is so far "little reference to the role that materials play in the process" and as a result, there appears to be a strong demand for empirical investigation (Tomlinson (2010a, p. 1), which could be undertaken by classroom observation.

3.1.4 Summary

There are two dimensions by which teaching materials can be evaluated: in terms of what the materials have to offer in relation to what they claim to offer; and the material's relevance to the users' needs, wants and circumstances. It is important that the central role of students and teachers as end users in relation to the appropriateness of the materials be prioritised in evaluation undertakings. Also, an evaluation can be done prior, during, or following the use of the materials with formative, summative or illuminative orientations, or with accountability- or development-oriented purposes. We have seen that the whilst-use evaluation seems to be suitable for a study that is interested in how a recently deployed textbook is operationalised in the classroom. Also, an evaluation that is principally

illuminative is in accord with a thesis undertaken at least partly for self-development purposes. Lastly, it is suggested that classroom observation is a powerful yet so far under-utilised tool to produce empirical results for materials evaluation.

3.2 TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

3.2.1 Textbooks as a special category of materials

Because textbooks are just one type of learning material, textbook evaluation needs to take into account their distinctive characteristics. First, according to Farrell (2003, p. 2553), what makes textbooks different from other learning materials is that they are "not the product of the creativity and imagination of individual authors", but they abide specifications set by whatever authorities develop the standard curriculum for a system of schools. It follows that there are curriculum-based constraints for the authors during the creation of textbooks, as well as organisational factors that shape the textbooks and their usage due to there being many stakeholders involved. Second, noted by Farrell (2003, p. 2553), in the context of a poor nation, the textbook is the primary, or the only, carrier of the set curriculum. In these circumstances, there is pressure for the textbook to meet the expectations and needs of users of a wide variety of levels and learning conditions. This apparent primacy of textbooks is likely to be further reinforced if the political and socio-cultural atmosphere favours textbook-based education. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it should be acknowledged that when it comes to language teaching materials, aims other than language education are often expected of textbooks "if it were of concern that language teaching materials should contribute through their content to general and moral education" (Roberts, 1996, p. 382). In this situation, textbooks assume multiple roles.

The issues relevant to the various types of textbook characterisations need to be considered when evaluating Vietnamese textbooks. As noted in Chapter 2, the creation and use of textbooks in Vietnam was initiated by the political party in power and was carried out by the government institutions that would define what the textbooks were to contain and what

agendas they were to serve. In this context, textbooks were not only to be the learning tool underpinning the teaching of knowledge, they were also to reinforce patriotic and political values (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006, p. 5; Education Law of 2005, Article 27, Clause 1; Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 14/2001/CT-TTg, 2001, Directive 2). Being "one of the most important educational inputs" (Altbach 1991 in Pingel, 2009, p. 7), textbooks are automatically required to fulfill these objectives. It is emphatically stated in educational directives that the aims of Vietnamese education are not only those of knowledge teaching, but also human education and vocational training (*day chu, day nguoi va day nghe*), as reiterated recently by a high-profile educational official (as cited in Chuc Thanh, 2011). Notably, in the context of secondary education "human education" is to be interpreted to include "building up the character of *Vietnamese socialist people* [emphasis added]" (Education Law of 2005, Article 27, Clause 1). These expectations are not uncommon as "in addition to transmitting knowledge", observes Schissler (1990, as cited in Pingel, 2009, p. 7), "textbooks also seek to anchor the political and social norms of a society". Furthermore, it should be noted that in Vietnamese education, textbooks are monopolised and controlled by the State, and that a variety of organisations and agencies are involved in the creation and deployment of a textbook. In many cases, the (un)favourable conditions provided by those stakeholders (other than the teachers and students) for the textbook development, deployment and implementation can have a significant impact on textbook usage. In particular, the voices from those in power are influential and, unfortunately, if they see the textbook innovation as "socially pollutive" as was the case with an Indonesian classroom methodology innovation project (Tomlinson, 1990, p. 33), or maybe even worse, politically incorrect, the textbooks will have to be altered and remedied. "To say that language teaching is in some sense political would seem uncontroversial", argues Pennycook (1989, p. 590), "since it is clear that many decisions about what gets taught, to whom, how, when, and where, are made at high levels of the political hierarchy". Naturally, this political

influence should be understood in a broad sense, referring to implicit impact that is rooted, for instance, in the textbook creation and deployment processes and even the classroom setting. That being the case, as for textbooks, Sheldon remarks (1988, p. 237), there is not only professional and financial but also "political investment". Indeed, textbooks are bound within a governmental system and are driven by "the pedagogic, political, and sociological forces of the times" (Hidalgo, Hall, & Jacobs, 1995, p. iii), as indicated in a recount of the textbook writing experience in India.

3.2.2 Textbook evaluation

It follows that textbook evaluation as a process of "matching needs to available solutions" (Hutchinson & Walters, 1987, p. 97) entails giving consideration to the appropriateness of the textbooks, not only in relation to their users within their specific circumstances, but also in relation to the broader contextual issues relevant to their creation and reception. 'Needs' and 'available solutions' may be considered in reference to the students and teachers, as well as other stakeholders in the textbook development that might have influenced the textbooks' creation and usage. According to Richards (2001b, p. 15), the factors that should be considered in textbook evaluation include those related to the programme, teacher, learner, content and pedagogy. The factors relating to the teacher, the learner, the content and the pedagogy of textbooks are quite obvious issues as, like most learning materials, textbooks have teachers and learners as their users who interact with the content and organise the books as pedagogic devices (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 192). Apart from those factors, given the close relationship between materials and programme factors, what deserves at least equally serious attention are the factors relating to, and shaping, the programme in which the textbooks are created, deployed and operationalised. Figure 3.2 shows the position of materials evaluation in relation to programme evaluation.

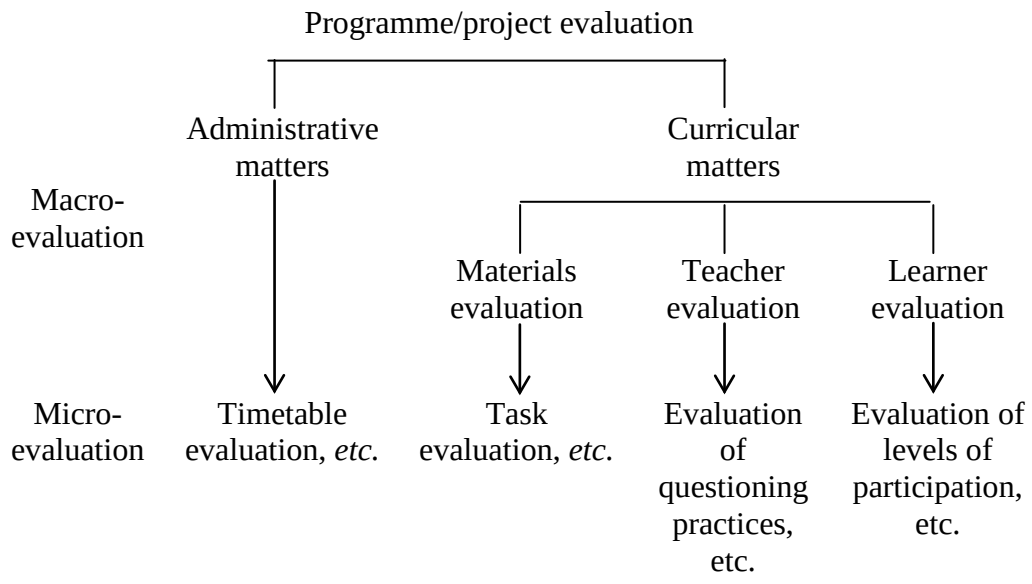


Figure 3.2. Macro- and micro-evaluation in language teaching. From Ellis (1998, p. 219).

According to Figure 3.2, materials evaluation, like teacher evaluation and learner evaluation, constitutes part of evaluation of curricular matters, and accordingly is part of programme evaluation. From a broad perspective, it relates not only to the consideration of the goals of the programme in which the materials are being used (Richards, 2001b, p. 15), but also the contextual factors affecting their effectiveness and appropriateness. Unlike other types of materials, textbooks arguably 'become' textbooks only when they are officially approved and used in a programme. Moreover, as noted earlier, this transformation involves other stakeholders in addition to teachers, students and materials developers, such as textbook innovation organisers, and entails the coordination of the agendas of all stakeholders concerned. Furthermore, a comprehensive evaluation of a textbook is one which takes into account the whole context of the textbook creation, deployment and use. Tomlinson's and Masuhara's "local criteria" (2004, p. 9) for materials development and evaluation can be extended to cover not only those factors pertaining to the textbooks' value "for particular

learners in particular circumstances" (ibid.), but also the features of the three contexts just mentioned.

In search of such a framework for textbook evaluation, it is noted that what Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005) propose for programme evaluation may also meet the interests and areas of concern of textbook evaluation. According to these scholars, programme evaluations can be undertaken by three complementary approaches: the ends-means approach; the situational approach; and the critical approach. The ends-means approach is quite traditional as it compares the desired versus actual ends and means of the programme concerned. The situational approach takes into consideration the views of those involved in the programme. It is therefore a responsive evaluation in nature whereby "different value-perspectives of the people at hand are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program" (Stake, 1991, pp. 275-276). As a result of the evaluation being undertaken in this way, the relevance and meaningfulness of the programme (or the lack of it) to the users is thereby revealed. The 'voice' of the users of the learning materials is respected, and the primary interest of the evaluation is directed towards the extent to which textbooks can meet their needs and interests, thereby highlighting the importance of what Tomlinson (2003a, 2003b) refers to as 'humanising the coursebook'. In some ways, the ends-means approach and the situational approach are rather similar to the two dimensions of materials evaluation discussed in the previous section.

Nevertheless, the two approaches alone, according to Werner and Aoki, are unable to uncover the underlying beliefs and intentions of the programme. It follows, therefore, that a critical evaluation is also needed that looks beyond the specific context of use in order to identify other factors affecting the programme's appropriateness that are not readily visible. In order to evaluate a programme critically, the evaluator is urged to "be self-reflective and aware of the fundamental beliefs which inform everyday decision making in classrooms" and reflect "upon the implications of these beliefs and interests" (Werner, 1984, p. 12). This

approach appears to be in line with developments in textbook analysis as “the methods of textbook research have evolved so as to meet the needs of different analytical purposes”, including “identifying not only the obvious content coverage and didactical approaches” but also “uncovering the hidden curriculum” or “the underlying assumptions” (Pingel, 2009, p. 67). It is perhaps for this reason that critical approaches to TESOL call for “attempts to connect the microrelations of TESOL – classrooms, teaching approaches, interactions – with broader social and political relations” (Pennycook, 1999, p. 331). In addition, the approach seems to be a legitimate appeal for the evaluator’s reflection, which is now extended to refer not only to the theories of learning and teaching (Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 18; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, pp. 1-3), but also to the broader contextual conditions of education. Thus, when this approach is undertaken there is another dimension to textbook evaluation that can yield research results which would not have been obtained through the other two approaches (i.e., ends-means and situational evaluation approaches).

Indeed, it is perceived that this three-pronged evaluation framework will enable the present study to not only evaluate the textbook (*English 10 – Intensive Programme*) according to the virtues of the textbook on its own (theoretical worth) and in relation to its contexts of use (empirical worth), but also to reveal the underlying reasons why the textbook is an (in)effective or (in)appropriate coursebook in light of the critical evaluations of the contextual forces collectively affecting the textbook and its usage. The research results collated from these three dimensions of evaluation will give a more comprehensive account of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook. Importantly, through the use of this framework the researcher’s role as a contributing writer during the textbook’s creation can be used to an advantage. Furthermore, combining the three complementary evaluation approaches will, as Parlett and Hamilton (as cited in Jacobs, 2000, p. 271), and Jacobs (Jacobs, 2000, p. 271) suggest, “throw light on a common problem… from a number of angles which in turn facilitates the cross-validation of data”.

According to Pingel (2009, p. 68), such "underlying assumptions" cannot be measured and will best be revealed by qualitative methods. This methodological research orientation is in line with the responsive evaluation approach to be adopted for the situational evaluation approach. Also, the two orientations appear to be well-harmonised with the evaluation purposes and timing as suggested in Section 3.1.3, which are whilst-use evaluation for illuminative and self-development purposes. Indeed, as noted, illuminative evaluation is "largely descriptive and qualitative" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). The findings from this research orientation are believed to provide not only "evidence which can inform theoretical disputes about directions to be followed", but also "*context-sensitive* [emphasis added] information on implementation; for example, […] whether certain textbooks or materials are appropriate or inappropriate, effective or not for various contexts, purposes, and groups of learners" (Weir & Roberts, 1994, p. 11).

3.2.3 Summary

Textbooks are unlike other types of learning materials with regard to the way in which they are created and deployed for mass use and in the roles they are to assume. It has been argued that a framework for textbook evaluation requires an investigation into the broad contexts of creation and reception of the textbooks, which are related to not only the direct users of the materials, but also the other stakeholders involved and the hidden influences on the textbooks' creation and reception. The purpose of textbook research is therefore to seek to learn how the textbooks align with to their stated aims and objectives, what the prevailing conditions are in the settings in which they are being used, and, importantly, what the underlying forces of influence are that impact the textbooks and their usage. We have seen that this three-fold scope of interest can best be investigated by adapting the programme evaluation framework proposed by Werner and Aoki as it permits a multi-dimensional evaluation of textbooks. Also, it is suggested that for the purposes of this study, qualitative methods and responsive evaluation are deemed to be appropriate research approaches.

3.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This section presents the results of the review of relevant evaluations of EFL materials used in various countries and in Vietnam in particular. It appears that most of the evaluations are conducted with a preordinate approach and quantitative methodologies, and that the qualitative components, if any, are of secondary importance.

3.3.1 Non-Vietnamese EFL materials

Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010b) is perhaps the most recent and comprehensive collection of EFL/ESL materials evaluations so far. Assembling 23 research projects conducted in 14 different countries by more than 30 authors, the publication is comprised of five sections dealing with research on the effects of "extensive reading", "in-house materials for university students", "locally developed materials for language learners"; and "the effectiveness of materials"; and finally "application of research results". What makes this publication distinctively different from others is that most of the studies reported in this publication are "case studies of material development in action" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010a, p. 8). It is perhaps for this reason that the sub-title of the publication claims to provide "evidence for best practice" in language learning materials development.

Another notable publication several years earlier was Tomlinson (2008), which was composed of reviews of materials of different types such as "materials for general English", "materials for teaching English young learners", "materials for English for science and technology" and materials in use in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and many different regions in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Collectively, the reviews by dozens of contributors and the editor's personal introduction arguably provide an encyclopaedic presentation of ELT materials in use around the globe. In particular, the reviewers' apparent familiarity with the contexts of use of the materials provide insights into the context-specific features of the materials and, in several cases, point out similarities and discrepancies between regionally-related countries and thereby suggests thought-provoking

recommendations for improvements in future materials. An example of these is Bao's (2008) evaluation of nine textbooks from Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. It should be noted, however, that most of the reviews are based on survey results and interviews.

Apart from those two significant publications, other available sources are mainly articles in research journals and individual theses. In the Turkish context, for example, Tok (2010) claims to "assess the overall effectiveness" (p. 510) of an English textbook for Year 8 students in Turkish schools. Strictly speaking, however, the results of the evaluation are simply about perceptions of the effectiveness of the textbook from one perspective, not about the effectiveness of the textbook, because the study only used a survey requiring teachers to respond to favourable statements about the textbook. In addition, "to gain further insights into the use of the textbooks", Kirkgöz (2009) evaluated three State-prescribed English textbooks used for Turkish Year 4 classes by means of a survey administered to teachers and students, and follow-up interviews with selected participants. While the evaluation only revealed perceptions of the effectiveness of the textbooks and nothing about actual classroom effectiveness, it presented no convincing selection criteria showing that the 37 questionnaire items used in the study were precisely adequate for the evaluation of the textbooks. Moreover,

In the East Asian context, Lee (2009) evaluated 11 high-school EFL conversation textbooks used in South Korea to see "how the textbooks teach culture" (p. 76). It was concluded by the study that there also seemed to be insufficient use of authentic materials and interactive technologies such as the Internet for teaching culture. As interesting as the results and topic of the study are, the evaluation was merely an analysis of content without consultation with the users of the books. In another Southeast Asian context, Chow (2004) conducted a study on how suitable teachers and learners perceived ELT textbooks in Hong Kong secondary schools to be with regard to their needs, pedagogy, and language use and goals. The study used a textbook evaluation model that "establishes the parameters […] and emphasises the importance of exploring the variables affecting textbook suitability in the

Hong Kong context". However, the research questions of the study were answered by means of surveys, which resulted in data being gathered on the question of perceptions of the textbooks under study, not on the actual value of those textbooks.

Regarding Southeast Asian contexts in particular, Chandran (2003) and Jazadi (2003) respectively looked "at the use of the English language textbooks by language teachers in Malaysian schools" (Chandran, 2003, p. 143) and examined "the government textbooks that are externally mandated teaching materials for use at junior and senior high schools throughout Indonesia" (Jazadi, 2003, p. 143). The findings from these evaluations are especially useful to readers who are interested in studies of ELT materials in the Vietnamese context, because of the many similarities of the teaching contexts (e.g. large classes and poor teaching resources) which is in many ways similar to their ASEAN counterparts. However, the two evaluations were not based on the actual usage of the textbooks concerned, leaving open the question as to the extent to which the informants' reports through surveys and interviews were true of what actually happened in the lessons using the materials concerned. It should be noted, though, there was an attempt on the part of the Indonesian researcher to apply Santoro's critical language perspective which provided a useful discussion that is revealing and context-sensitive of the bias in "locality/region issues" within the textbooks (Jazadi, 2003, pp. 150-151).

In the African context Muhigirwa (2005) looked "for evidence of the integration of English learning strategies and social justice issues and their significance for educational practice in Congo" by examining a Congolese EFL textbook set. Adopting content analysis methodology, the study coded its data and categorised it in terms of explicit language strategies and social justice themes and sub-themes. Specifically, the research focus was on the content of the textbooks in relation to students' needs rather than the larger question of the appropriateness of the textbooks in relation to contextual factors.

In relation to commercial materials, a noteworthy evaluation was jointly carried out by Tomlinson, Bao Dat, Masuhara, and Rubdy (2001) of adult EFL coursebooks by well-known international publishers. The evaluation was based on a mutually agreed list of 133 course evaluation criteria which was developed, as claimed by the evaluators, from research into what learners, teachers, and administrators want from coursebooks. The four evaluators then used these items "independently to evaluate the eight courses, before pooling their data and averaging their scores" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 4). Evaluations of this type are highly likely to produce influential results that are readily useable because of the research-based evaluation criteria and the expertise involved, particularly owing to the evaluators' familiarity with a variety of contexts (respectively the United Kingdom, Vietnam, Japan, and India). Yet, the evaluation was not directly based on the use of the materials by actual users in relation to context-specific conditions. Adopting these evaluation procedures (i.e., using a team of raters to complete a checklist), Sahragard, Rahimi, and Zaremoayyedi (2009) claimed to undertake an "in-depth evaluation" of the *Interchange* series (3rd edition). This study, however, simply employed a framework developed more than a decade ago (Littlejohn, 1998) without any modification of the evaluative checklist based on any relevant research. Also, despite interesting findings regarding mismatches between what the textbooks have to offer and the objectives set out for them, the study disregarded how the book "is used in the classroom" (Sahragard, et al., 2009, p. 55).

Littlejohn (1992) also conducted an examination of EFL textbooks to explore what factors had shaped the nature of the material. The study, however, did not attempt to find answers to the question of how the use of the materials is implemented. "My concern here", stated Littlejohn (1992, p. 5), "is with the materials themselves, with the content and ways of working which they propose, *not* with what may actually happen in particular classrooms".

In addition to these accounts of textbook evaluation, there have been textbook evaluations concerned with one or several aspects of the materials concerned. For example,

Azizifar, Koosha, and Lotfi (2010) evaluated two EFL textbook series used in Iranian high schools by adapting the textbook evaluation model proposed by Tucker (1975) to examine the materials' "pronunciation points, content, and grammar" (Azizifar, et al., 2010, p. 37). To cite further examples, Gabrielatos (1994) focused on pronunciation teaching through the use of a Cambridge course book, and was later (2006) especially interested in *if*-conditionals in ELT coursebooks using corpus-based evaluation. Apart from being evaluations of coursebooks in isolation and thus, at best, yielding the theoretical worth of the materials concerned, the studies did not seriously consider the local factors defining the use of the materials.

3.3.2 Vietnamese EFL materials

Though not directly related to textbook evaluation, Le and Barnard (2009) is the most recent study of the curricular innovation underpinning the most recently introduced Vietnamese textbooks. As "attempt to address and, to a very limited extent, narrow the perceived gap between curricular rhetoric and classroom reality" (Le and Barnard, 2009, p. 20), the research used lesson observation and post-observation interview upon which interesting evidence-based conclusions are reached. Nevertheless, the results of the study are arguably close-up snapshots of the classroom reality, and not focused on textbook usage.

Directly concerning the new English textbooks used in Vietnamese high schools, Nguyen (2007) evaluated the coursebooks of the regular programme for Years 10-12 that were deployed at the same time as those in the intensive programme (one of which is the focus of this study). The study was undertaken by means of textbook analysis based on checklists adapted from Cunningsworth (1995) and a survey with teachers regarding their opinions of the textbooks, and an interview with a textbook writer about the methodological foundations of the materials. While the research appeared to be based on multiple methods and sources of data, the findings could at best reveal only the learning potential of the textbooks. As a result, issues such as evidence-based accounts of the textbooks' teachability and the driving forces shaping the textbooks were left unaddressed.

Apart from these two research papers, the only other research on Vietnamese textbook evaluation were mostly minor theses as partial fulfillments of the requirements of a TESOL master's degree. For example, Chung (2008) conducted an evaluation of the *Tieng Anh 6* (*English 6*) textbooks from an editor's perspective, first by using a survey of 30 teachers in Ho Chi Minh City, and later through interviews with selected participants. However, there was no investigation into the actual teaching and learning with the books. In addition, T. V. A. Dang (2006) evaluated the extent to which *Tieng Anh 10* (*English 10* – experimental edition) was suitable for the students of the high school where she was working. The methodology used was simply a survey and the data collected pertained only to the perceptions of the teachers and students about the books and their suitability.

Prior to these reports was a study of the EFL textbooks used in Vietnamese secondary schools (that were the predecessors of the textbook under evaluation) by Nguyen and Crabbe (1999). In analysing the design and content of the materials their study admitted that what remained to be done was "collecting field information about the role of materials in a specific teaching context" in two schools in Hue, in central Vietnam. Regarding those 'predecessors', *English 7*, *English 11*, and *English 12* were also evaluated, as noted in Section 3.3.1, in Bao's (2008) review of EFL textbooks in Southeast Asian countries. Given its aim, however, the evaluation did not examine how those coursebooks were actually used in the classroom.

It is acknowledged that following the 2002 textbook innovation the Vietnamese educational authorities conducted a large-scale evaluation of all the new textbooks, collecting data comprising opinions from 64 education and training services in cities and provinces, as well as from relevant mass associations such as the Union of Sciences and Technology and the Association of Study Promotion (MOET Directive Document 2093/BGDDT-GDTrH). However, the evaluation (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008) was apparently not properly undertaken as a research work as it was merely based on administrative reports and no methodology was articulated. Also, it was hastily completed – in approximately one month

– as admitted by the then deputy head of the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming (as cited in Bao Anh, 2008a, 2008c). Unfortunately, little attention was given to the EFL materials as throughout the evaluation report, the English textbooks were only given two very general comments. In one section the report discussed English textbooks for high school students, yet it gave no reference to which programme (the regular or intensive) or which year the discussion was of relevance. In another section the report only discussed foreign languages textbooks as a whole.

It seems that to date there have been few systematically designed evaluations undertaken on Vietnamese EFL materials, and even fewer on Vietnamese EFL textbooks. Among the research reported, the approach taken was mainly quantitative and preordinate, and so the studies did not thoroughly explore the context of use, the classroom setting, or the broader cultural context. Even the rigorously designed evaluation by Vu et al. (2004) did not venture into the context of teaching and learning by means of any direct lesson observation. There are two probable reasons for the meagre amount of evaluative qualitative research on textbooks: First, until recently, evaluation was not an area of concern in Vietnam; and second, qualitative research was generally not well established in Vietnam. In addition, with regard to the new English textbooks, the fact that they have not yet been in use for a long period of time is a possible reason for the shortage of related research.

3.3.3 Summary

Most of the textbook evaluations reviewed in this chapter were concerned with the *perceptions* of the effectiveness and/or appropriateness of the coursebooks from a limited number of perspectives and hence their findings are of limited value. An interest in exploring how teachers and students are actually using their textbooks in the classroom, and to what effect, has been limited, perhaps given the complexity and intricacies of the teaching and learning settings. Where there was an interest displayed in these aspects, there appears to have been no attempt to investigate the underlying forces beyond the classroom

operationalisation of the materials concerned. Methodologically speaking, most textbook evaluations to date are primarily preordinate and quantitative in approach, so a responsive and qualitative research design for evaluation will possibly bring about results that are at least complementary to what has already been presented. It is with these issues that this thesis is most concerned.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a review of the literature related to language learning materials in general and language textbook evaluation in particular. Starting with a working definition of materials evaluation, the chapter emphasised the importance of examining the appropriateness of the materials in relation to their target users and context of use. Following the presentation of the dimensions and types of evaluation, it was suggested that a development-oriented, illuminative and whilst-use evaluation is suitable for the evaluation undertaken in an academic thesis aiming to explore complex classroom features affecting the effectiveness and appropriateness of the materials concerned. As for textbooks, which are demonstrably different from other types of learning materials, particularly in the Vietnamese context, it was argued that it is necessary to perform a critical evaluation in order to uncover the hidden influences on textbooks and their usage that are not simply made explicit by analyses of the textbooks and their target situation of use. Also, it was demonstrated that evaluation studies of EFL materials to date are mainly examinations of materials as work-plans. It was made evident that there have been inadequate attempts to probe into the reality of teaching and learning where the materials under evaluation were actually being used. Furthermore, the chapter has established that a research design which is qualitative in nature and an evaluation that is responsive in approach will yield findings beyond that which mainly quantitative evaluations are able to achieve.

Therefore, this study is taking initial steps into the largely uncharted territory of EFL materials evaluation in Vietnam. Exploratory in nature, it is based upon a qualitative research

design. “One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study”, writes Creswell (1994, p. 21), “is that […] not much has been written about the topic or population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to informants and to build a picture based on their ideas”. The findings of this thesis will be discussed in the context of Werner’s and Aoki’s programme evaluation framework, which arguably best serves the multi-dimensional evaluation interests of the study. The next chapter will present the methodology of the whole research project in detail.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this textbook evaluation in four sections. The first one identifies the research question the study seeks to answer, presents the rationale of the research and justifies the researcher's position as an insider evaluator. The second section presents the research design with reference to the nature of the research, the components of the case studies the evaluation is based on, the case selection, and the description of research participants, and importantly the explication of the evaluation framework adopted. The third section describes the instruments used for data collection, and the fourth section provides a chapter summary.

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

4.1.1 Research question

The research question of this study is, "How appropriate is the textbook *English 10 – Intensive Programme* to the target situation of use?". The approach taken for this research is case study analysis, seeking to learn about the usage of the textbook in three different contexts: rural, semi-urban, and urban schools focussing not only on the textbook itself but also factors in close relation affecting its creation and reception. In other words, the study is primarily a context-based evaluation of the relative worth of the textbook.

4.1.2 Rationale

There are many reasons for conducting this study. First, evaluation, particularly educational evaluation, is emerging as a research field in Vietnam drawing serious attention of both scholars and the authorities in recent years. Second, textbook innovation has become a key national issue of debate from which there has been a perceived need for serious evaluation for decision-making concerning the use of multiple coursebooks instead of only State-monopolised textbooks. This movement, notably, tends to begin with English rather than other subjects because commercial coursebooks by foreign publishers that have long

won teachers' and students' interests have been made widely available in the market at reasonable prices. Also, at the time of this research's conception, the textbook replacement had just been completed, suggesting a prime time for an evaluation of textbook innovation. Finally, English after years of being sidelined has been strategically identified as a key subject in Vietnamese education as a human resources preparation for its stronger international integration and economic relations.

At a personal level, the researcher's expertise area is teaching English as a foreign language. Also, the textbook under evaluation was one of the coursebooks created by a team in which the researcher was a textbook writer. Given this insider status, the researcher is able to evaluate material from a perspective different and unique in comparison with those of other possible evaluators. The advantages and disadvantages of this insider status will be elaborated in the immediately following section.

4.1.3 The evaluator's position

As the researcher was one of the textbook writers the first concern about the reliability of this study would be about the possibility of bias. The objectivity of conclusions of the evaluation could be questionable given the evaluator's involvement in the creation of the textbook. However, while subjectivity is undoubtedly undesirable, any evaluation would run the risk of being subjective. "No matter how structured, criterion referenced and rigorous an evaluation is", states Tomlinson (2003c, p. 16), "it will be essentially subjective". Indeed, there is hardly ever the so called value-free evaluation (Scriven, 1991).

The key question, therefore, is not whether the evaluator is an insider or an outsider; rather, it is the methodology that was used, the data collection that was conducted, the analysis of data that was done, and the argumentation leading to evaluational conclusions. The thesis, notably, is for the fulfilment of the requirements of an academic degree; assuredly not a report evaluating the textbook to the sponsors or organisers of the textbook writing project implicated in which would be the motive of self-praise. After all, evaluation can be

and should be done from various perspectives, not to exclude that of an insider. “Evaluation”, Murphy (1993, p. 23) comments reasonably, “is a political activity, cannot be neutral – except in its methods – and will always be controversial.”

From the positive side, the inside status is unique as it endows the evaluator with ‘competitive advantages’ that outsiders naturally cannot have. First, directly involved in the textbook creation, the researcher was able to see behind-the-scene factors that had affected the construction of the books. Second, his connections with other textbook writers and organisers of the textbook project automatically entail easier access to the directives, verbal and non-verbal, that had shaped the textbooks. Third, the results of the evaluation, particularly those with recommendations for substantial changes, would be more likely to be seen as constructive and taken into serious consideration when the evaluator was an insider; whereas on the contrary, negative conclusions of an outsider was apt to evoke “defensive” and even “hostile” response (McCormic & James, 1983, p. 97).

Particularly for the data collection, the evaluation conducted from the researcher’s perspective has the following advantages. First, as the researcher was one of the textbook writers himself, which was made explicit to all those who formed part of the study, teachers and students might possibly take interviews as opportunities to voice their opinion and provide feedback to a representative of the writing team and consequently were more likely to be cooperative. Second, as the researcher himself was involved in the process of creating the textbook, it was possibly more likely that textbook writer interviewees would present via interviews ‘realer’ accounts of their understandings and opinions.

It is important to note that the insider status of the researcher and the conflict of interest issue was discussed with the Ethics Committee at Macquarie University, and approval for this project was granted. Please see Appendix B for the final approval of the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) of Macquarie University and Appendices C.1-5 for the information statements and consent forms for research participants).

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1 The nature of research

This research was mainly exploratory and qualitative in nature, adopting the research design of case study to evaluate the textbook concerned in different contexts of Vietnamese high schools. This study reported three cases which might be best viewed, as three "contrasting sub-units" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 398) or as three "particular instances" (Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 164) of one phenomenon to be understood: the appropriateness of the textbook to its target context. As the evaluation was done of the textbook whilst it was being used, it is more specific to describe the three cases, adapting the term Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis of (1976, p. 140) as "instances in action". Underlying this multi-case study is "the replication logic" by which it is argued "that each case must be selected so that it either produces contrary results for predictable reasons or produce similar results" (Burns, 2000, pp. 463-464).

In recent years, "the power of the particular case to resonate across cultures" has become significant "in a field as broad geographically, socially and intellectually as TESOL, where generalisations are likely to be blandly true, suffocatingly narrow or irresponsibly cavalier" (Richards, 2003, p. 21). The case study approach allows an in-depth look at the contexts in which the textbook concerned was used, an issue of primary concern in materials evaluation, as is emphasised by Hutchinson (1987, p. 42): "It is necessary for the material evaluator to look not only at the materials to be evaluated, but also to carry out a thorough analysis of the teaching/learning situation that the materials are required for." Indeed, it gives an opportunity to come into direct contact with the very onsite users of the material, thereby meeting, watching, and talking with teachers and students, and thereby gaining a close-up of the intricacies of the actual use of the material, invaluable sources and ways for giving evidence-based evaluation of the textbook concerned. Also, the case study approach is a practical choice for a really meaningful in-depth study done by individual researchers (Bell,

1993, p. 8), such as the evaluator. Even for large evaluation projects, for example those reported in Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005, p. 98; 117; 122), the ability to illuminate has proven to be best achievable by means of case study. The down side of case study is limited generalisability but as pointed out by Bassey (1981, p. 85), its merit is more of relatability, not to mention the other "principal advantages" suggested by Adelman (1976). For example, "it is 'strong in reality' and therefore likely to appeal to practitioners…"; "it can represent a multiplicity of viewpoints, and can offer support to alternative interpretations…"; and "the insights yielded by case studies can be put to immediate use for a variety of purposes" (Nunan, 1992, p. 78), etc. As for evaluation, it allows engagement "in face-to-face *interactions* with individual stakeholders", a requirement for "proper conduct" of evaluation highlighted by Guba and Yvonna (1989, p. 264).

4.2.2 Components of case studies

Each of the three case studies was conducted with the observation of the classroom lessons using the textbook under evaluation as the core. The reliance on the classroom observation was appropriate with the nature of this research as is noted by Scholz and Tietje (2002, p. 2): "Qualitative analysis starting from the real-world level is an indispensable part of case analysis". In fact, classroom observation allows insights into actual classroom use of textbooks, which, according to Daoud and Celce-Murcia, is "the ultimate evaluation of a text" (1979, p. 306) and this classroom-based materials evaluation approach has long won "widespread recognition" (Ellis, 1998, p. 220).

In order to get an overview of the local context prior to the classroom observation, the researcher used questionnaire surveys (called pre-observation questionnaire) to collect information from the teacher and students whose lessons were to be observed. In addition, lessons observed were each preceded by brief interviews with the teacher (called pre-lesson interview) and followed by still briefer interviews with the teacher again and several selected students (called post-lesson feedback). The pre-lesson interview aimed to get an overview of

the upcoming lesson while the post-lesson feedback sought to capture immediate thoughts about the lesson just taught before it might fade in the research participants' minds.

At the end of the school visit, there was another, quite brief, questionnaire with students (called post-observation questionnaire) functioning as a written collective interview with all students asking for their confirmation or insights into what the researcher had noted happening in the lessons observed. With the classroom teacher there was an interview (called post-observation interview) further discussing what was reported by the teacher in the pre-observation questionnaire response and what was seen taking place throughout the lessons observed. The head English teacher of the school was also interviewed to enable the researcher to gain understanding of broader issues that might have affected the use of the textbook concerned in the classroom.

To sum up, the case studies were undertaken by classroom observation as the central part, the data of which was then supported and illuminated by interviews with teachers and students on the research site. The questionnaire surveys played an auxiliary role, being used as a tool for orientation before the key research activities commenced and for further clarification following the lesson observation. As this is a process-oriented evaluation, classroom observation and interview were felt to be duly effective research tools (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, pp. 6-7).

4.2.3 Selection of cases

Data collection was undertaken altogether at nine classes of six schools around Vietnam at varying levels of depth but this study finally chose to focus on three case studies of three different schools that individually and collectively were perceived to be best "representative of the population from which they are drawn" and thereby to best depict "a range of behaviours/profiles, experiences, outcomes, or situations" (Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 165), a sampling convention of case study research. Also, it is common in practice for a case study

researcher who works on his own to decide "which material to present in the final report" (Bell, 1993, p. 9).

At those three schools, all the data collection instruments described below (see section 4.3) were administered to all appropriate research participants (see sub-section 4.2.4), and sufficient data were collected. The three cases were of three classes respectively located in rural, semi-urban, and urban schools but, apart from location, it should be made clear that they differed significantly in other aspects. Table 4.1 below gives an overview of the case studies, each of which will be adequately described in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 regarding case studies.

Table 4.1
Overview of Three Case Studies

	Class 1	**Class 2**	**Class 3**
Geographical location	Rural	Semi-urban	Urban
Academic orientation	D1/H programme[2]	English studies	Vietnamese studies
Type of school	Regular	Provincial selective	National selective
Class size	50+	30+	20+

At those three schools, the classroom teaching of seven to eight periods, the amount of time prescribed for a textbook unit, was observed. The observed lessons were recorded and also notes were taken of the lesson proceedings and content. The teaching of the same unit was observed in the rural and semi-urban schools as they were geographically not very far away from each other. As for the urban institution, though, the observation was on different units.

[2] In this type of class, students were prepared for university admission via exams of which one would be English.

Regarding the other six classes, there were a variety of reasons for them to be left out, including limited access to research participants, unsuccessful arrangements for classroom lesson observation, unavailability of lessons during which the textbook concerned was used, and unexpected incidents, which resulted in inadequate data for case study. At one selective school, for example, there was a regular class whose lessons, if observed, would possibly yield insightful data but no sooner had the classroom observation started than the school, as the researcher was notified, was chosen to be a venue for a provincial contest and the class had to be cancelled for a week, causing discontinuity in the data collection. As another example, there was one institution where all the research activities were administered but, because it was perceived to be overlapping with one of the cases reported, it was finally left out.

4.2.4 Research participants

This research is as serious about choosing participants, as is it in selecting cases, common requirements of qualitative study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 398). There were four types of participants in this study: students, classroom teachers, head teachers and textbook writers.

“Students” and “classroom teachers” were those of the classes whose English lessons using the textbook concerned were observed. More than anyone else, these informants had hands-on experience with the textbook. They were arguably perfect on-site users of the textbook who were most directly knowledgeable about classroom-specific activities. “Head teachers” are the team leaders of the English teachers’ of the schools concerned whose role was to coordinate the teaching of English at their institution. While they might or might not have actually taught the textbook concerned, head teachers were in a good position to provide valuable information about broad issues affecting the usage of the material because they worked directly with the school board and even provincial leadership regarding professional issues and also they had team members reporting to them. In this study, there were three

classes of students, three classroom teachers, and three head teachers as research participants. (A more detailed description of these subjects will be provided in the case study chapters.)

"Textbook writers" were creators of the textbook. The data collected from interviews with them were to triangulate with the researcher's self-account of the creation of the textbook and validate and enrich his self-reflection for the critical evaluation of the textbook. Out of the ten-member team, there were three textbook writers interviewed in this study including a senior writer and two other members.

The senior writer was the obvious choice because working with the leadership particularly in the Ministry of Education and Training and the Publishing House of Education, he was best informed of its context of creation (hereafter called Textbook Writer 1). The two remaining choices were considered with a balance and multidimensionality of the information the interviewees would possibly provide depending on their position and background. One college lecturer was chosen because she was among the conveners of the summer training sessions for teachers for the deployment of the textbook concerned (hereafter called Textbook Writer 2). Her experience of this type was an advantage because she had close contact with the classroom teachers as users of the textbook under evaluation. The other choice was a textbook writer who used to be a high school teacher himself and had now become an officer in charge of the English teaching affairs of a province, a background making him the source of a wealth of useful information about the overall context of one of the three case studies (hereafter called Textbook Writer 3).

4.2.5 Evaluation framework

The theoretical framework for the textbook evaluation is based on the programme evaluation model proposed by Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005), considering the textbook through three complementary lenses: ends-means, situational, and critical evaluation. First, the ends-means evaluation will look at the ends claimed by the textbook and the means (to achieve those aims) as (i) potentially available in the form of

learning opportunities the textbook could offer and (ii) as actually available as found out throughout the three case studies, and thereby contrast them. Whereas (i) is of predictive value answering the question how appropriate the textbook is in principle, (ii) is of an empirical nature finding out how appropriate it is in reality. The two considerations are contrastive investigations respectively of, in the words of Breen (in Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 30), “materials-as-workplan” and “materials-in-process” or, adapting the terms of Aoki for curriculum evaluation (Aoki, 1984, p. 10, 2005, p. 144), “textbook-as-plan” and “textbook-in-use”. This evaluation was done by the analyses of the textbook and curriculum documents, including its Teacher Book and curricula following the guide by Breen and Candlin (1987, for the theoretical question) and classroom observation (for the empirical question).

Second, the situational evaluation is an attempt “to gain insights into human experiences as they are experienced by insiders, as they live within the situation” (Aoki, 2005, p. 142). Unlike the ends-means evaluation, it took in the views of textbook users regarding why they taught/learned as they taught/learned, particularly concerned with contextual factors defining and shaping their actual usage of the textbook. It is thus implicated by this orientation that the very users’ opinions and perceptions of the textbook given their own circumstances were considered a valuable source of data to evaluate the textbook. This evaluation was done by means of pre- and post-observation surveys, pre- and post-lesson interviews, and post-observation interviews. This approach is appropriate with qualitative study in which researchers typically “explain how people attach meanings to events and learn to see events from multiple perspectives” (Neuman, 2000, p. 144). It should be acknowledged here that despite the value of the opinions of the on-site users on the textbook, these perceptions are changeable rather than fixed. However, to some extent, this dynamic can be accommodated by means of the triangulation with the other data collected.

Third, the critical evaluation went further and deeper to uncover "the underlying beliefs and interests" on which the textbook creation and reception may be based and to reflect "upon the implications of these beliefs and interests" (Werner, 1979, p. 12). According to this orientation, "which is dialectical and transformative, both the evaluator and subjects become participants in an open dialogue" (Aoki, 2005, p. 146). Through this lens, the principles for critical language testing enumerated by Shohamy are of relevance and were modified for more thorough discussion of the evaluation of the textbook concerned. This evaluation was basically the researcher's reflective interpretation of the broad contexts in which the textbook was incepted, produced, deployed, and used, which was triangulated and validated by interviews with three other textbook writers involved in the creation of the textbook. This critical evaluation proves to be an indispensable defining factor for the success and meaningfulness of case studies, as is argued by Bassey (1981, p. 86). Evaluation, according to Nunan (1992, p. 185), "involves not only assembling information but interpreting that information – *making value judgments* [emphasis added]". Also, it should be acknowledged that "in any case, there are many times when the spectator or television viewer gets better perspective on what is going on than an individual player" (Burns, 2000, p. 462).

4.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The instruments of the research were of three groups: (i) questionnaires, (ii) classroom observation protocols, and (iii) interview questions. The original instruments were written in English but research participants and those concerned (e.g. school boards) were given Vietnamese translations because they were all Vietnamese nationals and used Vietnamese as their first language. Even for textbook writers, Vietnamese was still used because communication was most fluent and complete using the mother tongue of participants and the researcher. The data collected was then translated by the researcher himself and the translations, for transparency purposes, were sample checked by a NATTI-accredited translator/interpreter for accuracy (see Appendix D for her verification).

4.3.1 Questionnaires

The questions and format of the questionnaires are based on Brown (2001, pp. 273-289); Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979, pp. 304-305); Dave (1970, pp. 36-47); Dougill (1987, pp. 30-32); Litz (2005), Miekley (2005); Nunan (1991, 147-148); Scarino (1988); Tomlinson (2003c, pp. 16-36); and Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, p. 49).

4.3.1.1 For students

There were two questionnaires for students, one before and one following the classroom observation. The pre-observation questionnaire (see Appendix E) had three sections: Section A sought to learn about background information of respondents; Section B about their evaluation of the various aspects of the textbook; and Section C about their learning English with the textbook. For quite a number of questions, especially with the evaluative statements, the Likert-scale was used as it is considered to be "effective for gathering respondents' views, opinions, and attitudes about various language-related issues ranging on dimensions such as the following: very serious to slight, important to unimportant, like to dislike, and agree to disagree" (Brown, 2001, p. 41).

Concerning the post-observation questionnaire, there were three versions for the three classes (see Appendices F.1-3) because the items were based on what was observed during particular lesson sessions. Designed for quick administration (approximately 15 minutes), they had statements of issues of interest or concern followed by multiple-choice questions for respondents to tick off or simply requested brief answers to open questions.

4.3.1.2 For classroom teachers

The teacher questionnaire (see Appendix G) was basically like the pre-observation student questionnaire in terms of purposes, which were to ask for respondents' backgrounds and familiarity with the textbook concerned, perceptions of its effectiveness and actual usage of it from the perspective of teachers. This questionnaire shared quite a number of items with the student questionnaire particularly regarding Section B so that there could be some

comparisons between the two categories of respondents. There were, however, also items that applied to teachers only, for example, the item asking about the exams they made for students.

4.3.2 Classroom observation protocols

There were two classroom observation protocols used. The first one called 'Lesson Proceedings Recorder' (see Appendix H.1) was to record the sequence of classroom activities. This protocol was adapted from the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) by Spada and Frohlich (1995), an instrument used to observe second language (L2) classroom teaching and learning. For the practical purposes of this research project, however, the scheme was modified and simplified to be focused on four key areas of interest: how the interaction between the teacher and the students was in their using the textbooks for their lessons; whether skills (and which skill) or knowledge was taught in the classroom; and to what extent the textbooks were used in the classroom and which language (English or Vietnamese) was mainly used for the implementation of the lesson. The mention of which language was used for the implementation of the textbook is important because teachers using the textbook are required to conduct communicative activities in the classroom with an aim to form and develop English communication skills and most of the classroom implementations of learning activities are recommended to be process-oriented (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 6; 12-13; 18-26).

The second protocol, named 'Guidelines on Collection of Evidence' (see Appendix H.2) was self-developed and used as a self-guide to what counted as evidence of students' learning from the textbook, which was recorded in the aforementioned protocol. Though such evidence may not equate with students' textbook-related learning per se, it indicates their learning engagement, which might lead to effective learning. In effect, whereas the evidence of learning is needed for claims of the occurrence or non-occurrence of students' learning

(Dimmock, 2000, p. 245), it is “a particularly slippery parameter to measure” (Donovan, 1998, p. 169).

4.3.3 Interview questions

4.3.3.1 For students

As noted earlier, these interviews were feedback sessions conducted with several selected students only and were very brief. Student interviewees were invited to give comments on the tasks and activities in the lesson just observed. Also, they were asked what they (dis)liked about their lessons or certain classroom tasks observed, and why. (Please see Appendix I for the student post-lesson interview questions.)

4.3.3.2 For classroom teachers

As for classroom teachers, there were three types of interview: (i) pre-lesson interview, (ii) post-lesson interview (see Appendix J.1) and (iii) post-observation interview (see Appendix J.2). The first two types took place respectively right before and immediately following each lesson observed. While (i) was to obtain a pre-view of what was going to be taught in the upcoming lesson and how, (ii) was an investigation into the reasons why the teachers actually taught what they did in the way they did.

Regarding the post-observation interview, altogether there were six questions, asking for the teachers’ elaborated comments on the textbook and about classroom-specific issues. The first question related the current textbook with the previous ones, requesting interviewees to compare them, especially concerning their effectiveness and teachability. Concerning the current textbook in particular, the second question invited teachers to discuss any discrepancy between its requirements of users and their abilities and readiness to study with it. Next, interviewees were asked to explain, elaborate, and justify what was noted about the classroom lessons throughout observation, which certainly varied from case to case. The fourth question asked teachers what they would have done differently in the lessons observed if given all the resource support they might have needed. The fifth question let teachers comment freely

about their lessons and their experiences with them. The interview ended with a very open-ended question, asking interviewees to share anything else deemed relevant about the book, the programme, the students, the context, etc.

4.3.3.3 For head teachers

The interview with head teachers had five major questions (see Appendix K). The first one sought to learn about the teacher training for the new textbook. The second question approached an issue perceived to be strongly influential on classroom lessons: testing and assessment practices and regulations as they were implemented. The third question asked interviewees to comment on the fact that the other English textbooks of the regular program were being used far more widely. Looking across to new textbooks of other subjects, the interview continued with a question asking if they were presenting similar problems to teachers and students as did English textbooks, an issue head teachers should be broadly informed of in academic affairs meetings with the school board and local educational departments. The final question was very open, allowing interviewees to freely talk about anything else that had not been mentioned.

4.3.3.4 For textbook writers

The interview with textbook writers had questions divided into three groups: the first one was about the book and their understanding of its use, the second about the creation of the book, and the third one about the writers' own comments and opinions (see Appendix L).

The interview began with the question about differences in methodological foundations underlying the new textbooks and those of their predecessors, seeking to learn why there had been changes. The second question invited discussion on the gaps as they perceived them between their textbooks and context-specific usage. The third question asked if textbook writers saw if their textbooks were being actually used as they had envisioned during the creation. The fourth question asked about the interviewees' perception of the extent to which the teachers were informed of the implied nature of the new coursebooks and the

methodology required and their suggestions on the ways to enhance the link between the writing and the use of the books. Regarding testing wash back effect, the fifth question asked textbook writers how they thought current practices of assessment were affecting classroom teaching and learning and what they accordingly did for their textbook.

The interview then continued with questions about the textbook creation. The first question was concerned with the inception, the construction, and then deployment of the materials. The second one was about textbook writers' attempts, if any, to reconcile the interest and preferences of different stakeholders, including the educational and political leadership, teachers, students, parents, and the media.

In the last section, interviewees were requested to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the locally produced EFL textbooks versus imported commercial materials and then the possibility of joint creation of textbooks with foreign publishers. Also, as with most interviews, the writers were encouraged to share with the researcher what might be relevant but the researcher might have overlooked asking concerning the construction and creation of the books, the examination and improvement of the books, and teacher development as possibly needed for the use of the books.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The first section of this chapter set out the research question about the contextually-defined appropriateness of the textbook under evaluation and the goal to learn about its relative worth. Next, the rationale for the evaluation of the textbook was presented with regard to the demands of new developments in the country where the textbook was being used and the researcher's own personal background for the study. Also, the insider role of the researcher was acknowledged, followed by a justification of the impartiality and uniqueness of the status for the evaluation. In Section 2, the qualitative nature of the research was presented and argued for, through which case study emerged as a suitable research approach for process-oriented evaluation of the textbook. The two key aspects of the three interrelated

case studies were then reported including the selection of cases and research participants. Finally, the evaluation framework was described, which included three perspectives of ends-means, situational, and critical evaluations. The chapter then described the instruments used for data collection including questionnaires, classroom observation protocols, and interview questions.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY 1: RURAL SCHOOL

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the first of three case studies that profile the implementation of the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook in three distinctly different contexts. This case study focuses on the implementation of the textbook in a rural high school; Case Study 2 (Chapter 6) focuses on its implementation in an urban high school; and Case Study 3 (Chapter 7) focuses on its implementation in a semi-urban high school. The case studies describe how the textbook was used in each setting as part of a series of lessons. An interpretation and discussion of the case studies is subsequently provided in Chapter 8. It should be noted that beyond the primary distinction of different educational settings of each case study (i.e., rural, urban, and semi-urban), the schools also bear other distinguishing features such as the nature of the school (i.e., selective versus regular) and the academic orientation of the students (i.e. whether or not they were specialising in a certain subject). Thus, the three case studies provide a range of school types and contexts within which the same English textbook is prescribed and used in Vietnam.

5.1 CONTEXT

5.1.1 The school

Case study 1 features the research undertaken on a class at a school in a small town located in a rural district in a central province of Vietnam, hereafter called the Rural High School [RHS].[3] There are three high schools in the district, but RHS was selected for investigation because it was the only institution where the textbook under evaluation was

[3] For confidentiality reasons, pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real names of the participating institutions in this research and for other content that might identify them.

being used. In fact, it was the only rural school in the province where there were classes taking the intensive programme of English.

RHS is generally the preferred choice of school by students and parents within the district because of the school tradition and quality of the exam results. RHS has a reputation for high Year 10 entry requirements and for its students being admitted to tertiary education institutions. Indeed, it is partly for its successes in this area that it was the first rural school in the nation to be awarded the "State's Labour Medal in the Renovation Period". Yet, while this recognition honoured the school, it also placed additional pressure on the school to showcase its continued development. Importantly, the school's good reputation is primarily owing to its students' successes in the sciences, where, at provincial contests for outstanding students, they do very well in math, chemistry, physics and biology. Student achievements in English, however, are not so outstanding.

During the time of research at RHS there were 12 Year 10 classes, 12 Year 11 classes, and 15 Year 12 classes. (The difference in the number of classes and students between Year 12 and Years 11 and 10 was due to the school's intake each year, depending on the entry cut-off points, the enrolments of other institutions in the region, the number of local graduates from lower secondary education, and so on.) Yet, there was only one class in each year level taking the intensive English programme. As with the other case studies, only the Year 10 class doing the intensive English programme was the focus of the research – rather than the Year 11 or Year 12 class. This particular focus was selected not only for reasons which support the scope in this thesis, but also because it allowed for greater comparability. Moreover, the Year 10 focus at this school was of interest because the textbook had been in use with the Year 10 class for three years (as opposed to two years for the Year 11 class and only one year for the Year 12 class). One could expect, therefore, that the Year 10 lessons would have benefited to some extent from the textbook's longer inclusion in the curriculum.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of RHS's classes and students according to their English programme.

Table 5.1

RHS's Students and Classes by Type of English Programme, School Year 2008-2009

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
Regular programme				
No. of classes	12	12	15	39
No. of students	629	629	788	2,043
Intensive programme				
No. of classes	1	1	1	3
No. of students	51	54	56	161
% of total student number	7.5	7.9	6.6	7.3

Table 5.1 shows the percentage of students in each year taking the intensive programme was remarkably low at RHS. This is not uncommon in a rural region where learning English is not a traditional educational pathway and students generally demonstrate low motivation levels to learn the language. As revealed by the deputy principal, the overall focus at the school was more towards intensive study in sciences, which he supported with the comment that "English is not our strength".

5.1.2 The class

5.1.2.1 The students

The class was quite a large size, comprising 51 students. Such a large number of learners being crammed into one classroom is obviously not conducive to language learning that depends on a teacher. For example, shared by so many students, the teacher would no doubt find it hard to pay adequate attention to individual students and the large number would present additional classroom management difficulties that would not be found in smaller classes. As explained by the principal, though, the class size could not be reduced due to budget constraints. In any event, the class was approximately the same size as the school's

other classes. The students in the class came not only from the town, but also from surrounding rural communes where the conditions for English learning were even more disadvantaged.

The academic orientation of the Year 10 class was to prepare the students for tertiary admission exams of which English was a key subject. This goal, according to the pre-observation survey, was cited by the students as the most important reason to learn English, followed by the reason that English was a required subject. The students were taking the intensive programme for English and the regular programme for all other subjects. In regard to English education at RHS, in a typical week the students had four periods of lessons based on the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook and another two periods for the *bam sat* lessons, which were intended to reinforce the textbook-based lessons.

Other than school lessons, there was nowhere else in the community where students could practise their English or have the need to use it. Some students were taking private classes in English, but these classes were mainly oriented to exam preparation and were mostly only affordable to children of public servants. As a result, the students' study of English outside the classroom was primarily undertaken on an individual basis and was typically based on the textbook and other test practice materials if available. Moreover, exposure to English via media such as television and the Internet was very much limited.

Further inquiry disclosed that the intensive English programme students' overall academic performance was just slightly higher than the "regular" stream classes at the school and quite mixed in terms of English ability. Many of the students had been unsuccessful in their exam attempt to gain access into selective science classes and accepted this intensive English class as a second choice. Evidently, for many students a motivation to learn English was not the reason for enrolling in the class but rather it was because the class was generally perceived as being of a higher status than the regular classes. Perhaps it is for this reason that around 20% of the respondents flatly declared that they did not like studying English.

5.1.2.2 Classroom layout

The organisation of the classroom was very traditional, similar to that of a lecture room. The classroom was divided into three sections separated by two aisles along which the teacher could gain access to the students. The students also used the aisles to go to the blackboard when required. The students were seated in parallel rows at heavy wooden tables that accommodated two students. The tables faced toward the blackboard which hung on the wall at the front on the room. The benches were wooden planks secured to the sides of the tables making them impossible to fold, which consequently limited any flexibility to the seating arrangement. This inflexibility was exacerbated by the fact that the tables were tightly arranged to accommodate the maximum student numbers, which restricted the mobility of the students, especially those along the side walls. It is also worth noting that a student could only change from their assigned seat for a really serious reason and at the homeroom teacher's discretion. As a result of all of these elements, the communication and interaction among the students was normally limited to their habitual desk mates.

At the front of the classroom was a raised platform approximately 30cm high and which stretched from near the entrance of the room to the far corner where the teacher's desk was placed. This location gave the teacher easy access to the blackboard and an overview of the class. However, it also distanced the teacher from the students, particularly those in the far corners of the classroom.

5.1.3 The teacher

The teacher was a woman in her early forties. The fact that she was assigned to the intensive English class may be interpreted as a sign of respect for her as a senior teacher with long service, a convention that is generally not to be flouted in Vietnamese education. It may also be in recognition of her teaching effectiveness. Indeed, she had been teaching for 12 years, of which ten were at RHS. During her career in secondary education it is presumed that the teacher was exposed to the practicalities of the local context, and that this exposure had

shaped her teaching style. Regarding education, the teacher had a bachelor's degree (in teaching English as a foreign language), a standard qualification for high school teachers in Vietnam.

With regard to the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook, the teacher reported having taught it to another class during the previous year. Also, she had attended the seminars run by the provincial Service of Education and Training when the textbook (and the others for Years 11 and 12) was deployed. Other than that, as a rural teacher she had no other resources for teaching support. Notably, the teaching methodology she studied at university (which she finished 15 years earlier), was more suited to the textbooks previously used as they were grammar-based and partly audio-lingual.

As was revealed via the survey, the teacher was not really well prepared to use the new textbook. She stated that she had not had sufficiently clear information on how to use it, nor had she had sufficient time to learn how to use it. In addition, she had not been provided with helpful organised support. In relation to the English textbooks of the intensive programme in particular, the teacher said there was no specific, dedicated training for teachers. As confirmed by the head teacher at interview, the seminars for English teachers were solely about the use of the textbooks for the regular programme, which were used by the vast majority of schools in the province. When answering the survey, however, the teacher claimed that she had been clear about the fundamental features of the textbook such as its teaching methodology, aims, and activities. These claims seemed mutually incompatible but the apparent self-contradiction can be explained in terms of this questionnaire item being a so-called "prestige question" to which respondents would normally claim more than was actually the case "because it is the prestigious way to answer" (Brown, 2001, p. 51).

5.1.4 Summary

The data collection for Case Study 1 was carried out at a typical rural school in Vietnam. Despite the institution's local reputation, English education was not their subject of

concentration. Characteristically, the class comprised students with limited English proficiency that came from areas ranging from disadvantaged to very disadvantaged in relation to learning a foreign language. English was taken by students largely because it was a required subject for their current study and exams. In the classroom the teacher's lessons were apparently aligned to meet such demands as the majority of the students had nowhere else to access such preparation, and the teacher was likely to have been influenced by the local practicalities. Other than that, there was almost no perceived need, motivation, or opportunity for students to use the language communicatively, not at school or elsewhere in the wider community. Furthermore, there was limited support for language learning as the institutional culture tended to favour the study of sciences, the class size was quite large, and the classroom layout was not conducive to effective communicative language teaching. Having provided the context for Case Study 1, we can now turn to investigate the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of students and their teacher as revealed by surveys completed prior to lesson observations.

5.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS

There were two surveys done prior to lesson observations: one with the students;[4] and the other with the teacher. The aim of the surveys was to get a snapshot of the context of textbook use from the perspectives of the respondents.

5.2.1 Student survey

The student survey achieved a 98% rate of return. There were three sections in the questionnaire: The first sought to learn about students' background; the second about their evaluations of the textbook; and the third about the usage of the textbook in their context. As the key results of the first section have already been reported in Section 5.1.2.1, the following

[4] A second student survey instrument was administered after the lesson observations were completed.

is a presentation of the major results of the remaining two sections. (See Appendix E for a copy of the survey and Appendix M.1 for a summary of the students' responses.)

With regard to the textbook evaluation, the students were asked to respond to a variety of favourable statements about the textbook. The results were very positive as the cumulative percentage of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses to most of those statements achieved a percentile rating in the seventies or higher. Notably, the rates were respectively 93.6% and 88.3% for the statements that the textbook basically meets their English learning needs and they enjoyed using the textbook as part of their studies. Equally positive, 89.1% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that the textbook's subject matter was interesting enough to engage their attention. Moreover, with regard to the cognitive and language level required, approximately three quarters of the students reported that the textbook was appropriate for their level.

In relation to the statements concerning the textbook's tasks, the students' responses were similarly favourable with 83.3% and 77.1% respectively indicating that they agreed (or strongly agreed) that the tasks provided communicable situations for them to practise using English, and that they were meaningful and relevant to their environment. In relation to the actual implementation of the tasks, however, only 57.8% agreed (or strongly agreed) that the tasks were achievable given their complexity and the learning conditions in the classroom. In addition, almost as many students agreed (or strongly agreed) that the textbook task procedures were consistent enough to be understood and varied enough to be interesting.

Concerning their lessons, however, the students' interest in language knowledge was even apparent in their survey responses concerning the reading and listening skills lessons. During these lessons a stronger focus was reportedly given to the vocabulary, expression, and (sometimes) pronunciation tasks in the text rather than the skills and strategies involved. Notably, whereas reading was not seen as a real difficulty, listening was rated as the greatest problem. With regard to speaking skills, nearly half of the respondents indicated that there

had been inadequate practice of the focus language functions. As for writing skills, producing grammatical sentences was considered the greatest difficulty by the majority of students (82.6%), and it was in relation to this challenge that students laid their strongest emphasis. As for language focus, this section was found to be necessary by most students, which indicated that language knowledge was important to them.

Still concerning the lessons, the language most used was reported to be Vietnamese, though most of the students would have preferred it to be English. With regard to classroom interaction, the most commonly cited form was students working together under the direction of the teacher at 32.6% of the time, followed by students interacting with the teacher 26.6% of the time, and pair and group work reportedly being the least cited form at 21% of the time. In reference to the lesson activities, most of the respondents indicated that they were appropriate to their learning style (79.6%) and useful for their English learning (81.6%).

5.2.2 Teacher survey

The classroom teacher was also asked about her attitudes, opinions and beliefs in relation to using the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook in her teaching, prior to the lesson observations. The teacher's views, as determined from the survey, differed from those of her students, and, in general, when dealing with the same items,[5] she responded less favourably than did the students. (See Appendix G for a copy of the survey and Appendix M.2 for the translation of the teacher's responses.) The teacher indicated that she "(strongly) disagreed", for example, with the statements that the textbook was appropriate to the language and cognitive level of her students; that the topics were in accordance with the students' interests; that the tasks were achievable given the current circumstances; and that the textbook could meet students' wants and needs. However, the teacher "agreed" that the

[5] More than half of the (favourable) statements about the textbook concerned (Section B of the questionnaire) were also used in the (pre-observation) student questionnaire.

textbook's tasks were meaningful and relevant to the students' immediate environment, and that they would be conducive to student learning. Also, the teacher agreed that the classroom procedures recommended by the Teacher Book were generally do-able. Importantly, the teacher agreed that the book allowed flexibility for the teacher to be creative when teaching in the classroom.

With regard to her lessons the teacher reported that her first priority was given to teaching to exams, which were normally in the form of multiple choice questions and administered institutionally or regionally and which students needed to pass to move onto the subsequent year in high school as well as onto tertiary education. Perhaps as a result of that, the teacher perceived a "very serious" mismatch between the teaching methodology of the textbook, which prioritised teaching English communicatively, and the reality she faced in which exams were knowledge-oriented and showed little regard for aural and oral skills. With regard to classroom language use, the teacher reported that while the preferred ratio was 25% Vietnamese and 75% English, what currently happened was 50% for each because the "rural students' level was weak, particularly regarding listening and speaking, and too much use of English would leave students confused". The difference between the target and actual ratios was perhaps reasonable because classroom teachers would normally to have to make compromises between the desirable and the possible.

Of the five sections of the textbook, the teacher revealed that she gave the strongest focus to reading, followed by language focus and writing, with speaking and listening receiving the least focus. This bias was presumed to be in response to the emphasis given to exams, which predominantly included questions relating to the two prioritised areas the teacher mentioned. Concerning reading and listening lessons, the teacher reported that her major focus was to teach the strategies and skills required rather than to focus on the vocabulary and grammar activities in the textbook, which contradicted that which had been reported by her students. As such, although both the teacher's and the students' responses

were yet to be confirmed by classroom observation, her "politically correct" answer in consideration of the curriculum requirements was perceived as unlikely to be the case, particularly with reading, as the teacher had also previously claimed that priority was given to teaching to the exams.

With regard to the speaking lessons, the teacher answered in the affirmative to the question on whether she believed that the students received enough practice of the language functions required. Moreover, when asked about the writing skill covered during the lessons the teacher claimed to focus on teaching writing grammatical sentences, using appropriate vocabulary, organising paragraphs, and using correct spelling and mechanics. Lastly, concerning the language focus, the teacher thought that the book's focus points were useful for her students.

When surveyed on matters of assessment the teacher reported that the priority given to exam assessments had resulted in listening and speaking (not present in exams) skills being neglected and that there was an overemphasis on reading and language knowledge (heavily emphasised in the exams). With regard to classroom testing, the teacher indicated that she tended to reuse the texts already taught, sometimes with modifications (as for reading), or to decrease the difficulty required (writing). With listening and speaking, she reported that whole questions were often reused to alleviate students' preparation burden and to encourage listening and speaking practice. When teaching language focus the teacher reported that she used the texts and questions that had not been taught before, indicating her confidence in her students' language knowledge.

5.2.3 Summary

The results of the student and teacher surveys shed light on the differences in the users' perceptions of the effectiveness of the textbook, in addition to a variety of issues facing them in the classroom. While the students were generally in favour of the textbook, the teacher indicated that it was not really an appropriate course book for her students in terms of

its language and cognitive requirements, and in regard to the relevance of its topics to the students' interests and needs. Yet, the students and their teacher appeared to have similar reports of their actual lessons, which suggested what was taking place during the lessons was apparently not in line with how the textbook was intended to be used. There seemed to be an overemphasis on language knowledge, while the aural and oral skills were sidelined, presumably as a result of the influence of knowledge-oriented exams, which the teacher admitted to giving top priority. Also, the classroom activities were dominated by the teacher, and the interaction between the students and their use of English were limited. However, the teacher's responses indicated that the textbook was still teachable owing to its affordances for teacher creativity, to the Teacher Book's guidance, and surprisingly, to the way it related to the students' environment. Regarding the students, they were apparently happy with the lessons, indicating that the teacher's instruction was appropriate and useful for them in their particular context. The viewpoints of the students and the teacher gleaned from the questionnaire provided the point of departure for further inquiry during the classroom observations.

5.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

This section deals with the subsequent classroom lesson observations of the teacher and the students who had completed the questionnaires reported in the previous section. A few points need to be made about the ways in which the information in this section has been sourced and reported. First, the information provided in this section has been derived from three sources: (1) the notes taken from the researcher's classroom observation protocol; (2) the audio-recordings of the classroom sessions; and (3) and the subsequent interview feedback. The notes and audio recordings were complementary: Whereas the recordings recreate the lesson atmosphere and facilitate transcription of the exact wordings, the notes are particularly helpful in capturing what the students and the teacher produced in written mode

(usually on the blackboard). Second, according to the data collection plan, each classroom observation session was to be preceded by a pre-lesson discussion with the teacher, the topic of which was to be the lesson to be observed. However, for Case Study 1 it turned out that there were no lesson plans made on paper for any of the lessons the teacher taught throughout the school year, and that she was unable or unwilling to discuss her lessons in advance. What took place in lieu of the pre-lesson discussions was, when possible, a brief chat concerning what the lesson was going to be about.

It is also worth noting the unit coverage of the observations. The ideal "unit of analysis" for each case study was determined to be one complete unit from the textbook. However, for this class, the observation was sequenced from the last section of Unit 10 (language focus) through to all but the last section of the Unit 11 (reading, listening, speaking, and writing), which, in effect, also covered all five sections of a typical unit. The reason for this variation was to do with the permissions granted by the school and the classroom teacher based on the schedules for their tests and exams. In total there were four sessions observed, (one each for language focus, reading, speaking and writing, and listening), and each session comprised two periods. Thus, one unit of the textbook was taught across eight periods.

Although a full account of the "lesson proceedings" has been created for all sessions observed, only one excerpt from one lesson for each case study is provided in the body of this thesis. The detailed 'lesson proceedings' for the other observed sessions are provided in Appendix M.3. Each excerpt has been selected on the basis that it took place in the lesson that focused on speaking skills, which is a particularly important component of any textbook claiming to follow a communicative teaching approach, and, therefore, is appropriate for close examination in this thesis. In relation to Case Study 2, however, a proper speaking skill session was not available to be observed so a writing skill lesson was excerpted on the basis that it focused on productive skills development, akin to speaking skills. In the following

sections, overviews and post-lesson feedback are presented for all four sessions, but detailed lesson proceedings for the speaking lesson only are provided for Session 3.

5.3.1 Session 1

5.3.1.1 Overview

The first observation was of the language focus section of Unit 10 (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 133-136, see Appendix N) regarding the nominalisation of verbs with the suffix *-tion* (vocabulary), and the review of *should* and conditionals types 2 and 3 (grammar). The lessons were two periods, twice as long as the time allocated for the section by the curriculum (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 22). The vocabulary task required the students to complete five sentences using the correct nouns or verbs provided. The grammar section included three tasks: Task A required responses to the questions provided using *should* and the prompts in parentheses; Task B required the students to provide questions using type 2 conditionals; and Task C required the students to provide the correct verb form from a list of provided verbs.

5.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback

After the lesson, interviews were held with two selected students and the teacher about the session just observed. The selection of the student interviewees was based on their performance and motivation during the class as informed by the teacher. Of the selected students, one represented a highly capable and motivated student, and the other a student of average ability.

The student interview questions were primarily concerned with the points in the lesson that the students: (i) had found the most interesting or boring; relevant or irrelevant (to their wants and needs); difficult or easy; and (ii) would rather the teacher had spent more or less time on and why. The interviews were conducted in the school corridor as soon as the lesson ended, and each interview lasted up to four minutes. When interviewing the teacher, the interest was in why she had taught in the ways she did (e.g. more than or less than planned) and broadly whether she was happy or unhappy with the lesson and why. The

teacher interviews, however, did not take place as often or as thoroughly as expected because the teacher seemed unwilling to fully participate despite previously giving her consent. Also, it was quite difficult to locate her once she had left the class and the researcher had finished interviewing the students. To deal with this situation, the intended questions were put to the teacher when she met the researcher at a later time when she was willing to talk. These interviews normally lasted up to five minutes.

Student interviewee 1 found the first observed session interesting on the whole, particularly the teacher-provided exercises. She stated this was “because they meet my needs”, one of which was to go to a foreign language university. She found the textbook’s tasks suitable, but as for the extra exercises, she said more time would have allowed for clarification of some grammar points and new vocabulary. Student interviewee 2 said was going to take English as one of the three subjects for the university entrance exams. She also stated that she preferred the tasks in the textbook because they were more thematically related to the unit, and thus more relevant. To follow Task B both students reported that they had made prior preparations because they found it difficult. Not only did it require appropriate use of conditional tenses, the students were also required to come up with ideas and attempt sentence-building skills on their own. As for the other tasks, the students simply selected the right choice from the ones given, or were provided with suggested expressions.

The teacher affirmed the students’ feedback in her interview and stated that her students were only capable of accomplishing Task C, which simply required them to use the right verb forms (and anything else that was ready-made). As for Task B, the teacher indicated that the communication demands of the task were too overwhelming for the students. Also, because important exams would not include such questions, the task failed to fully engage the students. She said she would have liked to modify the task to make it more appropriate for the vast majority of the students.

5.3.2 Session 2

5.3.2.1 Overview

The data collection continued with the observation of Session 2, which was the reading comprehension section of Unit 11, *National Parks*. Within one period (i.e., 45 minutes) the teacher and her students covered two sub-sections, “Before You Read” and the main reading passage, thereby completing the gapped chart (Task A, Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 137-138, see Appendix N). The reading section included two more tasks (B and C) but they were yet to be done in the next lesson.

5.3.2.2 Post-lesson feedback

The two student interviewees found the task of completing the spidergrams the most interesting though, as observed, it was not completed despite the students’ collective effort. “The task”, said one interviewee, “helps to develop my vocabulary” and “it was fun to work with friends”. The other interviewee explained that she “found it challenging”. In terms of relevance, however, it was the true-false, matching and pronunciation tasks provided by the teacher that the two students found most directly related to their needs. “The exercises prepare me for the exams I will be taking”, said one of the informants.

The teacher interview revealed that, having been with the students, the teacher knew that the exercises were what the students needed because they served the practical purpose – preparing the students for their exams. “I had to take time to design the tasks myself”, said the teacher, “because the students need them more than they might need those of the textbook”. It should be noted that important exams almost always begin with a section on pronunciation, asking examinees to pick out the word from among the four choices for which the pronunciation of the part identified is different in terms of speech sound or stress pattern.

5.3.3 Session 3

5.3.3.1 Overview

The next session comprised lessons in speaking and writing separately taught in two consecutive periods. Full details of the proceedings from the speaking lesson on "Asking for Permission and Giving Reasons for Refusal" (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 141-143) are provided in the next section. Regarding the writing lesson, the main task was to write a short paragraph based on an interpretation of a graph, but it was preceded by quite a number of supposedly preparatory tasks including gap-filling, answering comprehension questions, writing based on prompts, and graph drawing.

5.3.3.2 Lesson proceedings: Speaking lesson

Minutes 1-4: (*The class did not start until four minutes after the bell rang.*)

Minutes 5-12: As usual, the first part of the lesson was set aside for lesson review, which was in fact regular student assessment. To the first student questioned, the teacher said in Vietnamese two of the key terms from the previous lesson and the student was to say the English equivalents. The student did it very well, *bao ton* → preserve and *thanh lap* → establish. Next, the teacher asked for a synonym of *yearly,* to which the student's response was "annual". The teacher then moved her focus to the second student and requested that she read aloud the reading passage from the previous lesson and then formulate questions about the total number of species of birds, reptiles and amphibians, which were present in the textbook. The student's questions were correctly formed.

Minutes 13-15: After the lesson review the class turned to the speaking lesson. In the lead-in, the teacher asked, "How can you say if you come to class late?" [sic] To this broad question a student responded; "May I come in?" The teacher continued, "During class, if you want to go out, how can you say?" [sic] After a period of silence from the students the teacher repeated the question, and this time another student provided the response; "May I go out?"

Following the two student-produced responses the teacher explained the uses of *may* in “May I go out/come in?” which led to the topic of the lesson: “Asking for Permission and Giving Reasons for Refusal”. She then wrote on the blackboard the expressions as examples, which the students then copied into their notebooks.

Minutes 16-19: The teacher wrote on the board a number of expressions used to ask for permission, some of which were already provided in the textbook. The students again copied those expressions into their notebooks.

Minute 20: Working in pairs, the students filled in the gapped exchanges in Task A (p. 141). The possible fillers were selected from the prompts provided. The task was completed well.

Minute 21: In pairs, the students had one minute to practise saying the expressions in Task B and the conversational exchanges in Task A. The exchanges were only fairly fluent as students had some difficulty in pronouncing the words and sentences.

Minutes 22-24: The teacher selected students to stand up and speak the exchanges. Students did so in pairs but the partners were from different tables to make the task more challenging. Despite some halting English, the students did a relatively good job.

Minutes 25-27: The teacher wrote expressions on the board which were examples of making a refusal, some of which were already in the textbook. The students copied the examples into their notebooks. Also, the teacher explained several words in the prompts provided which she thought to be new vocabulary.

Minutes 28-41: In pairs, the students were selected to practise exchanges about ways to preserve the natural environment based on the sample conversation and the prompts provided. The first pair was assisted by the teacher to choose the appropriate expressions and the right forms of verbs. Accordingly, they got through the task quite well. The second pair performed much better, but the third pair failed completely. The fourth pair struggled to choose the appropriate expressions and to use the correct verb forms.

Minutes 42-45: The whole class was working on Task C. The teacher provided scenarios in which the students could create relevant exchanges. The first scenario written on the blackboard by the teacher was “in the park”. “Anybody mind”, suggested one student, “if people litter in the park?” The next scenario identified by the teacher was; “in the school yard”. A student said, “Anybody mind if we litter garbage?” – “I’d rather you didn’t. It will damage our environment”. Between the teacher’s prompts and the students’ responses there were of course pauses, even long ones, and the students’ utterances were in halting English in many instances.

The class then had a break before returning to begin the writing lesson (see the full details of the proceedings in Appendix M.3).

5.3.3.3 Post-lesson feedback

According to both student interviewees, of the two lessons on speaking and writing, the latter was found to be more interesting and necessary. First, the students felt some “intelligence was needed for the ‘translating’ of information from the graph” and putting it into a paragraph, thus making the task challenging and exciting. Second, it was an opportunity for student written work to be corrected directly and immediately by the teacher. “It was such an occasion for me to be corrected by the teacher”, said one student. As for the speaking lesson, the student said that the interaction in English, though minimal (as observed), was such an effort for the whole class because, as she said, “speaking English is rare at my school”. It was not common for them, she said, to be involved and speak English as it happened, let alone speak good or fluent English.

The teacher disclosed in her post-lesson interview that the students would normally have enjoyed more challenging activities as required by tasks B and C of the writing section. She added, however, that for practical purposes the tasks were not the type of exercises students needed for the tests and exams. In the teacher’s opinion, both she and the students

should therefore refrain from getting too absorbed in such time-consuming tasks so as to save time for the exam practice exercises.

5.3.4 Session 4

5.3.4.1 Overview

The last session observed was a listening lesson (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 140-141). According to the order of presentation in the textbook, this lesson should have come before the reading lesson, but, as explained by the teacher, it was postponed until this time due to the unavailability of the disc. In this session there were four tasks for the students to complete, including a pre-listening pair work talk on national parks, a while-listening activity requiring scanning skills, another while-listening activity involving answering comprehension questions, and a post-listening group discussion.

5.3.4.2 Post-lesson feedback

One of the interesting points revealed through the interview with the students was that they really enjoyed listening to the disc because, in the words of one of the informants, “the pronunciation was real English”. They said that normally there had been no disc or tape being played and the teacher had instead read aloud the listening script. This was confirmed by the teacher who said she was not normally in possession of the disc for the lesson. “This is a special occasion as we have you visiting our class”, she said, “and so I had a friend send the disc from Nam Da City”. The teacher added, given the time constraints and the students’ reception capacity, it was more practical that her focus be on language knowledge and reading skills rather than spending time on listening and speaking tasks. This neglect of listening was in part due to the absence of listening tasks in exams and tests. English was a difficult subject for the rural students and their teachers were trying to simplify the requirements by, for instance, cutting off whatever was unnecessary and focusing on what was essential.

5.3.5 Post-observation survey

On the basis of the number of notes taken during the sessions observed, a short questionnaire (see Appendix F.1) was designed and administered by the researcher during the lesson several days later. The questionnaire included statements of the researcher's lesson observations and asked the students to confirm/refute whether they thought the observations were correct. In several places, they were asked to explain their observation briefly. It took the respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. There were 50 questionnaires handed back, achieving a 98% rate of return.

The first questionnaire item sought students' opinions about the reading lesson. The majority of the students claimed that they found it suitable. When asked, however, if they had understood the reading texts, the responses were more representative of the difficulty experienced by students who were struggling with their skills, as one-third of the respondents said they had not really understood, or had not understood the reading excerpts at all. When asked if they would rather their teacher explain the texts in greater detail or translate them into Vietnamese, most students answered in the affirmative. These results help to explain why the teacher used Vietnamese so often in the classroom.

Regarding the listening lessons, all of the respondents answered "no" when asked if they were able to do the textbook tasks after the first hearing. The situation got better after the second and third hearings of the listening passage when about three quarters of the respondents found it easier to deal with the tasks when facilitated by the teacher. This made clear the reason why the teacher played the same passage several times.

In relation to the speaking lessons, very few students thought that the language functions practice in the classroom was boring. This small percentage indicates that most students were aware of the necessity of practising the expressions repeatedly, and perhaps even acknowledges their willingness to do so. As a result, this turned out to be quite a contrast to the teacher's concerns that such practice would be too repetitious for the students.

When asked further whether the practice done in the lesson was adequate for them, the “yes” respondents accounted for only 37.8%, leaving quite a number of students ready to practise more for what was not deemed necessary for current tests and exams, thereby giving hope for students’ willingness to actually practise speaking.

The concern with the writing lessons centred on whether the students found themselves to be more interested in pre-writing than in writing activities as observed. The majority confirmed this was the case. The difference in interest was due to the excitement associated with the pre-writing activities. It was during this time that the students engaged in more interaction with the teacher and amongst themselves and had more freedom to express themselves, whereas during the while-writing activities the students were constrained by the targets they were set to achieve and because they had to work individually. These results correlate with those of the students’ perceived strong interest and excitement during the time for game play. Indeed, when asked to react to this perception, most students stated it was the case.

With regard to the extra lessons, again, the majority of students found them interesting and necessary, but more respondents opted for the latter (necessary, 85%) rather than the former (interesting, 69.4%). It is assumed that the reason for this popularity is, again, related to the relevance of the content of the extra lessons to the tests and exams that the students would be taking. Indeed, the time was primarily spent doing tasks closely related to the tests and exams, just like test practice time.

Concerning the observation that students seemed to be more occupied with the practice of grammar and vocabulary exercises, 90% agreed this was the case. The high consensus could be accounted for by the heavy emphasis in the tests and exams on knowledge questions rather than skills questions. To relate to testing and assessment practices, more than half of the students agreed that the current practices neglected the

development of listening and speaking skills. As a result, their study of the aural and oral skills was left unattended as confirmed by the majority of the students.

Thus, the results of the post-observation survey confirmed what was noted in the classroom observations about the students' struggling with the textbook. Indeed, more than one third of the students had difficulty in understanding the reading texts, and translation was preferred by the majority of the students to facilitate their comprehension. Moreover, all students were reportedly unable to do the task upon the first hearing during the listening lesson. Regarding production skills, most students did not think that classroom speaking practice sufficed; whereas in regard to the writing lesson the students seemed to be more interested in lead-in activities in which students were allowed to work together in a relaxed atmosphere. For the same reason, the students confirmed they enjoyed the game activities.

5.3.6 Summary

A variety of reasons may be cited as to why conditions in the RHS observed class were not really conducive to the use of the textbook as it had been intended to be used, even though the textbook was closely adhered to. First, the lessons focused on learning language knowledge rather than practising language skills, an orientation reportedly defined by current testing and assessment practices. Exam-oriented exercises supplemented by the teacher were apparently done with greater interest and attention than were textbook tasks. Moreover, the teacher did not appear to be keen on allowing the students to get too involved in the textbook tasks as they were not deemed compatible with exam preparation targets. Second, the classroom activities were all teacher-directed and dominated by teacher talk, which was estimated to account for 70% of the talk time. Generally, students worked individually and mainly said English phrases provided in the textbook. When there were times for students to make exchanges in English, they were mainly drills and the exchanges were in halting English. They seemed to be *learning about* English rather than *learning* English. Third, the students' English and background knowledge appeared to be too inadequate to undertake the

textbook tasks, which basically made the lessons an attempt to answer the task questions rather than perform them and facilitate English communication. Students proved to have real difficulty in expressing themselves in English and perhaps for that reason, Vietnamese was predominantly used both by the students and the teacher. The actual ratio in the classes was approximately 70% Vietnamese – 30% English, which was different from the teacher's reported ratio of 50% for the use of each language. The next section will touch upon some of these same issues as we explore this case study in more depth from the teaching and administrative perspectives.

5.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS

After the completion of the classroom observations separate interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and the RHS head English teacher. It was anticipated that the interview with the classroom teacher would provide further insight into the lessons observed; whereas the interview with the head teacher was conducted in order to gain a better understanding of how the broader context in which the textbook was being implemented might have affected the classroom proceedings at RHS.

5.4.1 Classroom teacher

This section reports the interview with the classroom teacher which was designed to help clarify the points noted during the classroom observation and, importantly, to understand the key local educational issues from her perspective. It was conducted in Vietnamese, lasting approximately one hour, but was not audio-recorded at the request of the teacher. (See Appendix M.4 for the translation of the interview transcript.) The researcher made notes during and after the interview. The interview with the classroom teacher revealed that, from her perspective, the teachability of the textbook was challenged by a variety of problems which included the textbook itself, the students, the influence of exams, inadequate teacher training in relation to the deployment of the textbook, and the classroom conditions.

According to the teacher, two important factors affecting the teachability of the textbook were that it was too difficult for the students and that its content was not relevant to their interests and needs. In response to the researcher's observation that the students were not very active in the lesson, the teacher explained that the main reason for this was the students' ability levels. "They had real difficulty in understanding the passages and task instructions", said the teacher (21:1).[6] The teacher explained that the students' English language skills were not developed enough for them to understand the tasks' requirements (25:1), for the task rubrics were all in English. The teacher noted that the students' correctly answering the questions in the textbook did not necessarily mean that they understood the task requirements because they might have copied the answer key, for instance, from the Teacher Book (25:3). The teacher pointed out that when the students were presented with teacher-made tasks many of them who normally provided correct answers to the questions in the textbook were perplexed (25:4). Due to the background of the students, according to the teacher, unless Vietnamese was the primary language used the lessons could not progress (7:3). Moreover, for much the same reason, the teacher had to translate the rubrics into Vietnamese to make sure the students understood exactly what they were required to do (25:2).

Indeed, it was emphasised by the teacher that the textbook was difficult for rural students (13:4). She said that while they might try to cope with the reading, writing and the language knowledge sections, listening and speaking presented very real challenges for the

[6] What was cited by the rural classroom teacher in this section (i.e. 5.4.1) all refers to her interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendices M.4. The number(s) in the parentheses refer(s) to the location(s) of the response(s) concerned: The number(s) before and, if any, following the colon respectively indicate(s) the block number and sentence number (in superscript) in the block. So, for example, (21:1-4, 6; 7) refers to the responses found in Block 21, Sentences 1-4 and 6 and in Block 7 in the appendix concerned (i.e. M.4).

students (13:1, 3). The teacher said that her students were unable to understand spoken English and “to open their mouths” to speak English (13:2). In the teacher’s opinion, the previous textbooks were able to facilitate better learning outcomes because they accommodated her students’ needs; namely lessons in reading, language knowledge, and writing (2:1). By contrast, the new textbook included two ‘extra’ sections on listening and speaking and, in her view, this stretched the students’ capacity to engage and concentrate (2:2). More specifically, the teacher felt the reading passages were “dry”, saying it was as if they had been taken from a geography text (31:2). Furthermore, in relation to the listening tasks, the teacher commented that they would have been more suitable for her students if, for instance, they had required the students to choose a picture rather than write down complete sentence answers (33:1), which, as she remarked, was such an ordeal for the students.

In addition, the teacher commented that several of the textbook’s topics were not really relevant or meaningful to the lives of rural students (15:1). Citing “preservation of nature” as an example, the teacher said that in her opinion it was hard for the students to talk about such topics as many of them might never have heard the terms (15:2). Urban students, she speculated, might well find such topics familiar and they might have picked up some ideas about them from their reading of newspapers, which were not readily available in the countryside (15:3).

Another factor that made it difficult to implement the textbook, both in terms of the goal it sets out to achieve (i.e., English communication) and the learning pathway to be followed to achieve the goal (e.g., group and pair work) is the context in which the textbook was being taught. According to the teacher, extensive use of English, and pair and group work as required by the textbook were hardly possible in her classroom because the students’ limited English language proficiency inhibited their participation and interaction and because the classroom amenities were not conducive to the learning activities required (7:1-2, 5). The teacher noted that the students’ limited language proficiency was then coupled with defensive

mechanisms, particularly from the weaker students, which made them even more reluctant to get involved in the learning activity (21:2). In addition, the teacher went on to suggest that the unfavourable classroom conditions such as the large class size and the rigid classroom layout were a hindrance to carrying out the activities recommended by the textbook (7:5).

The emphasis on exams was also a factor that adversely impacted the implementation of the textbook. Although the new textbook aimed to develop the students' communicative competence, it was pointed out by the teacher that parents and the school board did not care much about those outcomes (9:1-2). She said the parents just wanted their children to pass the tests and exams and then, if possible, to enter college or university (9:2, 4). The teacher contended that attempts to foster English communication or engagement by way of pair and group work were incongruent with the students' needs. As she indicated, the perception was that there needed to be a focus on testing students' knowledge of the language in order to help them to pass the exams (7:4). This was perhaps the reason for the students' poor pronunciation skills as observed by the researcher, because, to accommodate the exams, attention was primarily given to correct answers in writing (23:3).

The importance given to exams as drivers of educational outcomes was even reinforced in some of the teacher's comments. Indeed, the teacher proposed that the textbook tasks and its Work Book should use the same format as the secondary education graduation and university admission exams (i.e., multiple-choice questions) so that the students would be more interested and engaged in the learning activities (33:4). Furthermore, she wanted speaking skills to be included in the exams to increase the students' interests in developing their skills in this area (33:4). The teacher's orientation towards teaching the students according to the exam format is further evidenced in her claim that said she had to spend her own time preparing pronunciation test items in the style of the exams (33:5-6) as they were not included in the textbook.

Another factor that jeopardised the appropriate implementation of the textbook was improper and inadequate teacher training and support in relation to the deployment of the textbook. The teacher complained that the vast majority of English classes at RHS were following the regular programme. As a result, all of the teaching seminars and equipment were oriented towards teaching the textbooks of that programme, leaving the minority (accomplishing the intensive English programme) to manage by themselves (11:5-7). The interviewee said she was teaching the intensive programme based on her own interpretation and understanding of the instructions provided in the Teacher Book (11:5), which comprised only a dozen or so pages.

Finally, it was revealed that all of the challenges detailed above were exacerbated by the large-sized classes filled with students of mixed ability and motivation levels. The teacher commented that large classes made it difficult to ensure that all of the students participated and were provided with timely assistance. If the classes were smaller in size, she said, more student talk could be fostered and more attention could be paid to individual students (29:3-4). According to the teacher, pair and group work in particular presented real challenges to the less capable students who dreaded such activities and felt increasingly reluctant to participate (11:2). Moreover, this negativity may have also affected the classroom ambience as, according to the teacher, the better students were afraid to appear to be “showing off” if they kept monopolising the lesson (21:3). Also, she said care could be taken to enrol only students who were truly interested in studying English to ensure their commitment to the intensive English programme, as the less interested members had hampered the excitement and progress in the class lessons (29:6-7). The current class, the teacher disclosed, was comprised of many students who had been unsuccessful in their entrance tests into other selective subject classes and who were naturally not keen to study English (29:6).

In summary, the interview with the classroom teacher revealed that she believed the teachability of the textbook to be challenged in many ways. First, the textbook was too

difficult for the students and its content was not relevant to their interests and needs. Second, due to students' limited English skills and the unfavourable classroom conditions, the textbook could not be implemented according to its stated goals and suggested learning pathways. Third, because exam success was a priority outcome for parents and the school board, the classroom lessons had to prioritise exam preparation tasks which did not always align with the intended purpose of the textbook. Fourth, without proper training prior to, or support following, the deployment of the new material, the teacher was apparently left to learn for herself how to use the textbook and how to adopt a completely new teaching methodology. Finally, all of these challenges were aggravated by the problem of large class sizes and the mixed ability and motivation levels of the students.

5.4.2 Head teacher

The aim of the interview with RHS's head English teacher was to learn about the overriding problems and issues relevant to the teaching and learning of English in the particular class being observed. In addition, the interview was also a method to verify the data gathered though the other collection instruments. As the interviewee once taught the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook under evaluation, the information he provided was also that of a former user of the material. This interview was held at the end of the classroom observations in an office at the youth union, and it lasted for approximately one hour. During this time there was no else present except for the researcher and the interviewee. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese and audio-recorded for verbatim transcription. (See Appendix M.5 for the translation of the interview transcript.) Also, the researcher took notes during the meeting as an aid for further inquiry and later review.

It became evident during the interview that the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook was seriously challenged by inadequate teacher training in the deployment of the textbook. At issue, in particular, were the procedures of classroom implementation of the textbook's tasks and practical considerations of how to deal with the exam-oriented mentality

of society. In addition, the pervasive influence of exams at RHS, the students' limited English, and (for many of them) their seemingly mistaken decisions to enrol in the intensive English programme were also factors impacting the textbook's implementation.

First, as the leader of the English teachers' team, the head teacher was asked about the preparations made for the teachers at his school in how to use the new textbooks. He stated that there was a four-day seminar run by the provincial Service of Education and Training held in a district nearby during the summer break prior to the introduction of each of the three textbooks for Years 10-12. However, the seminars only focused on the textbooks for the regular programme, even though the textbooks for the intensive English programme were being deployed at the same time. "There was no training session for the intensive programme", he said, "it was all about the regular one. Because there were very few classes taking the intensive programme, the Service of Education and Training didn't take into account the intensive programme" (10:1-2).[7]

Therefore, teachers had to learn how to use the textbooks of the intensive programme on their own. This process of self-study was therefore based on the assumption of the transferability of what was learned from the seminars on the use of the textbooks for the regular programme. In turn, this posed the risk of teachers failing to understand adequately what was required by the students in the intensive programme. He said; "Teachers base themselves on what they have learned about the regular programme. The classroom procedures and steps are based on what was learned from the seminars" (34:1-2).

The head teacher reported that at RHS, following the training seminars, there was no form of organised support for classroom teachers to deal with the problems they might face when implementing the new textbooks (76:1). According to the head teacher, there was

[7] What was cited by the rural head teacher in this section (i.e. 5.4.2) all refers to his interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendix M.5. The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6, Chapter 5.

occasionally a one-day symposium for teachers from schools in the same region to get together to exchange teaching ideas and experience (80:3-4), but at such events, in the interviewee's words, "the textbooks of the intensive programme aren't tabled for discussion; just those of the regular programme" (86:2).

Furthermore, there is also the issue of testing and assessment practices which is deemed to be a problem inhibiting the use of the textbooks in accordance with the new methodology that aims to develop the communication skills of the students. The head teacher revealed that the teaching and learning of English at his school was apparently defined and driven by the format of the tests and exams, of which "the emphasis is on knowledge rather than skills" (191:1). According to the head teacher, in their classroom lessons "the target is to prepare students to do as well as possible at tests and exams" (205:1) rather than develop students' English communication skills. The head teacher's responses indicated that attention was mainly given to teaching knowledge, not skills, because "in order to achieve the target exam success, you'll have to teach as much grammar as possible" (207:1).

The highly likely impact of these practices is that the importance of the skills, especially listening and speaking skills, will be de-emphasised. In fact, according to the teacher, the two skills would not be taught at his school unless they were included in tests and exams. For the time being, he stated, the classroom teaching and learning activities were basically geared to exam results; and so the two sections in the textbook dealing with listening and speaking skills were never taught because the time was taken up with practice for exams:

> EXCERPT 5.1 There's never been enough time to touch upon those sections of listening and speaking. For us, the priority is to prepare students for exams, which come in the form of the multiple-choice questions. The primary concern is their language knowledge, so there's no time to touch upon those two sections (100:2-4).

This reiterates the point previously noted by the classroom teacher that for the sake of good exam results the allocation of multiple-choice test items in the Work Book at the

expense of the listening and speaking sections was warranted. The head teacher was quite practical:

> EXCERPT 5.2 The Work Book has almost no multiple-choice question exercises, whereas the current tests and exams have multiple-choice test items. So, that's where the book is inadequate. I mean "almost none"… In my opinion, listening and speaking should be omitted from the Work Book… because they are unnecessary… They use up space in the book, which isn't plentiful. So we should omit them and instead have more space for multiple-choice test practice exercises (96:1-3; 98:2-3).

The reason for the Work Book not containing multiple-choice questions is that it was developed based on the Student Book, which aims to develop students' communication skills with communicative tasks rather than prepare students for exams. It should be noted that the "multiple-choice test items" the head teacher was referring to were those which would typically appear in important exams, and which completely neglected the direct assessment of the students' listening and speaking skills. (Please see Appendix A for sample exam test items.) The head teacher's suggestion seemed to indicate that the pressure placed on teacher to have their students do well in the exams was very heavy. Importantly, there is also the implication that the listening and speaking skills were given inadequate attention in the classroom lessons, if not entirely neglected.

Apart from the testing and assessment issue, it was disclosed during the interview with the head teacher that the textbook was too difficult for the students at RHS, and that many of the students involved in this case study had not chosen to be in the intensive English class because they were keen to study English. He said that in his rural area there were few students whose English was good enough for the study of English in the intensive programme and even those students tended to choose to study intensive science programmes instead. The textbooks of the regular programme, as intended by the curriculum, were perceived to be at an easier level (239:1) and thus more comfortable for the students to study. The head teacher stated that the establishment of just one intensive English class was an achievement on the

part of school management which had to appeal to, and even force, some students to join the class:

> EXCERPT 5.3 There are few students whose English is good enough to follow the D stream to go to university. Right, so for us, one class is itself a big achievement; we had to force students to have that class… We had to call for the participation of students from the regular programme. If we hadn't done that, there'd not have been enough students for the one class (the intensive programme). They are more interested in math, physics, and chemistry, and, as such, it's easier for them to take the regular programme of English. (229:2-3; 231:2-4)

At RHS it was not a priority for students with limited resources and interest to be studying English intensively. Also, the school culture proved to be non-conducive to English learning. Once the students enrolled in the intensive English class, however, they had to make reasonable choices to optimise their exam performance by studying what was required in their exam. Indeed, when invited to share his opinions on any issues concerning the teaching and learning of English at RHS, the head teacher commented that the students' English was quite below the level required by the textbook prescribed for them, making studying with the textbook a real challenge (241:3-4). In particular, with respect to aural and oral skills, he said:

> EXCERPT 5.4 The majority of students are below average in terms of listening and speaking. That's why I used English just 25% of the time of my lessons. It's about listening. With regard to speaking, it seems that students are too shy to open their mouths. (265:2-5)

When elaborating on his comments about the students' aural and oral skills the head teacher stated that the majority of the students were not motivated to learn listening and speaking skills. Again, it was reinforced that the reason for this lack of motivation was that the skills were not components of exams and as a result there was no real practical need for the students to learn the skills (291-294). The only students who might care about these skills, according to the head teacher, were those participating in the contests for outstanding students, of which listening, and still not speaking, was a component (293:1). Consequently,

the classroom lessons on listening and speaking are “very boring hours, very boring indeed” (293:3).

In summarising the interview with the head teacher it is evident that there were significant problems regarding the use of the textbook at RHS. First, teachers were not adequately prepared or supported in how to teach the textbook or in how to adopt a methodology which was completely different to what they were used to. In fact, they had to rely on training sessions relating to the implementation of the textbooks for a different programme. Second, the priority given to exam performance was so strong that the lessons had to focus on what was required in the exams (i.e., teaching knowledge for multiple-choice tests) at the expense of the textbook’s aims and objectives. Finally, the students’ limited English speaking ability and their low level of interest in developing their English skills cast a shadow over their suitability for inclusion in the English intensive programme. Yet, they enrolled for extrinsic motivations (e.g. responding to the school board’s appeal) and consequently found themselves overwhelmed by the process of studying the textbook.

5.4.3 Summary

The interviews with the classroom and the head teacher confirmed much of what was noted in the surveys and the classroom observations. One of the more salient points was the students’ lack of ability and motivation to study English intensively, making it hard for them to study the textbook as it was envisioned to be used. The second important point was the profound adverse impact of exams on the classroom lessons, making them knowledge- rather than communication-oriented as desired by the textbook. This problem was compounded by the students’ limited English, by the absence of the need to use English communicatively, and, importantly, by the pressure to achieve exam success from students, parents and the school board. The head teacher was even more emphatic than the classroom teacher on the need to teach only what was needed for exam preparation, even if this meant demoting aural and oral skills. Third, there was a serious lack of preparatory work undertaken for the

introduction of the new textbooks, especially in relation to the training of teachers in how to use the textbook and follow-up support during the implementation process. Left alone to cope with the materials written with a methodology quite different from what they had been most familiar with, teachers could not have been expected to succeed in resisting the temptation to fall back on the teaching practices with which they were most comfortable.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The focus of Case Study 1 was on the implementation of a unit of the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook in a Year 10 class studying intensive English at a rural high school. Multiple sources and methods were used to collect relevant information for the evaluation of the textbook in this particular context.

It was revealed that the textbook was not effectively implemented. Although the textbook was quite highly evaluated by students in the student pre-observation survey, this view did not seem to be in evidence in the actual classroom observations and subsequent interviews, nor was it supported by the results of the survey with the classroom teacher. The textbook was not really implemented according to the methodology it prescribed, making it difficult to achieve the stated goals and objectives. Moreover, the students did not prove to be capable to accomplish the textbook tasks as required. In fact, communicative competence was neglected and more attention was given to teaching language knowledge in preparation for exams.

A number of reasons have been cited to account for this situation. First, the students' English proficiency was inadequate to enable them to study the textbook as desired. The students found it impossible to communicate in English according to the textbook requirements when they had difficulty pronouncing individual words. Also, the teacher did not attempt to downgrade the textbook's task to students' level, which may be attributed to the inadequate teacher preparation in relation to the deployment of the new textbook. It would

be unreasonable to expect teachers to virtually translate what they had been taught in relation to the methodology of another textbook into their classroom implementation of the textbook as the two textbooks were created by a completely different team of writers. Furthermore, the motivation of the students was simply to study to pass the exams that demanded knowledge acquisition rather than skill fluency, and more language recognition rather than production skills. Driven by the need to go further with their studies, which would depend on their exam performance, the students' studies were inevitably and legitimately focused on what was needed for exam success. The defining power of exams was a decisive factor because even if the textbook were made easier, the classroom lessons would not necessarily have been easier. In addition, the classroom conditions required for the methodology implementation of the textbook were unavailable as it was a large class with a rigid classroom layout. This prevented the easy and frequent movement of the furniture which is normally required for language learning activities.

From a broader perspective, the effective implementation of the textbook was challenged by a variety of other reasons. First, there is the question of relevance. Not only was there a question mark over the relevance to the students of the textbook content, its aims were impractical for rural students who, for the most part, did not need to be able to communicate in English. Second, quite a number of the students did not really want to take the intensive English programme, and were either forced into the class or they had no better option. Not only was this lack of learning motivation detrimental to their own study, it was also a disadvantage to the learning atmosphere of the whole class. This problem was coupled with the fact that there was nowhere in the community where English communication could be practised or where such abilities had an opportunity to be brought into use.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY 2: URBAN SCHOOL

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the second case study involving the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* student textbook. As with the previous chapter profiling the first case study, it begins with a description of the context in which the textbook was used, and then presents a summary of the results of the pre-observation questionnaire completed by the students and the teacher. Following this, the chapter reports on the classroom observation of the lessons in which the textbook was used, and then proceeds to provide a summary of the results from the student post-observation questionnaire. The chapter will then report on the interviews with the classroom teacher and the head teacher, before concluding with a chapter summary.

6.1 CONTEXT

6.1.1 The school

The second case study presents details of a class in a national urban selective high school (hereafter called Urban Selective High School [USHS]) located in an age-old central district in one of the largest commercial hubs of Vietnam. Admission to the school is very competitive as it selects students from all over the country. It has a reputation for high student academic achievement and high-profile teachers. For the school year 2008-2009, for instance, as many as 3,947 candidates registered for the entry exams, and of this number, only 300 were selected as students. In addition, by 2009, 450 medals from national contests and 24 medals from international contests had been awarded to its students. Moreover, with regard to the staff at the school as many as 60% of the teachers were visiting lecturers invited from colleges and universities.

Unlike the other selective schools in its city, USHS is not under the administration of the local education and training service. Established as an institution belonging to a university, the orientation of the school is towards training outstanding students for provincial, national and international contests. This unique position, coupled with the fact that most of its teaching staff were from tertiary institutions, allows it to be very flexible in the delivery of its programmes. As suggested by the school's deputy principal, the teaching content and pace of learning at the school is not strictly formalised, thereby allowing greater freedom in relation to course implementation.

At the time of data collection the school had three classes in each year level taking the intensive programme of English. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the classes and students at USHS according to the type of English programme they were taking.

Table 6.1

USHS's Students and Classes by Type of English Programme, School Year 2008-2009

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
Regular programme				
No. of classes	6	6	6	18
No. of students	211	209	176	596
Intensive programme				
No. of classes	3	3	3	9
No. of students	87	86	57	230
% of total student number	29.2	29.2	24.5	27.8

Although the table shows that slightly more than a quarter of the USHS student population was taking the English intensive programme, the figure is not actually high relative to the percentages of students enrolled in English intensive programmes at "rival" schools in the city. It should be noted that the school's implementation of the intensive programme did not necessarily entail the actual classroom use of the textbooks specified by

the Ministry of Education and Training. Instead, the teaching content was left more to the discretion of classroom teachers.

It is partly for this reason that the second case study was done on the class specialising in Vietnamese. Of the three Year 10 classes at USHS, this is the only one where it was claimed that the textbook under evaluation was actually used in the lessons. Another reason for selecting this class was the fact that the students' subject of concentration was Vietnamese and this helped to differentiate this case study from the other two.

6.1.2 The class

6.1.2.1 The students

The class size of 25 students was somewhat ideal for a language class. This size, however, was not so much due to the nature of the school, which was highly selective, but was more to do with the nature of the subject – not many students or parents were really keen on taking Vietnamese as a subject of concentration. (Vietnamese, unlike sciences such as math, is not perceived as one of the exam subjects that can offer many pathways for students to pursue tertiary education that promises good employment opportunities in the future.) In fact, this was one of the smallest classes in the school.

The weekly time allocation for English learning by this class was five periods, one period more than the standard for all Year 10 students following the intensive programme of English. As the students' subject of concentration was Vietnamese, English was presumably not getting their full focus. Apart from Vietnamese and English, the students of this class were also enrolled in the intensive programmes in math and history, an orientation undertaken presumably to allow students' more pathways towards tertiary education through two streams: D1 stream (math, Vietnamese and English); and H stream (Vietnamese, history and English), which are the two major pathways to colleges and universities – public and private alike – and both involving English exams.

The students came from the cities and the provinces, mostly from within southern Vietnam, and were filtered on the basis of their exam results in math, Vietnamese, and English, as well as an additional exam in Vietnamese with a more demanding scoring rubric. When the students' English learning capabilities were positively correlated with their general academic levels in those three subjects, it was assumed that they were at a reasonable entry level of English.

According to the results of the survey conducted prior to the classroom observation, the students all believed English to be a necessary subject to study and most claimed they liked studying it. It was reported by most students that their most important need was to study English for their admission to tertiary education. While this need is quite common among high school students, the pressure to do well at learning English was arguably even greater for these students who did not want to suffer the perceived embarrassment of attending such a respectable national selective school only to be unable to become a college/university student. This expectation might adversely affect students' studying with the textbook because the focus of the textbook (developing communication skills) was different from that of the university entrance exams (testing mainly language knowledge). In addition, it was noted that many students claimed they were studying English because of the opportunity it provided them to study overseas in the future. Indeed, the goal to study overseas was common among students at USHS, many of whom go abroad for study by the time they reach Year 12, and, as such, the goal was perceptibly favourable for communicative language teaching.

6.1.2.2 Classroom layout

The classroom had a traditional Vietnamese layout: two sections, each seating a dozen students, divided by an aisle in the middle. The furniture included wooden tables and benches that faced toward the blackboard on the front wall, each of which accommodated two or three students. Although language learning activities often require a rearrangement of the classroom furniture, it was difficult in these circumstances because the furniture was unable

to be moved easily or folded at all. Moreover, the expectation was that the layout was to be kept intact for the next lesson as the room was used by many classes.

However, as the classroom was small and housed only a relatively small number of students, the communication between all people in the room was much easier than is normally the case. If the students raised their voices they could easily make themselves clearly audible to their classmates and the teacher at her desk in the far corner from the entrance. Moreover, a microphone and a loudspeaker with an inbuilt disc player – normally for teacher use only – were available to the students upon request to facilitate their perception of sounds. Such equipment was generally considered to be 'ideal' for language classes in Vietnam schools where external noise is a constant distraction.

6.1.3 The teacher

The teacher was a woman in her mid-20s who was in the initial stages of her teaching career. She had graduated from university just three years prior to the launch of the textbook under evaluation, and had been working at USHS since then.

In practical terms, the teacher's background brought with it potential advantages to the implementation of a communicative approach to teaching as communicative language teaching was a major aspect of the English language teaching methodology required of her during her university education. Thus, her teaching practices would likely not have been unduly shaped by traditional teaching methods despite certain impacts from her years as a high school student. Lastly, working at USHS, she would not necessarily have been susceptible to old-style traditional teaching practices by colleagues as may have been the case if she was teaching at another ordinary school. Indeed, working at a school where many of her colleagues were university lecturers, the teacher could well have been exposed to, and inspired by the use of more contemporary teaching methodology.

Regarding the textbook under evaluation, this year was the first time the teacher had used it within her lesson delivery. What she based her lesson preparation on, however, was

merely her understanding of the curriculum guidelines. As reported in her questionnaire responses, no formal training for the use of the new textbook was made available to her despite the fact that she missed the teacher training seminars that were only offered once when the textbook was introduced three years earlier. Also, she had not received any on-the-job support to help her familiarise herself with the use of the new textbook. As a result, while she claimed that she had an understanding of the aims and objectives to be achieved, and the types of activities and classroom techniques the textbook encouraged, perhaps she did not really understand the approaches and methods to be used with the textbook, the specific outcomes to be achieved, or the primary role of the teacher. In other words, the teacher basically set out to teach the textbook in the ways she might have believed they should be taught, rather than in accordance with the prescribed method.

6.1.4 Summary

This case study focused on a class that demonstrated conditions quite conducive to the use of the textbook for communicative language learning. Despite their subject of concentration being Vietnamese, the students had the capacity to learn English and actively participate in the class given the small class size and the students' general academic achievements and background. In addition, because the teacher was commencing her career it could be assumed that she had not been shaped by the traditional teaching methods and expectations that might adversely affect her use of the textbook and her capacity to adopt the new methodology. Furthermore, in this quite non-traditional national selective school setting with its relaxed administration, the teacher and the students were free to use the textbook in ways that teachers and students at other schools would not have been able to do. Nevertheless, using the textbook according to the stated aims (promoting students' English communication) still had its challenges, particularly in relation to exam pressure (testing knowledge in the multiple-choice style) – and its importance to gain access into tertiary education. Moreover, another challenge was that the teacher received almost no training or

support towards the implementation of the textbook in the classroom. Within this context for Case Study 2, we can now turn to an investigation of the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of the students and their teacher as revealed in the questionnaire completed prior to the lesson observations.

6.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS

6.2.1 Student survey

As with the rural case study, before the lessons were observed a survey was conducted with the students using the same questionnaire for the same purposes. The rate of return was, however, was not so high, at just 64%. As the information pertaining to the students' background information was provided in the preceding section, the following presents the students' evaluation of the textbook and their reports of the usage of the textbook in their context. (See Appendix E for a copy of the survey questionnaire and Appendix O.1 for the summary of the students' responses.)

The survey showed that the students were quite critical towards various key aspects of the textbook. Notably, most of them did not agree that the textbook's topics were interesting enough to properly engage them, that its tasks provided communicative situations to practise English usage, and that it met their English learning needs. The student evaluations of the five sections of the textbook were also not positive: most students rated both the listening and speaking sections as boring; and the reading section, given its role in the exams, was generally seen as necessary rather than truly interesting.

Concerning their lessons, the students reported that the primary emphasis was still on knowledge learning rather than skills practice, with time being devoted more to vocabulary and grammar (and sometimes pronunciation), particularly in the reading session, but also in the listening session. The classroom speaking practice was deemed to be insufficient to build up their speaking competence. With regard to the writing section, the students' concern was

with the ‘higher order’ skills problems: finding and developing ideas; using appropriate vocabulary; and expressing ideas appropriately and clearly. Owing to their access to better language resources the respondents did not see the need for the textbook to present copious amounts of vocabulary and grammar content; nor would they prefer that their teacher spend more time on these language areas.

As for classroom interaction, the students reported that the principal mode was still for the students to interact as a group with the teacher, although some mutual interaction among students did take place. Moreover, the students said that pair and group work was employed and individual work was not a substantial part of the classroom activities. In terms of the language use in the classroom, the students reported that the priority language was English, yet Vietnamese was also spoken when clarification was required. On the whole, most students reported that the classroom lessons and activities were appropriate and useful to their study.

6.2.2 Teacher survey

Together with the students, the classroom teacher was also asked about her attitudes, opinions and beliefs in relation to the use the textbook as part of her teaching practice. (See Appendix G for a copy of the survey questionnaire and Appendix O.2 for the translation of the teacher’s responses.) Like her students, the teacher’s perceptions of textbook’s effectiveness were not really positive. She agreed with the students that the topics were uninteresting and that the language level was unsuitable, claiming that it was too easy and thus not challenging enough. The teacher also responded with ‘disagree’ (or ‘strongly disagree’) to the positive statements pertaining to the textbook tasks’ communicability, relevance, achievability, variety, consistency, and general interest.

Regarding the use of the textbook in her classroom, the teacher claimed that she was able to cover the required teaching within the time allowed and that she was teaching to exams. Perhaps in response to the exam-oriented direction of the lessons, the teacher also

revealed that she found the teaching methodology of the textbook to be incongruous with the needs and wants of the students. The teacher disclosed that in the classroom reading and language focus were given first priority, whereas speaking, writing and listening were of secondary importance. Concerning this bias, the teacher commented that the sections being excluded from the current exams – such as speaking and writing – ran the risk of being neglected in the classroom.

With specific reference to each section, the teacher claimed that in her listening and reading lessons the micro-skills were emphasised over vocabulary and grammar. In relation to writing the teacher claimed that attention was directed towards ensuring that the students produced grammatical sentences, expressed their ideas clearly and appropriately, and that they organised their ideas. Regarding speaking, the teacher said that she would not necessarily adhere to the language functions provided in the textbook because her primary concern was to build up the students' confidence in expressing themselves during presentations and discussions.

In terms of the language use in her classroom, the teacher confirmed that English was the primary language used (75% of the time); an encouraging rate made possible partly by the students' competencies and school cultural expectations. Nevertheless, it was quite natural for Vietnamese to be spoken 25% of the time because, according to the teacher, the language environment was homogenous in that all of the students spoke Vietnamese and it was inevitable at times for students to rely on the use of their mother tongue.

6.2.3 Summary

The results of the surveys indicated that there were a range of reasons as to why the textbook was not to be regarded as effective course material for this urban class. First, both the teacher and the students did not deem the textbook to be appropriate, particularly because it failed to meet the students' needs and wants such as those of exam success, future overseas study, studying topics of interest, etc. Second, most likely due to their focus on exam results,

the teacher and the students questioned the relevance of the implementation of the textbook tasks in the classroom and the focus on the teaching and learning of language skills rather than language knowledge. The only positive signals were the reports that pair and group work was being used in classroom activities and that English was predominantly used in the classroom. Throughout the observations of classroom lessons that followed, these issues were to be further explored with particular concern as to how the textbook and its tasks were to be implemented, and how the aims set out for the textbook were to be achieved.

6.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

This section reports the subsequent classroom observations of the teacher and students who completed the questionnaires reported in the previous section. The same research procedures and tools applied to the rural case study were used in this instance. Within the time allocated for one unit, three sessions totalling seven lesson periods (approximately 320 minutes) were observed but, as it turned out, what had been covered in the three sessions was both more and less than one unit. The lessons were on Unit 14 and the first part of Unit 15 (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 180-182; 187-188), but several sections were skimmed over or simply omitted, and teacher-provided tasks were also used to a substantial degree. As noted earlier, although a full account of the "lesson proceedings" were created for all sessions observed, only the excerpt regarding the writing lesson,[8] together with overviews and post-lesson feedback for all sessions is provided in the body of this thesis. The other lesson proceedings can be located in Appendix O.4

[8] Given the communicative language teaching approach required by the textbook the researcher was particularly interested in observing speaking skills sessions linked to the textbook. However, when this was not possible, as in this case study, the teaching of writing skills was a substitute focus since they were productive rather than receptive skills. In the writing lesson observed, students were also required to give oral presentations of their work, so the lesson was actually a hybrid of writing and speaking.

6.3.1 Session 1

6.3.1.1 Overview

The reading and vocabulary lessons were the first session observed. The tasks accomplished included those based on the textbook and those provided by the teacher. The textbook-based tasks were dealt with very quickly – the students were simply required to get the right answers.

The lessons started with a teacher-provided cloze test requiring the students to listen to a song related to a World Cup tournament and fill in the missing words. Talking to the researcher before the lesson, the teacher indicated the she believed the use of music would play a more effective role as a lead-in to the language than the picture in the textbook of the world-famous Brazilian footballer Pelé. Next, the lessons were directed back to the textbook tasks: Task B (*Before You Read*) was designed as a pre-reading activity with Tasks A, B, and C, containing comprehension questions about the text; and Tasks A and B including a vocabulary study. Lastly, the class worked on another two teacher-provided tasks: one on vocabulary and the other on reading comprehension.

6.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback

As soon as the lesson ended short interviews were held in succession with two selected students in a corner of the classroom. Each interview lasted for up to four minutes. The first student interviewed indicated that he found the lesson interesting because he had a chance to listen to music, which he thought had led smoothly into the lesson. He was dismissive, however, of the textbook exercises which he considered “boring” and “simplistic”, and preferred focusing on the teacher-provided reading exercise hand-outs, which he admitted were difficult, yet necessary. He wished that he (and the other students) had been given more time to work on the reading exercise at the end of the session in order to maximise understanding. Concerning the textbook in general, the student commented that it was alright, but that it was not very inspiring and that the grammar was no different to what he had

learned in Year 9. As for the teacher's performance, he appreciated the availability of opportunities for students to speak during the lesson.

The second student also found the teacher-supplemented exercises interesting, but she also enjoyed the reading text in the textbook. She said, however, that the lesson would have been better if the text had been about something that was currently in the news, for example, about the upcoming 2010 World Cup in South Africa, rather than the World Cups prior to 2006, the most recent tournament at that time. In a positive comment for the textbook, she said its reading text presented vocabulary more related to the theme concerned, particularly regarding the history of the World Cup competitions. With regard to the lesson content, the student said she felt she learned best from the reading activities, both from the textbook and those provided by the teacher.

The student also stated that she would have liked the teacher to spend time on speaking practice. She suggested that students could have been required to deliver a group presentation on a certain relevant topic to the class, since she thought the textbook speaking tasks had paid inadequate attention to presentation skills. According to the student, doing presentations would have provided the students with the chance to use the speaking expressions and vocabulary learned. Moreover, the student suggested that some of the time spent on the supplementary exercises could have been used for presentations.

No post-lesson discussion was held with the teacher because of her unavailability.

6.3.2 Session 2

6.3.2.1 Overview

The second session covered the grammar section of the language focus and writing sections of the textbook. Also, following the break, a listening task and one vocabulary task were provided by the teacher. This session, together with the previous one, brought the students to the completion of the unit. En route to the class the teacher briefly informed the researcher that the session would stay close to the textbook requirements, but would also

include several supplementary exercises. As noted earlier, only the proceedings of the writing lesson were included in this section; the proceedings from the grammar and the teacher-provided tasks (listening and vocabulary) can be located in Appendix O.3.

6.3.2.2 Lesson proceedings: Writing lesson

Minutes 43-59: The grammar lessons were followed by preparations for the writing lesson, "Writing an Announcement" (page 187). The first two minutes were spent on allocating students to their groups; each comprising five or six students. Given that the students' desks faced towards the front of the room, the students at some tables remained where they were while the other students turned around. Many students saw this as an opportunity to take a "mini-break", but the teacher urged them to get on with the task immediately. The students then worked together to produce announcements based on the sample provided by the textbook. The students appeared to enjoy the fun and collaborative work very much. Group members contributed their ideas on what to include in the announcement they were making and/or how to present it.

Minutes 59-70: Having made their announcements, the students were asked to put their work on the blackboard. The first two groups went to the blackboard where they copied down the announcements they had made. Again, this was a collaborative exercise with some students writing down the announcements and others drawing decorations. The two announcements displayed were as follows:

Announcement 1	**Announcement 2**
FRUIT MANSION In celebration of the Hung King's Day FRIENDLY FREE MEAL Place: Fruit's House Time: 24/7 Free to the end of this month In order to admire our ancestors we'll invite best sticky rice cake artist to make some delicious food. Furthermore, we'll have some games for you to enjoy like making cake with our best artist. Come and see the biggest cake all over the world!!! GUINESS Fruit Mansion's	DANCE CLUB In celebration of the Valentine's Day Overnight "Sweet" Party Local restaurant vs. Hotel Time: 8PM, February 14 till 5AM February 15, 2009 Main program: - changes lover - have "couple" meal - play some small games All couples are invited. P/S: Everybody, especially men, remember to bring chocolate and rose. By the way, be ready to take part in "Sweet Kiss" game. Nguyen Thi X (*name of English teacher*), Manager of DANCE CLUB

Those announcements actually looked much better than what is plainly depicted above, due to the varied font types, font sizes and colours that the students took pains to produce. It was a pleasant surprise for the researcher to see, despite grammatical mistakes, how attractive and creative the students' self-made announcements were.

Minutes 71-76: Group representatives went to the front of the classroom to present what their announcement was about. There was one primary speaker who was assisted by the team members when necessary. Each presentation was commented upon by the teacher and

their classmates. Their presentations skills were perceived to be of a very good quality and the students and the teacher appeared to be excited.

Minutes 77-81: Following these presentations, the next two groups came up to display their announcements. Probably because they had more time to perfect their works, their announcements looked even better in terms of the language used and the decorative component. English, for example, was localised to be blended with Vietnamese to coin "Dudonation (Club)", of which "đú đởn" (which roughly means "frolic") is Vietnamese.

Minutes 82-102: The announcements became even more interesting with the presentations around five minutes each. Following the presentations the teacher gave her comments, as did the classmates. The atmosphere was equally exciting. The class then had a break many minutes later than the designated time, but there was no sign that students wanted to finish the lesson.

6.3.2.3 Post-lesson feedback

The experience of making the announcements in groups was appreciated by both the students interviewed. The first student said he felt really excited about writing and decorating the announcement with his class mates. He also found the session enjoyable because the textbook was enriched by the extra tasks. However, he considered the grammar lesson to be particularly useful because the practice would be beneficial to his tests and exams. Notably, the student commented that the sample announcement provided in the textbook was "plain and conventional", and that its layout and decoration were not really interesting.

The second student's comments were mainly about the announcement making activity, which she found a practical, meaningful and relevant task to do. She said she had learned a lot from this activity and that she felt great learning how to make announcements in English. Like the other student, she did not feel that the sample announcement was typical and attractive enough. Concerning the grammar exercises, she thought that they were quite easy, thereby suggesting more advanced ones could be taught instead.

Concerning the teacher, this was the only time that the post-lesson discussion was fully done as planned. She had a free period (between this class the next) which she spent having breakfast in the school canteen so the discussion took place over a meal. The conversation started with a discussion on the quality of the student-made announcements, which the researcher said were very impressive. The teacher commented she had anticipated how creative the students would be, and that their language use would be good, because she had previously seen announcements made by these students as part of their activities at a school festival. She added that the students also did the task very well because it was fun for them.

Asked why the textbook listening tasks were dropped, the teacher said she thought they would have been boring because some of the students might well have already done them or referred to the answer key available in commercial textbook-based practice books. The teacher said that the tasks she supplied were equally new to all of the students, and thus would be challenging and engaging. With regard to the writing activity, the teacher said that it was retained because she thought it would be a good task for students to work on together instead of just listening, repeating and writing. The activity was thought to be needed for a change to the classroom atmosphere. As for the grammar section, the teacher explained that she would always either teach or simply "touch upon" it, just in case it came up in the exams, which always used the textbook as a framework. She would not want her students to be disadvantaged, she said, by failing to review the language knowledge section.

6.3.3 Session 3

6.3.3.1 Overview

The study continued with the third session to see whether any of the skipped topics and issues of Unit 14 might be taught. The lessons that took place (and had been observed) were only five periods in time length, whereas the average amount of time prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Training is 7-8 periods per unit.

The session being observed focused on two sections from Unit 15 of the textbook: Language Focus and Reading (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 190-192; 197-199). As the teacher said before the lessons, these sections represented the core content of the programme given their importance to the curriculum and the exams. Even when pressed for time she said she would at least take some time for them. In addition, there was also a reading task provided by the teacher.

6.3.3.2 Post-lesson feedback

A new student was included in the feedback discussion to broaden the scope of ideas. This interviewee said she found the categorisation of nations and the information about Vietnam interesting as it was something that she has not been taught before. She complained, however, about the grammar focus because she did not see how it was connected to the previous unit, as was the case with the other continuous units. Further to this point, the new interviewee commented that the grammar study needed to be more comprehensive and preceded by brief explanations to facilitate self-study by the students.

The second interviewee's first comment was quite negative, saying that in her opinion the Pacific Rim topic was too serious and was not an area of interest for high school students. She suggested that the students would prefer to do something that they were more familiar with, and which was more relevant to their lives such as the life of young people in different countries, overseas study experiences, or simple study skills. What she found practical was the teacher-presented techniques on dealing with test questions and the organisation of the texts. Finally, she wished that more practice had been given to pronunciation by means of students reading the text aloud and by giving greater focus to pronouncing the new vocabulary.

The post-lesson discussion with the teacher was not possible due to her unavailability.

6.3.4 Post-observation survey

Based on the notes taken during the lesson observations a short questionnaire was designed (see Appendix F.2) and administered in the lesson that followed. The questionnaire comprised the researcher's statements of what he observed during the previous three lessons. The students were asked to confirm or refute the statements, and, where needed, explain briefly their own perception of the lesson. It took the respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. There were 25 responses to the survey, achieving a 100% rate of return.

The first question of interest was the speed at which the textbook tasks were covered, which was approximately twice as fast as the rate prescribed. The students stated that the lesson pace had been the same as previous units, and that they found this pace suitable. When asked why the language focus section was always covered while other sections were not, very few students indicated that it was because its topics were interesting. Rather, the majority of the students indicated that it was to help reinforce what had been studied as well as to prepare them for the tests and exams.

Asked about the teacher-provided supplements, in which the students appeared to be very interested, most of the students said the extra exercises better prepared them for their secondary education graduation and university admission exams. In addition, the students indicated that they could otherwise do textbook tasks on their own. It was notably revealed that for this reason most students preferred to speed up the work on the textbook tasks to save time to work on the extra exercises which they found more challenging.

Even though the students were very concerned about tests and exams, nearly half of them claimed that they were not more pre-occupied with vocabulary and grammar exercises than skills practice. This may indicate that the students were assuming a dual burden: spending time both practising skills and learning knowledge. Concerning the current tests and exams, the vast majority of students agreed that they neglected listening and speaking skills.

Again, however, many students disagreed that the neglect adversely affected their study of aural and oral skills.

With regard to the Year 10 student textbook's companion Work Book which was not used during the lessons observed, the students revealed that they did not do the exercises contained in it on their own at home; and that they would not like their teacher to spend classroom time on them. The lack of interest could well be as a result of the fact that the exercises were fundamentally similar to the tasks of the textbook, which they had not felt challenged to do.

It was interesting to see that students were able to follow the lesson's progress given the teacher's considerable use of English in the classroom. Most of the students said they could understand almost all or at least three quarters of the English used in the lessons by their teacher and classmates.

Lastly, it was interesting to note that quite a number of students claimed they had learnt something useful from the lesson segments on language focus, reading and writing in the units observed. A considerably lower percentage, however, agreed that they had also learnt something useful from the listening and speaking segments. This could be an indication of reverting back to traditional expectations of teaching and learning because both the teacher and the students would typically prefer to have something more concrete to "take home" when the lesson was over. Also, it may indicate that proper attention had not been given to listening and speaking skills.

6.3.5 Summary

The classroom observations revealed that the prescribed order and content of the textbook was not strictly adhered to in this urban class. The teacher did not necessarily teach the materials of the textbook, nor did she follow the order of the five sections as presented. Instead, a significant number of exercises derived from external sources were included in the lesson activities. Speaking skills in particular were not taught as a separate lesson and the

listening skills lesson was entirely based on the teacher's supplementary material. Importantly, the teaching methodology proposed in the textbook was not really implemented, apart from one writing activity. Therefore, it appears unlikely that the textbook was regarded as an effective tool for the development of the students' communication skills.

There may be many reasons for the limited use of the textbook, but the most obvious ones are arguably related to concerns about the textbook's capacity to challenge the students and its limited usefulness towards preparing the students for the exams. Indeed it was observed that the teacher-prepared exercises were not simply substitute material for what was skipped over in the text book, but were designed more for exam preparation.

With specific reference to the lessons, although the students were able to work through the textbook tasks very quickly, real communication did not truly take place. In fact, the textbook tasks were treated as test items to answer. The fact that the students were able to go through the textbook tasks at a fast pace did not necessarily mean that the students were able to perform the communicative tasks required, as knowing the answers is different to communicating effectively. Also, there were very few serious attempts to create situations in which the students could speak to each other, or to maximise the student talk time. In effect, the teacher remained the dominant speaker and interaction was principally between her and the class. During the course of the lesson it was evident that Vietnamese was the language of choice for clarification, yet, overall, the English communication between the students was minimal and the time spent on student individual work was still considerable. An approximation of the actual percentage of English vs. Vietnamese talk was 65%-35% yet in many instances English was read aloud from texts rather than being spoken in real communication.

As demonstrated through the writing lesson, however, the students were willing and able to work together to produce meaningful and creative English when given an opportunity. Strictly speaking, the success of the activity can be attributed more to the students than the

teacher, and even less to the merits of the textbook. This raised the possibility of their equally good performance with regard to the other sections of the textbook if the tasks of those sections had been communicatively taught.

6.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS

When the classroom observations were completed the interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and the head teacher of the school. While the interview with the former was expected to reveal more about the lessons observed, it was anticipated that the interview with the head teacher would provide an insight into the textbook's use in the broader context of the teaching and learning strategies at the school.

It should be noted, however, that USHS did not have a proper English head teacher as was the case with other schools. Instead, USHS had a teacher-leader who only specialised in training English major students for provincial and national competitions. As such, he was not the head of the English teacher team at the school. As a lecturer at a university, that teacher simply attended the highly intensive training sessions and was not in any way accountable for, or informed about, the normal English teaching activities at the school. As a result, the interview was conducted with the head of the Academic Affairs Office, a position specific to USHS, whose duties included, but were not limited to, those of a head English teacher (i.e. teaching English and supervising other English teachers, as well as administering the English programmes of the school). For the sake of consistency, however, this interviewee is referred to as 'head (English) teacher'.

6.4.1 Classroom teacher

This section reports the interview with the classroom teacher, designed to make clear the points noted during the classroom observations, and, importantly, to understand the key educational issues from the teacher's perspective. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese, lasting approximately an hour, and it was audio-recorded for accuracy and

verbatim quotations. (See Appendix O.4 for the translation of the interview transcript.) Below are the important points revealed in the interview.

The first point concerns the comparison the teacher makes between the new textbooks and the previous ones. Recalling her experience as a student studying with the former textbooks, the teacher roughly estimated that the new textbooks featured positive changes. One of the changes identified by the teacher was that listening was given more attention in the new textbooks (22:4).[9] Furthermore, when elaborating on her observation the teacher indicated that there had been positive changes regarding the reading texts of the new textbook.

Second, when relating the textbook under evaluation to her own context, the teacher commented that the course book was not challenging enough for her students. "They are in some way lower than the levels of the students", she stated (24:2). Regarding the listening and speaking topics in particular, the teacher said that quite a number of the textbook topics failed to engage the students so she often resorted to the use of her own materials instead (24:3-5). She pointed out, for example, that while students might have found dolphins, movies or music (available in the textbook) intriguing issues to talk about, topics like "School Talks" and "Daily Activities", and those related with an environmental theme (also in the textbook) were deemed to be boring, thus drawing limited student participation (26:1, 11-16). According to the teacher, this problem was aggravated by the apparent topical repetition, which, she claimed, adversely affected communicative teaching. This is what she had to say:

> EXCERPT 6.1 I'd rather use the communicative approach, but the seemingly communicative topics, I mean such topics as the environment, are unable to engage the students even though they are in the news quite often. Normally students aren't

[9] What was cited by the urban classroom teacher in this section (i.e. 6.4.1) all refers to her interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendix O.4. The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6 of Chapter 5.

> interested in such topics. Because of their lack of interest, they won't be eager to participate. We want them to speak and listen, right? But those topics, just by their names, sound too boring for the students to get involved talking about them. That's the problem with the topics... The three Units 9-11 are all about conservation and the environment, but these topics, I think, could be condensed into one, some sort of larger topic, instead of treating them separately. Likewise, the topics of "School Talk" (*sic.*) and "Daily Activity" (*sic.*) overlap in their similarity. (28:1-8)

Third, concerning the students' learning styles, it was observed by the teacher that her teenager learners would naturally prefer to study through activities that they perceived as fun, with as few notes to take and as few practice exercises to do as possible. While this observation might imply that it is highly possible for communicative teaching to be in good harmony with students' learning preferences, the teacher pointed out a problem that hampered the teaching of communication skills: The priority was to prepare students for their exams, the results of which were very important. It was difficult to expect adequate attention to be paid, for example, to speaking, which, as noted by the teacher, was not a component of the exams and which had an insignificant score weighting in the final grade (46:2-6). Given the overwhelming importance and influence of exams, it is quite normal that teachers would be apt to attend to the pressing need for exam practice. Below is the teacher's argumentative observation:

> EXCERPT 6.2 Students will enjoy studying something that they can be playing while they are learning, without many notes to take or exercises to do. But that would be in opposition to the tests and exams. We definitely can't just let our students play because we can't just have oral tests. If you went to a communicative class at a language centre it would be plausible because they don't have to care about grammar. But the key point here is you should teach in such a way that students can do well at tests and exams. Good performance at tests is to be prioritised, because the priority is the students' test and exam results. This is something that can't be disregarded even though I might really want to. (30:2-8)

Furthermore, according to the teacher the importance of the exam results would be magnified by parents who "would just look at the final scores before they are interested to learn what their children have acquired" (32:1). In such a set of circumstances where students' exam "scores are an evaluative criterion" (32:2), attempts at teaching and learning via a communicative approach must have been impeded.

In reference to the notes taken by the researcher throughout the lesson observations, the teacher was asked why she would never skip any point of grammar and vocabulary in the language focus section. The question was presented with the view that the grammatical and lexical points in the section were not perceived as difficult in any way for her students, yet it meant that she would spend less time on the tasks of the other sections. The teacher explained that it was because exams were always based on the points of language knowledge covered in the language focus section. Furthermore, teachers might use their discretion to decide on the format of the classroom tests (15- and 45-minute tests), but the more important semester or yearly exams for the whole school or even the whole city were made by a selected teacher who, for the sake of the majority, would use the grammar and vocabulary as prescribed in the language focus section of the textbook as a point of content reference when making the test.

> EXCERPT 6.3 …it was all due to the tests and exams. Just in case I am not selected to make the test items for exams, my students will still be prepared for what will be tested. The school exams are based on the textbook, which is considered to be the backbone of the programme. So, the test items can't be anything other than those points in the textbook. That's why I always kept it (Language Focus), as this should be the point of reference for students. The points in these sections might be easier than the supplementary exercises but I still want my students to know that they will be part of the test items. (108:2-7)

It was revealed in the interview that, indeed, that importance and influence of exams were paramount. The teacher was diligent in prioritising what she thought was important to achieve after all:

EXCERPT 6.4 Communication should not be taken as the constant target because if the lessons were driven by communication alone, the students would end up not doing well at exams. Such a consequence would be certain to happen, as you might imagine. Instead, you will become very keen to prepare your students for the exams. The communication skills results are hard to see and proved but those in exams really are. How would you explain if you got four marks?[10] As a result, while attempts to provide communicative lessons are made, exam scores are ultimately the most important targets. (54:2-7)

Another point put forward during the interview was that the class was progressing through the Student Book more quickly than according to the time prescribed. Moreover, the accompanying Work Book was not being used. The teacher explained that this was because, as mentioned above, the textbook was perceived by the students to be too easy:

EXCERPT 6.5 The students' thoughts are that the textbook is easy, the point I told you the other day. They have a look at the textbook and say the textbook is easy… As for English… there are many resources. As for the reading passages of the textbook, for instance, the students just need to take a quick look and they'll say that they're clearly easier than their level. (136:1-2; 4-5)

The teacher instead used her own materials, which she claimed were more challenging and, thus, were better able to motivate the students when she perceived the textbook materials to be too commonplace for the students (138:1-3).

Concerning the neglect of the Work Book, almost the same problem was pointed out: It was not challenging enough for the students. It was said by the teacher that there would have been no good reason for working on the practice material whose exercises were of the same level of the Student Book (120:6). Still according to the teacher, another problem with the Work Book was its layout, which she commented was confusing, and its presentation, which she said left the impression that the material was for students of a younger age.

[10] The passmark is five in the Vietnamese grading system applicable to primary and secondary education.

As observed, what the teacher used as a substitute for the unused textbook materials was supplements taken from other sources which were perceived to be exam-oriented. Indeed, when referring to a commercial book that incorporated reading passages from TOEFL test practice books she often used with her class, the teacher indicated that those exercises better suited students' needs (122:13-16).

A further observation noted that the class was quite active and responsive to the classroom activities. According to the teacher, however, the students were not always so active or responsive and it was only towards the end of the previous semester that they started to change. Nonetheless, the teacher believed the changes were largely due to her patience and her preparedness to encourage the students to speak up and to be proactive. She said she found herself happy with the ongoing transformation and the way that the students were willing to speak and/or take part in the activities.

> EXCERPT 6.6 Unlike the time when the school year was just beginning, the timid students are starting to speak more freely... They're no longer afraid of making mistakes. They can go to the blackboard without being afraid of making mistakes. They are no longer afraid of being called to go to the blackboard or of the answer review time. Now they'll come forward upon request. (34:7, 10, 11-13)

Such a transformation apparently reinforced her desire to make further attempts to break down the students' reservations and involve them in the classroom activities. But, as the teacher stated, the effort to gradually teach the students to work together and to be more active would require perseverance and time, and the strategic introduction of individual, pair work, and then group work into the classroom activities (62:1-25).

In addition, there were efforts on the part of the teacher to change the physical environment in order to facilitate the students' learning as required by the textbook. For example, the teacher recalled that at particular times reorganising the furniture would produce favourable results:

> EXCERPT 6.7 Approaching holidays, however, I took time out to organise special activities for the students. For example, celebrating the upcoming New Year days, we would move the tables and benches as required by the activities; all done for a change to energise the students. (58:2-3)

Such timing was reasonable because the learning atmosphere tended to be quite relaxed as the holidays were approaching and there was thus time for the movement of the furniture, which would normally have been very hard to be done at other times. Moreover, at this time students would generally want to ease up and serious exam- and knowledge-oriented lessons were perceived to be largely ineffective, so it turned out to be a good opportunity for an emphasis on communication-oriented activities in the classroom.

The overall necessity of the textbook was regarded by the teacher to be a core course book to resort to when needed. She said the textbook should be seen as the 'backbone', and if nothing else were available, there would still be the textbook to use for the lessons (182:1-5; 184:4-5). The teacher did, however, point out that she preferred the curriculum to be the required document to adhere to rather than the textbook, even though it entailed more work for the teachers as they would then have to work out for themselves what teaching materials were to be used. Given the opportunity to create her own teaching materials, though, the teacher said she might end up with 'unique' resources that could evoke a better response from her students:

> EXCERPT 6.8 …I'd feel more challenged because you wouldn't have anything to fall back on. You'd have to go and look for teaching materials yourself. But your handouts will be unique. If you try to look for something on the Internet and your material is unique, you'd receive a different response from your students, which would be better. (192:1-4)

To sum up the classroom teacher interview, the textbook, from her perspective, was not challenging enough for the students and its topical content failed to engage them. Another problem that was apparently more important was that ongoing exams, which the students and

those concerned (e.g. parents) took as their issue of greatest interest, made learning and teaching happen in a way different from, if not opposite to, the aim and the methodology of the textbook. Nevertheless, with perseverance, commitment, and creativity the classroom teacher might effectively contribute to the textbook usage, thereby activating and gradually involving students in communicative language activities.

6.4.2 Head teacher

The interview with the USHS head English teacher sought to reveal information about the broad context of the teaching and learning of English in the case study class, as well as to verify what was learned through the other data collection instruments. This interview was held at the end of the classroom observations in his own office, lasting approximately an hour. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese and audio-recorded for verbatim transcription. (See Appendix O.5 for the translation of the interview transcript.) Also, the researcher took notes which could be used as the basis for further probing questions.

The umbrella question of interest was why the sessions observed had not seemed to be as communicative as they could have been despite the favourable learning conditions including class size, student ability and the relaxed administration. According to the head teacher, the first problem was that the teacher training did not succeed in making explicit to the classroom teachers what the new methodology entailed in relation to adopting the textbook into their classroom; or in engaging the interest of the teachers (10:1-2).[11] In his opinion, the transmission of the intentions of the textbook by the writers was complicated by the fact that the trainers (of the local seminars) were ordinary teachers who had simply

[11] What was cited by the urban head teacher in this section (i.e. 6.4.2) all refers to his interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendix O.5. The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6, Chapter 5.

attended ministerial seminars for a few days. As a result, their training left them incapable of directing the local teachers in how to take action for change when it was needed.

> EXCERPT 6.9 The key points unfortunately haven't been made clear to classroom teachers through discussions or sample teachings. The writers' intentions for the use of the textbook haven't actually been seen, by the seminar attendees, including those who went to the ministerial seminars. Teachers were there at the seminars simply listening to the presentations only once, and it doesn't necessarily mean that they will have recognised the intentions of the textbook writers. Many other things will need to be done for teachers to see what changes they need to make happen with the new textbook. (8:8-11)

The head teacher elaborated by asserting that the problem initially lay with the trainers of the (ministerial and local) seminars, most of whom were either teachers from local schools or officers from the ministry. In his opinion, while former (and quite possibly) excellent practitioners were not methodologically well informed, the latter did not have hands-on experience with classroom teaching (10:18-19). It was believed by the head teacher that the trainers for the seminars should have been those who wrote the textbook, or at least experts in the field "whose calibre is respectable enough to make participants convinced of what the presenters might be talking about" (8:6; 12:13). As mentioned by the head teacher, the seminars organised so far had failed to attract the attention and engagement of classroom teachers:

> EXCERPT 6.10 With what has been done, people attended the seminars only because they had to, and that wasn't really effective…. it seemed that the classroom teachers were not very keen on participating in those seminars; they were there simply because they had to be there. They did not really believe that attending the seminar would bring really good benefits. (10:8; 12:15-16)

What was essential, according to the head teacher, was that such teacher training events "should be conducted in such a way that could make participants feel like taking actions as expected" (10:7). To be fair, he argued that some teachers may have picked up in the essential

points (10:2), but the points should have nonetheless been made more apparent to them. “Some participants at the seminars”, said the head teacher, “complained that they had been to seminars only to find nothing new” (10:3). From the head teacher’s perspective, it was imperative to improve the teachers’ capabilities in lesson delivery, which he thought would have a decisive effect on the quality of teaching and learning with the new textbook (16:13-16).

Not only did the head teacher consider the ineffective seminars a contributing factor in the ineffective use of the new textbooks, he also blamed the current testing format. “I mean the end-of-semester exams or graduation exams”, he said, “of which the adverse impact is visible. It is quite common in Vietnam that people will study to the test, and this practice has made sizeable influence on teachers’ teaching” (8:15-16).

The head teacher pointed out that the emphasis in the tests and exams was on language knowledge rather than skills (53:1). Indeed, skills were deemphasised in exams, with the test items mainly in the multiple-choice form, and with greater emphasis placed on language knowledge. Worse still, said the head teacher, speaking skills were virtually neglected. This bias against developing communication skills, he said, was observable, even in the test samples and guidelines promulgated by the local Service of Education and Training.

> EXCERPT 6.11 For example, the sample exam questions and guidelines produced by the Service of Education and Training encouraged the testing of the two major skills of reading and listening, going straight to focusing on language knowledge and the content covered. Speaking is not listed as a component for testing and writing is tested at the sentence level only, such as transforming sentences… Such testing policies don’t actually correspond to the requirements of the curriculum. (53:9-10, 12)

As a result, the head teacher said it would be impossible to guarantee that all the four skills would be taught, particularly in Vietnamese schools where “teaching is normally geared to exams” (57:1). This problem was made worse by the increasing uniformity of exams; that is, using one and the same exam for the whole school, district, province, or even the nation,

which, according to the head teacher, “would push people to preparing students for exams, and nothing else” (57:2). In his opinion, as a result of the exams being centralised (i.e. made by the officer in charge of the geographical region concerned and administered for the whole region), teachers were deprived of classroom power and self-accountability (57:5, 9). Once exams were centralised and students’ exam results invariably became the measurements of students’ achievements and teachers’ performance, teaching and learning activities were geared to the exams (57:12).

The constraint associated with the implementation of the new methodological innovations of the textbook in relation to classroom environment “will have a stronger impact on the applicability of classroom activities”, said the head teacher (18:27). As he remarked, both the furniture and the students lacked the freedom of mobility in the classroom (18:14-15), and such freedom is typically required in communicative language teaching.

> EXCERPT 6.12 One common problem at high schools, for instance, is the organisation of the tables and benches; each accommodates three or four students; or two at least. The almost fixed furniture constrains the implementation of classroom activities. I usually say that Vietnamese students are chained to their study tables. With this furniture layout it is difficult to have really active lessons. (18:5-8)

Also, when pair or group work was attempted, he said the students would be bored in the long run because in the current conditions the partners would always be the neighbours nearby (18:13, 21). According to the head teacher, the unavailability of the classroom conditions conducive to the conduct of the communication-oriented activities prevented teachers from using the new methodology (18:4). He commented that teachers “are willing to do something new” and “they want to do something that can engage their students” (18:2) but “it would be difficult to do something other than what they are doing now” (18:16).

The head teacher went on to assert that radical changes needed to be made, starting with the replacement of the benches and tables with furniture that would allow activities required by the new textbook to be done in the classroom:

EXCERPT 6.13 If better amenities are available each student would be assigned a table at best, which will then allow more flexibility for pair and group work activities. This is because teachers could then move their students around and this mobility would make it easier, simpler and more interesting to conduct activities, and such activities are the core of the lessons. (18:17-18)

According to the head teacher, given the current circumstances such an investment would be more practical and more effective than equipping classrooms with LCD projectors for Powerpoint presentations (16:10-11), which was what was apparently trendy. "By 'physical conditions'", said the head teacher, "I don't mean such equipment as projectors. We might need to start with the student tables and benches, which will have a stronger impact on the applicability of classroom activities" (18:26-27).

To sum up, from the head teacher's perspective, the most significant challenge to the use of the textbook was rooted in the inadequate teacher training and support. Also, the ongoing testing and assessment, especially national exams, impeded efforts to achieve what the textbook aimed to achieve, for they neglected the testing of communicative competence. Furthermore, the inadequate classroom conditions were a considerable problem to the implementation of the activities required by the textbook.

6.4.3 Summary

The interviews with the classroom teacher and the head teacher shed light on the hindrances to the use of the textbook in this urban school case study. The most immediate problem reported was that the textbook was not challenging enough and had little relevance to the students' interest. Next, one might argue that the goal to facilitate the development of the students' English communication was challenged by the knowledge-oriented tests and exams. Indeed, the exam pressures were inescapable for the students at this highly selective urban school. Moreover, the textbook's expected goal was far from being achieved as the prerequisites for the textbook's classroom implementation were still yet to be met. It was revealed that the teacher training for the implementation of the new textbook and the

provision of follow-up support were inadequate, making it hard for the intended teaching methodology to be effectively translated into effective classroom practice. Furthermore, the current classroom amenities were not yet conducive to the implementation of the required communicative activities.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The focus of this case study was on the implementation of the new English textbook in a Year 10 class participating in the intensive English programme at an urban national selective high school. Multiple methods and sources were used to collect relevant information for the evaluation of the textbook in this particular context.

What became evident was that despite seemingly favourable teaching and learning conditions, there were a number of different reasons as to why the textbook was not effectively used in the classroom. First, the students themselves did not consider the textbook to be challenging enough or relevant to their life experiences. As a result, much of the learning material offered by textbook was not used by the teacher, who chose instead to supplement the learning material with her own resources, most of which were exam-oriented whilst some of which appeared to be relevant to students' interests (e.g. English language songs). Moreover, when material from the textbook was used, the tasks were treated as test items requiring only correct answers from the students. Therefore, the textbook was not consistently utilised as a learning tool for the students to practise their English usage. Second, the goal underpinning the use of the textbook was overshadowed by the primacy given to the preparation for exams. Although the aim of the textbook was to develop the students' English communication skills through a communicative approach to language learning, the exam presented the students with a series of multiple-choice questions which required the memorisation of language knowledge and recognition rather than production skills. This incongruity consequently discouraged the use of the textbook by the students as they did not

believe that it adequately met their needs. Third, the training provided to teachers to support them in their efforts to use the textbook were inadequate. As a consequence, the implementation of the textbook was made more difficult and the commitment to its implementation from the teachers also suffered. Fourth, the current classroom conditions were not favourable for the implementation of the textbook's activities, which require frequent and easy movement of the furniture.

However, when the textbook was used in the ways for which it was intended the outcomes were encouraging, as was evidenced by the work the students produced during the writing lesson. The positive learning outcomes were mostly attributable to the students themselves who demonstrated advanced skills and eagerness to undertake the group work activity.

CHAPTER 7
CASE STUDY 3: SEMI-URBAN SCHOOL

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the last of three case studies. Like the other case study chapters, it begins with a description of the context in which the textbook was used, and then presents a summary of the results of the pre-observation questionnaire completed by the students and the teacher. Following this, the chapter reports on the classroom observation of the lessons in which the textbook was used, and then proceeds to provide a summary of the results from the student post-observation questionnaire. The chapter will then report on the interviews with the classroom teacher and the head teacher, before concluding with a chapter summary.

7.1 CONTEXT

7.1.1 The school

The third case study refers to a high school in a semi-urban location in the capital city of a newly established province in Central Vietnam. The location is recently urbanised through the development of factories, businesses and industrial parks. The institution is a provincial selective school (hereafter called Semi-urban Selective High School [SSHS]) which was recently founded following the establishment of the province. Typically, each Vietnamese province or centrally-governed city has at least one such 'quality' school which assumes the task of training its best students for national contests.

SSHS selected its students from within the province based on competitive exams. The first intake of students took place during 2002-2003. Both the teachers and the students became the first users of the new school buildings – including a new language lab and a library – which had been earmarked for the education of 'the best seeds' of the province. In terms of the teaching staff, SSHS's teachers were recruited from the other three high schools in the city on the basis of their teaching experience and the professional quality of their work.

At the time of data collection, the school had two Year 10 classes using the textbook under evaluation – *English 10, Intensive Programme*. The case study, however, chose to focus on the Year 10 class specialising in English (hereafter called English class), which, in relation to the students' academic orientation, was what made the class different from the classes represented in the other two case studies; that is, one specialising in Vietnamese (urban case) and one oriented to take the D1/H stream for their university admission (rural case). Table 7.1 provides an overview of the SSHS classes and students according to their English programme.

Table 7.1

SSHS's Students and Classes by Type of English Programme, School Year 2008-2009

	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
Regular programme				
No. of classes	5	5	6	16
No. of students	160	138	173	471
Intensive programme				
No. of classes	2	2	1	5
No. of students	72	67	30	169
% of total student number	31	32.7	14.8	26.4

The table shows that the average percentage of students taking the English intensive programme was relatively high (26.4%) at SSHS, considering the institution was in a province where a vast majority of schools were without any classes taking the intensive English programme. In addition to classes specialising in English, SSHS had those specialising in other subjects including math, Vietnamese, and physics. It is perhaps for this reason that over the previous five years the school had been among the top 50 schools in the country with regard to the highest students' average university admission exam scores.

7.1.2 The class

7.1.2.1 The students

There were thirty-five students in the class, of whom three quarters were female. Their weekly English lessons comprised four textbook-based periods as prescribed by the curriculum, and two additional periods called *bam sat* based on the materials provided by the teacher (intended to reinforce what was learned from the textbook). Moreover, advanced lessons were given to selected students as preparation for the provincial and national contests for outstanding students. All the extra lessons were of course free for the students at this provincial selective school. As the students' key learning area was English, their English lessons were typically more intensive than those of a similar class who were also taking the intensive English programme but whose key learning area was another subject.

In addition to English, the students attended other subjects as required of all Year 10 students. Because the high school was under the control of the provincial service of education and training, it followed the standard curriculum very closely. Nevertheless, as was revealed by the school's head teacher and the classroom teacher, in order to provide the students with more pathways into university and college, one extra period of intensive teaching per week was provided in chemistry and math.

To gain admission into the intensive English learning class the students had to take competitive examinations in math, Vietnamese, and English, with the marks awarded in English being doubled in the calculation of the total score. The majority of students came from the capital city of the province, where the study conditions were more favourable and the momentum for English learning was stronger than in other districts. As the class comprised students specialising in English, the classroom atmosphere was generally favourable for English learning.

According to the pre-observation questionnaire, the vast majority of students were 16 years old at the time of data collection, which is the average age of Vietnamese Year 10

students. All of the students regarded English as either “very necessary” or “necessary”. Furthermore, most of the students indicated they liked studying English (some indicating liking it “very much”). Lastly, the students indicated a range of reasons for wanting to learn English, including that English was an important tool for their study, English was beneficial for general communication purposes, and, most importantly that English would help with their tertiary education admission.

7.1.2.2 Classroom layout

Although the school was recently built, the classroom for this class was no different from the other ones in the school. Its layout was traditional: students were seated at wooden benches and tables, each of which accommodated three to four students facing forward to the blackboard on the front wall. The furniture was arranged in rows one after another and divided into halves by the aisle in the middle. This layout made mobility a problem for students because they were almost “secured” to their tables, which could not be moved or folded. Like in all high schools in Vietnam, a student seat change could only be made with the head teacher’s approval, which would not be granted except for really important reasons.

Given this classroom layout, the only person who could reach most students in the classroom was the teacher, who could walk down the aisle from her desk situated to the right of the blackboard, or along the front rows of tables from her desk to the entrance door. No matter how active the teacher was there were always students in the far back corners whose access to the teacher was limited. Communication among the students was therefore mostly restricted to neighbours, and their chances of being exposed to their classmates’ ideas were similarly restricted. As such, the student pair/group partnerships, as determined by the teacher, were typically the closest neighbour as this was the most convenient (Appendix P.4 160:1-3). In addition to peer communication, the students might certainly talk to the teacher, but as she was shared by nearly three dozen students, the chances and frequency of this occurring, except for really proactive students, was hardly ever high.

7.1.3 The teacher

The teacher was a woman in her mid-thirties with more than ten years of teaching experience. Considered a mature teacher – yet still young enough to be innovative – she was recently transferred to the established school to undertake the challenge of teaching selective school students. It should be noted that teachers who were assigned a class specialising in the subject they were regularly teaching meant that they were being recognised for their quality performance and professionalism.

While in service at the SSHS, the teacher was also studying a master's course in linguistics, a step higher than her current BA degree in English education. Also, the teacher reportedly had local teaching workshops, seminars, and symposia to attend. Her background and commitment to her profession would have provided the teacher with many opportunities to be well familiar with the issues relevant to the teaching and learning of English in the local area, as well as keep her abreast of the current developments in language teaching methodology.

In relation to the textbook under evaluation, the teacher had not used it as a teaching resource prior to the time of the data collection. In fact, the data collection process commenced shortly after the teacher had replaced another teacher who had left to go on maternity leave. Regarding her preparedness, though, the teacher claimed that she was clear about the key features of the material such as the required teaching methods and classroom activities. In addition, the teacher reported that she had received helpful and organised support on how to use the textbook, thus increasing the likelihood that the textbook was used in the way for which it was designed.

7.1.4 Summary

This case study features a Year 10 class at a semi-urban school where the conditions for such a study are generally favourable for a number of reasons. First, its focus on the teaching and learning of English was presumably advantageous given the students'

perceptions of the value of the subject and their subsequent strong motivation to do well. Second, the resource support available was quite good given the availability of new facilities such as the language lab and the new library. Third, the institution was the number one selective school in the province and so the quality of the teaching staff would be beneficial to the class specialising in English. Fourth, the selected English teacher's years of experience, along with the possibility that she was still receptive to change and innovation, increased the chances that the teacher was willing and able to conduct her classes in accordance with the requirements of the new textbook. However, there were still challenges to overcome. First, the exam-oriented mentality that pervaded the school as part of the students' preparation for university admission would inevitably distract the students' focus. Second, the layout of the classroom remained unfavourable for the communicative activities that required student mobility and the easy and frequent movement of the furniture.

7.2 PRE-OBSERVATION SURVEYS

7.2.1 Student survey

As was the case with the other case studies, prior to the classroom observations the students were surveyed using the same questionnaire for the same purposes. The rate of return was high at 97%. Because the data from the survey concerning the students' background information were presented in the previous section, the following reports the students' evaluation of the textbook and their context of use. (See Appendix E for the survey questionnaire and Appendix P.1 for the summary of the students' responses.)

The students were asked to respond with different levels of agreement to a variety of positive statements of the various aspects of the textbook. The survey results showed that students had quite positive evaluations of the material. For all the statements, the cumulative percentage of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses ranged from 50% (audio components being helpful for learning) to 94.1% (illustrations being relevant for learning). Notably, the

rates for the two significant statements concerning whether the students found the textbook enjoyable to study and suitable to their needs were quite high at 73.5% and 79.4% respectively. When the five sections of the textbook were evaluated separately, all sections were seen as necessary or very necessary by at least three quarters of the respondents, yet only the Reading and Speaking sections were regarded as interesting by more than half of the respondents. Concerning the perceived difficulty level of the textbook, it was notable that the Listening section was the only one rated as "difficult" by the students, with 87% of them giving it this rating.

With regard to their lessons, the students' responses indicated that a mixture of English and Vietnamese was used, though approximately half of the students said their preference was for English only. In relation to their reading lessons, it was reported by half of the respondents that the focus was on both skills and knowledge while quite a number of them indicated that it was on skills only. With particular reference to the reading excerpts, most students regarded them as cognitively and linguistically appropriate, and relevant to their interests. Regarding their listening lessons, a number of students indicated that the emphasis was on skills, while half of them thought it was on both skills and knowledge. In reference to their speaking lessons, approximately three quarters of the students reported they were given a chance to practise their patterns in focus, which made them hopeful that their communication skills were developing. With reference to the writing lessons, while quite a number of the students said their area of greatest difficulty was expressing ideas appropriately and clearly, they reported their strongest focus was on writing grammatical sentences. In relation to language focus, most students said they did not find the explanations from the textbook and the teachers were sufficient, a result predictable from students specialising in English. .

With regard to classroom interaction, while the principal mode was still students as a chorus interacting with the teacher, pair/group work reportedly accounted for a considerable

amount of classroom time. Lastly, in relation to the classroom activities, it was encouraging to learn that a vast majority of the students thought they were appropriate to their learning styles and useful for their learning of English.

7.2.2 Teacher survey

Prior to the classroom observation, the teacher was asked about her attitudes, opinions and beliefs regarding the use of the textbook in her teaching. (See Appendix G. for the survey questionnaire and Appendix P.2 for the translation of the teacher's responses.) The results of the survey showed first of all that her perceptions of the textbook's effectiveness were positive. The teacher ticked "agree" to all of the positive statements about the textbooks, except for the one about the continuity between the textbook in question and those used in the lower grades, to which she responded "I don't know". She also ticked the "strongly agree" category for questions concerning the relevance and helpfulness of the textbook's illustrations.

Regarding the use of the textbook in her classroom, the respondent claimed that she could manage to cover the teaching amount required and her first priority in the classroom was organising activities and managing tasks for students to use English communicatively. Also, the textbook was perceived by the teacher not to have any serious mismatch with her reality. However, her responses to the questionnaire items that followed suggested that her teaching was not very congruent with what was prescribed by the curriculum: Whereas the expected aim was to develop students' communication skills and to give equal attention to all sections, she reported that the strongest focus in her lessons was on Reading, followed by Language Focus. This bias should not be interpreted as suggesting that reading does not develop communication facilities. Rather, it might indicate that the classroom lessons were oriented to the practice of exams since reading skills and language focus are the two areas that exams are most concerned with (see Appendix A for such test items).

When surveyed about teaching the sections of the textbook, the teacher claimed that in her Reading lessons she aimed to teach the skills in accordance with the procedures required. As for the Reading excerpts, she thought they were cognitively and linguistically appropriate, as well as interesting to the students. Likewise, in her Listening lessons, the teacher claimed the focus was to teach the skills in accordance with the procedures required. As for the Speaking lessons, the teacher, unlike most of her students, reported that she did not think there had been enough practice of the language functions prescribed by the textbook and that her strongest focus was to develop students' "language competence for communicative purposes". Concerning the Writing lessons, the teacher claimed her emphases were not only on teaching grammar and vocabulary, but also paragraph organisation and expression. In regard to her Language Focus lessons, the teacher said she had included advanced exercises for students to practise. In all her classes, on average, the teacher reported that she used 25% Vietnamese and 75% English, because she wanted "to create opportunities for students to practise listening and speaking".

With regard to testing and assessment, the teacher agreed with the assumption that the current practices neglected listening and speaking skills, and that there was too much emphasis on language knowledge, as was the case in her context. Current large-scale examinations, in her opinion, excluded the aural and oral skills because they would require amenities and examiners, which were not available at the present. In her classes the tests and exams were reportedly based on new texts, some of which might be easier than the level required by the textbook. As for listening, however, the texts used during the lessons were used again with some modification possibly to ease the challenges facing the students.

7.2.3 Summary

It was revealed through the surveys that generally both the students and teacher had quite positive perceptions of the textbook. Also, particularly through the teacher, it appeared that the textbook was being used in ways partly in accordance with how the textbook was

designed to be used (i.e., giving priority to the development of the students' English communication). Several claims by be teacher and students, however, showed that their concern was primarily for language knowledge and reading skills, while speaking and listening skills were neglected. The cause of this bias was apparently rooted in assessment practices that sideline aural and oral skills. With regard to speaking in particular, the teacher reported the classroom practice was not enough. Further investigation, in the form of classroom observation, was needed to see how the textbook was actually used and the extent to which attempts were made to achieve the aims and objectives of the textbook.

7.3 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

This section reports the subsequent lesson observations of the teacher and students who completed the questionnaires reported in the previous section. As was the case in the rural region, due to time constraints and limited class availability, the textbook-related lessons that were observed involved the last section of Unit 10 and all sections of Unit 11 but the final section (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 133-145). Collectively, this equated to one unit of the textbook. There were four sessions observed, one each on language focus, reading, reading (continued) and listening, and speaking and writing. As noted earlier, although a full account of "lesson proceedings" have been created for all sessions observed, only the excerpt regarding the speaking lessons, together with overviews and post-lesson feedback of all sessions, is provided in the body of this thesis. This is because in a communicative language teaching approach, how speaking skills are taught should be relatively easy to evaluate. The other lesson proceedings are located in Appendix P.3. Also, the procedures for, and the areas of interest of, the post-lesson feedback were the same as those of the other two cases.

7.3.1 Session 1

7.3.1.1 Overview

The first observed lesson was of the Language Focus section of Unit 10 (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 133-136, see Appendix N) regarding noun formations of verbs using the suffix *-tion* (vocabulary), and the review of *should* and conditionals types 2 and 3 (grammar). The lesson, however, was extended to cover the nominalisation of verbs with other suffixes as well as extensive reviews of three types of conditional sentences: possible, unreal (present), and unreal (past), and *unless* as an equivalent to *if… not.* As a result, the session was actually two periods, twice as long as the time allocated for the section by the curriculum (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 22).

The textbook includes only one vocabulary task which requires the students to fill five sentences with the correct nouns of verbs already provided. However, the teacher included one more task requesting the students to produce their own sentences using the nouns recently formulated in the previous activity. The textbook has three grammar tasks: Task A, requiring the students to respond to the questions provided using *should* and prompts; Task B, requiring students to respond to the questions provided using type 2 conditionals; and Task C, requiring students to provide the correct verb forms. The teacher, however, had prepared two additional tasks: in task one the students were instructed to produce responses to the provided prompts using *should*; and in task two the students were asked to respond to the prompts using conditional sentences. In addition, the teacher also instructed the students to make conditional sentences of their own based on the structures provided.

7.3.1.2 Post-lesson feedback

As soon as the lesson ended, short interviews were held with two selected students in succession in a corner of the classroom. The first student interviewed found the vocabulary session interesting because, he said, the new words he learned were practical and the word formations helped him to further produce their “relative words”. Also, he said he was able to

learn best from the pair work when there were many ideas contributed by his partner. Concerning the grammar session, however, the student said he found it boring because he had already learned about conditional sentences in Year 9. This attitude was shared by the second student who quoted the same reason, saying that conditional sentences practice was done not only in the year before, but also in the advanced practice sessions for provincial contests (for outstanding students). The lessons, she proposed, would have been more challenging if they had covered “mixed conditional sentences”. Concerning the most practical thing she thought she had learned, the student said it was *should*, which she assumed to be part of the upcoming test items.

No post-lesson feedback was given by the teacher because of her unavailability.

7.3.2 Session 2

7.3.2.1 Overview

As a one-period test was administered in the first half of the session, the actual lesson observation started from the second period. The lesson involved the use of audio-video components and was conducted in the school’s language lab which was equipped with an LCD projector (mostly for teacher use only) and personal computers (for students to share, two to a computer). The teacher indicated to the researcher just prior to the session that it would involve a picture display to help the students become more familiar with national parks.

In addition to the textbook’s chart-filling task, the session included teacher designed activities related to the topic of the unit. The first activity was a presentation of slides depicting national parks, with ask-and-answer exchanges between the teacher and the students following each slide. The second activity was a matching task designed to pre-teach the words needed to understand the reading texts of the section. Even the textbook-based chart-filling task was modified by the teacher in that once the chart had been completed the students were also asked to produce complete sentences from the information obtained.

7.3.2.2 Post-lesson feedback

The two students interviewed were very excited about the lesson and the use of the LCD projector. They said they found the lesson really interesting and enjoyable, being engaged by the animated pictures, which they said gave them a clear idea about what national parks were like. Asked how often the projector was used, the students said it was once per unit, normally for reading lessons. In particular, one student disclosed that the students had usually worked on the vocabulary and reading excerpts prior to the lesson. If they had not yet done so, he said, it would have been very difficult for them, for example, to get the right words for the prompts in the teacher-provided task, which he didn't find informative enough to come up with the wanted words. Notably, he suggested that the teacher should have spent time explaining the grammar structures of the reading excerpts.

No post-lesson feedback was obtained from the teacher because of her unavailability.

7.3.3 Session 3

7.3.3.1 Overview

This session was conducted in the classroom as normal and the lessons focused on reading and listening. As for reading, the students continued to work on Task B and Task C, each of which consisted of two smaller tasks. With regard to the second sub-task of Task C, the teacher provided words for the students to group into different categories, which was an attempt to facilitate the completion of the task by the students. Following the textbook-based tasks, the students played a game provided by the teacher which involved the use of animal words, an activity the students were very much excited about and actively engaged in.

Following the reading lessons, the session continued with the listening lessons during which the students were asked to do tasks, A, B, C and D from the textbook. Task A was a lead-in activity, and Tasks B and C were while-listening tasks requiring the students to check the boxes which related to details from the talk they had just listened to, and to provide brief answers to a set of comprehension questions. The listening session ended with another

teacher-provided game; a crossword activity that made the classroom atmosphere exciting for the students, thereby involving their active participation.

7.3.3.2 Post-lesson feedback

The first student identified the reading lessons as interesting because, in his opinion, the classification tasks helped him to memorise vocabulary very well. What he said he enjoyed the most was the game time because it mobilised his knowledge. He said he had learned the most from those activities because he was inspired by the competitiveness. The student also added that he would like the teacher to design more games for the students to play during the lessons.

This positive attitude towards game play was shared by the second student, who said it gave her an opportunity to better learn and memorise vocabulary. She further commented that the textbook tasks were not as interesting to her as the game. The student said, however, that the over-use of games would distract students from learning. In addition, she said there had not been enough time for the listening practice, which, together with speaking, were her two favourite skill sets when compared with reading, writing and language focus. She also disclosed that, due to this favouritism, she did quite a lot of listening skills practice through the use of *Headway*, for example, which were English learning materials that she said were available in the school library.

The interview with the teacher began with the question of why she had modified the spidergram task. She responded that, in her opinion, the textbook task instructing the students to produce and arrange words into different groups would have been too difficult for the students. She said as she did not think their vocabulary was adequate for them to undertake the task, she decided to provide a list of words for the students to work from, thereby making the task achievable. In relation to the lesson activities which went beyond those prescribed by the textbook, the teacher said she thought games played a significantly positive role in

activating student learning. The textbook tasks alone, she said, would have made the students bored with learning.

7.3.4 Session 4

7.3.4.1 Overview

This session involved a focus on speaking and writing. The speaking lesson was about "Asking for Permission and Giving Reasons for Refusal". The textbook offered tasks A, B and C for the students to accomplish and the teacher had one of her own, as shown in the lesson proceedings below. The writing lesson involved interpreting and describing graphs and during these lessons the teacher and the students managed to cover all the three tasks of the textbook (two of which consisted of two smaller tasks) and one task provided by the teacher. Unfortunately, the writing lesson included so many tasks that the teacher-provided task proved ineffective.

7.3.4.2 Lesson proceedings: Speaking lesson

Minutes 1-13 (15:17-15:29): This was the time allocated for a review of the lesson and the teacher asked selected students to recite some of the words she had taught during the previous class including *Aborigines, rim, balance, annual rainfall,* and *ecology*. The teacher gave prompts to which the students responded with the appropriate words, which the students were asked to write on the blackboard. Wherever there was a mistake, other students would provide corrections. Every time she heard a correct answer, the teacher wrote it on the blackboard. Selected students were then asked to read aloud the definitions of the words in focus and give their Vietnamese meanings.

Minutes 13-18 (15:29-15:34): The speaking lesson started following the lesson review. The teacher provided a number of expressions as shown below and asked the whole class to put them into columns: (1) Asking for Permission; and (2) Giving Reasons for Refusal. Students worked with their self-chosen partners.

1. *I wonder if…*

2. *Is it possible to…?*
3. *It's because…*
4. *Is it all right if…?*
5. *…and that's why I'd like to…*
6. *The reason is…*
7. *Would it be all right if…*
8. *Anybody mind if…?*
9. *It's sort of complicated, but you…*
10. *Well, the thing is…*

Minutes 18-22 (15:34-15:38): This was the time allocated to check students' work. The teacher asked students to stand up, say aloud the expressions, and put them in the correct columns. While the students were speaking she put their answers, if correct, in the appropriate column on the blackboard. Following the check, the teacher added several more expressions such as:

Could it be possible that…?

Is there any objection if…?

The teacher then asked students to learn by heart the expressions provided.

Minutes 22-29 (15:38-15:45): Working on Task A, the students used expressions that were deemed to be suitable requests and replies to fill in the three conversational exchanges provided. For each exchange there were two pairs asking and answering, meaning the second almost repeated the first if the answers were correct.

Minutes 29-31 (15:45-15:57): Working on Task B, the students in pairs made up and practised verbal exchanges about ways to preserve the natural environment based on the suggested expressions and prompts. They worked on their own for about two minutes in preparation for being called on to say the exchanges in front of the class.

Minutes 31-37 (15:57-15:53): In pairs, the students were called to stand up and read aloud the exchanges they had made. There were altogether nine pairs of students called and their exchanges were quite good. Their exchanges were well-matched in spite of mispronunciations and halting.

Minutes 37-42 (15:53-15:58): Students continued to work on Task C. They had around five minutes to generate ideas and practise saying permission-/refusal-related exchanges. Pairs of students were then selected to stand up and say aloud their exchanges in front of the class. There were six pairs altogether and again their exchanges were quite good. This is one of the student-produced exchanges:

- *Anybody minds if I litter in the school yard?*
- *I'd rather you didn't. It will make our school yard dirtier. We should throw the garbage into the dustbin.*

Minutes 42-43 (15:58-15:59): The teacher asked the students to recite the speaking expressions just studied. The first student was able to recite three expressions and the second student recited two expressions concerning asking for permission. The third student recited an expression about giving reasons for refusal, which was correct. The teacher then reminded students to learn by heart the expressions which she said would be tested the following Saturday.

The class then had a break before the writing lesson was resumed, the proceedings of which are provided in Appendix P.3.

7.3.4.3 Post-lesson feedback

As usual, two students were interviewed after the lessons. The first student commented that the graph writing activity was not really relevant to his needs, saying he found it was unlikely to happen in his life, and therefore, he did not need a lesson about it. In addition, he said the tasks were easy if he just did what was required by the textbook. Concerning topical issues, the student remarked that he found the unit repetitious given the

fact that they studied conservation of nature and the undersea world in the preceding units. The second student partly shared these opinions, commenting that the content and the tasks of the lessons were not really practical, specifically referring to the speaking expressions that she thought would have been shorter and simpler. In addition, the student said she preferred the speaking activities to be conducted as group work rather than just having a pair of students stand up and say the conversational exchanges, which she thought was mechanical. She remarked that if the students worked together in a group they would have been able conduct a discussion in which everyone could contribute ideas to a certain topic. Moreover, the student said the graph writing was a common IELTS task, but she had no need to practice for the test at the moment. Furthermore, she said she wanted herself and her classmates to exchange their notebooks (which contained their writings) in order to work together to improve their writing. By doing so, in her opinion, it would give them an opportunity to learn from each other and learn from their mistakes.

With regard to English communication practice, the student said there were few opportunities to find someone to speak English with in her city. To compensate, she said she and her friends would go to the orphanage nearby where English speaking volunteers were working and practise speaking English with them. As she disclosed, this English practice happened every two months and lasted several hours, with appointments being made in advance. Also, she spent her time chatting with English-speaking people at paltalk.com chat rooms and listening to broadcasters such as the Voice of America and whatever other audio sources were available, approximately twice a week.

There was also the chance to have a quick discussion with the teacher about the lessons. Asked about what she had taught other than what was prescribed by the textbooks, the teacher first of all explained that she used the graph-based gap-filling task in order to give the students an idea of what a graph was, although she was aware of the students' difficulty in understanding the words used in the definitions. Concerning the translation of vocabulary, the

teacher remarked that English-only teaching would definitely have left students uncertain about what the words really meant. She said students would generally want to have Vietnamese translations for the words they were studying, for they were hardly ever sure of their understanding if there were explanations in English only.

7.3.5 Post-observation survey

On the basis of the number of notes taken during the sessions observed, a short questionnaire was designed and administered by the researcher during the lesson several days later. The questionnaire included statements of the researcher's lesson observations and asked the students to confirm/refute whether they thought the observations were correct. In several places, they were asked to explain briefly what their observation was. It took the respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire (see Appendix F.3). There were 24 questionnaires handed back, achieving a 69% rate of return.

The first question was about students' preparations for the upcoming lessons and their practice for the past lessons. If students' self-reports were true, it was encouraging to see they had been working hard for the subject they specialised in (i.e., English). Most students claimed they had looked over the essentials of the sections they were going to study the next day and after class had practiced what they had studied. Quite a number of students said they did not prepare themselves for the listening lessons, though, because they were advised by their teacher to keep their mind fresh for the classroom tasks which should be done as the lesson progressed.

With regard to the reading lesson, it was claimed by most students that the reading excerpts were suitable for their level and they thus understood them well enough. Interestingly, just a small number of respondents said they needed the teacher's translation of the texts and/or further explanations. Regarding listening, it was acknowledged by many students that very few of them were able to answer the textbook questions upon the first hearing, and needed to hear the content one or two more times. When responding to the

questions on the speaking lessons, approximately half of the respondents said the repeated practice of language functions was boringly repetitious, but the same percentage said that speaking expressions were yet to be further practised. Relating to their writing lessons, it was confirmed by the majority of the respondents that the pre-writing activities were more interesting and exciting to them than the main writing task. The most common reason provided for the difference was that the writing activities were done independently, and thus were boring.

In reference to the game time, it was confirmed by the respondents that most students were more excited with playing games than they were with doing the textbook tasks. Among the reasons quoted were the games were interesting, competitive and relaxing, whereas the textbook tasks were dry, uncompetitive and boring. When evaluating all of their lessons the students reported they were essentially more preoccupied with doing vocabulary and grammar exercise than with practising communication skills. The primary reason for this preoccupation was that the former would better prepare them for the tests and exams they would be taking. Furthermore, in relation to testing, most students agreed that the current exams payed too much attention to the testing of language knowledge and this negatively affected their study of aural/oral skills.

Lastly, it was observed that the students could pronounce English words (in isolation, not in context) quite well and, in search for the contributing factors, the students were evoked to tell about their English learning circumstances. It is worth noting that the students' conditions for learning were quite good. As reported by the students, many might now feel free to listen to the radio in English, normally the Voice of America, use the Internet to talk to English-speakers thousands of miles away, as well as watch television programmes produced in English. In particular, the students were appreciative that the teacher had been dedicated enough to prepare and implement lessons that supported English speaking practice.

The results of the survey confirmed that the tasks in the textbook, excepting the listening section, were within the students' learning capabilities. Also, the classroom lessons were apparently supported by student preparation and practice, the opportunities for which were sought from outside the classroom as well. In addition, the teacher was recognised for her independent input into the lessons, especially through the games which the students found exciting and useful for study. Yet, according to the survey results, what was most important to the students was the study of vocabulary and grammar, because they perceived it was development in these areas that they needed to do well in their exams.

7.3.6 Summary

The classroom observations showed that there had been effective attempts to use the textbook in the way it had been designed to be used. First, students' communication practice happened over a considerable amount of time. The students were given opportunities to speak English, even in vocabulary and grammar sessions, and the actual ratio of English vs. Vietnamese talk was estimated to be 80% vs. 20%. The students were able to produce their own sentences using the materials from the textbook, and such evidence can be counted as effective learning. Importantly, throughout the observed lessons, student-constructed sentences proved to be meaningful and generally grammatically correct. All of these positive outcomes could be attributed to active lesson preparation and participation by the students, and the resourceful and creative input provided by the teacher. The textbook-based tasks could have addressed the students' needs for more natural English communication and practice, as it was observed that during the game activities where the students were actively and excitedly engaged the best type of learning took place.

However, it was observed that traces of traditional methods were clearly recognisable in every lesson. First, translation was still clearly an indispensable tool for teaching vocabulary, active or passive. The teachers' translations were always readily noted down by students. Second, actual interaction was still mainly between the teacher and the student.

When talking to each other, the students were doing so more for the teacher's appraisal of their work than for each other's comprehension. Third, there were indications that students sought to learn about grammar even during non-grammar activities. Generally, there was stronger interest in knowledge learning rather than skills practice on the part of both the students and the teacher, quoting the exams' influence as a legitimate cause. Their concern with learning language knowledge and being driven by exams was evident, for example, through doubling the time devoted to the Language Focus and teaching phonetic symbols.

7.4 POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS

Following the classroom observations and the post-observation questionnaire with the students, separate interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and the head teacher of the school. While the interview with the former was expected to reveal more specific details about the lessons observed, the interview with the head teacher sought to provide insight into the broad contextual usage of the textbook and its impact on the classroom activities.

7.4.1 Classroom teacher

This section reports the interview with the classroom teacher, designed to make clear the answers provided in her pre-observation questionnaire responses and the points noted during the classroom observation. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese, the mother tongue of both the interviewer (i.e. the researcher) and the interviewee. The interview lasted slightly over an hour, and was audio-recorded for accuracy and verbatim quotations. (See Appendix P.4 for the translation of the interview transcript.) Below are the important points as revealed in the interview:

The first point concerns the comparisons the teacher made between the new and old textbooks. The teacher commented that the new material was more effective (4:1)[12] and had "more interesting content", which she said was more realistic and more relevant to the student's life (8:1; 10:2). As a result, the teacher remarked that the students "appear to enjoy using the book" (34:1; 36:1). Concerning usage, the teacher rated the new textbook as easier to use (124:9), with separate sections reflecting the classroom procedures, thereby requiring less effort towards lesson planning.

Second, regarding the applicability of the textbook under evaluation, the teacher said that it was useable in her own context (20:1-3). According to the teacher, what was commonly seen as conflicting targets (textbooks emphasising communication skills *vs.* students prioritising language knowledge) turned out to be concurrently achievable with the new textbook. "Students can both learn the grammar of the language (i.e., lessons of knowledge) and have opportunities to practise communication" (20:3), a point she had previously claimed in the pre-observation survey response.

Having said that, the teacher acknowledged the influence of knowledge-oriented exams: "There are quite a number of students who aim to study for exam purposes only; they aren't learning English to use it" (26:1). In fact, the teacher said: "…for them it's just enough to study English and pass the exams required" (26:3). The reason, as explained by the teacher (26:2), was that students did not have access to an environment to use English and they were not motivated to learn to use the language. In addition, still according to the teacher, Year 10 students were too young to be aware of their language needs. She said that although they had chosen to specialise in English, her students might not want to persist with the language in the future (38:1-6).

---

[12] What was cited by the semi-urban classroom teacher in this section (i.e. 7.4.1) all refers to her interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendix P.4. The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6 of Chapter 5.

In relation to the outcomes prescribed by the curriculum and the targets the students set themselves, some conflicting drivers were apparent. Although the reality was that the "students have to learn all four skills", they were mostly pressured by parents towards "the study of grammar, reading, and writing", and perhaps "some listening" (76:1-3), because they were the areas to be tested in the important graduation and university admission exams. It was remarkable that even in the advanced training of students for the provincial contests, speaking was still not on the agenda because it was not a component to be tested in the competitions.

In terms of classroom time allocated to the teaching of the different sections of the textbook, according to the teacher (132-134), the curriculum designated one-third of the unit time to aural and oral skills, an allocation inconsistent with the claim that special attention should be paid to developing students' communication skills. Indeed, it is stipulated in the curricular guidelines that two of the seven periods allocated to each unit are to focus on listening and speaking (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 22).

In fact, the pressure to do well in the test was evident in the way that the teacher said she was designing her test items so that her students would work from the work book without her supervision.

> EXCERPT 7.1 …several sections of my one-period tests are based on the work book. Those who have worked on those exercises from the work book would have an advantage in doing the classroom tests […] Take the recent test as an example: I have used the writing section and four multiple-choice questions taken from the work book. (138:2-3; 140:1)

In addition, the backwash effect of exams was also visible in the way the teacher taught vocabulary in the classroom. Despite the fact that the textbook did not require phonetics symbols to be taught, the teacher did it while teaching pronunciation, especially in relation to the sounds that were seemingly alike and/or unusual. This knowledge, said the teacher, would help the students to deal with the phonetics test items, which always formed part of the exam (156:1-3). Moreover, the teacher nevertheless strongly believed that the

current exams did not present any considerable interference to the teaching of the textbook, arguing that the teaching and learning of all four skills should have become a practice:

> EXCERPT 7.2 I think they have been learning all fours skills since they started learning English. They've had to study listening, speaking, reading, and writing since Year 6. They should have been familiar with how things are by now. (78:1-2, 6)

Furthermore, the teacher was there to reconcile any differences. As she reported, for example, she would spend more time with the class that did not specialise in English because their English background was weaker (92:2-4). To cite another example, within a particular class she would take care to pick up the right students for the right activity at the right time so that the tasks were completed (90:1-8). Also, she said she would have modifications prepared if and when they were necessary:

> EXCERPT 7.3 As for the textbook, I have had to process many sections. The same content is taught but the activities could be differently conducted, not necessarily adhering to the prescriptions of the textbook… As for the questions that require group discussion, if the content is simple, I will instead have the pair work activities for those questions. (110:1-2; 112:4)

Therefore, modifications and further input would be done by the teacher wherever appropriate; depending on the class and the students she was teaching (124:1-8). Further to the discussion of the textbook modification, the teacher said it would have been more extensively localised if she had had more time. The alterations were to make sure the students' answers were genuine, meaning students understood the answers they had produced. For what was apt to happen as predicted by the teacher (194:1-4), the students access the answers available in the practice books, which would consequently deliver a false impression of the students' performance.

Further evidence of the teacher's positive attitudes was her claim that the allocated teaching load was "all right" given the time allowed (128:2). The implication of this evaluative comment differed from the widespread complaints that the work load was too

heavy for both teachers and students. One of the teacher's interventions, as she said, was to "reallocate" the content to teach (128:3), which was moderating the depth of lessons on the items to teach.

Finally, the teacher indicated that the learners' positive attitudes made a helpful contribution to her classroom teaching. As perceived by the teacher, the learners were very open and willing to work together and share the work load as well as their opinions (198-202). This was largely due to the fact that the class had selected English as their core subject.

To sum up, during the interview the classroom teacher expressed her positive attitudes towards the new textbook. Along with her perception of its improved teachability when compared to the former textbook, the teacher said it was useable in her context where the students had opportunities to have language usage lessons and communication practice. The textbook's teachability was supported by the teacher's contribution and the students' cooperative participation. Implementation of the textbook, however, was challenged by the knowledge-oriented exams which were the end focus for many students, especially when pressured by their parents. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that communication in English was not perceived to be a top priority by many students (whereas exam success was). In addition, the time allocated to the aural and oral skills of communication was considered inadequate in relation to what the curriculum claimed it aimed to achieve.

7.4.2 Head teacher

The interview with the head English teacher of the school was included to provide the researcher with an insight into the broad context of the teaching and learning of English in the class in question, as well as to validate the data from the other collection instruments. The interview was held at the end of the classroom observations at the teacher's own home. As with the teacher interview, it was conducted in Vietnamese and audio-recorded for verbatim transcription. (See Appendix P.5 for the translation of the interview transcript.) Also, notes

were taken for key and/or remarkable points, which the interviewer might use as the basis for further probing questions.

The most important issue of interest discussed with the head teacher was the manner in which teachers were prepared for the introduction of the textbook. As the head teacher indicated there were three training courses, each approximately one week, given in the three consecutive summers preceding the school years the textbooks for Years 10, 11, and 12 were introduced. The first two courses were about English teaching methodology in general (18:8, 14),[13] and the third one was a workshop at which teacher participants worked together to study the textbooks and create lesson plans for the units in the textbooks (24-26).

The courses, however, did not appear to be closely related to the teaching and learning of the textbook under evaluation; *English 10 – Intensive Programme.* First, in terms of methodology, the courses did not appear to be directly oriented towards the teaching methodology of the new textbook. As disclosed by the head teacher, the trainers were selected teachers of the province who had undertaken the training courses by foreign-funded projects completely unrelated to the introduction of the new textbooks. The projects, in fact, had been carried out even before the textbooks were published (36:1; 68:4-5). Because the course trainers were not related to the new textbook project, all they did was teaching what they had previously learned (44:1; 5-6) assuming it should be appropriate with the new textbooks.

Not only were the course trainers unrelated to the textbook project, they were educated in a variety of teacher training projects overseas (40:2-6), leaving doubt on the unity of the methodologies they learned and their adaptability to the local contexts. Worse, the principles and techniques proposed by the different trainers were to be strictly observed

[13] What was cited by the semi-urban head teacher in this section (i.e. 7.4.1) all refers to her interview responses, the translation of which is provided in Appendix P.5. The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6 of Chapter 5.

(48:4; 52:6-7), as the training was run by the local Service of Education and Training. This meant that the trainers had been trained through the foreign-assisted projects they had signed up to, and were thus locked into those programmes. Importantly, the training was inevitably shaped by the overseas training projects, which, as remarked by the head teacher, apparently aimed to achieve their own outcomes (68:8-10) and which may, in fact, be different to those included in the local textbooks. Convinced or not, teachers were to follow closely as their teaching performance was evaluated according to the criteria set by what they had been taught (70:2), particularly when one of the trainers was the head of the English teaching affairs of the provincial service (52:13-14; 54:1-3).

As it turned out, some of the principles and techniques they taught were in discordance with the new English textbook concerned. For example, as interviewee head teacher explained, teachers were restricted to teaching at most eight new words per session (62:6; 64:1), an apparent regulation to be strictly observed. Perceived as an act of disregard for the local circumstances, said the head teacher, the restrictions were not received favourably by local teachers (44:7-8) who, in relation to the example given, were faced with students whose English background might require them to be taught well more than that designated number.

Not only was the methodology of the courses inappropriate to the textbook and inconsiderate of the local conditions, the textbook study sessions and the lesson plans created were unrelated to the intensive programme textbooks. As reported by the head teacher, the focus was on the materials of the regular English programme being used by the vast majority of schools in the province.

> EXCERPT 7.4 The primary focus was on the textbooks of the regular programme because only a few classes took the intensive programme …and when the textbooks were studied, the primary focus was on those of the regular programme, not the intensive programme. […] The lesson plans focused on the textbooks of the regular programme. (18:10, 13; 58:1)

Given such training, teachers of the intensive programme were almost left alone to work out what they might need to do for their classes. “We had never touched upon the intensive programme”, said the teacher, “that’s why teachers teaching the intensive programme would have to work harder because they had to develop their own lesson plans” (22:2-3).

As observed by the head teacher, however, “the new methodology” was now being used in her province, at least at her school. Apart from strict enforcement, another cause for the acceptance of the methodology was that in the new context, the traditional methods turned out to be at odds with the new materials, forcing teachers to bring into use what they had recently learned from the training courses:

> EXCERPT 7.5 I don’t know what things are like at other schools but the new methodology is now being applied at my school. The traditional methods are no longer appropriate. For the new textbooks were designed to be taught through three stages, *before*, and then *while*, and then *post*, which we have had to follow. (62:1-3)

The question, as pointed out by the head teacher, was how these apparent ‘laws’ were being observed: “The question is the extent to which we are doing it” (62:4). Not only did the concern lie in teachers’ readiness, students’ responsiveness was also questionable. “In terms of methodology, we have to do the new ways”, she said, “but it’s hard to say how active students’ responses are” (62:5).

Apart from the training courses, it was hoped that the regular institutional meetings of the school’s English teaching team and the inter-school symposia would contribute to teachers’ use of the textbooks. As reported by the teacher, though, the English teachers meetings were mainly for administrative matters (72:4). Furthermore, the symposia met only infrequently (once a year) and only for a short duration (72:19). That being the case, “I don’t think it is very effective” said the interviewee about the yearly events (74:3), “because the topics are too big issues to discuss in half a day”.

Another topic of concern is the testing and assessment practices, and their impact on the use of the new textbooks. The first point to be brought to light is the lack of testing for listening and speaking skills in current tests and exams. As reported by the teacher, listening was normally not directly tested; and neither was speaking (118:8, 25). To be precise, sometimes speaking was tested but it was done indirectly through written multiple-choice test items (124:2-4), or minimally at the so called lesson review, in whichever case, its score weighting was far under its supposed importance.

As the students, and even teachers, were ultimately the most preoccupied with doing well at the tests and exams, the exam-oriented mentality was visible at many schools as the interviewee observed (130:3-6). As the head teacher elaborated, according to the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Training, testing should only be done in the multiple-choice format for Year 12 students, who would soon be taking the national exams (which are composed of just multiple-choice test items). For Years 10 and 11, the format should be a combination of both multiple-choice and self-writing. The policy was, in the words of the head teacher, "whatever is taught should be tested" (124:8). What turned out, however, was that everyone was rushing to use the multiple-choice format as early as possible. The problem was their exams, presumably due to practicality reasons, did not test listening or speaking. The following was what the interviewee had to say about the adverse effect of current testing practices on the use of the textbook:

> EXCERPT 7.6 Teachers were instructed to test what was taught. So, speaking should be tested orally. It should be the correct way but no one can do it. But we can still do it at the time for oral check, can't we? Yeah, but not enough for speaking. Writing is best tested by students' writing. For how can the testing of correspondence writing be made in the multiple-choice format? Most of our writing activities are about writing letters, writing resumes, or a narrative story. All these are impossible to be in the multiple-choice questions. (128:2-10)

And to her evaluation, the adverse impact was undermining the teachers' efforts. "That's why what we are doing is not effective", she said, "and it's something I can see very clearly" (130:1). What followed, according to the teacher, was that the classroom teacher orientation was being distorted by the multiple-choice format of the exams.

> EXCERPT 7.7 But, whatever is being done, students should be ready for multiple-choice questions when they are in year 12. If they are not given multiple-choice questions, they won't be familiar with this format, which is used for important exams. That's why we teachers will have to prepare students for exams so that they could get best results. (130:3-5)

Essentially, the students' inclination towards the ministry's exams, which played a decisive role in their graduation and university admission, was readily apparent in the interviewee's analysis of the students' choices of academic streams (136-138; 144:1-10).

Another topic, comparing the textbooks of the intensive and the regular programmes, was raised in relation to why the materials of the latter were being used by far more students. "The reason does not lie in the textbooks themselves", said the teacher (134:1). It was explained (134:2-8; 136:1-16) that it was simply because students taking the natural sciences and basic streams were overwhelming in number and these students were practically regulated to use the textbooks of the regular programme. Meanwhile, the textbooks of the intensive programme were used by social science students, who were the minority.

Asked to comment on the improvements of the new textbooks in comparison with the former ones, the teacher's answer was quite positive. According to her, broadly speaking, the new textbooks were "able to make students more active", and more specifically; "students' speaking capabilities have improved" (150:3-4). In contrast, however, the grammar knowledge of the students using the books deteriorated (150:5-6). Still, in the teacher's opinion (152:5-9), the class size presented a large problem to the implementation of the textbook tasks, which place emphasis on the development of the students' communication skills, particularly at rural schools. Given the students' inertia and the teachers' inability to

control such a large group, little speaking practice could be done for and by students in many other schools (152:9). Thus, relating this back to the teacher preparation programme, it was surprising to see that, according to the interviewee, the training courses were inadequate in preparing teachers to teach the two production skills:

> EXCERPT 7.8 The teacher training courses were all about teaching vocabulary, grammar, listening but there was nothing about teaching speaking. As for teaching writing, there was just a little. (156:26-27)

In direct reference to the textbook under evaluation, the teacher commented that they appeared to be lacking in dialogues for the students to practise on their own and memorise (at least, part of them) in order to use whenever possible. Having said that, the teacher recalled her experience of teaching large classes at private language centres where she said *Streamline* was used quite effectively owing to the availability of meaningful and complete dialogues, not just the "useful expressions" that the textbook had to offer (152:12-17). It should be noted that, as remarked by the interviewee (156:24), "teachers are generally weak in spoken language, and they don't have much spoken language input, so they find it difficult to teach speaking".

To sum up, it was revealed through the head teacher interview that the teacher preparation for the introduction of the textbook was not well done, if not problematic. Not only was the training not directed to the textbook, it appeared to be lacking in unity and appropriateness to local teachers. Also, the current assessment practices were blamed as hindrances to the use of the textbook because they rendered attempts to develop communication skills scarce and ultimately ineffectual. In addition, among the obstacles mentioned were the large class size and the problems with the teachers' spoken English and their teaching of speaking skills. Notably, it was commented by the head teacher that instead of making students produce English on their own, the textbook should have complete and authentic dialogues for them to learn by heart as samples. For in large-sized classes, students cannot be adequately attended to or facilitated by their teachers.

7.4.3 Summary

The interviews with both the classroom and the head teachers provided insights into the reality of teaching and learning English at SSHS. There seemed to be opportunities for the textbook to be used to achieve the targets set out as long as there were suitable input and strategies to moderate the implementation of the textbook's tasks, thereby bridging its mismatches with reality. Also, local teachers' teaching methodology was taking place as a result of the enforced application of the new textbooks (though the extent and degree of change were uncertain). Nevertheless, the possibility of achieving communicative competence was put at risk by the widespread influence of the current assessment practices, which were knowledge-oriented. The students and teachers appeared to be held captive in the race to practise for exams that neglected listening and speaking. Relating to the introduction of the textbook, the teacher preparation was reported to be seriously inadequate. The training was not specifically oriented to the textbook (of the intensive programme), making it hard for teachers to knowledgeably and effectively use this material. In addition, there was doubt about the compatibility of the teacher training courses with the textbook's teaching methodology, mainly because the trainers came from completely different projects and thus introduced foreign teaching techniques inappropriate to the local conditions. Furthermore, there were problems in the use of the textbook due to issues such as large-sized classes, teachers' limited verbal competence, and the textbook's unrealistic (and therefore overwhelming) requirements of learners.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The details of this case study centred on the teaching and learning strategies employed in a semi-urban high school class in relation to a unit of work from a new textbook to be used as part of the Year 10 intensive English programme. The textbook was evaluated on how it

was used and what factors contributed to its use, based on the relevant information collected through multiple sources and methods.

There were indications that the textbook was used as it had been intended to be used. The students were involved in activities through which they practised using English, particularly in the spoken form, though it was mainly by means of pair work activities and not necessarily proper communication. There was evidence that students were learning to use English from the textbook as demonstrated by their production of English based on what the textbook had to offer. All this, however, would not have happened without the teacher's input and the students' participation. The teacher was recognised to play a leading role in modifying and supplementing the textbook to offer classroom tasks that were effectively used with her students. Importantly, the teacher held a positive opinion in relation to the teachability of the textbook. The reasons for the students' participation (and performance) could be explained in reference to their English background and motivation. As high-performing students who chose English as their core subject, the learners proved capable of undertaking the classroom activities, and in their ability to muster the resources available to facilitate their study of English.

Nevertheless, the results might have been better if the following hindrances to learning had been eliminated and if teaching support had been provided. First, the exams, studying for which was students' legitimate priority, should have been modified to be better aligned with what the textbook encourages to be taking place in the classroom. Second, the classroom teaching would possibly have been enhanced if teachers had been properly prepared prior to the textbook deployment and adequately supported all through their use of the material. Third, the availability of better resource support particularly regarding the classroom fixtures and fittings could have functioned as another booster to the operationalisation of the textbook.

In conclusion, it turned out that the usefulness of the textbook was largely determined by the actual users of it. The findings are hopeful for achieving the targets set out for the textbook if it is to be used by the personnel who are capable and willing to use it as desired. In particular, the mindset of the on-site users of the textbook, and believing in and thinking positively of it and what they are doing, is indispensable.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

The previous three chapters have set out three contrastive case studies in which the English textbook was used in three different teaching contexts in Vietnam. This chapter provides a discussion of these case studies within a theoretical framework suitable for textbook evaluation. The chapter begins with a brief review of different approaches possible for evaluation and argues for adopting what will be referred to as the Werner/Aoki framework of evaluation as the most suitable framework for this study given its research questions and the researcher's 'insider' status. Based on that framework, in the three sections that follow, the textbook is evaluated based on the three complementary lenses including the ends-means, situational, and critical approaches. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

8.1 APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

8.1.1 Dominant paradigms

There are many possibilities for evaluation. Regarding methodology, there are preordinate *versus* responsive approaches. While the former involves undertaking primarily quantitative evaluation of the achievement of goals using an a priori plan (Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991, p. 270), the latter involves using qualitative methods seeking to learn about the activities rather than intentions, responding to "audience requirements for information", and taking into account different stakeholders' views (Stake 1991, pp. 275-276). In light of these two approaches, the evaluation of a textbook could be done by measuring the extent to which the aims (set out by the textbook itself and/or the curriculum the textbook is based on) have been achieved versus considering how the material is used in particular contexts and what the views of the people involved in its use are.

With reference to timing of evaluations, there are pre-, whilst-, and post-use evaluations. As the terms themselves quite clearly indicate, pre-use evaluation (of materials,

for example) considers the potential suitability of the materials for certain target users in certain circumstances at a certain point of time prior to the decision of their selection; whilst-use evaluation considers the suitability of materials in reference to target users as the materials are being used; and post-use evaluation aims to estimate the worth of the materials at a significant end of the circle of use (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 5).

Still related to timing but concerning purpose, there are formative, summative, and illuminative evaluations. According to Finch and Crunkilton (1989, p. 288) formative evaluation, typically undertaken by material developers familiar with the textbook under evaluation, aims to improve the textbook whereas summative evaluation is concerned with "the examination of a completed item to determine its impact on the potential consumer". Meanwhile, the primary concern of illuminative evaluation is neither exploratory (like that of formative evaluation) nor conclusive (summative evaluation); rather, it is descriptive and interpretive, focusing more on the process than on the product (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, p. 26).

Being 'responsive' in its approach (Shadish et al. 1991), this study by nature is principally a whilst-use evaluation that is illuminative in purpose. First, the responsive approach allows insights into the use of the textbook that are context-specific, and suitable to interpreting the findings of this study. The preordinate approach is not taken because meaningful findings are not expected to be achieved with it, in the context of this thesis's case studies. It is deemed too difficult to delineate the impact of the textbook on the learning of students that is interrelated with and interdependent on so many factors differing tremendously among different students such as their intelligence, their outside learning and even at school where it is not related to the textbook concerned, their teachers, their classmates, their family background, their local conditions, etc. Also, the impact of the textbook in isolation, even if it could be gauged, would not be as meaningful as the impact

created by the textbook itself in relation to the contextual factors mentioned, for the whole should be greater than the sum of its parts.

Second, whilst-use evaluation permits seeing to what extent the textbook is suitable for specific students in specific contexts and conditions while it is being used by and for those target learners, an issue materials developers are naturally inclined to seek to learn about. In order to achieve this goal, strictly speaking, the research is partly a pre-use evaluation to see what learning opportunities the textbook can offer, which, if any, will be contrasted with the extent to which these opportunities were seized (or missed), based on findings from the whilst-use evaluation. This study is not concerned with post-use evaluation because the textbook has recently been deployed and is thus only half way through its life cycle of use.

Third, the purpose of this study is to illuminate the intricate challenges and opportunities of the textbook that are believed to ultimately define the use and thus the success (or failure) of the textbook. As one of the textbook writers, the researcher wanted to set out and visit specific schools where he would be able to observe specific classroom lessons in which the textbook was being used and thereby search for evidential factors affecting the (in)effectiveness and the (in)appropriateness of the book. While summative evaluation is inappropriate for the reason given above for the non-use of the textbook and formative evaluation is no longer really needed, illuminative evaluation stands out as the most suitable approach, paving the way for attempts to answer the research questions of the study.

Nevertheless, the focus for evaluation in this study is the textbook itself and its stakeholders. The findings from the various evaluation approaches outlined above would at best reveal what aspects of the textbook – and perhaps the textbook only – are (in)effective and the (in)appropriateness and why that is so, again centering on the textbook in isolation. The evaluative results would be a close-up examination of the use of the textbook, thus failing to consider the whole system in which the textbook has been deployed and used. While such results would provide useful information, they would be unlikely to adequately

address the ongoing problems of textbook innovation. The point is not just to deal with accurate information but also complete information for, as a Yiddish proverb runs, ‘a half truth is a whole lie’. This study follows an orientation comprising a multidimensional evaluation. In addition to practical usage aspects of the textbook there must be critical evaluation of the textbook that first steps back in order to have a broader view of the textbook use in its contexts. Also, the evaluation should get behind the scenes in order to see what is unseen or partially seen from the front. Last but not least, such evaluation should be digging down to uncover the underlying causes that make the textbook used as it is and that define the surface ‘symptoms’ as they are. In short, the evaluation should aim at not only the theoretical and empirical worth of the textbook but also at critical consideration of the textbook.

From this view, the three-pronged evaluation framework put forward by Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989; 2005, hereafter called the Werner/Aoki framework) turns out to be able to meet the triple interests of this research. Apart from the traditional ends-means approach that compares the desired versus actual ends and means and the situational approach taking into consideration the views of those involved, the Werner/Aoki framework emphasises the significance of critical evaluation that looks beyond the textbook itself into the system in which it was operationalised.

It is important to note here the influence of Jurgen Habermas in the Werner/Aoki approach. “Those familiar with Jurgen Habermas’ work, *Knowledge and Human Interest”*, comments the editor to the paper of Werner (1979, Editor's Note), “will find resonance with Werner’s paper, which we find is a skillful interpretation within an evaluative framework of Habermas’ tri-paradigmatic conceptions”. Indeed in this same paper, Werner acknowledges the influence of Habermas (Werner, 1979, p. 13, 1984, p. 32) and in other works Aoki admits “we appropriated Habermas’ paradigms” in order to sketch “the three research orientations” (Aoki, 1984, p. 4, 1989, p. ii, 2005, p. 137).

8.1.2 The Werner/Aoki framework adapted for textbook evaluation

Based on the framework of programme evaluation by Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005), the textbook is evaluated through three approaches: ends-mean, situational, and critical. Table 8.1 summarises how the framework is adapted for the evaluation of the textbook concerned.

Table 8.1

The Textbook Evaluation Framework Adapted from Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005)

	Werner/Aoki framework – for programme evaluation		**Werner/Aoki framework – adapted for textbook evaluation**	
	What is the evaluator's attention?	*What does the evaluator do?*	*What do I do?*	*What are the primary sources of data?*
Means-ends	Relationship between means and ends	Analyse and judge the methods used in a programme on how well they help educators achieve specified goals	Analyse and judge the methods (i) as claimed by the textbook and (ii) as actually taking place on how well they help to achieve specified goals	(i) The textbook, its Teacher Book, their curriculum (ii) Observation of classroom lessons of three case studies
Situational	Perceptions which people have of a programme	Judge a programme on the situational meaning and relevance which it may have in the experience of various classroom participants	Judge the textbook on the situational meaning and relevance which it may have in the experience of various classroom participants including (i) students, (ii) classroom teachers, and (iii) head teachers	(i) Surveys & post-lesson feedback (ii) Survey, post-lesson feedback & interview (iii) Interview
Critical	Foundations of a programme	Probe its underlying values and assumptions and the worth of its goals	Probe underlying values and assumptions of the textbook and the worth of its goals based on CTE principles adapted from Shohamy (2001)	Researcher's self-reflexive evaluation & interview with other textbook writers

According to the Werner/Aoki framework, there are three approaches to programme evaluation: ends-means, situational, and critical evaluations. The ends-means approach seeks to find out answers to "value evaluation questions such as: How well have the ends been achieved?" (Aoki, 2005, p. 141). The primary concern is "focused on the relation of the means (i.e. teaching methods, student activities, materials, resources) to the ends (i.e. intended objectives and outcomes)" (Werner, 1984, p. 3). Regarding the textbook under evaluation, there are two major tasks to be addressed. First, there will be analysis and judgment of the aims and methodology claimed by the textbook, its Teacher Book, and their curriculum as the desired ends and means, thereby evaluating the theoretical worth of the textbook. Second, what was noted taking place in the three case studies by classroom observation (actual means) will be considered in order to see to what extent the claimed aims will be likely (or not) to be achieved by such means.

According to Werner, however, "there is no one program… but as many programs as there are groups interpreting and experiencing something they refer to as a 'program' in different situations" and the "the programme and the local situation are inseparable" (1984, p. 9). Therefore, the views of those concerned with the programme under evaluation should be considered in order to judge "its relevance and meaningfulness to the various participants". In this study, those views are of three key groups of on-site stakeholders (or "school inhabitants" in the words of Werner and Rothe (1979, p. 3)) from three case studies comprising students, classroom teachers, and head teachers. Their views are collected through questionnaire survey, discussion following classroom lessons, and interviews.

The activities and accounts obtained by means of those two approaches "are based upon beliefs (assumptions, images, root metaphors) and intentions (aims, motives, and other interests) which may remain hidden, and which are often legitimized and maintained… in various ideologies, roles, and institutions" (Werner, 1984, p. 12). It follows that "a critical evaluator… probes into the underlying foundations which may be implicit and hidden". The

critical approach, therefore, requires that the evaluator "be self-reflective and aware of the fundamental beliefs which inform everyday decision making in classrooms" and reflect "upon the implications of these beliefs and interests" (*ibid.*). In this research, the textbook will also be critically evaluated based on the researcher's self-reflexive evaluation and interviews with other textbook writers. Since the guidance on critical evaluation is perceived to be of general orientation only, as will later be explained in this chapter, Shohamy's critical language testing principles (in Lynch, 2001, p. 363) are drawn upon and modified for discussion of the textbook evaluation.

8.2 ENDS-MEANS INTERPRETATION

Following Norris' explication of Werner's framework, this section looks at "the gap between the ideal and the actual" (1993, p. 103). 'The ideal' includes the means envisioned to be taking place and the ends claimed to be as a result achieved for the textbook by such means, and 'the actual' is what was noted and observed in the three case studies where the textbook was in use. In this research, 'the actual' is primarily the (actual) means by which actual ends are seen to be achieved; it is not the aim of this study to identify (all) the actual ends that have resulted from the use of the textbook concerned.

8.2.1 Desired ends and means

An evaluation of the textbook requires some reference to the curriculum which, as the basis for the book's conception, plays the leading role in writers' deliberation of what content the textbook is to include (and in what order) and how the book is to be used. The curriculum is legally declared to supersede the textbook (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b, p. 6). In effect, teachers are required "to abide with the curriculum rather than textbooks if there is a perceived conflict between the two" (MOET Directive Document 6631/BGDDT-GDTrH, 2008, p. 2). Textbooks are by law realisations of the curriculum into different year levels for different subjects (Education Law of 2005, Article 29, Clause 2) and it would be justified to say that the textbooks are the mirrors of the

curriculum (Ha Anh, 2008). Apart from the curriculum, the Teacher Book as the users' guide for the textbook will also be considered in this approach for clarification and confirmation.

8.2.1.1 Overriding goals

The textbook under evaluation is based on two curricula, the master one for all subjects in upper secondary education of Years 10-12 (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006a) and the derivative one for English only all through secondary education, Years 6-12 (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b). Also, the textbook has the Teacher Book as a guide for teachers to use the textbook in the classroom. An understanding of these three documents, therefore, will illuminate the desired aims set for achievement by the textbook and the ways it is envisioned to do so.

First, an analysis of the two curricula and the Teacher Book indicates that they are ambivalent in defining aims of English education of new textbooks and that English textbooks are not just to teach English. Regarding the master curriculum, it is not clear whether knowledge or skill (that is to develop for students) is to be the focal point. Defining the requirements of 'standards' of knowledge and skills which "are to be the foundations for the writing of textbooks, teaching management, and assessment" (p. 10), the master curriculum is quite ambiguous:

- Knowledge: "…to have basic knowledge that is relatively systematic and complete about phonetics, vocabulary (approximately 1,000-1,500 words) and grammar of a modern foreign language so as to formulate and develop communicative skills. To have basic knowledge of the country, people, and culture of that language".
- Skills: "…in the given foreign language learning, to comprehend the gist of oral talks about general issues suitable to the level and age group. To be capable of discussing and presenting thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about favourite topics. To understand general texts of about 300-400 words. To be capable of writing a number of common and simple formal types of text". (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006a, pp. 1072-1073)

The ambiguity continues to be found in the aims set out by the derivative curriculum (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming 2006b, p. 5) and even in the Teacher Book, in which "English education in secondary schools is to help students:

1. To use English as a tool of communication at the basic level by means of listening, speaking, reading, and writing *in order to meet rather advanced needs in the fields of social sciences and humanities.*
2. To master knowledge of English that is basic, *relatively systematic and complete* and is suitable with the level of proficiency and psychological characteristics of age group and *rather advanced needs in the fields of social sciences and humanities.*
3. To acquire general understanding of the country, people, and culture of a number of English-speaking countries and thereby to develop a positive attitude of the country, people, culture, and language of English-speaking countries; to cultivate pride in, love for, and respect of the Vietnamese culture and the language. (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 6)

Such a definition of the aims, though more specific than that of the master curriculum, is still unclear. Particularly in reference to the italicised words, they seem to distinguish the intensive from the regular programmes (the latter of which is not in italics) rather than to state clearly what it is to be achieved. In the section on "the views on the construction and development of the curriculum" by the curriculum developers and textbook writers in the two documents, the desired means become clearer when communication skills and the learner-centred approach are presented of central importance:

1. Communication skills are the aim of the teaching and learning process; language knowledge is the means to formulate and develop communication skills.
2. Students are the subjects that play an active, proactive, and creative role in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are the organisers and guides of the teaching and learning process".(Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b, p. 6; Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 6)

The reader, however, might still want to look for explicit statements of the focal ends to be achieved and means to achieve those ends. For first these 'views' are just those of the curriculum developers and textbook writers, not necessarily required of teachers and students.

Second, there is no indication or suggestion on how those views could be translated into classroom lesson practices. Broadly speaking, in the words of Werner (1991, p. 229), it conceals rather than reveals directions of teaching and learning.

Second, the analysis of the defining documents also show that in addition to language competence requirements, what matters equally, if not more, is the aim to build up among students the following attitudes:

> "To love the hometown and the homeland Vietnam, *to love socialism*; take pride in and preserve and bring into play the treasured traditions of the nation, *the revolution*, the culture, and the ethic values… of our people. […]. *Believe in and contribute to the rule-governed developments of history*.
>
> To live up to the constitution and the law. *To be willing to carry out the obligations of building and defending the socialist country. Support and have positive attitude and behaviour; fight against and criticise negative attitude and behaviour in life*". (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006a, p. 1079, emphases added)

In the Vietnamese context, these requirements are to be met if the books are not to be rejected (for instance by the committee of textbook examiners representing the authorities). The italicised words in the excerpt above might sound odd to the ear of outsiders but they are unquestioned in the Vietnamese context. Such requirements are legitimate as the school textbooks are to serve educational aims of the nation. In fact, it is a strength of 'in-country' textbooks that "have a voice that promotes the national identities, religions and political viewpoints" (Bao, 2008, p. 267). Broadly speaking, "all teaching materials carry cultural and ideological messages" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 129).

In summary, English communication skills are not straightforwardly set as the sole end to achieve and language knowledge is not really deemphasized. In reference to the curriculum developers' and textbook writers' orientations, however, the textbook arguably encourages the adoption of the communicative approach of language teaching and learning, as will be further discussed below. This ambivalence might jeopardise unified interpretation of the means and ends of the textbook. In addition, it is revealed that mere English education

is not the only aim. The textbook in principle is to play a dual role, taking on the political duties as well.

8.2.1.2 Specific outcomes

What has been presented above are the overriding goals; much more specific outcomes desired to be achieved by students completing the intensive programme of English for Year 10 can be found in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2

Targeted Outcomes of English 10 – Intensive Programme

Finishing year 10, students are able to use English knowledge they have learned in the curriculum concerned in order to:	
Listening	Understand the gist and details of mono-/dialogues of 140-160 words within the topics covered
	Understand texts read at a relatively slow speed
	Recognise and differentiating the individual sounds, words, and stress
Speaking	Ask and answer about the content concerning topics covered.
	Perform a number of basic communicative functions: giving instructions, expressing opinions, asking for directions, asking for information, providing information, expressing attitudes and viewpoints, raising advantages and difficulties, comparing and contrasting
Reading	Understand the main idea and specific details of texts of 200-250 words within the topics covered
	Develop vocabulary skills: dictionary use, contextual cues
	Develop word use skills (using synonyms, antonyms, and word formations)
	Understand the relationship between sections of a text
Writing	Write from cues a text of 100-130 words concerning the topics covered or for basic needs of personal and social communication.

Note. From Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming (2006a, p. 845).

Table 8.2 shows that the ultimate outcome is that students should master language skills rather than knowledge, for there are only descriptions of the skill outcomes to be achieved. Though the textbook has Language Focus in addition to the four sections of the

four micro-skills, knowledge mastery is not listed as a goal. The ends seem to be more clearly identified: skills development is highlighted.

Undoubtedly, while abiding the curricula, the writers have their own interpretations, thus contribute by giving recommendations on how to teach the book. Their teaching guide provided in the Teacher Book (Tu Anh et al., 2006, pp. 18-32) is mostly what the communicative approach of English language teaching promotes (see, for example, Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 153-177), making the desired means (to achieve the desired ends) clearer. For example, textbook writers claim that the topics of their books "are contextualised and developed naturally and with diversity and hence they can help students practise *language and study skills* [emphasis added] at best" (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 15). The writers even go further to elaborate the teaching and learning approach they expect to be taken for the use of the textbook as follows:

> The teacher is to organise and guide students to participate actively in their learning process through individual, pair, and group work. The teacher needs to eclectically use teaching methods and techniques and supplementary materials in order to create interest for students. The teacher needs to use Vietnamese reasonably and effectively in the teaching process.
>
> Students are the doers of learning activities. Students are to play an active, proactive, creative, and highly cooperative role in learning and communicative activities. Students need to be aware of the importance of their communication practice in classroom and self-study activities. (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 13)

Based on these claims and those of the curricula cited in the previous sections, the curriculum can be presumed to aim at teaching communication skills as ends via a learner-centred approach as means. The primacy of skills can also be seen in the requirements of assessment whereby each of the four skills is recommended to account for 20% of the total score, thereby 80% collectively in comparison with the remaining 20% for language knowledge (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 13). The adoption of the communicative approach as a primary philosophy for the textbook and the emphasis on aural and oral skills was also

claimed by one of the writers in interview (Q.1, 10-13).[14] As such, the means (i.e. communicative teaching) and also ends (communication skills) become more visible.

However, applied on a national scale the achievement of these goals is jeopardised by the possible variable interpretations of the ambiguous teacher guidance. For example, it is noted in that document that socio-economic differences may be used as the basis for the English curriculum to be adjusted to be local (*ibid.*) without specifying the extent of variation. As an example, the use of the mother tongue is almost encouraged when it is loosely defined that "the teacher needs to use the mother tongue reasonably and effectively in the teaching process" (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 13), allowing variable interpretation.

To sum up, further investigation into the guiding documents has made it clearer that communication skills are identified as the primary target of the textbook. Whether these skills are actually developed in the classroom depends also on whether opportunities for English communication learning are (i) potentially offered by the textbook and (ii) actually made available in the lessons delivered by the teacher and taken by the students. The following sections will discuss these two issues.

8.2.1.3 Potential opportunities

Any evaluation of a textbook is concerned about what the material can offer to learners (Littlejohn, 1998) or, in the words of B. Nguyen and Crabbe (1999), its "potential learning opportunities". The more learning opportunities there are, the more learnable the material is. For a textbook to be used on a national scale, it is essential that the material be flexible in catering for a wide variety of students nationwide. The construct *flexibility*, which is what Hutchinson (1987, p. 43) refers to as what is made possible for teaching and learning from materials, has long been considered an indispensable quality of effective learning materials (Bell & Gower, 1998, pp. 122-123; Savova 2009, p. 2; Tomlinson 2003, p. 101; Tomlinson 2010, pp. 83-84, 95).

[14] The reference rules applying to these numbers are the same as those described in Footnote 6, Chapter 5. As many sources are cited, the number(s) of the relevant appendix(ces) are used. So, for example, 'Q.1, 10-13' refers to the responses of the interviewee that can be found in Appendix Q.1, Blocks 10-13.

To find out the opportunities available, as is suggested by Breen and Candlin (1987, p. 15), it is necessary to know the requirements of knowledge and skills for students. Following is an analysis of the tasks of the units (or parts of them) whose lessons were observed in the rural and semi-urban cases, Units 10 and 11 of *English 10 – Intensive Programme* (Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 133-147, see Appendix N) based on the tasks therein and the corresponding teaching guides available in the Teacher Book (Tu Anh et al., 2006, pp. 148-161) for understanding what opportunities are available for learning to take place. (Please see Appendix R of a brief analysis of the requirements of the other units concerning the urban case.)

Table 8.3

Requirements of Knowledge and Skills of Related Sections of Units 10-11, English 10 – Intensive Programme

UNIT 10: CONSERVATION				
Section		**Task**	**Attainment targets**	
			Knowledge	**Skills**
LANGUAGE FOCUS	**Word study**	Complete gapped sentences with appropriate forms of the words given.	(1) Meanings of the words given (2) Derivational (and perhaps inflectional) forms of the words in focus	Reading comprehension of the gapped sentences provided
	Grammar	Answer questions with *should* and the prompts provided.	Use of *should*	Reading comprehension of the questions provided and sentence building
		Answer questions using conditional sentences type 2 (implicitly required)	Use of conditional sentences type 2	Reading comprehension of the questions provided and sentence building
		Complete sentences using appropriate forms of verbs of conditional sentences type 3 (implicitly required)	Forms of verbs of conditional sentences type 3	Reading comprehension of the sentences provided

UNIT 11: NATIONAL PARKS				
Section		**Task**	**Attainment targets**	
			Knowledge	**Skills**
READING	**Pre-reading**	a) Match pictures of national parks with appropriate extracts	Geographical knowledge of national parks of Vietnam	Reading comprehension and matching
	While-reading	a) Answer comprehension questions by filling a gapped chart about the reading passage	'Biographical' information about one national park in the USA and another in Australia	Scanning for specific information
		b1) Answer comprehension questions	Vocabulary of animals found in the two national parks	Graph interpretation
		b2) Fill in gaps with information from a reading passage and the graph	Vocabulary of animals found in the two national parks	Text reading comprehension and graph interpretation
	Post-reading	c) Complete spidergrams	(1) Names of Vietnamese national parks and (2) vocabulary of 'species of animals'	Speaking and copying words (*group work*)

LISTENING	**Pre-listening**	a) Discussion about personal experience and opinions of national parks	National parks	Speaking (*pair work*)
	While- listening	b) Check the right boxes	Activities and vocabulary related to national parks	Listening for specific information (*simple*)
		c) Answer comprehension questions	Activities and vocabulary related to national parks	Listening for specific information (*complex*)
	Post-listening	d) Talk about measures of national park conservation	Measures of national park conservation	Speaking about measures of national park conservation
SPEAKING	**Pre-speaking**	a) Match the questions and answers of permission and refusal	Functions of permission and refusal	Speaking about permission and refusal
	While-speaking	b) Ask and answer using provided expressions of permission and refusal	Functions of permission and refusal and issues related to environmental protection	Speaking about permission and refusal (*pair work, controlled practice*)
	Post-speaking	c) Ask and answer using provided expressions of permission and refusal	Expressions of permission and refusal and issues related to environmental protection	Speaking about permission and refusal (*pair work, free practice*)

WRITING	**Pre-writing**	a) Interpret a graph and fill in a gapped passage	Graph interpretation language	Writing a paragraph by graph interpretation
	While-writing	b1) Answer comprehension questions based on the information provided by a graph	Gas blowouts that occurred in Australia in 1965	Interpreting a graph
		b2) Write a paragraph by interpreting a provided graph	Gas blowouts that occurred in Australia in 1965	Writing a paragraph interpreting a graph
	Post-writing	c1) Draw a graph based on speculated figures	Visitors to the national parks Cuc Phuong and Nam Cat Tien	Drawing graph
		c2) Write a paragraph interpreting a self-made graph	Visitors to the national parks Cuc Phuong and Nam Cat Tien	Writing a paragraph interpreting a graph
LANGUAGE FOCUS	**Word Study**	Complete gapped sentences with the correct words, *preserve* and *conserve*, and their correct forms	(1) Meanings of and differences between *conserve* and *reserve* (2) Derivational (and perhaps inflectional) forms of *conserve* and *reserve*	Reading comprehension of the sentences provided
	Grammar	a) Rewrite sentences by reducing relative clauses	Reduced relative clauses	Reading comprehension and rewriting of the sentences provided
		b) Complete sentences by using the passive voice and/or modal verbs	The passive voice with modal verbs	Reading comprehension of the questions provided and sentence building

Table 8.3 shows that the units incorporate what is prescribed by the curriculum (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming 2006a, p. 851) in terms of theme/topics, attainment targets, and language focus, with a 'face' conformity. In terms of potential for skill practice, the unit exposes learners to input the target language to facilitate the production of output required. Reception skills (reading and listening) and production skills (speaking and writing) are interwoven: Production tasks are led in by reception ones and reception activities are warmed up and/or reinforced by production ones. Learners appear provided with opportunities to practise the four macro skills in an integrative way. The skills are sandwiched by sub-sections of pre-, while- and post- activities, thus leading students' learning from tasks more of reception to more of production. This organisation is believed to allow language use to take place in the natural way as real communication will normally be in more than a single mode. In terms of knowledge, 'Language Focus' of Unit 11 as an example, helps students to differentiate two seemingly similar words related to the theme (i.e. *preserve* versus *reserve*) and to consolidate grammar points (reduced relative clause and the passive voice with modals).

A closer look, however, does not indicate that opportunities for learning English communication are readily visible. What is claimed to be principles for writing the textbook like "contextualising language by means of communicative situations" (Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming, 2006b, p. 17; Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 12) is apparently not realised in the unit under consideration.

First, tasks conducive for implementation of communicative activities are not readily available. There is, for example, no substantial amount of pair or group work, through which English communication can take place except in the Speaking section. In the Reading and Listening sections, the two activities recommended (respectively for group work and pair work) stand little chance of taking place very effectively as they are not the main tasks of the sections, one being left at the end of the section (practically the end of the lesson) when students are

normally not in a mood for learning and one at the beginning of the section when the lesson is apt to rush by to enable time for more significant tasks.

Meanwhile, all the other tasks are liable to be done individually, creating few opportunities for student interaction to happen. Worse, the tasks look like test items to which students just need to provide answers. Individual work could be predicted to take place substantially as there is almost no need felt for getting a partner to complete the tasks. Even though the teacher might have students sit together to do some pair/group work, students will not necessarily do so effectively unless they are driven by a need, for example, to interact for information they would need from their partners. Activities requiring real information exchanges, unfortunately, are not present in the unit.

Particularly regarding the Speaking section, even for the activities intended for pair work, it seems that students are required to undertake drills of language functions rather than any real communicative activities. All students might need to do, if they are able to, is to follow the sample mini-talk provided, use the expressions of the language functions in focus (already provided), and put in the prompts (still provided), which could all be done individually. Whereas drills and communicative tasks can be mutually complementary, students should be presented with more activities in which communication, which is the targeted outcome the textbook aims to achieve, is the focus of attention.

Furthermore, while the language function in focus is that of "asking *for* permission and giving reasons *for* refusal" (emphases added), the conversation exchanges provided are all more of asking *about* permission and giving reasons for why the permission is unlikely to be granted. Such a discrepancy is likely to confuse students and present them considerable difficulty. It is difficult to see how the following examples provided by the key of the Teacher Book are asking for permission:

1. *"Is it all right if tourists shoot animals in national parks?" – "It's sort of complicated, but you see, this practice will lead to wildlife extinction in the long run"*.
2. *"Anybody mind if tourists throw garbage into the lakes?" – "I'd rather they didn't; the thing is, this will pollute the water"*.
3. *"Would it be all right if people use* (sic.) *more and more motorbikes and cars instead of bicycles and public transportation?" – "Well the thing is, they will suffer from air pollution because smoke from these vehicles pollutes the air they breathe"*.

(Tu Anh et al., 2008, pp. 141-142; Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 156)

Also, these language functions will be hard to practise and perform effectively because, as pointed out by T. T. M. Nguyen (2007), students are not told about the role they will be playing, e.g. (the hearer) patrolling national parks. Notably, no such suggestion is seen made in the Teacher Book for classroom teachers. Finally, but importantly, even if such guidance were given, the roles students are to play as suggested by the expressions and example provided do not sound very meaningful for and immediately relevant to the life of adolescents still at school. It would be too demanding to have students by themselves imagine they are playing those roles, which ultimately will possibly fail to motivate their willingness and readiness to practice the required tasks communicatively.

Concerning the Listening section, the tasks appear to be well interconnected. The pre-listening pair work might help to lead students into the two while-listening tasks that follow, one for listening for main idea and the other specific details, and the post-listening task is an opportunity for them to produce English based on the input possibly available in the pre- and while- stages. These tasks are fine except for the possibility of the first and last running the risk of being neglected.

In the Writing section, before the main task of writing, students are to work through two quite lengthy tasks requiring interpreting two graphs, filling four gaps and answering three

comprehension questions with short answers, which almost repeat the Reading section. While the tasks might be intended as an attempt to indirectly instruct students how to write a paragraph, interpret a paragraph and to provide an example, many students would have become too tired by the time they reach the main task.

The lack of communicativeness of the tasks is most clearly seen in the Language Focus section, where the vocabulary part could be easily done with the help of a dictionary and the grammar parts were simply mechanical transformations. The theme-related words and the provision of the mini-talks in which the grammar point in focus is present do not make the tasks contextualised in any way. In fact, the existence of mini-dialogues can be deceptive, leaving a false impression that they are opportunities for communication skills practice.

The best designed section of the unit is the one of Reading. Overall, the tasks are likely to make students work out their answers by means of scanning, skimming, making inferences, and collating information from more than one source. The chart-filling task can be seen as an appropriate activity to begin with, quite easy but not undemanding, and the second one, while making quite straightforward questions, requires students to refer to a graph, a reading source not as conventional as a text. The final task at the end looks suitably challenging (and communicative) as it makes students work out answers by putting together the relevant information from both sources and is within students' capacity as just one word is required to be selected to fill each gap.

8.2.1.4 Summary

To sum up, the desired means and ends are yet to be made explicit both in the curricula and the Teacher Book for better aligned efforts and preparation to achieve the aims of the textbook. While they are implied by guidelines on teaching methodology for the textbook, it is of paramount importance to be straightforward about what is to be achieved and, if there is more than one objective, which is the more/most important or whether they are equally important. The

means alone do not necessarily make the ends clear. Regarding the evaluation of a sample of textbook material, the units do not seem to provide many potential communicative tasks. The desired means being unavailable in the textbook, they would have to have been made available by its users. It follows that users of the textbook bring in what can render the implementation of the tasks more communicative.

The actual lessons of these tasks might be different if there are contributions made by the teacher and especially students towards the implementation of the tasks. What is more meaningfully significant after all is the use of the materials in the classroom, which calls for the contributions from teachers and also students. Teachers, with the (un)availability of resources and their own abilities, will possibly work out what is to be done for their actual classrooms, and that will hopefully compensate for what is missing from the textbooks. “In using textbooks”, as Richards points out, “teachers invariably have to put back some of the creativity that may have been lost in the process of textbook publication” (2001b, p. 14). For a valid and convincing conclusion on effectiveness, the evaluation will need to take into account the actual classroom lessons. The following section discusses this issue with reference to the lessons observed in the three case studies.

8.2.2 Actual ends and means

Classroom observation can provide evidence of how the desired outcomes are likely to be achieved through the actual lessons in various classroom contexts. In other words, adopting the idea of Goodlad’s definition of types of ‘curriculum’ (1979 as cited in Short, 1980, pp. 5-6), what follows is a discussion of the ‘operational’ textbooks, in contrast to the ‘formal’ textbook, in the three contexts. Whereas no direct measurement of outcomes was made, the interpretation and its claims are accounts of how students were engaged in their lessons. Though not explicitly learning, engagement is a pre-condition and precursor of effective learning.

8.2.2.1 The rural case

It was seen from the actual lessons that in the rural classroom there was very little chance for communicative activities through which students worked together and their production of English was demonstrated. Based on the classroom observation, it was estimated that such activities constituted around just 8% of the total lesson time. Throughout the four sections of skills as set out in the textbook, students and the teacher mainly worked to give answers to the questions of the tasks in the textbook, which were treated as test items rather than doing activities that involved students' English communication. When opportunity for natural communication came into view, it was not seized but instead dismissed in order to have time for other exercises (e.g. minutes 34-45, session 1, the instance regarding a student's self-produced sentence relating to a patriotic song). The role assumed by the teacher in the majority of cases seemed to be that of pulling students through the questions of the tasks, trying to get the right answers and providing correction as needed. Students as well appeared to aim at no more than providing the correct answers, which they struggled to do, failing to play the role of participants in communicative activities.

Secondly and as a result, there was almost no real communication in English taking place between students. The interaction was mainly between the teacher and the same several students who had better English and more proactive learning styles than the rest of students. Particularly, the weaker students, upon request, just repeated the answers made by their stronger classmates (e.g. minute 24, session 1; minutes 38-43, session 2; minutes 58-64, session 3). It was observed that in most of the lesson time, the majority remained silent and at best watched what was going on and hurriedly wrote down the answers once they were confirmed as correct by the teacher. In effect, the teacher talking time was dominant. Also, the language spoken throughout the course of the lessons was basically their mother tongue, Vietnamese. Worse, the lessons had many times run aground as students did not really understand what they were required to do by task rubrics

written in simple English and/or they had difficulty in understanding the texts and/or producing English sentences as required, a problem partly attributed to their limited level of English proficiency. In fact, translation was quite often resorted to as a clarification strategy (minutes 8-10, 19-23, 46-59 session 1; minutes 26-30, session 2; minutes 58-64, session 3; minutes 27-29, session 4).

Just as with skills, language knowledge was dealt with in traditional ways as well. Teaching vocabulary, for instance, did not bring into students' attention contextual cues from which the meanings of the words in focus could be uncovered. The meanings of the words concerned were directly given to students mainly via direct translation (e.g. minutes 26-30, session 2). Likewise, grammar was taught and learned deductively, starting with the formation and then use of the point in focus before drill exercises were done (e.g. minutes 34-45 and 60-70, session 2).

The teacher supplemented the course material with her own tasks but they were not perceived to be able to contribute to students' communication practice at all. Again, 'tasks' meant just exercises to complete. Taking the scrambled word task (Session 1, minutes 14-15) as an example, it only required students to rearrange the letters to make Vietnamese words referring to names of Vietnamese national parks. As another example, the explicit teaching of vocabulary in minutes 26-30 (still Session 1) did not make any attempt to use techniques common to the communicative approach, such as referring to contextual cues, if they were available, to help students make out the meanings of the words. In practice, such ways of proceeding saved the teacher's and students' time and energy to be spent for exam preparation, supposedly their largest concern, as shown by the teacher-designed pronunciation task (Session 3, minutes 84-89).

When pair/group work was done and some students seemed to find interesting and challenging, it was too difficult for the majority to complete given their English proficiency, as was the case with the spidergram task (Session 1, minutes 62-84). Other than that, pair/group

work simply meant two or more students were involved in a certain exercise without any true communicative activity taking place. For example, for Task B of the Speaking section, for which pair work was suggested to be done, what happened (Session 2, minutes 28-31) was several pairs of students were asked to stand up and read aloud the conversational exchanges just made up from ready-made segments. Students were not seen having been led into situations in which they might have had a meaningful purpose for speaking or driven to say the sentences they were provided to repeat. Incidentally, the functions provided seemed to be irrelevant, impractical and complicated, a possible reason for the fact that the teacher began the lesson with the much simpler way of using 'may' to ask for permission.

As a result, there remained a long way to go for the rural classroom lessons to be delivered communicatively as expected in official statements about the curriculum. The lessons at best taught knowledge, meeting just one of the goals of the curricula and the textbook, neglecting the goals of teaching skills and attitudes. As students were generally perceived as being still too weak for the textbook, the blame was not necessarily to be placed on the teacher, who could not have made crawlers walk while there was almost no indicator that they were able to stand firm on their own. In any case, the lessons could have been more communicative if there had been more relevant input and modification on the part of the teacher.

8.2.2.2 The urban case

What made the lessons of the urban class strikingly different from the other two settings was that the content of the textbook was quite often skipped and the teacher instead used her own self-prepared materials. The teacher led students to 'pass by' the units at a very rapid pace, leaving out even the major tasks of the skill sections. For example, in the listening lesson, students listened to a song instead of the textbook-prescribed texts and then did a gap-filling exercise based on the song they heard (Session 1, minutes 8-33). It was seen that within the time prescribed for just one unit (seven periods) they had done one and a half units. Not being used

significantly for whatever reason, the textbook could hardly be said to be an effective key course material for the classroom lessons.

Remarkably, unlike their rural peers who had to struggle considerably, these urban students managed to provide answers to the questions of the tasks quickly, almost all of which were correct. And not only were they able to do well with the questions of the textbook, which could be attributed to possibly assessing the key widely available in commercial textbook practice materials, they managed to answer the teacher-made questions, e.g. summarising the main ideas of the paragraphs of the reading passage (Session 1, minutes 38-49). One noticeable problem was, like in the rural class, in most cases the tasks seemed to be treated as test items to which the responses expected of students were correct answers rather than their interaction with each other and/or with the texts.

In fact, except for what happened with the Writing section, communication was not seen taking place throughout the lessons. The teacher remained the dominant speaker. It was estimated that the teacher spoke more than half of the classroom time. And students primarily reacted to her prompts, and did so collectively. There were few instances when their exchanges were controlled or led by students. Students were in the background, not the teacher, playing a secondary role. Clearly enough, students were yet to assume a more proactive and creative role, which they would possibly be able to take over as evidenced by their performance at the writing lesson to be discussed further below.

Not only were the tasks of the textbook performed uncommunicatively, the teacher's supplements, unfortunately, were perceived to be merely practice exercises for exams, being basically in the formats of the exams students were going to take. As such, communication did not take place with these supplements either. It turned out, therefore, that students' English proficiency, the lack of which was cited by the classroom teacher and head teacher as an excuse for failure to implement communicative tasks in the rural case, is just one of the many required

conditions for the aims of the textbook to be achieved. For communicative activities were still not done in this urban class, where students' English background was sufficiently advanced to enable such activities to succeed.

As foregrounded above, the students of the urban case did a very good job when they were given an appropriate opportunity to do a communicative task in the Writing section. Students worked together very well in groups and created announcements recognised to be very good not only in grammatically correct English but also their stylistic expression (see Session 2, minutes 59-70), decoration, and layout. Though some Vietnamese was used during the group work, students were engaged in truly communicative and meaningful activities that they appeared to find relevant and challenging, and were excited about. Even when Vietnamese was used, it was a sign of creativity as evidenced by their coinage of 'dudonation'. When simply given an opportunity, students demonstrated their willingness and abilities to undertake communicative tasks and communication then took place with surprisingly encouraging results. The fact that such a lesson was made possible could perhaps be attributed to their English proficiency level and background, but the point is that such lessons would not have taken place if students had not been given the opportunity.

To sum up, the urban class proved that students were capable of undertaking communicative tasks effectively that were based on the textbook. And when the activity was interesting and meaningful enough, students participated with great interest and demonstrated creativity. This, however, was not possible in all lessons observed since it was reportedly not the immediate concern of the teacher and students themselves as well as other stakeholders as discussed in later sections. What mainly happened, unfortunately, was the lessons were oriented to exam practice.

8.2.2.3 The semi-urban case

Actual lessons of the semi-urban class were both similar to and different from those of the rural one. In terms of similarities, the teacher and students treated quite a number of the tasks of the unit concerned as practice exercises. That means they did not do the tasks through communicative activities but were simply trying to get answers to the questions. There were instances (e.g. Session 1, minutes 72-76) when students were simply requested to produce sentences based on the structure, and they did so without being triggered by real communicative situations in which they could have been imaginatively placed. Second, the teacher talking time was still dominant, accounting for nearly half of the classroom time and the classroom interaction was mainly between the teacher as one party and students as another. Most of the time students worked under the direction of the teacher or individually rather with each other independently. Thirdly, translation was resorted to when it came to vocabulary learning. It seemed the teacher and students were not assured until they had come up with a Vietnamese translation, particularly for vocabulary items deemed new to students. Lastly, all the content of the unit was covered and strictly adhered to, indicating the significance of the textbook as input for students. In fact, the tasks of all sections were done.

However, the semi-urban lessons differed from the rural ones in a number of ways. First, students spoke English more often and better – and so did the teacher – and there were quite a number of instances in which English communication happened albeit at an elementary level. Students proved to be able to produce sentences using the words and/or grammar points in focus in response to the prompts provided (e.g. Session 1, minutes 27-32; 32-37; 45-66; 82-92). Secondly, the flow of lessons was smoother. Presumably, owing to students' level, the teacher, for instance, did not have to explain in detail the rubrics of the tasks or translate them. Perhaps for the same reason, as the teacher spoke to students, more of them responded, though not always in English or not necessarily verbally. Thirdly, the teacher had made many more contributions to

the lesson content that were deemed relevant and able to make the lessons more communicative by making students speak and write in response to contextual cues (e.g. Session 1, minutes 45-66 and 82-92; Session 3, minutes 16-27 and 36-59). Therefore, communicative teaching and learning took place more intensively in this classroom.

8.2.2.4 Summary

Three different case studies presented both differences and similarities concerning the use of the textbook. Firstly, the course material was used substantially in the classroom lessons of the rural and semi-urban classes but not of the urban one. Secondly, semi-urban students seemed to have more opportunities to use English, though still at quite a basic level, than their rural peers and even their urban ones, who were busier with exam-oriented practice materials. When given an opportunity, however, urban students were effectively and competently able to do communicative tasks with very good results. Thirdly, whereas the supplemented materials in the urban class did not provide further support and/or alternatives for students to practise using English communicatively, most of those given in the semi-urban proved effective in engaging students in meaningful activities to produce English, interactionally authentic if not situationally so (Ellis, 2004, p. 6). The rural students, unfortunately, had to struggle a lot with the level required by the textbook.

8.2.3 Conclusion

It could be recognised in the first place that opportunities for communicative language teaching and learning are not visible in many of the tasks of the concerned units of the textbook as the ideal means are not readily available for the ideal ends to be achieved. Opportunities for the aims of the textbook being fulfilled in practice should instead be sought in the classroom lessons to which the teacher's input and students' English proficiency and background (just to mention a few factors) are very significant. Indeed, the analysis of the tasks offered by the

textbook alone is invariably an unreliable meter for prediction of to what extent the tasks will be taught communicatively; actual lessons depend on actual contexts.

In effect, the findings from two of the case studies (i.e. rural and the urban) show that the aims of the textbook and its curriculum would have been achievable only if more opportunities had been made available for students to be involved in communicative activities that were doable. In other words, more actual means were yet to be created for a stronger likelihood that ideal ends will occur. These should have presented activities requiring interaction between students who were to be driven to work together for some genuine purposes. For the actual ends to match the ideal ones, students were to do, act, and respond meaningfully and not just give answers to questions. Importantly, the prerequisite was that the aims are to be within the reach of students considering their English proficiency, background, and interest. Wherever challenges arise, the teacher's role as the facilitator was indispensable to make necessary adjustments and province assistance, not an overdose or an abuse of it. Undoubtedly, all these challenges would entail not only teacher's contributions but also students' participation, which were apparently rooted in their capabilities and motivation. All these conditions were fortunately met in the semi-urban case study where English learning was observed taking place basically in the ways envisaged by the textbook. Certainly, what happened in this semi-urban case does not necessarily mean that the aims of the textbook were fulfilled, but it was a signal and encouragement for the undertaking of English education to Vietnamese secondary students.

At an earlier stage in the textbook creation plan, a clearer vision of what to achieve would have helped the classroom implementation. It is the ambiguity of the definition of the aims of the curriculum and the textbook that makes blurred the aims set to be achieved. Indeed, unless the ideal ends are made crystal clear, the means actually taken are difficult to be aligned to the targets desired. To conduct a truly communicative lesson is undoubtedly to be faced with a number of challenges regarding exam pressures, more hard effort from both teachers and

students, and the inertia of traditional teaching and learning styles, and as such the actual delivery of lessons is apt to be directed to language knowledge teaching (for it seems to be also one of the aims to achieve) and to stick to the textbook only as a safeguard (for the coverage of it is mandatory in tightly controlled environments).

These findings, yielded by the traditional ends-means approach, do not adequately take account of the specific contexts of teaching and learning that are perhaps too complicated and intricate for outsiders to fully understand. Though multiple glimpses were caught of a particular instance of classroom lessons, those findings are merely photographs that need vivifying by voices of those portrayed who would be able to elaborate the stories told from their points of views. The second approach in the Werner/Aoki framework, namely the situational approach, is precisely concerned with these contexts and stakeholder views and is the subject of the next section.

8.3 SITUATIONAL INTERPRETATION

It was suggested by the ends-means evaluation of the textbook that in reference to what had been envisaged, the actual use of the textbook appeared to be considerably different in all three case studies, though it seemed to be less so in the semi-urban one. In an attempt to illuminate the underlying causes of the discrepancy found between the actual textbook usage and the desired usage and between the actual usages themselves as viewed by the very insiders of those case studies, this section will provide an account of a situational approach to evaluation, the second component in the Werner/Aoki framework, one in which the perspectives of key stakeholders are considered. In particular, the views of students, classroom teachers, and head teachers will be investigated.

According to these stakeholders, the textbook was faced with quite a variety of challenges for which the causes varied from case to case but could ultimately be put into two major

categories: (1) the extent the textbook is able to engage students and (2) the conditions that support the use of the textbook to achieve what is expected. In addition, emerging from the accounts of the stakeholders are opportunities for the textbook that seem quite hopeful for its eventual success. Wherever the issues concerned are perceived to be case-specific, they will be discussed as three separate sections for the three case studies; otherwise, they will be considered holistically across the cases. It is acknowledged that regarding the effectiveness of a textbook, the collective potential of its tasks to help to achieve the outcomes intended is an important factor but the analysis of the views of the research participants have not highlighted this as a significant issue to their perception of the textbook. This issue, therefore, will not be addressed in this situational interpretation but it will be revisited in the critical evaluation section.

8.3.1 Challenges

8.3.1.1 Textbook

The problems concerning the textbook's ability to engage students include its level of difficulty and its relevance to students' interests. While the former was mainly related to the level of English required, the latter was primarily concerned with the topics of its content.

8.3.1.1.1 Difficulty

8.3.1.1.1.1 The rural case

One of the biggest problems that was highlighted through the accounts of the participants was that the textbook was too difficult for rural students given their limited English. Interestingly, the discrepancy between students' level and the textbook's requirements was not readily diagnosed by the pre-observation questionnaire results regarding students' evaluation of the material which reported that the textbook was perfectly placed to fulfill its role as a course book. These self-reports, however, were somewhat inconsistent with students' responses to the open-ended items and the results of the pre-observation survey with the classroom teacher, and were completely discredited by what was noted through the classroom observation. In particular,

post-lesson discussion and the post-observation survey with students and interviews with teachers helped to clarify the issues challenging the local use of the textbook. It is speculated that the reason for the textbook to be overrated by students might be related to their lack of information about comparable publications and the assumed traditional respect for textbooks in Vietnam.

Regarding the pre-observation survey, some students, when asked to comment on their study experience with the textbook, said there were many tasks too difficult for them to do and/or understand (i.e. what they were required to do), and the problems were reportedly because of their limited English. As a result, for listening lessons as an example, some students said they read the transcript before the lesson to look up the words they did not know. Probably still because of inadequate English, many students reported resorting to Vietnamese in the lessons, as in case of a student who contended "it would be easier, more comfortable, and more expressive to use the mother tongue". Such practices were apt to jeopardise the implementation of tasks in the procedures expected, failing, for instance, to let the teacher have students learn vocabulary through contextual cues and/or practise using English in the classroom, arguably the only place where rural students had the opportunity to use English, and particularly learn vocabulary through contextual cues.

Of the teacher's questionnaire responses, what was notable was the comment that her students were too weak in English for the recommended teaching methodology to be used. She explained that while English was suggested to be predominantly used in the classroom, the students' level was insufficient to do so. The problem, as she pointed out, was aggravated by the extensive use of pair and group work recommended for the textbook tasks that students would feel frustrated to engage in.

Those comments indicated that students would struggle with what was required by the textbook, which was later verified by the observation of classroom lessons. In the discussion

following lesson session 1, the teacher said that poor English background discouraged students from doing the tasks of the textbook. Later in the interview, it was further elaborated by the teacher that the material was too difficult for her students to study in terms of their linguistic and cognitive levels and maturity, and she pointed out that many students even had difficulty in understanding tasks rubrics written in simple English (M.4, 24:1). The classroom teacher's judgment was supported by the head teacher who said he thought it was a real challenge for students at his school to study with the textbook given their English background, particularly regarding the learning of the aural and oral skills (M.5, 110:3-4).

Students' limited English as a problem inhibiting the use of the textbook was also confirmed by the results of the post-observation questionnaire survey of students. Student respondents said the textbook was too challenging for them and thus they eventually felt burdened by seemingly unending insurmountable tasks. "I am just able to recognise words written on the board; not when they are spoken", reported one respondent. Regarding reading excerpts, most students said they preferred for the sake of their comprehension the teacher to translate the texts into Vietnamese, which was noticed in the lessons observed. Also, students raised concern about the insistence on English communication, which they said was not only a target they would be unable to achieve but also possibly non-existent in their context, both in their immediate environment and in the foreseeable future.

Given that their English level was not sufficient to study the textbook, students seemed to make a reasonable choice, and so did the teacher, to work on that which was needed for them and which they were able to do at best; otherwise they would have been overstretched. It follows that it might always be necessary to localise the study outcomes and teaching methodology so that they could better fit students' backgrounds and needs, thereby preventing students from being possibly alienated from or even actively avoiding English study. Concerning the essential role of affective engagement, state Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, p. 2), "positive attitudes towards the

learning experience, self-esteem, and emotional involvement are important determiners of successful learning".

8.3.1.1.1.2 The urban case

The use of the textbook was also challenged in the urban class but for the opposite reason: Urban students found the textbook too easy and were reportedly thus not interested in it. This problem became evident early through the results of the pre-observation questionnaire surveys according to which the textbook was rated quite low by both the students and the teacher. In particular, while students showed considerable disagreement with positive statements relating to the use of the textbook in their lessons, the teacher reported that she found considerable discrepancies between the requirements of the textbook and her students' level.

According to the classroom teacher, the textbook did not really engage students because the level of English it required was lower than that of her students and much of the information it provided was simplistic and/or outdated to them. Following the first observed session, one student interviewee condemned the textbook tasks as 'boring' because students could do them easily whereas, more specifically, another recommended that the reading excerpt of the unit concerned be updated. Students proved to be able to do the textbook's tasks quickly and accurately. Also, considering the teacher's explanation as an example, the reading passages were about the 2002 football World Cup tournament whereas students at the time (early 2009) were possibly reading about the upcoming 2010 tournament.

Living in the most developed city of the nation and studying at one of the most selective schools, these students, according to their pre-observation questionnaire responses, had easy access to a variety of information sources, including English-speaking television, broadband internet connection, and English speaking movie DVD's, all of which were not readily available in rural areas. Consequently, the textbook was apt to be dated in terms of currency of information content. In addition, it was notable to learn from the two interviewed students that they

considered the sample announcement text provided by the textbook “plain and conventional”, which was true in comparison with the ones they themselves created in the writing lesson (session 2).

The fact that the textbook was perceived by students to be lower than their level might discourage their studying. The issue of textbook localisation is again to be raised but for these urban students, the direction was different to that of the rural students. More challenging and updated materials could instead be brought into use provided they were fundamentally equivalent to the textbook in terms of the outcomes expectedly to be achieved.

8.3.1.1.1.3 The semi-urban case

Semi-urban student respondents to the pre-observation survey respectively had more and less positive evaluations than did urban and rural ones. For example, the majority of students reported they did not find any sections of the textbook too difficult to study, apart from listening, suggesting that these semi-urban students were mostly capable of studying with the textbook.

The discussions with students about the lessons observed also revealed that they had no real difficulty with studying the textbook. Their ability to complete the tasks of the material could be attributed to their background, including their English level and also to the teacher’s adaptation of the tasks. The interview with the teacher showed she was quite well-informed about her students’ levels and importantly proactive to make appropriate teaching decisions (P.4, 90:4-8). Despite occasional comments on the difficulty of the textbook, student respondents to the post-observation survey generally indicated the textbook was appropriate for them.

It should be noted that these semi-urban students were specialising in English, meaning their background and motivation to learn English was quite high. The textbook was perceived even easy for them regarding its requirements for language knowledge. Discussions with students showed that they wanted a more advanced presentation of grammar to be provided by the textbook and/or by their teacher. Following session 1 one of the student interviewees

suggested extending the coverage of conditional sentences to mixed types to avoid being "boring".

However, students reported listening was "difficult" for them. Some student respondents said that very few of them were able to answer the questions of the textbooks upon the first hearing, and would need to listen one or two more times before they could complete listening tasks. The results of the post-observation survey also confirmed students' problems with this reception skill. It should be noted that the difficulty mentioned was concerned with the listening tasks students were required to do, which involved audio-discs recordings of native English speakers' voices.

8.3.1.1.1.4 Summary

In all three case studies, the textbook proved to be inappropriate in terms of its requirements of students' background for its key users. As for rural students, they were seemingly ceaselessly bombarded with what they were unable to deal with. As for urban students, the problem was quite the opposite: Students did not feel engaged because the textbook's tasks were not seen as challenging enough for them. As for semi-urban students, however, the textbook appeared to be within their capabilities except for Listening, which was perceived to be too hard and for Language Focus, which was apparently too simple for them.

8.3.1.1.2 Relevance

Also related to the textbook's engagement but to a lesser extent, some topics of the textbook were considered irrelevant and impractical for students. As for rural students whose background knowledge and English were reportedly limited, they said they found topics like *National Parks* "so abstract" to talk about. Their reaction could be understood by referring to the classroom teacher's comment that such a topic was not really relevant to rural students' life. Urban students, she said, might have had more information about such topics owing to their access to more available resources but they were beyond the knowledge of her rural students

(M.4, 15:1-3). One student compared the textbook with *Headway*, saying it would be easier to use the latter and expecting communicative activities to take place with it and complimenting it on its "specific and interesting" situations.

The topics of the textbook were considered irrelevant because rural students did not have access to information about such issues. As for urban students, they complained that was some topics of the material were outside their areas of interest. The Pacific Rim, as an example, was said by students to be a topic too far away from what they were intrinsically interested in. One of the students interviewed following the last session said she would have liked to instead talk about the life of young people in different countries, overseas study experience, and study skills, areas young adults like her could identify themselves with. In relation to her more demanding students, the teacher compared the textbook with foreign publications available in the market including *Headway, All Stars*, and *New Interchange*, which she commented "have more interesting topics", thereby drawing students' attention better as well as from "livelier pictures which are more colourful". Similar comparisons were found in the results of the survey with students who, in addition to those differences, stressed the strengths of information currency in the textbook's competitors.

Semi-urban students' opinions resonate with what was reported by rural and urban students. In the discussion following session 4 one student interviewee said that the content and tasks of the textbook were not really practical, and considered the textbook's speaking expressions as lengthy and unusual. Still regarding what students said they found "impractical" about the textbook, respondents to the post-observation survey commented that the writing topics were sometimes "unauthentic". Specifically concerning the unit he was studying, one student interviewee said he found it repetitive to study "National Parks" when he had just studied "Conservation of Nature" and "The Undersea World", the topics of the two immediately preceding units.

To sum up, across the three cases, the textbook was considered to be inadequate in terms of its relevance and practicality to students' interest and environment. Though this problem was not perceived to be persuasive throughout the textbook, just in many parts of it, it might possibly make them bored with the material and, particularly for the rural case, disenchanted. It appeared that several topics and tasks would need to be adjusted and/or updated so that the textbook as a whole could be found more relevant and practical to students' lives and contexts.

8.3.1.2 Supporting conditions

The effectiveness of a textbook depends not only on its inherent quality but also on contributing factors such as the actual lessons activities accompanying it, the teacher's capabilities, the learning atmosphere, and classroom facilities. In the three case studies, what was highlighted as problematic included the lack of communication-oriented activities in the classroom lessons, inadequate teacher preparation for the introduction of the textbook, the exam-oriented study atmosphere, and inadequate classroom conditions. This section will explore each of these problems areas in more detail, drawing from the perspectives of key stakeholders (i.e. teachers and students).

8.3.1.2.1 Lack of communication-oriented lessons

Even assuming that the textbook provides adequate opportunities to conduct communicative lessons, English communication will not necessarily happen because such opportunities will have to be operationalised through actual classroom activities and students will need to be willing and able to participate in those activities. Those conditions, however, were not always met as revealed by the research participants' accounts that follow.

8.3.1.2.1.1 The rural case

Besides their limited English, another reason for rural students' inadequate communication in their English lessons was the lack of communication-oriented activities. One

student reported in the pre-observation survey that classroom lessons were all an effort focused on answering questions with special attention paid to the grammaticality of the answers.

Of the four skills, listening and speaking were seen as seriously neglected by the classroom observations. It was notably revealed by a student interviewee following session 3 that the little student-student interaction in the speaking lesson concerned was all they could demonstrate, for the oral skill were normally set aside. Concerning listening, as disclosed by the classroom teacher before the lesson, no audio disc was normally available to play the recorded talks and consequently she read the transcript instead or, more often, there was simply no listening lesson at all. The teacher's disclosure that the disc had been obtained from a city nearby just in time for the observed listening lesson suggests how little attention was normally paid to listening practice for that class.

All these testimonies might shed light on students' reports in the pre-observation survey, such as "Speaking and listening tasks are quite insufficient" and "Listening practice is almost non-existent here". It was commented by some students in the post-observation questionnaire survey that for them more classroom practice of English speaking was yet to be done. Again, the teacher attributed this situation to the students' English, which was deemed below the level required for them to be willing and confident to participate.

The neglect of the aural/oral skills does not necessarily mean attention was directed to developing students' reading and writing skills. Through the lessons observed, all that students were required to do was nothing more than giving answers to questions, standing up (involving just a few students) and reading aloud the answers, and copying down the ones confirmed as correct, which were written on the blackboard by students or the teacher herself.

Another notable feature of the lessons observed was the lack of pair/group work and the types of activities that these configurations would allow in terms of interaction and communication taking place between students. In fact, students were observed mainly working

individually and responding to the teacher only. By way of explanation, the teacher claimed that to have students work together and use English would be difficult because their English was too limited and it would be impractical because students would need the time to be spent on exam-oriented practice (M.4, 1-4). As revealed in the post-lesson discussion following session 3, while recognising students' interest in the spidergram task of group work, the teacher rejected the possibility of letting students be absorbed in it, saying it would have been an inefficient use of time. The teacher seemed to be obsessed with exam preparation and indeed she said her students were not devoted to doing a task requiring the production of result clauses as responses to prompts of conditional clauses (session 1) because it was not in the format of common exams.

8.3.1.2.1.2 The urban case

In comparison with the rural class, more communication-oriented activities were seen taking place in the urban one where skills were treated more equally and also there was more pair/group work. Still, the primary concern was with exam preparation and the textbook tasks were treated as if they were exercises to which answers should be given.

Such treatment of the textbook tasks could be due to the particular teacher. Explaining why she replaced the listening tasks of the textbook with her own materials, for example, the teacher stated that some of the students might well have referred to the answer key available in commercial practice books (session 2), which suggested that the only thing that could be done with a textbook task was to get the correct answer. The teacher could have adapted the textbook tasks requiring students' responses other than those originally set by the textbook and their reference to the commercial publications might then turn out to be a positive preparation. In communicative language teaching, the journey is to be more important than the destination, meaning it is essential to create opportunities to use English which students should take and in doing so practise and improve their proficiency.

The urban students warmly welcomed communication skills and pair/group work. In their responses to the surveys prior to and following the observation of lessons, many students said they would like to have more chances to work together because it was not only fun but also an opportunity to speak English. “I can then learn from my team mates and think in English discussing a certain topic in groups”, reported one respondent, “and I can both learn and play at games”. As a comment on the lesson (Session 1), another student said he appreciated the teacher’s attempts to provide speaking opportunities. Still another student even suggested (again session 1) being provided with more speaking activities, for example making presentations through which they could practise using the vocabulary and expressions of the unit.

Similar comments by students could be found in the discussion following the second session. Regarding group work, the two students interviewed appreciated the time they spent with their team mates creating announcements. The second student was particularly emphatic in saying that the activity was a practical, meaningful, and relevant task for her. Incidentally, students’ excellent performances of this work, as the teacher said later, was within her expectation, meaning the teacher had known that students would be capable of doing that work.

8.3.1.2.1.3 The semi-urban case

Of the three cases, the lessons in the semi-urban class were the most communication-oriented. According to the pre-observation survey, half of the students said the focus of their lessons was a mixture of skills and knowledge, and that they were happy with that way of learning. Regarding the lessons observed, the communicative tasks adapted from the textbook (e.g. the spidergram task) or provided by the teacher (e.g. the crossword puzzle game) were also considered interesting activities by students. One student at the interview following session 3, for instance, said he found the game the most enjoyable and inspiring for the competitiveness it had created. The teacher herself was aware of students’ fondness for game play as she said in the discussion following the lesson, and it was the reason she took time preparing for such game

activities. Also through the discussion, the teacher demonstrated her excellent evaluation of the applicability of textbook tasks and students' English level by strategically adapting the spidergram task, providing words for students to categorise rather than letting students struggle to work them out by themselves, a task foreseen to be too difficult.

The time for the oral and aural skills, however, was not seen as sufficient. One student interviewee (session 3) indicated the 45-minute lesson was not enough for her listening practice. According to what was allocated by the curriculum, though, it was exactly the prescribed amount. Elaborating this imbalance in the interview, the teacher said (P.4, 132-1-3) that the oral/aural skills accounted for less than one-third (two periods) of the time actually allocated for a unit (seven periods), indicating the bias against these two skills despite the claim to develop students' communication skills made by the curriculum and the Teacher Book.

Regarding pair and group work, the semi-urban students also appeared to give their approval to activities in which students could work together. According to the results of the post-observation survey, many respondents said they preferred pre-writing activities than the main writing one itself because the former were fun whereas the latter was so "solitary". In the discussion following session 4, one student even suggested speaking activities be conducted as group work rather than just having a pair of students stand up and say the conversational exchanges, which she thought was simply mechanical.

The interview with the teacher indicated that the organisation of these types of activities would present no problem to her class. Students, according to her perception, were very open and willing to work together (P.4, 198-202). With group work, members each would contribute their own ideas, thereby enriching team members' understanding. The problem, she said, lay in the overall context that students did not have an immediate environment in which to use English, and thus were not motivated to learn to use the language. Students simply did not set English use as a target to achieve (P.4, 26:-12).

8.3.1.2.1.4 Summary

The lack of communication-oriented activities in classroom lessons was perhaps most rooted in the particular teacher's reluctance to conduct them. The rural teacher pointed to students' limited English and, partly as a result, the need to optimise the limited conditions for exam preparation as two major reasons for her very limited communication-oriented lessons whereas the urban teacher highlighted students' exam performance as pressure for constraining communication development in her class. The semi-urban teacher, by contrast, was much more willing to teach the textbook as expected while acknowledging the necessity of exam practice and the lack of an immediate environment for her students to see the benefits of those activities. Students in all cases, however, seemed to support the conduct of communication-oriented activities and particularly pair/group work.

Ultimately, the rural teachers did not seem to be convinced that her students were capable of doing communication-oriented activities. Apart from the issues of teaching ability and exam pressures, the underlying cause for this could be traced back to inadequate teacher training, an issue to be discussed in the next section. The same problem might also apply to the urban teacher, whose lesson input was not related to developing students' communication skills but was primarily concerned with exam preparation.

8.3.1.2.2 Inadequate teacher preparation

The lack of communication-oriented activities in the classroom could be attributed to the teacher's being unprepared to teach such lessons. The textbook was not observed being taught in a way that it was supposed to be used, neither in the rural class where the teacher's lessons closely adhered to the textbook (but the tasks were only treated as test items to give answers to) nor the urban one where a substantial amount of teacher-provided materials were brought into use instead. There could be many reasons to explain this situation, of which the two most important ones were teachers' ability and willingness to teach communicatively. For whichever

reason, it is essential that teachers be adequately educated concerning how to use the new textbook which adopted a methodology completely different from what had previously been in use for approximately two decades, and be provided suitable support for lesson planning following the deployment of the new textbook.

8.3.1.2.2.1 The rural case

The interviews with the classroom and head teachers revealed that the training available for using the textbook was quite short in duration and irrelevant in content. First, according to the head teacher, the training was like that of a summer school convened for just four days (M.5, 1). Second, as stated by both teachers, the training was concerned with a different English textbook (of the regular programme) concurrently launched and supposedly adopting the same methodology (but created by entirely different writers). The teachers therefore returned to their class to teach according to their interpretation of the Teacher Book of the textbook concerned, which just provides general guidance, and their own experience, which could well have been shaped by traditional methods associated with the previous textbooks (M.4, 11:5-7; M.5, 20).

The training was a one-off occurrence; there was no form of follow-up teacher advice or support irrespective of possible problems that teachers might be faced with in their first years of using the textbook. According to both teachers, there was no support to make sure that the classroom implementers of the new textbook were able to translate what they had learned and understood into their own context. What they were offered at the ‘summer school’ was mainly lectures and lessons delivered as examples.

At the end of each year, disclosed the head teacher, there was an annual symposium intended to enrich participants’ teaching experience but again it was all about the other textbook (M.5, 86:88). Also, the time available for discussion was reportedly very limited and did not provide an opportunity to further enhance understanding of using the new textbook.

8.3.1.2.2.2 The urban case

Regarding the urban class, the teacher was also not seen attempting to use the textbook as prescribed despite more favourable conditions to do so, including students' much better English and motivation and the school's far more relaxed administration, which gave more flexibility in teaching content. Missing the one-off training as the teacher began her employment several months after the teacher training, she was given no compensatory guidance on how to use the textbook. Quite new in her career, the teacher made her own way with whatever she thought was appropriate, consequently finding herself even more perplexed than did the rural teacher. As in the case of her rural colleague, though, there was no teacher support service for her throughout her teaching with the textbook.

From his position, the head teacher made several noteworthy comments about the teacher training (O.5, 8-10). First, according to his perception, what was done through the training sessions was not enough to make classroom teachers clear about what they would be expected to do and/or be convinced of the applicability of the new approach in their contexts. In his opinion, the inadequacies could have resulted from not only the limited time available for the training but also the variation and loss of information from the ministerial to the local level training. He said by the time the training reached the local level, the intentions of the textbook writers (on how to use the materials) might have become distorted for local teachers. Importantly, speakers of teacher training seminars, according to his evaluation, lacked charisma and/or hands-on teaching experience and appropriate education so that their training could be of enough interest to teacher attendees. Otherwise, and as was unfortunately the case, he said, teachers complained that they had found nothing new in the training, for it failed to make clear and convincing the approach expected to be adopted for the new textbook.

Second, the head teacher seemed reasonable to emphasise the improvement of teachers' capabilities to deliver lessons as a major task to be undertaken for effective implementation of

the tasks of the new textbook. The training itself for just a few days was definitely inadequate. He suggested that more education should be provided both regarding teachers' ability to implement the textbook's tasks in their lessons and also to plan lesson activities on their own (O.5, 15:6-10). Above all, the head teacher insisted that teachers need to be convinced of the need and benefits to apply the new teaching methodology.

8.3.1.2.2.3 The semi-urban case

The head teacher of the semi-urban school reported that not only was the focus of the teacher training, like in the rural case, on the textbook of the other English programme but the trainers were educated from different projects unrelated to the textbook deployed (P.5, 18, 43-44). Obviously, this incongruity presented risks of deviation from what the new textbook aimed to achieve, and conflicts among trainers in terms of what teachers were instructed to do. Worse, the teaching principles taught by such trainers seemed to strictly adhere to what they had learned from overseas without regard to the local contexts. Consequently, what remained questionable was the extent to which teachers brought the new methodology into use.

Still according to the head teacher, following the introduction of the textbook, there were annual inter-school symposia for teachers to participate in but they were formal events rather than practical activities actually oriented to providing support to teachers using the new textbook (P.5, 72-74). Such symposia therefore were short in time and loose in topical orientation for teachers to usefully draw on.

8.3.1.2.2.4 Summary

In all three case studies, teachers were neither adequately prepared to bring into play the innovations of the new textbook nor provided with support for their day-to-day classroom problems. Teachers, as agents of change, did not receive adequate attention and left alone with their teaching challenges. They were thus apt to fall back on the familiar and to resort to

something that might steer lessons away from the expected approach. For example, they might focus on exam practice, a dominating issue to be discussed in the next section.

8.3.1.2.3 Exam-oriented atmosphere

Beyond the problems relating to students' English background, lack of communication-oriented activities, and the teacher's preparedness discussed above, there remains another enduring and troublesome issue: the impact on teaching of assessment and testing practices. This issue was the focal point of attention of many research participants who appeared to blame it as being the most important factor deferring the application of the teaching methodology of the new textbook.

8.3.1.2.3.1 The rural case

For regular assessment, it was reported by the head teacher that communication skills had rarely been tested (M.5, 144-168). Regarding important exams ranging from end-of-semester exams in the classroom through to those of secondary education graduation and university admission, the focus of testing is more about mastery of English knowledge, not skill fluency.

In the pre-observation survey, exam-oriented study had been reported by students as their greatest concern. Post-lesson discussions with students revealed their appreciation of the Language Focus lesson, which reviewed and consolidated vocabulary and grammar of the unit concerned, the two primary areas of test items. Regarding the second session, both student interviewees said that while they found the group work on vocabulary the most interesting, it was the true-false, matching and pronunciation tasks, all in the format of their exams, that were the most relevant to their needs, i.e. exam practice.

In her responses to the survey, the teacher blamed the current testing format as a factor that would derail the expected teaching of communication, saying such a format caused neglect of listening and speaking. In talks following the first two sessions, the teacher also confirmed that her students' study was oriented towards the exam. The teacher said not only was teaching

students to communicate in English difficult, it was irrelevant, saying they were wholly concerned with just what was directly related to their exams.

The sentiments of the classroom teacher were all in agreement with those of the head teacher who was more straightforward, saying “There’s never been enough time to touch upon those sections of listening and speaking” (M.5, 100:2). Given their situation, he said, they had to make sacrifices, choosing to focus on language knowledge teaching in order to achieve the target of teaching students to succeed at exams. To emphasise the point, the head teacher went further to propose the replacement of sections on listening and speaking in the accompanying Work Book with practice exercises of the multiple-choice format used in current exams, indicating not only his single-mindedness but also the pressures that exams create.

The classroom teacher’s exam-oriented attitude could also be seen in the interview at the end of the school visit at which she rated the older textbooks better than the current ones expressly because they did not have listening or speaking sections (M.4, 2:1-2). The new textbook with listening and speaking, she said, stretched students’ energy and concentration, which should have been more efficiently spent on exam practice. The comment was to be interpreted in light of the local contexts where, as mentioned, the ultimate aims of lessons were students’ results in tests and exams, not necessarily their ability to use English communicatively, and where they could not afford to aim at anything other than that.

The paramount importance of exams was also seen through the teacher’s and students’ views of supplementary materials. As shown in the discussion following session 2, both the teacher and students considered exercises designed after the format of national exams as being the most relevant. One of the survey respondent students even said she rated the textbook lower than commercial exam practice materials as the latter specialised in tasks of the multiple choice format of national exams, the very kind she needed to practise.

8.3.1.2.3.2 The urban case

Like the rural students, those from the urban class were reportedly faced with the pressures of doing well in exams. They appeared to have the need to learn to communicate in English but it was overshadowed by the need to pass exams. For example, while saying he enjoyed the free writing activity of group work (session 2), one of the student interviewees also referred to the grammar lesson as something really useful for him, for it related to his exams.

In the interview at the end of the school visit, the teacher said that her priority was students' good results for their exams. "Communication", she said, "should not be taken as the constant target" (O.4, 54:2). In her responses to the pre-observation survey, the current testing practices were alleged by the teacher to have caused neglect of speaking and writing, for "these two sections were not listed as testing components" and an overemphasis was on grammar, reading, and language focus, for these "were the focal points of exams and thus deserved most of the lesson time for intensive practice of them". Notably, it was acknowledged by the teacher that she would always 'touch upon' Language Focus though she thought the section was quite easy for her students, the reason she gave for skipping skill sections (O.4, 108). Also via the interview, the teacher appeared to be pressurised by parents to leave the target of the textbook unattended and instead to focus on teaching students to the exams, since for parents, children's scores were an "evaluative criterion", in other words, the most important point (O.4, 32:1-2).

The pressures of exam practice leading to the neglect of developing communication skills were confirmed by the head teacher. In his position as a teacher supervisor, he referred to government documents issued by the local department of education concerning exam administration according to which speaking was not mentioned at all (O.5, 53:8-12). The consequences of this were that those oral skills received little attention.

Another aggravating factor pointed out by the head teacher was that the increased centralisation of exams had made classroom teaching and learning deviate from the path

suggested by the communicative approach (O.5. 57). Being administered to a large number of students, these exams favoured making 'objective' test items in the multiple-choice format (preferably grammar and vocabulary) and refrained from testing 'subjective' components like speaking. For the past years, the teacher said, exams tended to be centralised not only for graduation or university admission for Year 12 students but also for end-of-semester exams for Years 11 and 10 as well. Centralised exams, the head teacher argued, were apt to deprive teachers of their classroom power and self-accountability, leaving exam results emerging as the measurements of students' and teachers' performances. The need to learn to communicate was thus overpowered by the pressure of students' doing well at exams.

8.3.1.2.3.3 The semi-urban case

The significance of tests and exams for the study of the semi-urban class was also seen in students' views, and so was the adverse impact of testing on the implementation of the textbook tasks. According to the pre-observation survey, the students' responses indicated that their study was biased against communication practice and instead the focus was on language knowledge, which was reportedly for the sake of their exams. Regarding the lessons observed, the goal of study was said to be oriented to exam preparation above all else. Following session 1, for instance, one of the student interviewees said what she found most practical was a grammar point (i.e. *should*), assumed to be part of the upcoming tests.

Regarding 'supplementary lessons', which were sessions of practice for tests and exams, an overwhelming number of the students felt they were interesting and necessary for their study. According to the post-observation survey, students admitted that they were essentially more pre-occupied with doing exercises of vocabulary and grammar than practising communication skills, while being aware of the target of skills fluency for English communication set out by the textbook and that the current assessment practices negatively affected their study of spoken skills.

From her position, the classroom teacher also confirmed in the post-observation interview that quite a number of students were aiming to study for preparation for exams (P.4, 26:3), which promoted mastery of language knowledge, not English use. Students' exam-oriented mentality was supported and pressurised again by parents who wanted their children to excel in grammar, reading, and writing exercises (P.4, 76:1) in order to succeed at graduation and university admission exams. Notably, the teacher herself took advantage of this impact of testing by including in her regular tests several sentences of the accompanying Work Book and thereby making students work on the material without the need for her supervision (P.4, 138:144). In addition, the backwash effect of exams was also visible in the ways the teacher taught vocabulary in the classroom: she taught phonetic symbols because they would be tested in exams, though they were not required at all by the textbook.

The overwhelming influence of exams and the entailment of exam-oriented influence were confirmed by the head teacher. The teacher noted that an adverse impact of testing practices was undermining teachers' efforts to teach English communication. While the official documents, she said (P.5, 118:7), stipulated that the testing should be about what was to be taught as required by the curriculum, what happened was that exams (samples and previous ones) were all basically about language knowledge and all in the multiple-choice format, thereby rendering calls for communication-oriented lessons to fall by the wayside.

8.3.1.2.3.4 Summary

Of all the forces challenging the use of the textbook, the exam-oriented study influence was perceived to be the largest adversely affecting students in all three case studies. Not only did it put off the teaching of communication skills in the rural context where students' limited English and resources were given as excuses, it undermined the implementation of communicative lessons in the urban class where learning conditions were mostly favourable (e.g. students' good English level and knowledge background). Concerning the semi-urban case,

though more communication-oriented activities were seen happening, exam-oriented practice was still dominant. The omnipresence of exam-oriented study might be traced to years of using the former textbooks in traditional ways as well as being valued by the national culture, an issue to be explored in the critical evaluation of the textbook later on in this chapter.

8.3.1.2.4 Inadequate classroom conditions

In addition to the lack of communicated-oriented lessons, inadequate teacher preparation, and exam-oriented influence, the use of the textbook was challenged by the problems typical of the Vietnamese contexts of use regarding the classroom conditions conducive to the teaching of English communicatively. Though being normally not issues of key concern, these problems presented considerable difficulty for the implementation of the textbook as expected.

8.3.1.2.4.1 Classroom fittings and layout

A common problem existent in all classes was the furniture and its layout in the classroom. Tables and benches fixed in rows made it difficult to move students around as required by lesson tasks and limited the number of partners a student might want to work with, a problem aggravated with the unchanged seat assigned to each student. It was surprising to notice that the furniture was not in any way better in the urban case where the school concerned was perceived to be among the most selective schools in the nation or the in the semi-urban case where the school was still in any case a provincial selective school. In particular, both schools were built well after the developments of language teaching adopted by the textbook had been well established but the requirements of teaching English communicatively did not appear to have been taken into consideration.

The head teacher of the urban class might have overstated the case to say students seemed to be “chained to their study tables” (O.5, 18:7) but the comment perceptively pointed out this ongoing problem as one of the causes holding teachers back from organising communication-oriented activities. Moreover, another problem, still in his opinion, could consequently arise in

the long run: Students would soon get bored with speaking with the same nearby students, if pair/group work were conducted (O.5, 18:20-21).

8.3.1.2.4.2 Inadequate teaching and learning aids

Throughout the three cases, teaching aids were generally quite poor. The class enjoying the best facilities was the semi-urban one where students reportedly had fortnightly access to a computer lab and an audio disc player, available upon request in addition to the teacher-made materials like vocabulary sheets. The availability of those amenities had enhanced students' morale for studying. Student interviewees following session 2 said they were both excited about the lesson with the use of the LCD projector. They said they found the lesson really interesting and enjoyable, being energised with the animated pictures, which gave them a clear idea of what national parks were like. The urban class, despite being located in a national selective school, had only a disc player, available upon request, plus teacher-supplemented handouts. The poorest class was the rural one where the textbook-based disc, as disclosed by the classroom teacher, had not been available until the research took place.

The significance of teaching aids for language teaching seemed to be particularly ignored by the management in the rural and urban classes. Regarding the former case, it was revealed, for instance, by both the teacher and students that the disc had not usually been available. It was surprising to see students getting excited with the 'real' English made available by means of a textbook-based disc just previously obtained. Concerning the urban case, the availability of teaching aids was not markedly better. What the teacher brought in were merely photocopies of exercises and discs of listening practice.

8.3.1.2.4.3 Large-sized class

One of the classroom conditions unfavourable to teaching and learning English communicatively in the rural and perhaps the semi-urban classes, and commonly quoted as a problem elsewhere in Vietnam, is large class sizes. With more than 50 students in the class, it

was admittedly difficult for the rural teacher to put students into pair/group work through which English communication might take place. The difficulty became greater given the students' level of English, the exam-oriented study, and Vietnamese being their common mother tongue. The teacher was reasonable to say she wished for a smaller class so that it would be easier for her to ensure all students were participating. Though smaller in size, the semi-urban class with more than 30 students was still too large for the teacher to more effectively implement the communicative tasks. Large-sized classes would always make it extremely difficult for teachers to fully monitor students' use of English and engagement in group work activities, and to facilitate students to be fully involved in the classroom activities. Unfortunately, effective attempts to reconcile the problem of class size did not appear to be made in the textbook development process.

8.3.1.2.4.4 Students of mixed levels and motivations

Regarding students' English level and motivation, the rural class was subject to being disadvantaged by being arguably like a 'melting pot' receiving students dropping out from selective classes they would have preferred to be in. Consequently, there were two major problems.

First, according to the pre-observation survey, many students reported that they did not really like learning English. One of the reasons for this, as revealed by the head teacher, was that determined to have a class taking the intensive programme of English, the school management had appealed for and even forced students' participation irrespective of their levels and motivations. Unable to cope with the requirements and/or unwilling to do so, those students would likely have found it hard to enjoy their lessons.

Second, and worse, the presence of those students, said the classroom teacher, would have discouraged the other students and negatively affected the learning atmosphere as a whole (M.4, 29:6). This 'contagion' was prone to happen in a class where the English learning

atmosphere appeared inhibited by a lack of intrinsic motivation of students many of whom, as indicated by the head teacher, might look for opportunities to enter higher education through pathways of exams in subjects other than English (M.5, 231:4). It was no wonder to hear about a nationalistic sounding argument against the use of English from one of these students: “As I am Vietnamese”, one wrote in the questionnaire survey, “the Vietnamese language should assume the predominant role over foreign languages (in my lessons).”

8.3.1.2.4.5 Summary

The physical classroom conditions challenging the use of the textbook in the three case studies were mainly ‘hardware’ problems. The first two problems were those of the furniture and teaching aids applying to both the rural and (surprisingly) the urban cases and the third one was concerned with large-sized classes existing in the rural and, to a lesser extent, the semi-urban cases.

8.3.1.2.5 Summary of supporting conditions

The problems of the first category (i.e. the textbook’s lack of engagement) might be addressed mainly with the capabilities of the textbook writers alone. However those of the second category (i.e. supporting conditions) will involve quite a number of stakeholders not only on-site users, namely students and classroom teachers but also school management, textbook project organisers, teacher trainers, test-makers, and policy-makers, and even authorities. This would entail more effective collaboration between all of them. These non-textbook-related problems were concerned with the particular contexts in which the textbook was operationalised. Whether or not the material would successfully work largely depended on the enhancing and/or impeding forces caused by operational factors.

8.3.1.3 Conclusion

Following the Werner/Aoki framework, this section has provided a situational analysis evaluation of the textbook and discussed the views of students, classroom teachers, and head

teachers on the problems challenging the use of the textbook in the ways that it should have been used. First, especially for rural and urban students, the textbook itself proved not to be successful in engaging students because it was perceived as being too as easy or too difficult and irrelevant. Second, this problem was aggravated by the supporting conditions ranging from the classroom lessons where there was a lack of communication-oriented activities to inadequate teacher training and support. The exam-oriented atmosphere appeared to be the most overwhelming challenge applying seriously to all three cases, and last but not least the quality of classroom conditions also played a significant role in impeding the implementation of a communicative approach to teaching using the textbook.

All through this discussion, the implication has been that there was very poor connectivity between what the textbook was expected to achieve and what was actually made available to achieve what was expected. It appeared that each of the stakeholders was working to serve their own agenda, and therefore for better effectiveness of the textbook, there should be coordination to merge those agendas into one mutually agreed by all parties so that students' interests would not be compromised but best served.

8.3.2 Opportunities

Despite numerous problems facing the textbook, at least six areas of opportunity for it to be used effectively were visible throughout all three case studies. First, except for urban case study, the textbook as a coursebook was highly valued by the majority of students, a positive indicator of its being used. Particularly regarding the semi-urban case study, students were very interested and excited with the tasks the teacher developed based on the textbook (e.g. Session 2).

Second, most students said they wanted more listening and speaking activities to take place in their lessons. Remarkably, these 'expressions of interest' were also made by even some rural students where the priority was for exam practice given their circumstances (see post-lesson

feedback, Section 5.3.4.2). One of the reported reasons was that they had a chance to listen to 'real' English-speaking voices. The excitement might have resulted from the rare opportunity to listen to the audio disc but it showed that the students were not at all dreading something supposedly too difficult for them nor were they reluctant to do something just because it was not related to their perceived need of exam concentration. Throughout the post-observation surveys, there were many student respondents suggesting reducing lesson time for language knowledge and instead increasing communication practice. It seemed that students recognised they would need to improve their communication skills and it was interesting to note that one student from the rural case study said she wished there would be easier questions so that she would have a chance to stand and speak up in front of the class.

Third, pair and group work was undertaken by students with interest and excitement. Even for rural students, taking the spidergam task as an example, the two students interviewed following the (second) session both said they found it "interesting", a comment not made for other tasks, even for those highly related to their exam practice. The reasons they gave for their positive attitude were quite simple but sound: With that activity, students had a chance to develop their vocabulary and it was fun work with their classmates. It turned out that given opportunities to work together, the students could find a positive change from the predominantly teacher-dominated lessons, and they were exposed to a variety of ideas from their partners. It was of course not easy to work on their own but students appeared to be appreciative of the challenge and proved to be interested in most cases. While drills were seen as tedious exercises, tasks that required students to work out the answers from given cues were seen as enjoyable and inspiring by students. "Challenging" was one of the comments of one of the interviewed rural students cited in their appreciation of the spidergram vocabulary and writing activities (Session 2). It was the rural teacher herself who revealed that students would like to have done such "challenging" activities for which collaborating to work something out was enjoyable to students.

Fourth, despite reports of poorly organised teacher training, teachers proved to be able to teach the textbook as it had been envisaged to be used. The key issue was their willingness and devotion rather than their knowledge. According to the rural head teacher (M.5, 34:1-2; 38:1-3), teachers had to make their own way to learn how to use the textbook of the intensive programme from the training for the one of the regular programme. Likewise, the semi-urban head teacher said the new textbook and the new times had framed teachers into the new ways. "…the new methodology is now applying at my school" she said, "the traditional methods are no longer appropriate" (P.5, 62:1-2). The inevitable changes were also admitted by classroom teachers. The one from the rural case, for example, said teachers were willing to teach in the new ways whilst acknowledging that huge problems loomed large. While it is uncertain that the new teaching methodology was used extensively, teachers' delivery of lessons should have been influenced by the textbook as it was the (only) required the course book, which will become pervasive over time.

Sixth, when conditions required for the use of the textbook were present, the material proved to be not only teachable but also interesting to students. Of those conditions, the teacher who was willing and able to adapt the tasks to her own classroom was a very significant factor in making successful and interesting lessons, as shown by the semi-urban case. In addition, the availability of classroom facilities played an important part. The lesson in the language lab in the semi-urban case study proved to tremendously increase students' interest though it simply involved the use of power point software to present pictures. Finally, if the testing format of exams were changed to be aligned with the textbook, i.e. more emphasis on communication and inclusion of oral and aural skills in exams, the target outcomes and teaching methodology of the textbook would stand much better chances of being realized. According to the head and the classroom teachers of the rural case, presence of speaking and listening as components of

important exams, like graduation ones (M.4, 33:4; M.5, 104-106), would drive teachers to teach these skills to their students.

To sum up, amidst a wide variety and large number of problems for the textbook, there were also many opportunities present. Apart from high evaluations of the textbook by students (of the rural and semi-urban case studies), there were indications that young adults proved to be willing, if not happy, to study the textbook according to what it has to offer and how it should be done. Also, the use of the textbook would be further enhanced if the conditions required were met including teacher devotion, availability of classroom amenities, and amended exam format.

8.3.3 Conclusion

This section has considered the views of stakeholders directly involved in using the textbook and highlighted their perceptions of the problems of the textbook itself (i.e. difficulty and relevance) and supporting conditions (i.e. lack of communication-oriented lessons, inadequate teacher preparation for the textbook deployment, exam-oriented atmosphere, and inadequate classroom conditions). Whereas the former problems were perhaps concerned with a small group of people (i.e. mainly textbook developers), the latter ones involved quite different categories of stakeholders ranging from teachers, textbook innovation organisers, teacher trainers, exam-makers to administrators and leaders. For the textbook to be effectively used, it is necessary to implement concurrent measures involving well-coordinated action plans from all parties concerned. The next section will probe stakeholder agendas and shed further light on the issue of coordinating policies with classroom practices.

8.4 CRITICAL EVALUATION

Textbook evaluation is not simply a matter of trying to determine whether the goals set out by the textbook have been achieved, or monitoring in order to see whether the textbook, in the words of Scriven (1993, pp. 16-17), ‘on-task’, both of which fall under the ends-means

interpretation approach. Nor is it just uncovering the meanings of textbook use as interpreted by different stakeholders, as shown in the previous section through the situational interpretation approach. These two complementary approaches to textbook evaluation are enhanced by the third approach nested in the Werner/Aoki framework, namely the critical approach by which the evaluation goes further and uncovers the foundations of a textbook's creation and reception to make problematic what is taken for granted (Norris, 1993, p. 104).

8.4.1 Critical textbook evaluation (CTE)

Before considering the Werner/Aoki approach to critical evaluation, it is useful to deconstruct and examine the expression 'critical evaluation' more closely because of its central role in this thesis. 'Evaluation' can be defined as "*systematic* [emphasis added] investigations of the *worth* [emphasis added] or *merit* [emphasis added] of an object (e.g. a program, project, or instructional material" (Sanders et al., 1994, p. 205) or "…the application of *research* [emphasis added] skills to determine the *worth* [emphasis added] of an educational practice" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 527). "Materials evaluation" can be considered as an assessment of "the *merit* [emphasis added] or *worth* [emphasis added] of content-related physical items, including books, curricular guides, films, tapes, and other tangible instructional products" (Sanders et al., 1994, p. 206). What can also be noted from these definitions of 'evaluation' is that first of all the research concerned should be carried out systematically "according to certain guiding principles using carefully defined criteria" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, pp. 4-5). In this thesis's study, "the guiding principles using carefully defined criteria" are provided by the evaluation framework of Werner (1979, 1984) and Aoki (1984, 1989, 2005), complemented by critical textbook evaluation (CTE) principles adapted from principles for critical language testing (CLT) by Shohamy (2001, pp. 131-132).

A second notable feature in defining evaluation is that there are apparently two aspects of inquiry to identify the 'merit' and 'worth' of what is evaluated, which differ in terms of their

point of reference. Indeed, as Scriven states, “merit means quality according to the standards of the profession” whereas “worth or value… means benefit… the meeting of needs…” (1993, p. 67). This study thus considers not only the extent to which the aims and objectives of the textbook appeared to be fulfilled by the use of the textbook (i.e. its merit, by means of the ends-means evaluation approach) but also the appropriateness and compatibility of the textbooks’ innovations within the local contexts (i.e. worth/value by the situational and critical evaluation approaches)

Turning to the term ‘critical’, there are many meanings for this term but the one to be taken into consideration here is “involving making fair, careful judgements about the good and bad qualities of somebody/something” (Hornby, 2005) or “characterized by careful evaluation and judgment” ("Critical psychology," n.d.). In order to ensure fairness, this study takes into account the views of all stakeholders involved with the textbook and impartiality should be enhanced by focusing on issues and not individuals as argued by White (1991, p. 150). To help ensure a careful investigation, the findings will be discussed in consideration of subtleties of local contexts and insiders’ voices because as White notes, “the particular strength of case studies lies in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right” (1991, p. 150).

It is important to note that in this study a specialised meaning of ‘critical’ is implied: critiquing mainstream approaches of evaluation, as in ‘critical psychology’ ("Critical psychology," 2011; Critical psychology," n.d.). The study evaluates a textbook not only as it is in isolation but also in reference to the contexts in which it is used including people’s perceptions of the material and situational factors that give it its particular meaning and relevance (situational approach) and “the foundational assumptions, hidden values, and implications” of a textbook (critical approach; Werner, 1984, p. 1). In other words, the evaluation should assess the relative

merit and worth of the textbook concerned, going beyond the approaches of ends-means and situational evaluation.

What is required to be undertaken in the critical programme evaluation approach set out by Werner (1984, p. 15) includes, but is not limited to, making explicit the perspectives underlying programmes; social relations maintained and legitimised through perspectives; sources of these perspectives; the control function of these perspectives; and arguments, criteria, or standards for changing these perspectives. According to Aoki (Aoki, 1984, p. 11), critical curriculum evaluation concerns the underlying perspectives of the curriculum, the implied view of stakeholders, the interests served by the curriculum, the root metaphor guiding the curriculum developer, the curriculum implementer, or curriculum evaluator, the bias of the publisher, the author, and/or the developer of prescribed or recommended resource materials and the curriculum's supporting world views. The evaluator, it should be noted, does not simply give a description of those issues but also reflects on them as well.

The need to operationalise a critical approach for evaluating a textbook has led the researcher to draw on the literature of critical language testing for guidance. Indeed, both testing and textbooks are currently very topical areas of concern in Vietnamese education. There are four practical reasons for the incorporation and adaptation of Shohamy's CLT principles into this critical evaluation of the textbook concerned. First, although the Werner/Aoki approach to critical evaluation provides a framework for evaluation, it does not provide enough detail to operationalise a critical evaluation. In order to be able to critically evaluate the textbook in its different contexts of reception, a more practically-oriented set of criteria needs to be identified and deployed. Second, there are many substantial similarities between what is proposed by Shohamy and Werner and Aoki, particularly the attempt to look beyond and under the surface issues. The principles put forward by Shohamy (2001, pp. 131-132) are borrowed "mostly from Pennycook (1994) and from Kramsch (1993)" (Shohamy 1998, p. 332), who are proponents of

critical applied linguistics. It is useful to analogise those principles as articles of law and their clauses which enable the "constitutional" orientations proposed by Werner and Aoki. Indeed, while the issues raised by Werner and Aoki can be considered as orientations, Shohamy's principles can facilitate a more thorough investigation.

The third reason for drawing on the principles cited by Shohamy is that they have emerged from developments in applied linguistics, the field in which this evaluation is located, rather than the broader and more dated field of Werner and Aoki's research. Aoki himself claims to "speak as a novice" in the realm of critically reflective social theory and he calls for close examination by educational researchers in "those reflecting disciplines" (1989, p. 19). Werner emphasises that "critical interpretation of programs must be rooted in some framework which informs the evaluator of the meaning of "criticism itself" and that "a selection of a framework must be made on the basis of its appropriateness to the phenomenon under study and the evaluator's intent" (1979, p. 16, 1984, p. 35). Regarding critical evaluation in particular, Werner (*ibid.*) recommends that the evaluative questions "need to be modified and expanded when applied to particular programs". In the case of this study, what is to be evaluated is a textbook, which is different (from a programme), so the need for drawing on Shohamy's CLT principles is quite natural. Lastly, combining the ideas of Werner and Aoki with those of Shohamy, Pennycook and Kramsch is beneficial as they bridge important frameworks from the literature of both applied linguistics and general curriculum evaluation, two broad areas of concern of this thesis.

Shohamy (2001) was in fact a ground-breaking work in the field of critical applied linguistics and language testing and appears well placed to inform this study because both tests and textbooks are highly centralised educational 'mechanisms' and involve the key interests and accountability of a variety of stakeholders. The researcher thus believes that Shohamy's principles can be perceived to be directly corresponding to the challenges and opportunities of

the textbook as revealed through the ends-means and situational evaluations presented already in this chapter.

In this section of the chapter, and as a major contribution of this thesis, the researcher shows how Shohamy's 15 principles of CLT can be adapted to provide very useful criteria for a truly critical evaluation of a textbook. Tables 8.4a-d shows how Shohamy's 15 critical language testing principles can be adapted to critical textbook evaluation, where the primary object of concern is a textbook rather than a test. It should be noted here that for the sake of succinct presentation, the paraphrases of Shohamy's principles as used by Lynch (2001, p. 363) are given in Tables 8.4 a-d below,[15] but the discussion will also take into account the principles as used by Shohamy herself (2001, pp. 131-132).

[15] In Tables 8.4 a-d, the words in italics indicate the adaptations, which are used for critical textbook evaluation. As noted by Lynch (2001, p. 363), "Numbering refers to the order in which Shohamy (2001) presents the principles. Asterisks (*) indicate that the principle appears under more than one characteristic."

Table 8.4a

Principles of Critical Textbook Evaluation Adapted from Critical Language Testing (1)

Critical perspective characteristic 1: *an interest in particular domains such as gender, class, ethnicity, and the ways that language and language-related issues (like all human relations and activities) are interconnected with them.*	
CLT principles	**CTE principles**
1. CLT is not neutral but is shaped by cultural, social, political, educational, and ideological agendas.	1. *Textbooks are* not neutral but *are* shaped by cultural, social, political, educational, and ideological agendas.
3. CLT views test-takers as political subjects within a political context.	3. *CTE* views *textbook* users as political subjects within a political context.
4. CLT views tests as tools within a context of social and ideological struggle.	4. *CTE* views *textbooks* as tools within a context of social and ideological struggle.
*5. CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.	*5. *CTE* asks questions about which and whose agendas *textbooks* serve.
*6. CLT claims that testers need to understand the tests they create within a larger vision of society and its use of those tests.	*6. *CTE* claims that *textbook developers* need to understand the *textbooks* they create within a larger vision of society and its use of those *textbooks*.
*****7. CLT examines tests in terms of their measurement and assessment of knowledge versus their definition and dictation of knowledge.	*****7. *CTE* examines *textbooks* in terms of their *presentation of knowledge* versus their definition and dictation of *knowledge*.
*8. CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?	*8. *CTE* questions the nature of *knowledge* that *textbooks* are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?
9. CLT examines the influence and involvement of the range of stakeholders in a testing context.	9. *CTE* examines the influence and involvement of the range of stakeholders in *contexts of textbook creation and reception*.
10. CLT perceives the embeddedness of tests within social and educational systems.	10. *CTE* perceives the embeddedness of *textbooks* within social and educational systems.

Table 8.4b

Principles of Critical Textbook Evaluation Adapted from Critical Language Testing (2)

Critical perspective characteristic 2: *the notion that our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant, postpositivist-influenced one.*	
CLT principles	**CTE principles**
*****7. CLT examines tests in terms of their measurement and assessment of knowledge versus their definition and dictation of knowledge.	*****7. *CTE* examines *textbooks* in terms of their *presentation of knowledge* versus their definition and dictation of *knowledge*.
*8. CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?	*8. *CTE* questions the nature of *knowledge* that *textbooks* are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?
11. CLT admits to the limited knowledge of any tester and the need for multiple sources of knowledge.	11. *CTE* admits to the limited knowledge of any *textbook developer* and the need for multiple sources of knowledge.
12. CLT challenges the psychometric traditions and considers "interpretive" approaches to assessment that allow for different meanings and interpretations rather than a single absolute truth.	12. *CTE* challenges the *traditional assumption of a "standard" role of textbooks* and considers *the extent to which textbooks cater for different teaching and learning interests and needs*.
*13. CLT considers the meaning of test scores within this interpretive framework, allowing for the possibility of discussion and negotiation across multiple interpretations.	*13. *CTE* considers the *worth of textbooks* within this *applicability* framework, allowing for the possibility of *teaching and learning for multiple interests and needs*.
15. CLT challenges the primacy of the "test" as assessment instrument and considers multiple procedures for interpreting the knowledge of individuals.	15. *CTE* challenges the primacy of *the "textbook" as instrument of instruction* and considers multiple *media/modes* for *presenting knowledge to* individuals.

Table 8.4c

Principles of Critical Textbook Evaluation Adapted from Critical Language Testing (3)

Critical perspective characteristic 3: *a concern for changing the human and social world, not just describing it: the "transformative agenda", with the related and motivational concern for social justice and equality.*	
CLT principles	**CTE principles**
2. CLT encourages an active, critical response from test-takers.	2. *CTE* encourages an active, critical response from *textbook users*.
*5. CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.	*5. *CTE* asks questions about which and whose agendas *textbooks* serve.
*6. CLT claims that testers need to understand the tests they create within a larger vision of society and its use of those tests.	*6. *CTE* claims that *textbook developers* need to understand the *textbooks* they create within a larger vision of society and its use of those *textbooks*.
14. CLT challenges the knowledge that tests are based upon and advocates a democratic representation of the multiple groups of society.	14. *CTE* challenges the *knowledge* that *textbooks* are based upon and advocates a democratic representation of the multiple groups of society.

Table 8.4d

Principles of Critical Textbook Evaluation Adapted from Critical Language Testing (4)

Critical perspective characteristic 4: *the requirement that critical applied linguistics be self-reflexive.*	
CLT principles	**CTE principles**
*5. CLT asks questions about which and whose agendas tests serve.	*5. *CTE* asks questions about which and whose agendas *textbooks* serve.
*8. CLT questions the nature of knowledge that tests are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?	*8. *CTE* questions the nature of *knowledge* that *textbooks* are based on: whose knowledge? Independent "truth" or negotiated and challengeable?
*13. CLT considers the meaning of test scores within this interpretive framework, allowing for the possibility of discussion and negotiation across multiple interpretations.	*13. *CTE* considers the *worth of textbooks* within this *applicability* framework, allowing for the possibility of *teaching and learning for multiple interests and needs*.

Several important points arising from the adaptation of CLT to CTE need to be noted here. Firstly, concerning Principle 1, whereas in the original principle Shohamy claimed what was "not to be neutral" was "the act of language testing", Lynch's paraphrase appears to go beyond this, saying it is CLT itself (that is not neutral). Accordingly, following Shohamy's original principle, the adapted CTE principle applies 'textbooks' as a corresponding subject. Secondly, regarding Principles 6 and 11, the term used as corresponding to 'tester(s)' in CLT is 'textbook developer(s)', which refers to textbook writer(s) and curriculum designer(s) who both play an important role in the creation of the textbook under evaluation. Thirdly, concerning Principle 7, the key function of a textbook as an instrument of instruction is assumed to be presenting knowledge to teach and learn, just as that of a test is to measure, assess and interpret the knowledge (of individuals). Fourthly, in reference to Principle 9, the textbook's context is elaborated in two major areas of concern including the contexts of creation and reception. Fifthly, relating to Principles 12 and 13, what is to be challenged is the traditional assumption

that textbooks should be ‘standard’ materials, a conception believed to limit the useability of textbooks for different teaching and learning contexts, interests and needs. Also, particularly regarding Principle 13, the worth of textbooks is evaluated within the applicability framework allowing for the possibility of teaching and learning for multiple interests and needs, just as the meaning of test scores is to be considered within the ‘interpretive’ framework allowing for the possibility of discussion and negotiation across multiple interpretations. Finally, concerning Principle 15, the employment of multiple media and modes versus the solitary ‘textbook’ for presenting knowledge to individuals is considered to be akin to using multiple assessment procedures versus the solitary ‘test’ for interpreting the knowledge of individuals.

8.4.2 The textbook critically evaluated

Guided by the 15 CTE principles in Tables 8.4 a-d, this section will critically evaluate the textbook in an attempt to illuminate the underlying causes for the challenges and opportunities of the appropriateness with its contexts of use. This evaluation is organised according to the first three of the four perspectives of critical applied linguistics under which the 15 CTE principles are arranged in Table 8.4 a-d; a separate section for the fourth perspective is arguably redundant because it is subsumed under the other three sections, where its three principles (i.e. Principles 5, 8, and 13) are already discussed and where the researcher’s self-reflexive thoughts from his view as an insider of the textbook innovation are already presented. It should be noted that though several CTE principles come under more than one category (as shown in Table 8.4 a-d), each principle will be addressed only where it is deemed to bring about the most thorough discussion. Also, the views of textbook writers as voices of ‘insiders’ in the process of the textbook creation have been brought in for the purposes of triangulation with the self-reflexive thoughts of the researcher.

Regarding the first perspective (i.e. “an interest in particular domains such as gender, class, ethnicity, and the ways that language and language-related issues (like all human relations

and activities") are interconnected with them"), the Vietnamese context as a site of creation and reception of the textbook will first be considered as it is the broad domain within which textbook-related issues are interconnected. In relation to the second perspective (i.e. "the notion that our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant, postpositivist-influenced one"), currently prevailing assumptions of the textbook's dominant role as a coursebook will be challenged, thereby arguing for open attitudes towards the position of textbooks in school education. Last, concerning the third perspective (i.e. "a concern for changing the human and social world, not just describing it: the 'transformative agenda', with the related and motivational concern for social justice and equality"), the textbook will be evaluated in reference to the extent of its concern for its target users.

8.4.2.1 Critical perspective characteristic 1 applied to the creation and reception of the textbook

8.4.2.1.1 Textbook creation

Critical perspective characteristic 1 involves "an interest in particular domains such as gender, class, ethnicity, and the ways that language and language-related issues (like all human relations and activities") are interconnected with them". This section will evaluate the textbook based on Principles 1, 8, and 9, which are considered to be the most directly relevant to the factors affecting the textbook's creation. Strictly speaking, the evaluation based on Principle 9 (i.e. CTE examines the influence and involvement of the range of stakeholders in contexts of textbook creation and reception) is equally related to both contexts of creation and reception and could thus have been split into two sections. For the sake of maintaining the flow of ideas, however, the whole is placed in this section.

The causes for why the textbook is as it is are rooted in the factors shaping its creation including cultural, social, political, educational, and ideological agendas (Principle 1) of the stakeholders concerned. Indeed, as the textbook developers had to cater for such agendas,

especially regarding the inclusion and education of political and ideological attitudes, the textbook was apt to result in a plainer final product after a variety of compromises were made throughout the selection and development process of its topics and the ongoing and final evaluations of the textbook. For anything even remotely ideologically controversial was almost always excluded after many attempts of, adapting a word of Tomlinson's (1998, as cited in Tomlinson 2003b, p. 25) "sanitisation" to avoid possible criticism particularly from the textbook evaluators and media. It was always stressed to the textbook writers by the organisers of the textbook innovation project that the textbook would have to be neat, tidy and, importantly, politically correct if it were to be approved. As a result, the textbook writers tended to remove and/or were reluctant to bring into their book what was politically sensitive, no matter how interesting it could be for students. As an English language teaching textbook inevitably relates to Western culture, there was a strong need for the issues of being 'politically correct' to be more seriously addressed. The following was a recount of one of the writers regarding her experience with the textbook writing process:

> EXCERPT 8.1 But they forced us to do what they had told us to do before they approved our textbooks. I had to follow their feedback in an upset mood because I felt it was clearly unsatisfactory. There were instances I had to make changes as required by the examination committee only to find teachers attending in my training sessions asking why not keeping things as they had been in the trial versions. Those teachers said the original tasks were more interesting, but I had had to make changes as required by the examination committee (*laughing*). (Q2, 204:2-5)

Particularly in dealing with the textbook evaluators, who, driven by their own agendas, might resort to a variety of pretexts to insist on their proposed changes, the textbook writers eventually had to concede to their suggestions to cut off or add whatever they considered inappropriate or needed. Though meeting for just one week to review the textbook, the evaluators were given the power to overrule what the writers had created over a period of at least one year.

While the textbook writers in principle might argue their own case, this right was hard to exercise regarding borderline cases. They had to be strategic, for example, to accept to change what the evaluators considered 'difficult' or 'easy' or '(culturally) inappropriate' because there was no benchmark of what was 'difficult' or 'easy' or '(culturally) inappropriate'. Importantly, it was the evaluators who were 'in power' and it may well be the case that they were "eager to maintain and preserve their power and knowledge" (Shohamy 2001, p. 132). The unequal struggle became even more biased against the textbook writers when pressed for time by project deadlines.

A second important factor in the creation of the textbook concerns the nature of knowledge that the textbook is based on (i.e. subject matter and teaching methodology), which is to be questioned in terms of its teachability because it was entirely at the discretion of the textbook developers and no negotiation was held with the other stakeholders (Principle 8). What the textbook has to offer is not at all a result of textbook developers' working in collaboration with those on-site users to find out what might possibly best suit them. The textbook as a finished product was imposed upon teachers and students who, once they were enrolled in its programme, had to use it. No matter whether they would find the textbook relevant to their interests and needs or not, users of the textbook had to accept it as their only course book. Without negotiation with its users, the textbook runs a foreseeable risk of being unfit in its contexts of use. As admitted by one member of the writing team, the textbook has target outcomes "too ambitious" and that appeared over-demanding (Q.3, 4:13; 10:10).

Indeed, while English communication was emerging as a perceived need in a developing nation like Vietnam attempting to integrate into the world community, the teaching methodology of the textbook stood little chance to be implemented in the school context if its educational stakeholders did not see it as appropriate and needed. So far, research in the Vietnamese context has shown that traditional teaching and learning styles do not appear to be receptive or ready for

communicative language teaching and learning (see Gregory, 1994; T. H. A. Nguyen, 2002; Pham, 2005; Tran, 1991; Vuong, 1980, p. 347). As admitted by one of the textbook writer interviewees, the teaching approaches of the textbook were not perceived to be what was actually demanded by education itself though the wider society seemed to need English-speaking abilities (Q.3, 4:3; 18:1).

A third factor of great importance to the creation of the textbook, and following the issue above, was that the textbook's appropriateness was challenged by the lack of the influence and involvement of stakeholders (Principle 9) in the process of its creation and deployment. Indeed, the key users of the textbook were virtually ignored as students had not been consulted at all concerning their needs and interests and teachers' voices were minimally heard. According to the textbook writer interviewees, prior to the creation of the textbook there had been no research into the context of reception of the material and its target users (Q.1, 119:1; Q.2, 129-130:1; Q.3, 12:4; 26:3). Throughout the textbook's creation, all that the writers had to rely on was mainly their own experience (Q.2, 128:1). As revealed by one of the textbook writers, the teachability of the materials of the textbook was mainly based on the judgement of the two high school teachers in the writing team (Q.2, 130:2-6). Concerning the context of reception, there was also no serious attempt to seek to learn about the textbook's teachability, except for some classroom lesson observations, which were reportedly perfunctorily organised and ineffective due to teachers' other arrangements (Q.1, 125:133). As pointed out by one of the textbook writers (Q.3, 26:5), the test-run trials of the textbook before its mass deployment should have been able to detect and eliminate mismatches between the textbook and the classroom reality if they had been effectively undertaken.

Worse, when the textbook was deployed, there were inadequate attempts to involve teachers in the implementation of the textbook. The inadequate teacher training for the textbook innovation failed to win the approval of teachers in terms of its methodology and subject matter.

Without a shared vision of what was expected to be achieved with the textbook and how it should be done, it was inevitable that the textbook's effectiveness was reduced. It is quite obvious that the necessity of teacher education for the implementation of an educational innovation cannot be over-emphasised (Harlen, 1977, p. 117; Karavas-Doukas, 1998, pp. 35-39; Richards, 2001a, p. 209). Regarding this English textbook the issue becomes critical because the new textbook adopts a teaching methodology completely different from what teachers had been familiar with and the social and cultural atmosphere did not seem conducive to its application (e.g. the pervasive exam-oriented mentality). This demand for adequate teacher training is to be urgently attended to as the current EFL teaching force is insufficient in number and uncertain in quality in Vietnam (H. C. Nguyen, 2007, p. 45; H. T. Nguyen, 2006; Vu, 2009).

To sum up the textbook's creation in light of Principles 1, 8, and 9, we have seen that the appropriateness of the textbook was challenged by the collective influence of different agendas, the textbook developers' 'monopoly' of knowledge it is to teach, and the lack of negotiation with and involvement of students and teachers in the creation and reception of the textbook. While the textbook writers appeared to cater for the interests of those 'in power' (e.g. the political scrutiny), they neglected those of its key users, who should have been considered active participants in rather than passive recipients of the textbook's creation. It follows that the textbook could have become a more appropriate teaching instrument if it had liberated itself from such constraints and utilised the contributions from its key stakeholders.

8.4.2.1.2 Textbook reception

As the textbook is essentially an artefact whose effectiveness is largely determined by the ways in which it is used as course material, it is imperative to judge its worth in relation to its context of reception. This section will critically evaluate the textbook in light of other Characteristic 1 principles deemed the most relevant to this specific domain, which are Principles 3, 4, 7 and 10.

First, it appears that the textbook usage was affected by teachers and students as political subjects in their political context and by the political context in which the textbook was used (Principle 3). As found in the three case studies, students' need to prepare for knowledge-oriented exams reportedly made the classroom lessons suffer from a lack of communication-oriented activities, thereby undermining the textbook's goal of developing students' English communication. Evidently, the agendas of these political subjects were not necessarily aligned with those of the textbook. The teacher as the classroom implementer of the textbook and the students by virtue of being large in number may render the textbook (in)effective if they are distracted by forces that are not aligned with what the textbook aims to achieve.

In reference to another finding from the rural and urban cases, despite the textbook being too difficult or easy, other more appropriate materials of lower or higher levels were not (officially) used as coursebooks instead. This lack of options is due to the political context of those textbook users, where only the State-prescribed textbooks are permitted to be used (Education Law of 2005, Article 29, Clause 3). In such a context, even for "self-chosen supplementary lessons" that schools are allowed to provide their students as extras, they are warned against teaching more than what is prescribed by the textbooks (MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines).

Still in reference to Principle 3 but viewed from a more positive perspective, nevertheless, the textbook had chances of becoming an effective source of materials as its users were political subjects within a political context. The textbook as State-prescribed teaching material had the advantage of being accepted in those schools where teachers are subject to aligning their lessons with what was being promoted. As noted by the head teacher in the semi-urban case (P.5, 62:1-4), the new methodology had virtually replaced traditional teaching methods at her institution since the new textbook was introduced. Once there have been quite a number of teachers following the new teaching methodology, it is possible that the rest will

become involved because teachers as political subjects within a political context are likely to be affected as times change. Regarding the students, subject to being led and affected by their teachers' teaching, they proved to be participating in the textbook's tasks in all three case studies (to varying degrees). In fact, there were strong indications from many instances in the semi-urban case and also some of the urban case that the textbook was used in expected ways and that relatively successful communication did take place. Whereas there was no guarantee that the same effectiveness could be achieved in real life, or that it was a causal relationship between what was offered by the textbook and what students were able to do, the textbook was teachable in the ways set out. Notably, students themselves also indicated that they were ready for the new methodology of the new textbook regarding, for instance, their willingness to undertake pair or group work. Their mentality and this reality suggest a hopeful condition for the use of materials to be further exploited as students within the constraints of the classroom and school setting, are likely to be amenable in terms of how classroom lessons are delivered. Initially, distinctive transformations should not be expected to happen; however, over time transformations will become clearer as signs of change in fact were already clearly and consistently observable in the semi-urban case.

A second factor to consider in terms of the textbook's reception is that it was apparently a victim of its being a tool within a context of social and ideological struggle (Principle 4). In reference to the rural case, the school management and the students were perhaps driven by their own political motivations to cling to this intensive programme textbook irrespective of the students' limited background. The existence of such a class at their school was believed to add value, though just face value, to the reputation of the institution. The added value could help to enhance their 'brand name' considering the fact that throughout the province there were just half a dozen out of hundreds of Year 10 classes taking the intensive programme of English. Likewise, the students themselves should also be held accountable for responding to the school

management's appeal and accepting to be in the class using a textbook beyond their capabilities. By doing so, they still enjoyed some satisfaction of being in a class supposedly higher than other ones (taking the regular English programme) while they were unable to get accepted in their preferred classes. Their choice was not actually driven by their enjoyment of studying or need to study English intensively, so it was difficult for the textbook to provide effective material for them.

A third important factor concerning the textbook's reception is that in practice the knowledge that was taught in the classroom seemed to be defined and dictated by what was presented in the textbook (Principle 7), which eventually affected the effectiveness of the material. Although teachers are encouraged "to decide what points and concepts the lesson should concentrate on, for given the time allocated for each lesson, it will be difficult to teach thoroughly all the language present in each lesson" (Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 20), few teachers in practice would venture to make such 'bold' decisions. There was always pressure for teachers to cover whatever was there in the textbook (particularly vocabulary and grammar points), which consequently distorted the ways the lessons were taught and overstretched the students and teachers. This problem became worse for classes whose students' English background was inadequate, as happened with the rural case. Though the curriculum guidelines advise that "teachers might want to adjust a number of tasks of the textbook that are over demanding or too long for students in disadvantaged areas" (MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines, p. 7), it would have been an unnecessary, even 'career-threatening', move to take for the teacher or the management. If exams requested, for instance, certain vocabulary items in the textbook that were deemed too difficult and thus were not taught, the teacher in particular would have been in trouble. As pointed out by T. T. M. Nguyen (2007, p. 54), whereas the Ministry of Education and Training has no explicit regulations against textbook localisation, attempts of textbook customisation would have been discouraged by the administration of the same nation-wide

exams and the regular inspections of the local educational authorities for teacher performance appraisal. Textbook adherence is always implicitly and explicitly encouraged for successful performance at exams. Though government documents concerning preparation for important exams always state that the curriculum will be the basis (see, for instance, Regulations for the Upper Secondary Education Graduation Examinations, 2008, Article 5, Clause 1), the curriculum is still too general for teachers and students to refer to and they are consequently advised to base their efforts on textbooks. The State-approved textbooks are declared to be the basis for exams of high school graduation and university admission and are encouraged by senior ministerial officials to be used as the best preparation materials (Guide on Graduation Exam Review, 2009; Thanh Chau, 2011; Tue Nguyen, 2010).

A fourth factor relevant to textbook reception is that embedded within the social and educational systems of Vietnam, where exam success is prioritised, the appropriateness of the textbook was challenged (Principle 10) in many ways. The first challenge was the negative washback effect of exams, which test language knowledge by way of multiple-choice test items. Indeed, the teaching and learning of English in the three case studies was always confronted by the pressures of exam preparation, which was clearly biased against the methodology of the textbook. It was impractical to expect students to be doubly burdened by studying for English communication on the one hand (supposing it was a worthwhile target in the long run) and for exams. The exam-oriented mentality (of not only the students and teachers but also the whole society) was perceived to be the toughest and most enduring issue affecting the applicability of the textbook in the three case studies. As one of the agents for change, the textbook is admittedly a powerful tool when it is approved as the only permissible course material but this influence was counteracted by the ‘invisible hand’ of exams.

Another challenge was that of convincing teachers of the worth of teaching the textbook. If the new textbook is to be properly used, not only should teachers have been adequately taught

how to conduct lessons in new ways but also, importantly, they should have been convinced of the validity and applicability of its methodology as suggested by many research results (Nunan 1987, Mitchell 1988, Lawrence 1990, and Lamb 1995 in Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p. 32). For language teaching innovations to take place successfully, teacher behaviour and beliefs are commonly considered what is to be changed (Karavas-Doukas, 1998, p. 28). As found in the three case studies, however, the teacher training sessions were not adequate or effective and as a result, as reported by the urban head teacher, teachers were not intrinsically motivated to use the new methodology. Innovation being always apt to be challenged by what has become well established, it was natural that the textbook was not readily accepted, particularly not by veteran teachers who had been shaped by traditional practices and/or the psychological inertia of resistance to change.

To sum up the analysis of critical perspective characteristic 2 in light of Principles 3, 4, 7, and 10, it was indicated that the textbook was arguably 'victimised' by its users being political subjects within their political contexts; its being a tool within a context of social and ideological struggle; its being embedded within social and educational systems; and by its own nature. Being a casualty of all these forces, the textbook cannot have been itself and was subject to being driven off the predetermined track and away from the intended targets. When those forces were constructively utilised, however, the textbook managed to create positive transformations in the classroom lesson practices and students' and teachers' attitudes to English education. It appears that the elimination of those inevitable challenges is almost impossible and instead should be utilised as driving forces to make what is expected to take place actually happen.

8.4.2.2 Critical perspective characteristic 2 applied to the primacy of the textbook

Critical perspective characteristic 2 involves "the notion that our research needs to consider paradigms beyond the dominant, postpositivist-influenced one". This section will evaluate the textbook based on Principles 11, 12, 13 and 15, which are considered to be the most

appropriate to be used to challenge the prevailing assumptions of the dominant role of a textbook as a course book. First, it should be admitted that the textbook writers' knowledge is limited (Principle 11) and it follows that the pivotal position of the textbook as the only permissible coursebook should be challenged. The textbook's inadequacies do not only lie in the accuracy of its language as one of the textbook writers implied (Q.1, 5:6) but also in the teachability of its tasks, its presentation of knowledge, and broadly its applicability in different contexts. The textbook proved to have quite a number of drawbacks making it inappropriate for certain contexts of use. Indeed, the textbook was perceived to be too difficult in the rural case and too easy in the urban case, and its relevance was a problem to varying degrees in all three cases. Also, the lack of communication-oriented lessons, as pointed out in the ends-means interpretation section, is arguably due to the poor availability of communicative tasks in the textbook itself. The causes for the inability to create such a coursebook were most likely due to the textbook writers' lack of language material development expertise, as none of them had ever had any training to do the job as one of the textbook writers admitted (Q.2, 148:3-4; 188:1-2) and, as noted in Section 8.4.2.1.1, to the lack of investigation into the contexts of reception of the textbook and limited effort to seek feedback from the textbook's users.

The acceptance of the textbook writers' limited knowledge suggests the need for multiple sources of knowledge that should have been employed for the textbook innovation. First, the best textbook expertise available in the nation should have been mustered for the creation of textbooks. There was no attempt, however, to do so for the textbook concerned. The writers of the textbook were commissioned to do the job not by means of any competitive selection procedures. Second, multiple sources of knowledge could have been brought into play not simply for the creation of this particular textbook but also to allow the creation of multiple textbooks that teachers and students could choose from, thereby increasing the possibility of their selecting the most appropriate learning materials for their circumstances. It was even suggested by one of

the textbook writers that foreign publications would have functioned as better teaching materials and should thus have been used instead (Q.3, 18:3).

From the reception context, teachers and students should have been considered as key sources of knowledge to be mobilised for effective English education. Empowered and supported to contribute to the textbook innovation, these on-site users of the textbook would have made adjustments needed in their circumstances that textbook developers were unable to anticipate and therefore incapable of addressing. The successful implementation of the textbook's tasks as observed in the semi-urban case was not necessarily attributable to the textbook but rather to the teacher and her students. Regrettably, this empowerment approach was seriously neglected; the textbook writers were apparently more preoccupied with presenting knowledge to the textbook users, a temptation that, as acknowledged by one of the textbook writers (Q.2, 150:6-7), was irresistible in the textbook creation process.

A second key issue relevant to the primacy of the textbook is that the traditional assumption of the 'standard' role of textbooks as backed up by the law and as commonly held by Vietnamese society should be challenged (Principle 12) because it presented a number of difficulties for the effective use of the textbook. The preferential treatment given to the textbook has let it assume a monopolised position as an instruction instrument, virtually 'outlawing' other materials. The finding, as noted in Section 8.2, that none of the teacher and student interviewees made any complaint directly concerning the potential of the textbook's tasks to help to achieve the target outcomes while they quoted quite a number of reasons for its ineffectiveness is perhaps very marked evidence of their trust in and respect for the textbook. As mentioned in Section 8.4.2.1.2, it made the classroom lessons tend to adhere closely to the textbook and teachers reluctant to localise its tasks and content to make classroom activities appropriate for their students, thereby hindering flexibility required for classroom use of the textbook. Such a situation is virtually like securing the steering wheel while the car needs to be driven according

to the ongoing conditions of the route it is travelling on (T. N. Nguyen, as cited in Trinh, 2008). The textbook is arguably, in the words of Cunningsworth (as cited in Chandran, 2003, p. 162), a poor master. Given the unhealthy, if not dangerous notion of primacy, it bars competition and thus limits students' exposure to other resources, which might have not only improved suitability but also diversity. Referring further back to its creation and review, there were always attempts to avoid being controversial, which consequently made the textbook's content quite stereotypical, and to pick up big but unfamiliar issues for the textbook's topics, which alienated the textbook from its users. Forced to be wearing a formal suit, the textbook was apt to be stiff, finding it hard to 'socialise' with actual learners, whose needs and interests were normally not as 'high' as what was expected to be achieved with the textbook. In Vietnamese society, the textbook has been pushed onto a pedestal of respect, which has ultimately done more harm than good to itself.

It follows that an open attitude towards the role of the textbook was needed to help to abolish the practice of being a slave to the textbook and to release the textbook's tension of being '*the* textbook' by, as discussed in Section 8.4.2.2, considering it one of the (major) course materials instead of the only 'correct' coursebook and by making it more user-centered. The worth of the textbook should be judged in terms of how widely applicable it is for the possibility of teaching and learning for multiple interests and needs (Principle 13). From this viewpoint, the textbook did not prove to be an effective course book, because not much of what it sets out to take place in the classroom was actually realised in two of the three case studies (i.e. the rural and urban cases). Also, across the three case studies, it was found that there was a significant mismatch between what the textbook wants to do with students' English (i.e. developing their communicative competence) and what the students actually needed the most (i.e. passing standardised exams). The important point, however, is how the textbook was able to meet the multiple teaching and learning interests and needs of teachers and students across the nation.

Again, this question could possibly be addressed by empowering classroom teachers to localise the textbook. This possibility would entail the need for adequate teacher education and the deemphasisation of the role of the textbook as well as challenging the highly centralised education that favours textbook-based education.

Broadly speaking, the current primacy of the textbook as an instrument of instruction should be challenged and multiple media or modes for presenting knowledge should be considered (Principle 15). In this textbook innovation, the textbook proved to be quite solitary as it was the sole material used in the classroom. Even the accompanying Work Book was not used much in practice, for it was not considered a textbook and thus not a required reading. Likewise, the audio disc was not often brought into use either in the rural or urban class. Referring back to the creation of the textbook, the production of the audio disc for the textbook was mainly a result of the team leader's own effort rather than of the textbook project organisers, making the reading of listening scripts monotonous with few voices and lacking authentic background sounds. In the context of reception, as shown through the rural and the urban case studies, students' English education was always situated within the classroom where blackboard teaching was predominant. In the rural and semi-urban cases, the weekly one or two supplementary periods to regular lesson hours were still classroom-based lessons working further into the intricacies of language, again for exam practice. The extra time, unfortunately, was not spent on any extra-curricular activities through which students would have more natural and relaxed English practice, a pre-condition for successful learning (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 2). On the contrary, the textbook could have been more effective if the teaching and learning process involved the employment of multiple media and modes. As shown in the semi-urban class, the use of the language lab and game play proved to make the students very excited and thereby engaged them in the textbook lessons. Also in an Asian context, it is found by Ma (2010, p. 229) that "students dispreferred a textbook-driven teaching approach… but favoured the use of language activities, games, story

telling and jokes in lessons". In this era, "electronic media", writes Pingel (2009, p. 51), "offer teachers, as well as students, new possibilities for structuring their lessons and collecting their own material". Opportunities of practising speaking English sought outside the classroom (e.g. with English speakers at the local orphanage and online pen pal as reported by semi-urban student interviewees) are absolutely necessary to become a component of the curricular activities. It turns out that diversity in educational media and modes are to be encouraged, for the ultimate benchmark should be students' learning outcomes.

To sum up the analysis of critical perspective characteristic 2 in light of Principles 11, 12, 13, and 15, it was shown that the textbook had intrinsic problems relating to its writers' limited knowledge; its limited applicability for users of multiple interests and needs; the conventional undue assumptions of the 'standard' role of the textbook; and its primacy as an instrument of instruction. It follows that the primacy of the textbook as the only coursebook and a dominant medium of instruction is to be challenged and so is the classroom-based mode. For an education that is truly oriented to learning and the learner, textbook-based education should be substantially supplemented with multiple media and different modes for presenting knowledge and multiple sources of knowledge.

8.4.2.3 Critical perspective characteristic 3 applied to the target subjects of the textbook

Critical perspective characteristic 3 involves "a concern for changing the human and social world, not just describing it: the 'transformative agenda', with the related and motivational concern for social justice and equality". As implied in the previous sections, the textbook did not seem to be appropriate in its contexts of use because serious attention was not given to the teachers and students in both the processes of creation and reception of the material. In this section, the textbook will be evaluated in the light of Principles 2, 5, 6, and 14, which emphasise the concern for the textbook's target users.

First, the creation and deployment of the textbook seemed to involve no active or critical response from its users (Principle 2), thereby limiting the number and extent of adjustments it could have made to become more suitable for its users. The whole process of creating the textbook was that the curriculum developers outlined the themes and topics and on such a basis the textbook writers worked out the textbook draft which was then revised following the feedback from the textbook evaluators and, with their approval, it was deployed. Prior to and following the introduction of the textbook, as noted in Sections 8.4.2.1.1 and 8.4.2.2, there was no serious attempt to consult with teachers and students, who with their hands-on classroom experience would have provided useful feedback. As for the textbook writers, it seemed that their concern was primarily with the feedback of the textbook evaluators, who were gate-keepers, not with that of the teachers, whose feedback was minimal anyway. One of the textbook writers who was a provincial supervisor of English education seemed reasonable to suggest that there should have been acknowledgement of teachers' comments on the textbook and explanations on the extent to which their comments had been incorporated into the textbook (Q.3, 14:2-3), as a token of appreciation that could have elicited further useful contributions.

A second issue of relevance to the target users of the textbook is that by sidelining its users as the target subjects in its development, the textbook as a final product seems to serve the agendas of other stakeholders (Principle 5) that are not directly involved in the teaching and learning from it. Not serving the agendas of its key users, the textbook's effectiveness was jeopardised. The textbook innovation was initiated by the central government leadership who wanted new materials to take the place of the books already in use for two decades. Commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training to undertake the new textbook innovation, the textbook developers chose the knowledge on which the textbook was to be based. The teaching methodology adopted was communicative language teaching, which, in the words of Dubin and Olshtan (1990, p. 180), is "the spirit of the times" and perhaps a preemptive

demonstration that the textbook was keeping abreast of professional developments. With the textbook being rolled out, the textbook developers were arguably relieved having completed their project assignments and the leadership were happy to have the new material to be delivered to classrooms. By then the agendas that had been served were those of these two stakeholders, not those of others like teachers and students.

Worse, the stakeholders whose agendas had been served did not do enough of what was needed for the next stages of the textbook innovation. More than anyone else, the textbook developers should have been aware of the significance of teacher education, but they did not manage to push the central leadership to pay adequate attention to the task. More than anyone else, the provincial and ministerial leadership should have been politically and (thus) financially capable to deal with the very time-consuming and costly complication of teacher education, but they seemed to assume the textbook would function as the tool to make change and it would be teachers' business to teach themselves how to use the new textbook. This lack of the continued interest of the stakeholders concerned is indicated by the fact that by now, years after the textbook has been used, there is still no data concerning the numbers of students and schools taking the English intensive programme. The lack of interest in teacher education on the part of the leadership was recalled by one of the textbook writers:

> EXCERPT 8.2 For example, they would like to invite a textbook writer to come and talk to their teachers, and everyone would agree that it was what needed doing. When the request was submitted to the provincial leadership the answer was that there was no funding for this item. Yet, what was definitely sure was that that provincial budget could have afforded such expenditure. (Q.1, 80:5-7)

A third issue concerning the target subjects of the textbook is that the textbook developers have not appeared "to understand the textbook they create within a larger vision of society and its use of the textbook" (Principle 6). They have written a textbook aiming to develop students'

English communication but it is uncertain whether such communicative competence is truly needed in that society. In fact, English communication does not appear to be an urgent need of many Vietnamese students. This mismatch challenges the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook because learners normally learn what they really need to learn (Tomlinson, 2003c, p.18). Within the country, people's language communication needs for their everyday lives are satisfactorily met by their mother tongue. As there is no environment in which students will be required to communicate in English, it will be hard for them to relate simulated classroom activities to use English to what they might authentically be faced with eventually in reality, not at school, at home, or elsewhere. What they learn in the classroom English lessons will have little chance to be used outside the classroom. It should be emphatically pointed out that Vietnamese students are in very homogenous circumstances – virtually all students and teachers speak the same mother tongue. This homogeneity is a disadvantage for attempts to make students speak English communicatively in comparison with a multilingual classroom scenario where students might have to use English as a common language to communicate with each other. It seems that it will yet take much more time for the whole society to be really in need of and ready for English communication lessons from schools.

A further point concerning the outcomes expected of the textbook is that what was set out by the central leadership is to produce new materials that "are congruent with the demands of the new developments" (of the nation, CPV Central Executive Committee, 2001b, Section V; 1). This specification does not necessarily mean, however, that the developments of the nation demand that high school students be able to communicate in English. At the moment, unless students plan to undertake higher education study overseas, English communication is not fundamental to their local study and/or employment. Even for tertiary students, according to recent research, that ability is not perceived as an important target (Ton & Pham, 2010). Not strongly driven by vital needs for using English for life, students will have been unlikely to find

the textbook to be a suitable coursebook and to study it effectively. Even if the textbook had a good number of tasks conducive to the implementation of communicative activities, communication-oriented lessons would not necessarily have happened.

Also, though Vietnamese residents should have been aware of the practical conditions of English education, as claimed by one of them (e.g. Q.1, 20:3-8; 38:1-5), the textbook writers did not seem to have any practical compromises to make their textbook useable in a society where the influence of exams is sweeping and pervasive and the classroom conditions are inadequate. The textbook recommends the use of modern language teaching techniques that are not readily useable in the Vietnamese classroom because of those reasons. Meanwhile, as pointed out by the semi-urban classroom teacher, the Teacher Book itself does not actually function as a useful guide for local teachers to adapt the Student Book's tasks in their circumstances.

A fourth issue of relevance to the target subjects of the textbook is that the knowledge that the textbook based on is to be challenged because it does not necessarily represent what is needed and wanted by multiple groups of society (Principle 14). Communicative language teaching is adopted for the textbook because many of its developers (and evaluators) have been educated overseas where such an approach is in fashion and perhaps effective but this methodological orientation was not necessarily shared by students or teachers in Vietnam, the vast majority of whom did their education locally. While the recommended methodology might be trendy, its teachability is questionable in the local contexts, where its applicability is faced with a variety of problems such as exam-oriented motivation, large-sized classes, mixed-level students, and lack of favourable facilities such as flexible seating, etc. (see, for instance, Le & Barnard, 2009). Regarding the subject matter, the choice of the topics that the textbook has included (or excluded) is not backed up by any research into their relevance to learners' areas of interest. Indeed, the unit topics like *National Park* turned out to be unfamiliar with the rural students whereas the topical content like that of the past World Cup tournaments rather than

something more recent was boring to the urban students. The teaching content and methodology appeared to be advocated only by the textbook writers whereas there was not much care about how local teachers and students would be managing to teach the textbook in their own contexts, except from preemptive advice on the textbook localisations (MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines, p. 7; see Tu Anh et al., 2006, p. 20).

It has become evident through all this discussion that there was a lack of a user-targeted mentality as each stakeholder was interested in carrying out what was their own agenda only and there was a poor alignment of the agendas of the various stakeholders, consequently leaving many problems unaddressed. One such unaddressed problem, as shown through the three case studies, was the distracting effect of exams on the use of the textbook. While the textbook writers claimed to create materials that were to develop students' English communication, the test items even years after the textbook deployment were still made in the form of multiple-choice format and mainly tested students' knowledge of English, not their communicative competence, emphasising recognition rather than production skills. Exam administrators would have had their own reasons for using such testing techniques (e.g. ease of marking and administration).

In practice, the driver of exam-oriented study was strong because it would be of benefit for the students and teachers. It was seemingly paradoxical to observe that, particularly in the urban case, a substantial amount of supplements brought in by teachers and readily received by students were exam practice materials while they said they were reluctant to customise the textbook because it was a legal requirement not to do so. What these teachers did, however, was legitimate because exam success was on their agenda whereas English communication was not. In other words, the textbook writers, the exam administrators, and the teachers and the students held their own agendas, which unfortunately were not aligned to a common end.

As a consequence, classroom English education was geared away from English communication development in order to be focused on exam success, which is always prioritised

in Vietnamese society (Salomon & Vu, 2007, p. 347; Vuong, 1980, p. 69). If exams were modified to be aligned with the textbook's aims, the teaching and learning would be very likely to take place as expected (i.e. stronger emphasis on communication skills and communicative activities), as was stated by the rural head teacher (M.5 104-106; 271:1-4). To be practical, nevertheless, it remains a long journey to take before exams could be reformed in terms of their testing components and format, for quite a number of problems are to be cleared, especially the one of exam-related corruption as pointed out by the rural head teacher (M.5 305:1-4) and one of the textbook writers (Q.1, 49-53; 93:2; 149-151). Administering communication-oriented exams including the four skills would be an impossible mission even in the near future; a similar project starting with strong determination to enhance communicative language teaching in Sri Lanka (Wall & Alderson, 1993, p. 43) eventually had to exclude listening and speaking.

Another problem arising from the poor alignment of the key stakeholders involved in the textbook innovation was that of inadequate classroom conditions. Launching the new textbook with tasks requiring, for instance, moveable furniture for classroom task-based activities, the leadership at all levels concerned including that of the Ministry of Education and Training, the provincial authorities, and institutional management did not seem to be prepared to provide such logistics required for the textbook to be teachable. At the three schools studied, it appeared that the indispensable need of such 'hardware' conditions had not been fully understood. Though the schools in the urban and semi-urban cases were newly built, after the inception of the textbook concerned, the amenities for language learning were still those of traditional classrooms in Vietnam, which were not favourable for language learning using the communicative approach. At the urban school, there was no language lab available for use. At the rural school, even an audio disc was not readily available to be played for the listening lessons. This oversight of the significance of classroom conditions required for the textbook implementation would perhaps continue to be the case when all that is officially required as minimum English teaching

equipment for all secondary education Years 10 through 12 includes just a map of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and tapes or discs of readings of the vocabulary in the glossary, and conversations and reading excerpts of the textbooks (List of Minimum Teaching Equipment, 2010). The basic conditions required for the textbook implementation like audio and video equipment and even a language lab were not actually beyond the financial capacity of local schools but the school management perhaps could not see how the expenditure would have brought what they were actually in need of, namely students' performing well on exams, and such equipment was overlooked in their decision-making. Their being practically-minded again relates to the question of whose agenda is being served.

To sum up this analysis of critical perspective characteristic 3 in light of Principles 2, 5, 6, and 14, we have seen that the inappropriateness of the textbook was predictable because it did not effectively seek contributions from its users; it aimed to serve the agendas of stakeholders other than its target users; the textbook writers failed to 'rationalise' what knowledge the textbook was to teach (and how that could be done) as required by practical conditions; and the vision of what the textbook aimed to be achieved was not shared by the majority of its users. Also, it became clear that there was poor alignment of the agendas of stakeholders concerned, especially those in power, for a user-centered textbook. The textbook innovation should have placed more attention on its target users, sought their contribution, and aligned their teaching and learning orientations towards the common aims set out. Importantly, the agendas of all concerned should be well coordinated to ensure thoroughly addressing the problems relating to more than one stakeholder.

8.4.3 Conclusion to critical evaluation

This critical evaluation has tried to uncover broad but hidden factors that have possibly affected the production and reception of the textbook concerned and to reflect on their implications. Rather than contrasting what could happen and actually did happen, or looking for

the possible causes for what happened from the views of stakeholders in the situations concerned, as was done in the two previous sections of this chapter, this section put the whole textbook innovation into a web of elements, connections and relationships that could have affected the use of the textbook and its effectiveness. Deconstructed from a critical perspective on the basis the CTE principles, the textbook innovation seemed to have been seriously challenged by its intrinsic and extrinsic problems. The effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook was apparently caught in an array of challenges rooted in the context in which it was created, the way it was deployed, the role and position it was assumed to take and the target subjects it appeared to serve. The critical evaluation has revealed that there were a variety of problems to be dealt with for the textbook to have become more effective and appropriate teaching material. In the first instance, its evolution should have been freed where possible from the constraints of the various different agendas by which it and its usage were adversely affected and simultaneously it could have more duly involved all its stakeholders' contributions. Second, potentially adverse forces appeared to be always present in the context of use and should have been harnessed in a way by which they could become supporting forces for the targets set out. Third, the conventional textbook-based education presented drawbacks, particularly when it is primarily classroom-based and it follows that multiple sources of knowledge and instructional media and modes could have been mobilised. Last, the textbook seemed to have been flawed as a result of its lack of placing serious attention on its target users and the poor alignment of stakeholders' agendas. Therefore, it is imperative that for the textbook to be appropriate for the whole nation, it should be a coursebook that is of, by, and for its users, a mission to be completed with well-coordinated undertakings of all concerned.

It is acknowledged, though, that this critical evaluation has not and cannot have been an exhaustive discussion because:

> The point of criticism is… to be reflective and aware that we do hold presuppositions that influence our thoughts and actions. Taken to an extreme, criticism would be in itself a paralyzing task to undertake, for assumptions always rest upon prior assumptions in what it seems to be an infinite regress. Uncovering basic premises is a task that can be pursued to various depths, but at some point our response must be "for I believe so" (Polanyi, 1964, p. 9). It is not possible to make clear all of our starting premises at the same time, because we must assume some position from which to question. (Werner, 1980, p. 153)

Also, it should be acknowledged that the use of the critical evaluation approach might possibly leave an impression that the researcher is being too harsh on the textbook, given the government constraints currently operating in Vietnam. However, it is through this lens that many insights into the worth of the material are obtained.

8.5 CONCLUSION TO DISCUSSION CHAPTER

Using the Werner/Aoki programme evaluation model as a framework, this chapter has evaluated the textbook through three complementary approaches. The first one (i.e. ends-means interpretation) is quite traditional as it considers the textbook through its teaching methodology and content (i.e. desired means) and its aims and outcomes (i.e. desired ends) in reference to the findings from the research of the lessons observed in three case studies regarding the ways they were taught (i.e. actual means) and evidence of students' learning, or the lack of it (i.e. actual ends). It was found that the textbook was not very effectively used in two of the three case studies (i.e. rural and urban) because of inadequate learning opportunities in the textbook itself and the actual classroom lessons, not to mention the textbook's lack of clarity of what it aims to achieve. In the semi-urban case study, though, the inadequacies of the textbook were compensated for as a result of the teacher's and the students' contributions and, consequently, relatively effective learning with the textbook was observed taking place. The second approach

(i.e. the situational interpretation) took into consideration the views of on-site users of the textbook concerning what problems they were faced with and why. It became clearer from their discussion that the targets set out for the textbook were hard to achieve due to problems relating to the textbook itself, including its difficulty and relevance to students, and supporting conditions, including the lack of communication-oriented lessons, inadequate teacher preparation, exam-oriented atmosphere, and poor classroom conditions. There were, however, opportunities for the textbook to be used more effectively as there were positive indications of students' and teachers' abilities and willingness to use the textbook in the ways in which it was designed to be used. Lastly and very importantly, the third interpretation of the case studies (i.e. the critical approach), adopting the recently developed principles of critical applied linguistics and critical language testing, was an attempt to get to the roots of the challenges and opportunities of the textbook and thereby enable consideration of what and to what extent the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook could be understood. It was revealed that the textbook innovation was challenged by the problems relating to its creation, reception, the primacy it was granted and its neglect of the significance of its target users. Amidst the complications, though, transformations as a result of the introduction of the textbook as a leverage of change had taken place in the specific classroom contexts regarding the ways English was taught and learned, thereby raising people's awareness of the new or another possibility of English education. It was implied that the underlying problems, while not readily visible, were significantly strong in influencing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the textbook and consequently, if not thoroughly addressed, undermined the efforts of on-site users of the textbook (i.e. the students and teachers). It was important for an effective textbook innovation that stakeholders concerned should have been involved and their agendas aligned to the shared vision of what was to be achieved.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the relative worth of one of two state-sanctioned Year 10 English textbooks available for use throughout Vietnam's secondary school education sector. The *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook was the object of study in this thesis, and it was researched in three different school contexts: rural; urban; and semi-urban. The findings from the questionnaire surveys, lesson observations, and interview data of the three case studies were presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Subsequently, those findings were discussed in Chapter 8 along three dimensions: (1) the textbook and its operationalisation in the three different classrooms; (2) the students' and teachers' views of the textbook and its usage in their own specific circumstances; and (3) the textbook and its use as defined by its creation, deployment and reception. This concluding chapter will summarise the main findings of the study, evaluate its contributions and limitations, discuss its implications and suggest further research.

9.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

9.1.1 Ends-means evaluation

The ends-means evaluation of the textbook found that the textbook apparently aimed to develop students' communicative competence, yet it provided very few learning opportunities to achieve that aim. In reference to the actual lessons observed, those of the rural and urban cases were not conducive to developing students' English communication and were primarily concerned with what was needed for exams. Particularly regarding the rural case, the students were struggling with the textbook because of their limited English. As for the semi-urban case, though what took place in its classroom lessons did not necessarily mean that the students' English communication resulted from studying with the textbook, the textbook materials were broadly used in the prescribed ways and the students demonstrated

some basic English communication skills based on those materials. This achievement was possible because, apart from reasons related to the students' background and motivation, the teacher provided considerable lesson input, thereby adjusting the textbook tasks to her students' level and interests.

9.1.2 Situational evaluation

It was revealed by the situational evaluation of the textbook that despite the textbook's teachability, its effectiveness and appropriateness were constrained by challenges relating to the textbook itself and conditions needed for the classroom operationalisation of the textbook. The textbook was found to be too difficult for the rural students yet unchallenging for the urban students and was in many ways irrelevant to the needs and interests of the students in all three case studies. Also, these problems were aggravated by many factors common to all three contexts, including the lack of communication-oriented lessons; the pressure of preparing for exams that test knowledge in the form of multiple-choice test items; the inadequate classroom conditions required for communicative activities; and, importantly, the teacher preparation needed for the effective use of the textbook. Amidst a variety of problems, however, it was found that the lesson procedures recommended by the textbook were implementable as the students were willing to participate in pair and group work activities. Also, the textbook's aim to develop students' English communication stood a chance of being achieved as even the rural students were interested in learning the aural and oral skills despite being pre-occupied with language learning for exam practice.

9.1.3 Critical evaluation

It was revealed by the critical evaluation of the textbook that there were quite a number of challenges for the textbook that were rooted in its contexts of creation, deployment, and implementation. The textbook in its creation phase had to cater for an array of different aims and was held back by the textbook developers' limited expertise and the 'monopoly' of knowledge that had to be taught. Students and teachers, the key textbook

users, were peripheral players in the creation process. In relation to its usage, the textbook was used for knowledge-based exams rather than its intended use for communicative competence. It appeared that the textbook was imposed on the students regardless of its suitability and, granted primacy of place as a state-sanctioned coursebook, the textbook monopolised the presentation of knowledge. Worse, as exams emphasised the memorisation of the knowledge presented by the textbook, there was limited space in the curriculum for lesson activities leading to the achievement of the textbook's aims. In reference to its target users, it seemed that the textbook better served the agendas of stakeholders outside the classroom rather than those of the students and teachers inside the classroom; that there was no serious attempt to reconcile the discrepancies between the textbook and the contexts of use where educational activities were invariably driven and limited by context-specific conditions that were unfavourable for the achievement of the textbook's aims; and that there was apparently poor alignment of all stakeholders' agendas to realise the textbook's vision of what was to be achieved.

9.2 EVALUATION OF STUDY

9.2.1 Contributions

9.2.1.1 Methodological contributions

This study is believed to make significant methodological and theoretical contributions to the fields of textbook evaluation and textbook innovation. Regarding methodology, the study provides an innovative research design not previously seen in textbook evaluation studies. The study's research design enabled the collection of data from multiple methods, namely questionnaire survey, lesson observation and interview and from multiple perspectives, namely students, classroom teachers, head teachers and textbook writers. The results from those different research methods and sources enabled the triangulation of data that thereby provided a credible account of the textbook's effectiveness

and appropriateness. Indeed, if lesson observations (and interviews) had not been undertaken, findings based on the results of the pre-observation survey with the rural students alone would have led to very favourable conclusions about the textbook, which were not actually true.

More specifically, the study's contributions are arguably distinctive in the employment of post-lesson interviews with the teachers and the students, which provided 'fresh' accounts of the lessons before they faded in the participants' memory. These interviews provided illuminations of the discrete points of the lessons just observed rather than possibly bland, general opinions that might have been provided if the feedback had been delayed until a later point in time. While the post-lesson feedback was only obtained from a few students per class, this limitation was compensated by the survey at the end of the school visit, which drew feedback responses from all the available students of the class concerned. Notably, in the Vietnamese context, a post-observation survey like this was assumed to be more effective in seeking the students' opinions about actual lessons than group discussion. Concerning the evaluation of the textbook from multiple perspectives, this study took into consideration the views of a variety of the textbook's important stakeholders including students, classroom teachers, and head teachers as the users and textbook writers as the creators of the material. With an 'outsider-insider' dichotomy, these informants could also be seen as stakeholders from inside (i.e. the students and the classroom teachers) and from outside the classroom (i.e. the head teachers and the textbook writers). This 'democratic' representation of a variety of stakeholders permitted the multiplicity of viewpoints by which the data were better triangulated and thus made the evaluation of the textbook much more thorough.

9.2.1.2 Theoretical contributions

Apart from methodological contributions, this study has made several important theoretical contributions to textbook evaluation research and textbook development,

deployment and implementation. The most significant contribution is the use of the multi-dimensional textbook evaluation framework adapted from the Werner/Aoki framework of programme evaluation. While the ends-means approach helped to evaluate the textbook and its usage in particular contexts, the situational approach shed light on the textbook, its deployment, and its usage from the perspectives of its actual users, and the critical approach enabled an examination of the forces underlying the creation, deployment, and use of the textbook. Particularly concerning critical evaluation, a notable contribution of the study was the provision of 'critical textbook evaluation' (CTE) principles adapted from critical language testing principles, which were formulated on the basis of recent developments in applied linguistics. The CTE principles then helped to illuminate the relative worth of the textbook in its broader contexts, looking beneath the surface of the classroom operationalisation of the textbook and beyond the specific case studies and thereby revealing the undercurrents affecting the value of the textbook. Though this multi-dimensional evaluation might not be seen as being "concerned with establishing the value of materials per se" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 9), the subject of evaluation in this study is a state-prescribed textbook for secondary education that is distinctively different from 'regular' materials and thus requires an arguably more sophisticated evaluation approach. Indeed, the textbook's creation and usage were defined by a variety of underlying influences that were not readily uncovered by means of traditional evaluation approaches, and the evaluation of the textbook from three dimensions provided a more complete examination of the textbook in terms of why it was the way it was and why it was used in the way it was used.

The second important theoretical contribution of the study was that it confirmed the enormous significance of students in learning materials development. The study indicated that unless their needs and interests are adequately addressed, students as the largest group of stakeholders will gradually undermine all efforts invested to achieve the aims of the textbook.

It follows that learner-centeredness should not only be a cornerstone philosophy to adopt in teaching practices but also in the stages of materials development.

The third theoretical contribution of the study is related to teachers. It was shown in the study that despite political pressures, the teachers may not necessarily translate policy ambitions into classroom lessons. Their choices to follow the textbook or to digress from it were subject to being conditioned by many factors, of which their students' needs and interests and their own teaching background were the most important. Regarding their background, the teachers did not actively align their teaching to the aims of the new textbook unless they were convinced it was worthwhile and they were capable of undertaking it. It is evident that teacher education specifically targeting the use of textbooks should be an integral part of textbook deployment.

The last theoretical contribution of this study is its reiteration of the importance of the alignment of the agendas of all stakeholders including not just the textbook developers or teachers, towards a shared vision of the purpose of introducing a new textbook. The results of the study showed that the achievement of the textbook's aims was seriously challenged because each group of stakeholders was apparently more driven by their own agendas than interested in contributing to the completion of the common mission. It follows that for textbook innovation to be effective, there should be a clearly stated vision of what is to be achieved and specifications for the contributions of each stakeholder. In the case of the textbook writers, for instance, it is important for them to understand the constraints imposed by the education system (e.g. the pressures of exam-oriented study) and make practical reconciliations to deal with those constraints (e.g. including some of the national exam type questions in the textbook). Then, and only then, can all concerned strive for the realisation of the shared vision.

9.2.2 Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has evident limitations. Three of the most important are discussed here. The first limitation concerns the extent to which the value of the textbook and its effect on students in particular was measured. If the study had delineated what the students were able to learn from the textbook, to what extent that textbook-related learning happened, and what exactly about the textbook was actually appropriate or inappropriate to the students, the value of the textbook (or the lack of it) would have been more explicit. However, as noted in Chapters 3 and 4, such issues were not within the scope of the study. More precise measurement might have been possible in classroom observations if the researcher had been assisted by a co-researcher in the collection of this data. Indeed, a more detailed classroom observation protocol might have provided useful information to contribute to this study.

A second limitation concerns the selection of the case studies. The present study could have provided more accounts of the usage of the textbook in a greater variety of sites in terms of geographical location, type of school, and students' academic orientation if, for instance, it had extended to include classes specialising in subjects other than English and Vietnamese from a rural selective; a semi-urban regular; and an urban regular school. Nevertheless, such extension would have been beyond the scope of this thesis.

A third limitation of the study concerns the representativeness of the lessons observed and their teachers. For example, observing more than one unit of teaching per site or observing a male teacher using the textbook might have contributed further valuable understandings about the textbook in use. The selection of schools was, however, limited by factors beyond the researcher's control such as the granting (or not) of permission for conducting research at various sites.

9.3 IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

9.3.1 Textbook development

The first implication of this study is that it confirms the necessity to be focused on the students and teachers as direct users in the process of textbook development and educational practices. It was revealed by the study that despite the primacy of the textbook as the only official materials to be used in the classroom, the students and the teachers still used other materials to study with (as shown in the urban case) or chose to focus on specific areas of the textbook that served their own purposes and were within their capacity (i.e. language knowledge in the rural case) while apparently following the curriculum prescribed as 'compulsory'. For textbooks to be teachable, the feedback from students in terms of its difficulty and relevance to their needs and interests should be obtained as pre-conditions for effective learning (Judd, 1981, p. 65; Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 384; Tomlinson, 2003c, p. 18). Such invaluable information will help form the basis for the adjustments of the teaching content and methodology presented by the textbook. It is for this reason that textbook authors are urged "to give examples that relate to the students' own experiences" (Pingel, 2009, p. 14).

A second implication of the study is that it also follows that the topics, methodology, tasks and even the aims of the textbook will need to be reexamined in terms of their suitability and worthiness. If needed, it is recommended that reasonable compromises with students' needs, interests, and levels should be made so that the textbook could become more teachable and its aims could be achievable. Driven by their legitimate concerns, students and teachers will divert their learning and teaching efforts away from the mainstream curriculum if they do not find it practical or appropriate. If that happens, as it did in the rural and urban case studies, the textbook will be almost destined to fail as a coursebook.

A third implication of the study relating to textbook development is that it is necessary to mobilise textbook development expertise that can create a better textbook in relation to the

various local contexts while still being serviceable to the overall educational aims set out by the central authorities (so that it could be approved to be used as a school textbook). While publications by foreign publishers seem to be favoured by many teachers, at least in terms of the naturalness of language and linguistic accuracy (as indicated in Bao, 2008), the State is not yet prepared to sanction coursebook produced by 'outsiders' mainly for reasons related to their understanding of educational aims and culture. Some sort of collaboration of 'domestic' and international textbook developers might therefore provide a solution to bring into play the advantages yet minimise the disadvantages of each side. Among international personnel, the greatest potential would possibly involve Vietnamese scholars who have been exposed to the academic study of textbook research and have hands-on experience with different textbook projects and who, given their connections, would be able to help to mobilise the most appropriate expertise for textbook development training and textbook development.

9.3.2 Textbook deployment

Regarding textbook deployment, what is implied by this study in the first instance is that it is imperative to prepare teachers adequately prior to the introduction of textbooks for mass use. As classroom implementers of the textbook, teachers are "key players" in textbook innovation (Markee, 1997, p. 43). Indeed, as pointed out by Jolly and Bolitho (1998, p. 96), "the excellence of materials lies less in the products themselves than in appropriate and unique tuning for use that teachers might be better engaged in". Moreover, empirical research shows that teachers are key players in any attempt to promote curricular innovations (see, for instance, Carless, 2001, p. 264). The teacher preparation entails not only training teachers how to teach the new textbooks but also importantly establishing the credibility of the application of any new methodology in the textbook. This capacity-building will create deep and lasting results that even accountability and incentives are unable to achieve (Fullan, 2001, p. 220). Teacher preparation should be started at least several years prior to the introduction of new textbooks and be undertaken by the whole population of teachers.

Another implication for textbook deployment is the necessity of the provision of adequate learning resources and conditions for effective implementation. This issue will entail enormous expenditure from the already limited educational budget in contexts like that of Vietnam where problems such as large class size and the lack of furniture conducive to learner-centered education are chronic problems.

9.3.3 Textbook implementation

Regarding textbook implementation, it is implied by the study that textbook localisation and adaptation should be further strengthened. As “no published coursebooks can possibly cater for every teacher, learner, or learning situation” (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 17), teachers should be encouraged to adapt textbooks according to their particular students. This should be done not simply with a note of the possibility of textbook localisation in the Teacher Book or curriculum guide but also by means of more comprehensive measures such as the promulgation of schemes of teacher appraisal and empowerment. If appraised not according to the extent to which their teaching adheres to the prescribed textbooks, teachers will have more flexibility and can bring into play more creativity in their classroom lessons as materials adaptation is “at the heart of teaching” (Richards, 2001b, p. 16). No one else is better than the classroom teacher “in bringing the syllabus closer to the local classroom, as learners are able to voice their concern and the teacher is able to recognise and understand that concern” (Bao, 2003, p. 189). Also, if empowered to evaluate their students according to assessment guidelines, not only will teachers be freed from the pressure of teaching to exams, there will be more opportunities for them to focus on what is reasonably suggested by Savova (2009): teaching students, not textbooks.

Turning to exams, not only should tests be modified to be more congruent with what textbooks aim to achieve, they should also be decentralised. These changes will help to align teaching and learning efforts in the classroom to the achievement of the textbook’s aims and

to enhance teacher empowerment. The exams are enormous drivers of students' study and thus teachers' teaching. Freed from the pressure of teaching to centralised exams, teachers will find it easier to adapt textbooks according to the needs, interests, and the circumstances of their students. Also, student assessment to be undertaken by the classroom teacher can, due to its small scale, employ multiple assessment procedures that can not only yield better indicators of students' progress and achievement but also eliminate or reduce adverse effects for the achievement of textbooks' aims that centralised exams, mainly for testing practicalities, will otherwise create (e.g. ignoring testing communication skills).

Apart from textbook localisation and exam reformation, another implication of the study is for the permission of the concurrence of multiple textbooks and the employment of multiple teaching resources and educational media and modes. With many textbooks available to choose from, students and teachers will be more likely to select the materials that best suit their needs, interests and level. In addition, the employment of multiple educational media and modes will help to diversify the channels of input and change the 'atmospheres of learning', and teachers can cater for different learning styles and make schooling an enjoyable experience. Both these measures will subsequently enhance learning outcomes.

9.3.4 Textbook innovation

Another implication of the study is that the agendas of all stakeholders in textbook innovation should be properly aligned towards the shared vision of what is to be achieved. This alignment is necessary because successful textbook innovation is rooted in the contributions of stakeholders involved in a variety of stages and across a variety of dimensions including the creation and production of teachable textbooks, the provision of adequate teacher training and conditions for textbook classroom operationalisation, and the creation of favourable support for the fulfillment of textbooks' aims (e.g. ensuring compatibility of testing and exam practices with textbooks' aims).

Apart from teachers having a stake in the innovation process, there are other key stakeholders ranging from ministry of education officials to school principals, to name a few (Fulan 1982 as cited in Markee, 1997, p. 43). Management and state authorities in particular play a significant role in resolving implementation problems professionals are faced with. "The implementation of educational innovations, in short," Gross et al. state (1971, as cited in White, 1991, p. 143), "not only requires alterations in behaviour expected of teachers but also changes in the role performance of management". The prospect of the complexity of the situation can appear to be overwhelming as it involves numerous stakeholders, but for textbooks which are to be used across the nation and which will affect generations of students, the task must be properly addressed.

9.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study suggest that there are many areas where further research could be of great benefit. A few of these areas are suggested here. First, since it was concluded by the study that the textbook was irrelevant to the needs and interests of many students, further research might be undertaken to find out what topical content and language teaching/learning methodologies would be considered the most suitable by and for the majority of Vietnamese school-age children. Also, research might seek to address an even more fundamental question whether English communication capabilities are worthwhile aims for Vietnamese high school students. The results of such studies could form the basis for the design and development of the next generation curriculum and textbooks.

Regarding the position of primacy monopolised by state textbooks, another question that is worth investigating is whether, if multiple textbooks were permitted to be used, better learning would take place and, importantly, what socio-political implications would follow as a consequence. "The socio-political environment in which English language instruction occurs", Judd (1981, p. 59) states, "has a direct impact on the shape of ESOL instruction".

Another area for further research concerns the extent to which communicative language teaching textbooks and materials should be prescriptive. As this study indicates, despite the lack of potential for communicative activities in the textbook, relatively successful English communication happened in the semi-urban case at least partly as a result of the teacher's input and textbook adjustments. Future research might therefore pursue a study with the current study's research question inverted: With less teacher input and textbook adjustment, would a textbook offering many communicative activities be able to create the same (or even better) effect assuming that the teacher teaches the textbook as it is expected to be taught? This seemingly naïve question is in fact an interesting topic given the abundance of what Pennycook (1989, p. 610) calls "'teacher-proof' materials" by foreign publishers flooding the local market and the widespread interest in using such materials, because they offer highly communicative tasks.

Future research could also investigate and collate the views of curriculum developers, teacher trainers, school boards, and local authorities, and the central leadership. These are all important stakeholders yet their voices were not considered in the current study. Underrepresented in classroom-based research, these stakeholders tend to be blamed for the failures or inadequacies of educational innovations, so their 'stories' are worth hearing and considering, not only for the sake of textbook evaluation but also for the possibility of findings that really help substantially resolve classroom problems on a large scale.

Involving a similarly large-scale project, future research might tackle an issue that is a topic of serious concern yet appears hardly possible without ample investment in terms of time, money, and manpower: the effectiveness of the textbooks in relation to language acquisition and development. If such results are available, they would be a good basis for decision-making regarding textbook selection/adoption though admittedly they will be very sensitive information, especially for the textbook publishers. As indicated by Tomlinson (2010a, p. 1), with adequate financial support and expertise, future studies might be

undertaken with sophisticated research designs that are able to control a wide variety of variables other than textbooks (that affect students' learning), such as: the quality of teaching, the rapport between the teacher and the class, the exposure to the target language the students gained outside the textbooks, etc.

Lastly, future research could investigate and evaluate the other state-sanctioned Year 10 English textbook used throughout Vietnam's secondary school system, in a study comparable to that presented in this thesis.

9.5 CONCLUSION

9.5.1 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has summarised the main findings of the thesis and subsequently evaluated the study in terms of its contributions and limitations. Also, the implications of this study for textbook innovation as a whole and for its various stages have been discussed. The chapter has also offered a few suggestions for future research.

9.5.2 Thesis conclusion

This research project has shown that despite some success, the achievement of the *English 10 – Intensive Programme* textbook's apparent aims was challenged by many factors, including its limited learning opportunities, its difficulty (overwhelming for rural yet unchallenging for urban students) and, to a lesser extent, its relevance to students' interests and needs (applicable to all three case studies). Also having an unfavourable effect on the textbook to varying degrees in the three contexts were the unavailability of communication-oriented lessons and poor classroom conditions, the forces of knowledge-oriented of exams and inadequacies of teacher preparation for the textbook deployment. Importantly, the textbook's effectiveness and appropriateness were found to have been adversely affected by factors rooted in its creation, deployment and implementation relating to underlying socio-political, educational and cultural forces. It was implied that textbook modification, ample

classroom resources, assessment reformation, and even teacher preparation were necessary but not sufficient on their own to meet the policy ambitions for the new textbook. Also essential is the need to align the agendas of all stakeholders concerned towards one key point of convergence: the service of on-site textbook users' needs, interests and circumstances.

REFERENCES

Adelman, C., Jenkins, D., & Kemmis, S. (1976). Rethinking case study: Notes from the second Cambridge conference. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 6*(3), 139-150.

Allwright, D. & Bailey, K. M. (1994). *Focus on the language classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aoki, T. T. (1984). Interests, knowledge and evaluation: Alternative curriculum evaluation orientations. In T. T. Aoki (Ed.), *Curriculum in a new key*. Edmonton: Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

Aoki, T. T. (1989). Toward curriculum inquiry in a new key [Occasional Paper No. 2 (revised)]. *Curriculum praxis* [Monograph Series]. Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Aoki, T. T. (2005). Interests, knowledge and evaluation: Alternative approaches to curriculum evaluation (1986/1989). In W. Pinar & R. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 137-150). Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Atkinson, D., Brown, J. D., Canagarajah, S., Davis, K., Duff, P. A., Harklau, L., et al. (2003). Some guidelines for conducting quantitative and qualitative research in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly, 37*(1), 157-168.

Azizifar, A., Koosha, M., & Lotfi, A. (2010). An analytical evaluation of Iranian high school ELT textbooks from 1970 to present. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 3*(2010), 36-44.

Bao Anh. (2008a, May 2). Danh gia CT, SGK: Xau nhat thi phai do ra viet lai [Evaluating the curricula and textbooks: They would have to be dismantled and rewritten at worst]. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved May 3, 2008, from http://vnn.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2008/05/781045/

Bao Anh. (2008b, May 12). Giao duc chi tinh den loi ich nha nuoc [Education caters for the benefits of the State only]. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved June 3, 2008, from http://www2.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2008/05/782669/

Bao Anh. (2008c, May 16, 2008). Danh gia chuong trinh, sach giao khoa: Phai co nguoi phan xet cuoi cung [Evaluating textbooks: Finalist judges are needed]. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved December 22, 2008, from http://www2.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2008/05/783436/

Bao, D. (2003). Localising ELT materials in Vietnam: A case study. In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in language teaching*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Bao, D. (2007). Enhancing the language learning process for reticent learners of Vietnamese and of English in Vietnam. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Language acquisition and development: Studies of learners of first and other languages* (pp. 205-224). Great Britain: Continuum.

Bao, D. (2008). ELT materials used in Southeast Asia. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *English language learning materials: A critical review* (pp. 263-280). Great Britain: Continuum.

Bassey, M. (1981). Pedagogic research: On the relative merits of search for generalization and study of single events. *Oxford Review of Education, 7*(1), 73-93.

Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bell, J., & Gower, R. (1998). Writing course materials for the world: A great compromise. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 116-129). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloch, C. (2002). *Concepts of early childhood development (ECD), literacy learning and materials development in multilingual settings.* Cape Town, South Africa: PRAESA.

Bock, G. (2000). Difficulties in implementing communicative theory in Vietnam. *Teacher's Edition, 2*(March), 24-30.

Breen, M. (1989). The evaluation cycle for language learning tasks. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Breen, M. P., & Candlin, C. (1987). Which materials?: A consumer's and designer's guide. In L. E. Sheldon (Ed.), *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development* (Vol. ELT Document 126, pp. 13-28). London: Modern English Publications and The British Council.

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bruthiaux, P. (2008). Language education, economic development and participation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 11*(2), 134-148.

Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods* (4 ed.). Malaysia: SAGE.

Byrd, P. (1994). Writing grammar textbooks: Theory and practice. *System, 22*(2), 245-255.

Carless, D. R. (2001). A case study of curriculum implementation in Hong Kong. In D. Hall & A. Hewings (Eds.), *Innovation in English language teaching* (pp. 263-274). New York: Routledge.

Chandran, S. (2003). Where are the textbooks? In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in language teaching* (pp. 161-169). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Chow, Y. W. F. (2004). *Teacher and learner perceptions of ELT textbooks in Hong Kong secondary schools* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Leicester, Leicester.

Chuc Thanh. (2011, June 8). Doi moi chuong trinh SGK sau nam 2015 the hien tinh than doi moi can ban va toan dien giao duc [The textbook revision following 2015 to undergo substantial and comprehensive educational renovations]. *Giao duc Va Thoi Dai*. Retrieved June 9, 2011, from http://www.gdtd.vn/channel/3361/

Chung, T. Q. (2008). *Evaluation of the textbook "Tieng Anh 6" using teachers' perception and implication for textbook design in relation to the curriculum* (Unpublished master's thesis). Curtin University of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City.

CPV Central Executive Committee. (2001a). *Bao cao chinh tri cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang khoa VIII tai Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IV cua Dang* [The political report by the 8th CPV Central Executive Committee to the 9th CPV Congress]. Hanoi: 8th CPV Central Executive Committee.

CPV Central Executive Committee. (2001b). *Chien luoc phat trien kinh te-xa hoi 2001-2010 (Bao cao cua Ban Chap hanh Trung uong Dang khoa VIII tai Dai hoi dai bieu toan quoc lan thu IV cua Dang)* [Socio-economic strategies for the Years 2001-2010

(Report by the 8th CPV Central Executive Committee to the 9th CPV Congress)]. Hanoi: 8th CPV Central Executive Committee.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Critical psychology (2011). In *Wikipedia – the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_psychology

Critical psychology (n.d.). In P. M. Parker (Eds.), *Webster's online dictionary with multilingual thesaurus translation*. Retrieved from http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/critical?cx=partner-pub-0939450753529744%3Av0qd01-tdlq&cof=FORID%3A9&ie=UTF-8&q=critical&sa=Search#922

Cunningsworth, A. (1984). *Evaluating and selecting EFL teaching materials*. London: Heinemann.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Dang, T. V. A. (2006). *The evaluation of "Tieng Anh 10": Its suitability for students in Mac Dinh Chi High School* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Social Sciences and Humanities of Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City.

Dang, V. H. (2006). Learner-centeredness and EFL instruction in Vietnam: A case study. *International Education Journal, 7*(4), 598-610.

Daoud, A., & Celce-Murcia, M. (1979). Selecting and evaluating textbooks. In M. Celce-Murcia & L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

Dave, R. H. (1970). *Preparation and evaluation of textbooks in English: Principles and procedures*. New Delhi: NCERT.

Davison, W. F. (1976). Factors in evaluating and selecting texts for the foreign language classroom. *ELT Journal, 30*(4), 310-314.

Dimmock, C. (2000). *Designing the learning-centred school: A cross-cultural perspective*. London: Falmer Press.

Do, H. T. (1999, October 13-15). *Foreign language education policy in Vietnam: The emergence of English and its impact on higher education.* Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi.

Do, H. T. (2006, September 14-16). *The role of English in Vietnam's foreign language policy: A brief history.* Paper presented at the English Australia Conference, Perth.

Doan, H. D. (2005). Moral education or political education in the Vietnamese educational system? *Journal of Moral Education, 34*(4), 451-463.

Donovan, P. (1998). Piloting: A publisher's view. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 149-189). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dougill, J. (1987). Not so obvious. In L. E. Sheldon (Ed.), *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development* (Vol. ELT Documents 126, pp. 29-36). London: Modern English Publications and The British Council.

Dubin, F., & Olshtan, E. (1990). *Course design: Developing programs and materials for language learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Duiker, W. J. (1995). *Vietnam: Revolution in transition* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Westview.

Education Law, *Luat giao duc* [Education Law], 38/2005/QH11 (2005).

Ellis, R. (1997). The empirical evaluation of language teaching materials. *ELT Journal, 51*(1), 36-42.

Ellis, R. (1998). The evaluation of communicative tasks. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 217-238). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2004). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Farrell, J. P. (2003). Textbooks: Overview. In J. W. Guthrie (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of education* (2nd ed., Vol. 7, pp. 2551-2554). New York: Macmillan Reference USA.

Finch, C. R., & Crunkilton, J. R. (1989). *Curriculum development in vocational and technical education: Planning, content, and implementation* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Gabrielatos, C. (1994). *Materials evaluation and adaptation: A case study of pronunciation teaching: The treatment of pronunciation in "The New Cambridge English Course, Vol. 1"* (Unpublished essay). Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics, Cambridge.

Gabrielatos, C. (2006, July 1-4, 2006). *Corpus-based evaluation of pedagogical materials: "If" conditionals in ELT coursebooks and the BNC.* Paper presented at the 7th Teaching and Language Corpora Conference, Paris.

Gonzalez, A. (2003). ESL materials for Philippine use in primary and secondary schools. In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in language teaching: Current perceptions and practices and their implications* (pp. 125-141). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Goodlad, J. I. (1979). *Curriculum inquiry.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book, Co.

Government Directive 459/CP-KG, *Cong van cua Chinh phu so 459/CP-KG ngay 29 thang 4 nam 2002 ve trien khai chuong trinh giao duc pho thong moi* [Government Directive 459/CP-KG (dated April 29, 2002) regarding the implementation of the new secondary education curricula], 459/CP-KG. (2002).

Grant, N. (1989). *Making the most of your textbook*. New York: Longman.

Gregory, E. (1994). *The appropriateness of the communicative approach in Vietnam: An interview study in intercultural communication* (Unpublished master's thesis). La Trobe University, Bundoora.

Guba, E. G., & Yvonna, S. L. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Guide on Graduation Exam Review: *Huong dan on tap tot nghiep THPT nam 2009* [Guide on the review for the secondary education graduation exams 2009], 2553/BGĐT-GDTrH. (2009).

Ha Anh. (2008, April 2). Can cham dut lam sach giao khoa kieu "mat tran" [Necessary to stop creating textbooks by 'representativeness']. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved July 14, 2009, from http://www.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2008/04/776323/

Ha Huong. (September 24, 2009). Khuyen hoc phai tro thanh truyen thong cua moi gia dinh Viet [Study promotion is to become a tradition of each Vietnamese family]. *Tuoi Tre*.

Retrieved December 1, 2009, from http://www.tuoitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=338742&ChannelID=13

Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and human interest*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hall, D. (1995). Materials production: Theory and practice. In A. C. Hidalgo, D. Hall & G. M. Jacobs (Eds.), *Getting started: Materials writers on materials writing* (pp. 8-24). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Harlen, W. (1977). Evaluation at the stage of large-scale implementation. In A. Lewy (Ed.), *Handbook of curriculum development* (pp. 117-149). New York: Longman Inc.

Harwood, N. (Ed.). (2010). *English language teaching materials: Theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hasan, R. (1989). *Linguistics, language, and verbal art.* Burwood, Victoria: Deakin University.

Hasan, A., & Esmat, B. (2002). Universal characteristics of EFL/ESL textbooks: A step towards systematic textbook evaluation. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *8*(2). Retrieved September 30, 2011 from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Ansary-Textbooks/

Hidalgo, A. C., Hall, D., & Jacobs, G. M. (Eds.). (1995). *Getting started: Materials writers on materials writing*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Hoang, V. V., Nguyen, T. C., & Hoang, T. X. H. (2006). *Doi moi phuong phap day Tieng Anh o Trung hoc pho thong Viet Nam* [Innovations for English teaching methodology in Vietnamese upper secondary education]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Hornby, A. S. (Ed.) (2005). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hutchinson, T. (1987). What's underneath?: An interactive view of materials evaluation. In L. E. Sheldon (Ed.), *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development* (Vol. ELT Document 126, pp. 37-44). London: Modern English Publications and The British Council.

Hutchinson, T., & Walters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centred approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming. (2006a). *Chuong trinh giao duc pho thong – cap Trung hoc pho thong* [Secondary education curriculum – senior level]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming. (2006b). *Chuong trinh giao duc pho thong – mon Tieng Anh* [Secondary education curriculum – the English subject]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Jacobs, C. (2000). The evaluation of educational innovation. *Evaluation*, *6*(3), 261-280.

Jamieson, N. L. (1993). *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jazadi, I. (2003). Mandated English teaching materials and their implications to teaching and learning: The case of Indonesia. In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in language teaching* (pp. 142-160). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Jolly, D., & Bolitho, R. (1998). A framework for materials writing. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Judd, E. L. (1981). Language policy, curriculum development, and TESOL instruction: A search for compatibility. *TESOL Quarterly, 15*(1), 59-65.

Karavas-Doukas, K. (1998). Evaluating the implementation of educational innovations: Lessons from the past. In P. Rea-Dickins & K. P. Germaine (Eds.), *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges* (pp. 25-50). Malaysia: Longman.

Kiely, R., & Rea-Dickins, P. (2005). *Program evaluation in language education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kieu Oanh. (2006, April 13). 16.000 ti dong de thanh nien Viet Nam thao ngoai ngu nam 2020 [VND16,000 billion is needed for Vietnamese young people to have been proficient in foreign languages by 2020]. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from http://www.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2006/04/559864/

Kirkgöz, Y. (2009). Evaluating the English textbooks for young learners of English at Turkish primary education. *Procedia Social and Behaviorial Sciences, 1*(2009), 79-83.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2002). ASEAN and Asian cultures and models: Implications for the ELT curriculum and for teacher selection. In A. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *Englishes in Asia: Communication, identity, power and education* (pp. 213-224). Melbourne: Language Australia Ltd.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). Setting attainable and appropriate English language targets in multilingual settings: A case for Hong Kong. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 17*(3), 366-391.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). English as an Asian lingua franca and the multilingual model of ELT. *Language Teaching, 44*(2), 212–224.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Le, V. C., & Barnard, R. (2009). Curricular innovation behind closed classroom doors: A Vietnamese case study. *Prospect, 24*(2), 20-33.

Lee, K.-Y. (2009). Treating culture: What 11 high school EFL conversation textbooks in South Korea do. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 8*(1), 76-96.

List of Minimum Teaching Equipment, *Danh muc thiet bi day hoc toi thieu cap Trung hoc pho thong – mon tieng Anh – kem theo Thong tu so 01/2010/TT-BGDĐT ngay 18/01/2010 cua Bo truong Bo GDDT* [List of minimum teaching equipment for upper secondary education – the English subject – an appendix to Circular No. 01/2010/TT-BGDĐT promulgated 18/01/2010 by the Minister of Education and Training]. (2010).

Littlejohn, A. (1992). *Why are English language teaching materials the way they are?* (Doctoral dissertation, Lancaster University). Retrieved from http://www.andrewlittlejohn.net/website/books/Littlejohn%20phd%20chapter%201.pdf

Littlejohn, A. (1998). The analysis of language teaching materials: Inside the Trojan Horse. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Litz, D. R. A. (2005). *Textbook evaluation and ELT management: A South Korean case study*. UAE University Al Ain, UAE. Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Litz_thesis.pdf

Luong, H. V. (2003). Postwar Vietnamese society: An overview of transformational dynamics. In H. V. Luong (Ed.), *Postwar Vietnam: Dynamics of a transforming society* (pp. 1-26). New York: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore & Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Luu, T. T. (2010). Infusing cooperative learning into an EFL classroom. *English Language Teaching, 3*(2), 64-77.

Lynch, B. K. (2001). Rethinking assessment from a critical perspective. *Language Testing, 18*(4), 351–372.

Lyons, P. (2003). A practical writing experience of institutional textbook writing: Product/process implications for materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching* (pp. 490-504). New York: Continuum.

Ma, L. P. F. (2010). *Native and non-native English speaking teachers in Hong Kong: Strengths, weaknesses, perceived and actual teaching behaviour* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Macquarie University, Sydney.

Markee, N. (1997). *Managing curricular innovation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCormic, R., & James, M. (1983). *Curriculum evaluation in schools*. London: Croom Helm.

McDonough, J., & Shaw, C. (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

Miekley, J. (2005). ELT textbook evaluation checklist. *The Reading Matrix, 5*(2). Retrieved from September 21, 2008 from http://www.readingmatrix.com/reading_projects/miekley/project.pdf

Ministry of Education and Training. (2008). *Bao cao ket qua danh gia chuong trinh giao duc va sach giao khoa pho thong nam 2008* [Report on the evaluation of the educational programs and textbooks for secondary education], Document No. 146/BC-BGDĐT. Retrieved May 19, 2009 from http://vanban.moet.gov.vn/?page=1.15&script=viewdoc&view=351&opt=brpage

Ministry of Education and Training. (2011). *De thi va dap an* [Exam questions and answer keys]. Retrieved from http://thi.moet.gov.vn/

MOET Announcement 254/TB-BGDDT, *Thong bao ve viec lay y kien gop y ve chuong trinh giao duc va sach giao khoa pho thong qua dien dan mang giao duc EduNet* [Announcement of the survey for opinions on the secondary education curricula and textbooks via the EduNet forum]. Retrieved October 14, 2008 from http://www.thuvienphapluat.vn/default.aspx?ct=vc&nid=67890&oid=43E7EF008&m=1&nb=0

MOET 2008 Curricular Distribution Guidelines, *Tai lieu phan phoi chuong trinh THPT – mon Tieng Anh (Dung cho co quan quan li giao duc va giao vien, ap dung tu nam hoc 2008-2009)* [Guidelines on the distribution of the senior secondary education curriculum – the English subject (To be used for educational management bodies and teachers, in effect from School year 2008-2009)]. Retrieved January 10, 2009 from http://moet.gov.vn/?page=1.30&view=1556

MOET Directive Document 2093/BGDDT-GDTrH, *Danh gia chuong trinh va sach giao khoa pho thong* [Evaluating the secondary education curricula and textbooks]. Retrieved January 15, 2009 from http://www.gdtd.com.vn/index.htm

MOET Directive Document 6631/BGDĐT-GDTrH, *Su dung SGK pho thong va tai lieu giang day hoc tap* [Use of general education textbooks and teaching and learning materials], 6631/BGDĐT-GDTrH. (2008).

'Monopolising' textbook creation, Xung quanh van de 'doc quyen' lam sach giao khoa [Regarding the question of 'monopolising' textbook creation]. (2006). In H. D. Nguyen, T. T. Nguyen & T. T. Hoang (Eds.), *Xa Hoi Voi Sach Giao Khoa* [Society towards textbooks] (Vol. 3, pp. 87-90). Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Muhigirwa, & K., B. (2005). *Integration of English learning strategies and social justice education in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Content analysis of a textbook series* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of San Francisco, San Francisco.

Murphy, D. (1993). Developing theory and practice in evaluation. In P. Rea-Dickins & A. F. Lwaitama (Eds.), *Evaluation for development in English language teaching* (pp. 10-28). Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Limited.

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition. (1996). *Country education profiles: Vietnam – a comparative study* (2nd ed.). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Neuman, W. L. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nguyen, A. N. (Ed.). (2009). *Cau truc de thi mon ngu van, lich su, dia li, ngoai ngu – dung de on thi tot nghiep THPT va thi tuyen sinh dai hoc, cao dang 2009* [The formats of examinations in Vietnamese, history, geography, and foreign languages – to be used to prepare for the 2009 high school graduation and tertiary admission exams]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Nguyen, B., & Crabbe, D. (1999). *The design and use of English language textbooks in Vietnamese secondary schools.* Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi.

Nguyen, D. H. (2007). *Viet Nam huong den nen giao duc hien dai* [Vietnam orients itself to modern education]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Nguyen, H. C. (2007). Teaching and learning of foreign languages in Vietnam: The current situation and some solutions. *Social Sciences Information Review, 1*(1), 43-52.

Nguyen, H. C., Hoang, T. X. H., Vu, T. L., Do, T. M., & Hoang, V. V. (2007). *Nhung van de chung ve doi moi giao duc Trung hoc pho thong – mon Tieng Anh* [General issues in the renovation of upper secondary education – the English subject]. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Nguyen, H. D., Nguyen, T. T., & Hoang, T. T. (Eds.). (2006). *Xa hoi voi sach giao khoa* [Society towards textbooks] (Vol. 3). Hanoi: Educational Publishing House.

Nguyen, H. T. (2006, May 7). 'De an mot ngoai ngu': Thut lui 50 nam? ['The one-foreign-language project: A 50-year set-back?]. *Tin Nhanh Viet Nam*. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from http://www3.vietnamnet.vn/giaoduc/2006/05/568021/

Nguyen, K. P. (2006). Quanh mot nhan dinh va mot chu truong ve xuat ban sach giao khoa [Regarding an opinion and a policy on textbook publication]. In H. D. Nguyen, T. T. Nguyen & T. T. Hoang (Eds.), *Xa Hoi Voi Sach Giao Khoa* [Society towards textbooks] (Vol. 3, pp. 90-95). Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

Nguyen, L. (2006). *Viet Nam's education in the transitional period*. Paper presented at the 28th Human Resources Development, Ho Chi Minh City.

Nguyen, N. H. (2008, May 5). Nen co nhieu bo sach giao khoa [There should be multiple sets of textbooks]. *Tuoi Tre*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from http://tuoitre.vn/Ban-doc/255939/Nen-co-nhieu-bo-sach-giao-khoa.html

Nguyen, T. G. (2006). *Chinh sach ngon ngu o Viet Nam qua cac thoi ki lich su* [Vietnam's language policies through historical stages]. Hanoi: Institute of Language Studies.

Nguyen, T. H. A. (2002). Cultural effects on learning and teaching English in Vietnam. *The Language Teacher*, *26*(1), 2-10.

Nguyen, T. M. H., & Nguyen, Q. T. (2007). Teaching English in Vietnamese primary schools. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *8*(2), 162-173.

Nguyen, T. T. M. (2007). *Textbook evaluation: The case of English textbooks currently in use in Vietnam's upper-secondary schools* (Unpublished research report). SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore.

Nguyen, X. T. (1994). Education in Vietnam: An overview. In X. T. Nguyen (Ed.), *Vietnamese studies in a multicultural world* (pp. 230-252). Melbourne: Vietnamese Language & Culture Publications.

Norris, N. (1993). *Understanding educational evaluation*. London: Kogan Page.

Nunan, D. (1991). *The learner-centred curriculum: A study in second language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, *37*(4), 25.

Opuku-Amankwa, K. (2010). Textbooks and literacy development in a multilingual school in Ghana. In B. Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Ed.). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice* (pp. 305-317). New York: Continuum.

Park, H. (2010). Process drama in the Korean EFL secondary classroom: A case study of Korean middle school classrooms. In B. Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Ed.). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice* (pp. 155-171). New York: Continuum.

Parlett, M., & Hamilton, D. (1972). *Evaluation as illumination: A new approach to the study of innovatory programmes* (Unpublished Occasional Paper No. 9). Centre for Research in the Educational Sciences, Edinburgh.

Pennycook, A. (1989). The concept of method, interested knowledge, and the politics of language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *23*(4), 589-618.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language.* Singapore: Longman.

Pennycook, A. (1999). Introduction: Critical approaches to TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(3), 329-348.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Pham, H. D., & Nguyen, T. C. (1998). Vietnam. In D. H. Brooks & M. Thant (Eds.), *Social sector issues in transitional economies of Asia* (pp. 283-335). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Pham, H. H. (2005). "Imported" communicative language teaching: Implications for local teachers. *English Teaching Forum, 43*(4), 2-9.

Pham, H. H. (2007). Communicative language teaching: Unity within diversity. *ELT Journal, 61*(3), 193-201.

Pham, M. H. (2002). *Vietnam's education on the threshold of the 21st century*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.

Phan, T. (2009, September 25). Chuong trinh–sach giao khoa THPT: Can danh gia lai [Upper secondary education curricula and textbooks: Evaluation is needed]. *Sai Gon Giai Phong*. Retrieved October 11, 2009, from http://www.sggp.org.vn/giaoduc/2009/9/203689/#

Pingel, F. (2010). *UNESCO guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision* (2nd ed.). Braunschweig: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research.

Polanyi, M. (1964). *Science, faith and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 14/2001/CT-TTg, *Doi moi chuong trinh giao duc pho thong – thuc hien nghi quyet so 40/2000/QH10 cua Quoc hoi* [Renovating the secondary education curricula – implementing the National Assembly's Resolution 40/2000/QH10], 14/2001/CT-TTg. (2001).

Prime Minister's Executive Order No. 422-TTG, *Tang cuong boi duong ngoai ngu cho can bo quan li va cong chuc nha nuoc* [Strengthening foreign language education for managerial cadres and public servants], 422-TTG. (1994).

Pryor, S. (2010). The development and trialling of materials for second language instruction: A case study. In B. Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Ed.). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice* (pp. 207-203). New York: Continuum.

Rea-Dickins, P. (1995). Introduction. In P. Rea-Dickins & A. F. Lwaitama (Eds.), *Evaluation for development in English language teaching*. Hong Kong: Modern English Publications and the British Council.

Rea-Dickins, P., & Germaine, K. (1992). *Evaluation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rea-Dickins, P., & Germaine, K. (2001). Purposes for evaluation. In D. Hall & A. Hewings (Eds.), *Innovation in English language teaching* (pp. 253-262). New York: Routledge.

Rea-Dickins, P., & Germaine, K. P. (1998). The price of everything and the value of nothing: Trends in language program evaluation. In P. Rea-Dickins & K. P. Germaine (Eds.), *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges* (pp. 3-50). Malaysia: Longman.

Regulations for the upper secondary education graduation examinations, *Quy che thi tot nghiep trung hoc pho thong – Ban hanh kem quyet dinh so 08/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT ngay 06 thang 3 nam 2008 cua Bo truong Bo GDDT* [Regulations for the upper secondary education graduation examinations – Auxiliary Document to Decision No. 08/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT promulgated March 6 2008 by the Minister of Education and Training]. (2008).

Riazi, M. A. (2003). What do textbook evaluation schemes tell us? A study of the textbook evaluation schemes of three decades. In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and*

materials design in language teaching. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Richards, J. C. (2001a). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C. (2001b). The role of textbooks in a language program. *Guidelines, 23*(2), 12-16.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. C. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Roberts, J. T. (1996). Demystifying materials evaluation. *System, 24*(3), 375-389.

Sahragard, R., Rahimi, A., & Zaremoayyedi, I. (2009). An in-depth evaluation of "Interchange" series (3rd edition). *Porta Linguarium, 13*(2010), 55-74.

Salomon, M., & Vu, D. K. (2007). *Đổi mới*, education and identity formation in contemporary Vietnam. *Compare, 37*(3), 345-363.

Sanders, J., Alexander, R., Baker, R., Berger, M., Bader, B., Blank, R., et al. (1994). *The program evaluation standards* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

SarDesai, D. R. (2001). Vietnam. In R. Marlow-Ferguson (Ed.), *World education encyclopedia* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1550-1564). Detroit: Gale.

Savova, L. (2009). Textbook use as part of the ESOL classroom ecosystem: Teaching the students, not the book. In L. Savova (Ed.), *Using textbooks effectively (TESOL classroom practice)*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

Scarion, A., MacKay, D., & Clark, J. (1988). *Evaluation, curriculum, renewal, and teacher development*. Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre.

Scholz, R. W., & Tietje, O. (2002). *Embedded case study methods: Integrating quantitative and qualitative knowledge*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Scriven, M. (Ed.) (1991). *Evaluation thesaurus* (4th ed.). Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.

Scriven, M. (1993). *Hard-won lessons in program evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Pass Publishers.

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Leviton, L. C. (1991). *Foundations of program evaluation*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Shapiro, L. A. (1995). *English language training in Vietnam in the era of* doi moi (Unpublished master's thesis). School for International Training, Brattleboro.

Sheldon, L. E. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal, 42*(4), 237-246.

Shohamy, E. (1998). Critical language testing and beyond. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 24*(4), 331-345.

Shohamy, E. (2001). *The power of tests: A critical perspective on the uses of language tests.* Singapore: Pearson Education.

Short, E. (1980, February 13). *Ideas from ten North American curriculum thinkers*. Paper presented at the Curriculum Theory Conference, Caracas, Venezuela.

Skierso, A. (1991). Textbook selection and evaluation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 432-453). Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

Spada, N., & Frohlich, M. (1995). *COLT – communicative orientation of language teaching observation scheme: Coding conventions and applications.* Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.

SRV Constitution 1992 – Amended 2001, *Hien phap nuoc Cong hoa Xa hoi Chu nghia Viet Nam 1992 – sua doi nam 2001* [The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992 – Amended 2001]. (2001).

SRV National Assembly Resolution No. 40/2000/QH10, *Doi moi chuong trinh giao duc pho thong* [Renovating the general education curriculum], 40/2000/QH10. (2000).

Stake, R. E. (1991). Responsive evaluation and qualitative methods. In W. R. Shadish, T. D. Cook & L. C. Leviton (Eds.), *Foundations of program evaluation* (pp. 270-314). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Thanh Chau. (2011, March 16). On thi tot nghiep 2011: Tai lieu la sach giao khoa [For the review for the 2011 graduation exam: The materials needed are textbooks]. *Bao Moi*. Retrieved May 12, 2011, from http://www.baomoi.com/On-thi-tot-nghiep-2011-Tai-lieu-la-sach-giao-khoa/59/5878428.epi

Thanh Ha. (2009, November 20). Quan trong nhat la long yeu nghe [Professional dedication is the most important point]. *Tuoi Tre*. Retrieved November 21, 2009, from http://tuoitre.vn/Tuoi-tre-cuoi-tuan/Tuoi-tre-cuoi-tuan/348836/Quan-trong-nhat-la-long-yeu-nghe.html

Tickoo, M. L. (1995). Materials for a state-level system: A retrospective record. In A. C. Hidalgo, D. Hall & G. M. Jacobs (Eds.), *Getting started: Materials writers on materials writing* (pp. 31-44). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Tok, H. (2010). TEFL textbook evaluation: From teachers' perspectives. *Educational Research and Review, 5*(9), 508-517.

Tomlinson, B. (1990). Managing change in Indonesian high schools. *ELT Journal, 44*(11), 25-37.

Tomlinson, B. (1998). Affect and the coursebook. *IATEFL Issues, 145*, 20-21.

Tomlinson, B. (1999). Developing criteria for materials development. *IATEFL Issues, 147*, 10-13.

Tomlinson, B. (2003a). Humanizing the coursebook. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching* (pp. 162-173). New York: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (2003b). Humanising the coursebook. In W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology and materials design in language teaching* (pp. 12-29). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Tomlinson, B. (2003c). Materials evaluation. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching* (pp. 15-36). New York: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (2003d). Preface. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching* (pp. ix-x). New York: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (Ed.). (2008). *English language learning materials: A critical review*. Great Britain: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B., & Bao, D. (2004). The contributions of Vietnamese learners of English to ELT methodology. *Language Teaching Research, 8*(2), 199-222.

Tomlinson, B., Bao, D., Masuhara, H., & Rubdy, R. (2001). EFL courses for adults. *ELT Journal, 55*(1).

Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2004). *Developing language course materials*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Tomlinson, B. (2010). Principles of effective materials development. In N. Harwood (Ed.). *English language teaching materials: Theory and practice* (pp. 81-108). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2010a). Published research on materials development for language teaching. In B. Tomlinson & H. Masuhara (Ed.). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice* (pp. 1-18). New York: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (Eds.). (2010b). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for best practice.* New York: Continuum.

Ton, N. N. H., & Pham, H. H. (2010). Vietnamese teachers' and students' perceptions of global English. *Language Education in Asia, 1*(1), 48-61.

Tong cuc Thong ke [General Statistics Office]. (2011a). *Dan so trung binh phan theo dia phuong. Dan so 2000-2009 dieu chinh theo Tong dieu tra dan so va nha o 01/04/2009* [Population average by location. Populations through the Years 2000-2009 as adjusted according to the Census at April 1, 2009]. Retrieved September 21, 2011, from http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=387&idmid=3&ItemID=11503

Tong cuc Thong ke [General Statistics Office]. (2011b). *So giao vien va hoc sinh pho thong tai thoi diem 31/12* [The numbers of general education teachers and students at December 31st]. Retrieved September 24, 2011, from http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=395&idmid=3&ItemID=11417

Tran, H. H. (1999, October 13-15). *The challenges for Vietnamese students living and studying in Australia.* Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi.

Tran, K., & Nguyen, H. C. (2000). Education in Vietnam. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education, 1*(1), 219-241.

Tran, X. T. (1991, March 30 & April 1). *An investigation of how new language is introduced to learners of English in Vietnam.* Paper presented at the Language Education: Interaction & Development Conference, Ho Chi Minh City.

Trinh, V. H. (2008, September 13). Phai thay doi viec bien soan sach giao khoa [The writing of textbooks must be altered]. *Tuoi Tre*. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from http://www.tuoitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=278133&ChannelID=119

Trinh, V. H. (2009, April 11). Nhieu bo sach giao khoa, nhieu su lua chon [Multiple sets of textbooks, multiple options]. *Tuoi Tre*. Retrieved May 12, 2009, from http://www.tuoitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=310624&ChannelID=13

Tu Anh, Mai, V. P., Phan, H., Huynh, D. H., Huynh, T. K. H., Vu, T. L., et al. (2008). *Tieng Anh 10 – Nang cao (Sach Hoc sinh) [English 10 – Intensive Programme (Student Book)]*. Ho Chi Minh City: Education Publishing House.

Tu Anh, Mai, V. P., Phan, H., Huynh, T. K. H., Vu, T. L., & Luong, T. L. (2006). *Tieng Anh 10 – Nang cao (Sach Giao vien) [English 10 – Intensive Programme (Teacher Book)]*. Ho Chi Minh City: Education Publishing House.

Tucker, C. A. (1975). Evaluating beginning textbooks. *English Teaching Forum, 13*, 355-361.

Tue Nguyen. (2010, January 21). De thi se bam sat sach giao khoa [The exams will adhere to the textbooks]. *Thanhnien Online*. Retrieved May 12, 2011, from http://www.thanhnien.com.vn/Pages/20100121/de-thi-se-bam-sat-sach-giao-khoa.aspx

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Viet Lan, & Hien Vy. (2008, May 08). Danh gia lai chuong trinh–sach giao khoa: Mot hay nhieu bo sach giao khoa? [Evaluating the curricula and textbooks: One or multiple textbook sets?]. *Sai Gon Giai phong*. Retrieved June 3, 2008, from http://www.sggp.org.vn/giaoduc/2008/5/151641/

Vu, Q. H. (2009, July 12). Thieu nguon giao vien Tieng Anh [Lack of English teachers]. *Lao Dong Cuoi Tuan*. Retrieved October 8, 2009, from http://www.laodong.com.vn/Home/Thieu-nguon-giao-vien-tieng-Anh/20097/146392.laodong

Vu, T. P. A. (2007). *Hoc tieng Anh 10 nam trong truong van khong su dung duoc: Dau la nguyen nhan va co chang mot giai phap?* [Ten years studying English in schools and still being unable to use it: What are the causes and is there a solution?]. Ho Chi Minh City: Center for Testing and Assessment of Training Quality.

Vu, T. P. A., Nguyen, B. H., Nguyen, T. T. H., Nguyen, T. N. M., Nguyen, T. K. T., Tran, H. N. T., et al. (2004). *Danh gia hieu qua dao tao tieng Anh nhu mot ngoai ngu tai cac truong dai hoc tren dia ban TP. Ho Chi Minh* [An evaluation of the effectiveness of EFL teaching at universities and colleges located in Ho Chi Minh City] (Unpublished research report). Service of Science & Technology of Ho Chi Minh City: Ho Chi Minh City.

Vuong, G. T. (1980). *Getting to know the Vietnamese and their culture*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.

Vuong Ha, & The Uyen. (2008, May 08). Quy trinh viet SGK cua chung ta la qui trinh nguoc [Our textbook writing process was wrong way round]. *Lao Dong*. Retrieved October 9, 2009, from http://www.laodong.com.vn/Home/Quy-trinh-viet-SGK-cua-chung-ta-la-quy-trinh-nguoc/20085/87608.laodong

Wall, D., & Alderson, J. C. (1993). Examining washback: The Sri Lankan impact study. *Language Testing*, *10*(1), 41-69.

Weir, C., & Roberts, J. (1994). *Evaluation in ELT*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Weiss, C. H. (1986). Towards the future of stakeholder approaches in evaluation. In E. R. House (Ed.), *New directions in educational development* (186-198). Lewes: Falmer Press.

Werner, W. (1979). Evaluation: Sense-making of school programs [Occasional Paper No. 11]. *Curriculum, media, & instruction*. Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Werner, W. (1980). Editorial criticism in curricular analysis. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *10*(2), 143-154.

Werner, W. (1984). Evaluation: Sense-making of school programs. In T. T. Aoki (Ed.), *Curriculum evaluation in a new key* (pp. 20-39). Edmonton: Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

Werner, W. (1991). Defining curriculum policy through slogans. *Journal of Education Policy*, *6*(2), 225-238.

Werner, W., & Rothe, P. (1979). Doing school ethnography [Occasional Paper No. 2]. *Curriculum praxis* [Monograph Series]. Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

White, R. H. (1991). *The ELT curriculum: Design, innovation and management.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Williams, D. (1983). Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal, 37*(3), 252-255.

Wise, M. (1991, March 30 & April 1). *Australian conversation for Vietnamese: Workshop on bilingual materials using an integrated approach to language and culture learning.* Paper presented at the Language Education: Interaction & Development Conference, Ho Chi Minh City.

Wright, S. (2002). Language education and foreign relations in Vietnam. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Language policies in education: Critical issues* (pp. 225-244). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

The Reception of New Language Materials: A Case Study Evaluation of an EFL Textbook in Vietnamese High Schools

Nguyen Minh Tho LE

Department of Linguistics
Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University
Sydney

Submitted for the degree of
Ph. D in Linguistics

October 2011

(Part B)

Appendices

Appendix A

Sample test items from national English examinations for students in Vietnam

(Adapted from Ministry of Education and Training, 2011)

Appendix A (pages 318-323) removed from Open Access version as it may contain copyright content.

Appendix B

Final approval of the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) of Macquarie University

Appendix B (pages 324-325) removed from Open Access version as it may contain sensitive/confidential content.

Appendix C.1

Information statement and consent form – pre-observation questionnaire survey, classroom observation and interview – classroom teacher[18]

Name of Project:

Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam[19]

You are invited to participate in a study of one of the EFL textbook series in use at high school, *Tiếng Anh 10 – Chương trình Nâng cao* (English 10 – Intensive Program). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the books with special consideration of its context of creation and context of use.

The study is being conducted by Nguyen Minh Tho Le, home phone: (Vietnam), mobiles: (Vietnam); (Australia), e-mail addresses: to meet the requirements for the doctor's degree in Linguistics under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Moore and Mr. John Knox, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2109, office phones, respectively: ; email addresses: ; . It might need to be made known to you the fact that Mr. Nguyen Minh Tho Le himself is one of the authors of the books aforementioned and he will appreciate candid evaluations of the books, which will provide him with different insights into the various aspects of the books. Also, it should be emphasised that the data to be collected will not in any way be used for any performance appraisal of the authors, teachers, students or school administrators or anyone else.

If you decide to participate, I would like to ask for your permission and consent to be physically present in your classroom in order to observe the lessons all through one unit, or an equivalent length of time. Also, there will be discussion before and after each lesson through all the lessons, about 5 minutes each of the pre-lesson discussion and about 10 minutes for the post-lesson discussion, respectively about your preparations for the lessons and the classroom happenings. With your consent, we might take notes from or photocopy several pages of your lesson plans or some evidence of the lessons and students' learning. Finally, by the end of the unit, you will also be invited to an interview lasting for about 1-1.5 hours where there will be a review and further talk about your experience with the teaching with the books aforementioned and your particular context. If you do not mind, I would record the chats, the lessons observed and the interviews; otherwise, only notes would be taken.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are of course confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results; only pseudonyms or labels will be used. The only people who have access to the data you have provided will be myself and my supervisors and, in very special circumstances, the examiner(s) of the dissertation, who are also of course governed by the ethics and regulations concerned.

---

[18] The information statement and consent form to research participants were originally printed on the Linguistics Department letterhead paper, which is now no longer available due to the institutional logo change.

[19] Please note that the current title of the dissertation has turned out to be different from the working title the researcher used when collecting the data.

Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without any consequence thereof. Should you be interested in receiving feedback from this study, please contact the researcher at the above email addresses.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Investigator's Name: _____NGUYEN MINH THO LE
(block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone +61-2-9850.7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

CONSENT FORM

Research Project:

Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam

I, _____, have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a signed copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____ City/Province: _____

Investigator's Name: ____THO NGUYEN MINH LE
(block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone +61-2-9850-7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

Appendix C.2

Information statement and consent form – Questionnaire survey[20]

PARENT/CAREGIVER INFORMATION STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

(Students' questionnaire surveys and post-lesson discussions)

Research Project: **Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam[21]**

To Whom It May Concern,

Your child is invited to participate in a study of one of the EFL textbook series you're using at high school, *Tiếng Anh 10 – Chương trình Nâng cao* (English 10 – Intensive Program). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the books with special consideration of its context of creation and context of use.

The study is being conducted by Nguyen Minh Tho Le, contact information: telephones: , (Vietnam); (Australia), e-mail addresses: , to meet the requirements for the doctor's degree in Linguistics under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Moore and Mr. John Knox, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2109, office phones, respectively:; ; email addresses: .

It might need to be made known to you the fact that Mr. Nguyen Minh Tho Le himself is one of the authors of the books aforementioned and he will appreciate candid evaluations of the books, which will provide him with different insights into the various aspects of the books. Also, it should be emphasised that the data to be collected will not in any way be used for any performance appraisal of the authors, teachers, students, school administrators, or anyone else.

The research activities involving your child will be as follows. First, (1) a questionnaire about their English learning and use of the textbooks named above will be distributed to ALL the students in the class to answer; it will take about half an hour to do so. Second, (2) there will be classroom observation of English lessons during which I will be observing the happenings of the lesson with special attention to how the books mentioned are used. If necessary, I might take notes and/or photocopy several pages of the students' notebooks, books, worksheets, *etc.* on which they have produced their English and/or, during the lessons, record some of their spoken English, or collect some evidence, if any, of their learning English from the textbooks. Third, (3) after each lesson, SOME students will be selected and, with the prior consent of you yourself and your child, invited to briefly discuss with the researcher about the classroom happenings, about 05 minutes each and the discussion might be recorded, still with the consent mentioned. Finally, (4) by the end of the classroom observations, another questionnaire survey will ask ALL students about the lessons they have had and it will take them about 20 minutes or so to complete.

[20] The information statement and consent form to research participants were originally printed on the Linguistics Department letterhead paper, which is now no longer available due to the institutional logo change.

[21] Please note that the current title of the dissertation has turned out to be different from the working title the researcher used when collecting the data.

Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary – you are not under any obligation to consent. Your child may withdraw from the study at any time – or you may withdraw your child from the study – at which point all retrievable written and audio records of your child's participation will be destroyed. Your child's withdrawal from this study will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school. You can of course choose to let your child to participate in all of the three activities above or just one or two of them and the child will of course be asked for consent of participation. All the information about these research activities has been briefed to your child's English teacher and of course your child.

Given the fact that the targeted number of students to participate in the questionnaire surveys is quite large, 210 at least, it is practically impossible to obtain consent with a signature from every single parent of every single student. So, with the questionnaire surveys and the classroom observation activities (*i.e.* (1), (2) & (4), if you do not want your child to participate in the study or just any of the activities, could you please keep me informed of your non-consent within one week of receipt of this information sheet? Our contact information is provided above. If I do not hear from you, I will assume your consent of your child's participation and will proceed with the procedures described above, with the consent of your child him/herself of course. If later than that I learn about your non-consent, however, I will surely stop the research activities primarily concerning your child immediately and the retrievable relevant files will be destroyed.

For the discussion, if your child is selected to be invited to participate, I will send you the Consent Form and the discussion with your child will be done only with your return of the completed and signed form.

All aspects of this study, including the results, will be strictly confidential. A report of the study may be submitted for publication but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report; only pseudonyms or labels will be used. The only people who have access to the data you have provided will be myself and my supervisors and, in very special circumstances, the examiner(s) of the dissertation, who are also of course governed by the ethics and regulations concerned.

I draw your attention to the fact that this project might involve audio recordings of participants, again for research purposes only, during the discussions and the lessons observed, with your consent of course. These recordings will be

- Stored in my own PC and laptop for five years, after which they will be destroyed.
- Accessed by the researcher, his supervisors, and in rare circumstances the examiners of the dissertation.
- Used for the data analysis for the writing of the dissertation.

If you do not want us to do the recording of your child's chat, you can of course request us not to do so; only notes would be taken then. If you have any concerns about what has been recorded, you may access recordings of your child within the period of storage. These recordings can be accessed by contacting me. For some reason, if you wanted to exclude recordings of your child from the study, you might request me to do so by contacting me via addresses above and the relevant retrievable parts of files concerned will be destroyed.

When you have read the information and if you request, Nguyen Minh Tho Le will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have about this research. If you would like to know more relevant information at any stage, please feel free to contact: Nguyen Minh Tho Le (contact information provided above).

Thank you very much for your and your child's cooperation.

All the best.

(*This information sheet is for you to keep.*)

Investigator's Name: ___NGUYEN MINH THO LE

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____ City/Province: _____

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone +9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

Appendix C.3

Consent form – post-lesson interview – to parents/caregivers of (selected) students[22]

I (*print name*) …… give consent to the participation of my child (*print name*) …… in the research project described below.

Title of the project: **Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam[23]**

CHIEF RESEARCHER: Nguyen Minh Tho Le,

Investigator's Name: NGUYEN MINH THO LE

_____

Investigator's Signature: _____Date: _____City/Province: _____

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions, if any, I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information concerned and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher.
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project.
4. I understand that that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time without having to give a reason.
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity.
6. I understand that audio recordings may be made as part of the study. These recordings will take place during the post-lesson discussions (with the researcher) to be conducted at the school where my child is studying. I ☐ hereby agree to allow the chats to be recorded / ☐ want the chats not to be recorded (*please tick the box you want*).

I have been given a signed copy of this consent form to keep.

Signed……..

Name…….

[22] The information statement and consent form to research participants were originally printed on the Linguistics Department letterhead paper, which is now no longer available due to the institutional logo change.

[23] Please note that the current title of the dissertation has turned out to be different from the working title the researcher used when collecting the data.

Date……**City/Province:** ……

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone: +61-2-9850-7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

Appendix C.4

Information statement and consent form – interview – head teacher[24]

Name of Project:

Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam[25]

You are invited to participate in a study of one of the EFL textbook series in use at high school, *Tiếng Anh 10 – Chương trình Nâng cao* (English 10 – Intensive Program). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the books with special consideration of its context of creation and context of use.

The study is being conducted by Nguyen Minh Tho Le, contact information: (Vietnam), (Vietnam); (Australia), e-mail addresses: , to meet the requirements for the doctor's degree in Linguistics under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Moore and Mr. John Knox, Department of Linguistics, Division of Linguistics and Psychology, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2109, office phones, respectively: ; ; email addresses: . It might need to be made known to you the fact that Mr. Nguyen Minh Tho Le himself is one of the authors of the books aforementioned and he will appreciate candid evaluations of the books, which will provide him with different insights into the various aspects of the books. Also, it should be emphasised that the data to be collected will not in any way be used for any performance appraisal of the authors, teachers, students or school administrators or anyone else.

If you decide to participate, you will be invited to an interview where you will be asked about the your comments and opinions about the books aforementioned and the problems and issues possibly faced by yourself and your colleagues using the books from the point of view of the English head teacher of your school. The interview is expected to be 1-1.5 hours long. If you do not mind, we would record this interview; otherwise, only notes would be taken. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are of course confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results; only pseudonyms or labels will be used. The only people who have access to the data you have provided will be myself and my supervisors and, in very special circumstances, the examiner(s) of the dissertation, who are also of course governed by the ethics and regulations concerned.

Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without any consequence thereof. Should you be interested in receiving feedback from this study, please contact the researcher at the above email addresses.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

[24] The information statement and consent form to research participants were originally printed on the Linguistics Department letterhead paper, which is now no longer available due to the institutional logo change.

[25] Please note that the current title of the dissertation has turned out to be different from the working title the researcher used when collecting the data.

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone: +61-2-9850-7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

CONSENT FORM

Research Project: **Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam**

I, _____, have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____City/Province: _____

Investigator's Name: NGUYEN MINH THO LE

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone: +61-2-9850-7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

Appendix C.5

Information statement and consent form – interview – textbook writer[26]

Name of Project:

Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam[27]

You are invited to participate in a study of one of the EFL textbook series you're using at high school, Tiếng Anh 10 – *Chương trình Nâng cao* (English 10 – Intensive Program). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the books with special consideration of its context of creation and context of use.

The study is being conducted by Nguyen Minh Tho Le, contact information: telephones: , (Vietnam); (Australia), e-mail addresses: , to meet the requirements for the doctor's degree in Linguistics under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Moore and Mr. John Knox, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2109, office phones, respectively: ; ; email addresses: .

You might very well have known that Mr. Nguyen Minh Tho Le himself is one of the authors of the books aforementioned and he will appreciate candid evaluations of the books, which will provide him with different insights into the various aspects of the books. Also, it should be emphasised that the data to be collected will not in any way be used for any performance appraisal of the authors, teachers, students, school administrators, or anyone else.

If you decide to participate, you will be invited to a face-to-face interview where you will be asked about the experience of writing the books aforementioned and your relevant comments and opinions. The interview is expected to be 1-1.5 hours long. If you do not mind, we would record this interview; otherwise, only notes would be taken. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are of course confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results; only pseudonyms or labels will be used. The only people who have access to the data you have provided will be myself and my supervisors and, in very special circumstances, the examiners of the dissertation, who are also of course governed by the ethics and regulations concerned.

Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without any consequence thereof. Should you be interested in receiving feedback from this study, please contact the researcher at the above email addresses.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

---

[26] The information statement and consent form to research participants were originally printed on the Linguistics Department letterhead paper, which is now no longer available due to the institutional logo change.

[27] Please note that the current title of the dissertation has turned out to be different from the working title the researcher used when collecting the data.

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone: +61-2-9850-7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

CONSENT FORM

Research Project:

Design and Use of EFL Textbooks: An Evaluation of a Senior High School Textbook Series in Vietnam

I, _____, have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence or any reason. I have been given a signed copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____ City/Province:_____

Investigator's Name: NGUYEN MINH THO LE
(block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____Date: _____

NB. *The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone: +61-2-9850-7854; email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.*

Appendix D

Certification of sample check of accuracy of transcription and translation of data by a NATTI-accredited interpreter/translator

Certification of Sample Check

of Accuracy of Transcription and Translation of Data

by a NATTI-accredited Interpreter/Translator

This is to certify that I have done a sample check of the data claimed to be used for the research project undertaken by Mr. Nguyen Minh Tho Le for the completion of his doctoral study of applied linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. The data in Vietnamese were accurately transcribed from the audio files provided. Regarding the translation of the data, it was satisfactorily done and despite some shortcomings concerning the naturalness of English, the key messages from the Vietnamese transcripts/notes are conveyed in the translations.

Chipping Norton, September 12, 2011

Chu Tieu Nguyet, NATTI-accredited interpreter and translator

Appendix E

Student pre-observation questionnaire

NB: This questionnaire should be answered by students who have used at least some part of the textbooks English 10 – Intensive Program*, which are the very subject of evaluation.*

Please check ☑ ONE appropriate box unless otherwise instructed and, where needed, provide your own response(s).

A. About yourself:

1. Gender: ☐ M ☐ F Age: ____ School: _____ Class: _____
2. Please indicate the "ban" (program) you are taking:

☐ natural sciences ☐ social sciences

☐ standard basics ☐ specialized basics ☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____

3. As for you now, how _____ English as a subject?

(i) "*necessary is*":	(ii) *do you like studying:*
☐ Very necessary	☐ Very much
☐ Necessary	☐ Yes, I do
☐ Not really necessary	☐ Not really
☐ Not necessary at all	☐ Not at all

4. Your reasons of learning English vs. the relevance of the books:

(a) In column "Needs", please check the box(es) indicating your reason(s) of learning English. (*You may tick more than one box or none. Also, feel free to specify the reasons of your own other than those listed, if any.*)

(b) Circle ONE need that is the most important for you.

(c) For each need checked, if any, check the appropriate cell (1, 2, 3, or 4) to indicate the extent to which the books meet that need of yours. (*1. Very well; 2. Well; 3. Not really well; 4. Not at all; 5. I don't know*)

Needs	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
☐ using English as a tool for my study (*e.g.* self-study from English materials)					
☐ using English for general communication purposes					
☐ meeting the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program					
☐ succeeding at university entrance exams for which English is one subject, *e.g.* D program					
☐ studying abroad (where English proficiency is a requirement)					
☐ developing thinking capacity					
☐ developing my language skills					
☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____					

B. About *English 10 – Intensive Program*

Please give your own ratings of the books by responding to the following statements as follows: (*Tick one appropriate cell for each statement.*)

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. I don't know

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENT BOOK					
I. Organization					
a) There is good continuity between this series (*English 10 – Intensive Program*) and the other four for lower secondary education (*English 6, English 7, English 8,* and *English 9*).					
b) The language input is well graded from lesson to lesson so that it presents no significant difficulty to students' learning.					
II. Content/subject matter					
c) The topics and subtopics are interesting enough to make students interested.					
d) The cognitive level required is appropriate with students' level of maturity.					
e) The language level required is appropriate with students' language proficiency.					
III. Tasks/activities					
f) The tasks provide communicable situations for students to practise using English.					
g) The tasks are meaningful and relevant to the students' immediate environment.					
h) The tasks are achievable in consideration of their complexity and the classroom conditions.					
i) The procedures of tasks are consistent enough to be understood and varied enough to be interesting.					
IV. Other aspects					
j) The rubrics of the tasks and exercises are clear.					
k) The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning.					
l) The design and layout of the books are good enough so as not to cause confusion.					
m) The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in your home study and practice.					
n) The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in exposing you to a variety of contexts where English is spoken.					

WORKBOOK					
o) The workbook provides good tasks for review and reinforcement of the knowledge learned in the Student Book					
p) The workbook provides good tasks for further development of the skills learned in the Student Book.					
OVERALL					
q) I enjoy studying with the books.					
r) I think these books basically meet my needs of English learning.					

C. About your learning of English

1. What is the approximate amount of time per week, talking about the time for *English 10 – Intensive Program* only, you spend on learning each of the following, in class and elsewhere? (*Put your answers in minutes.*)

   listening: _____ grammar: _____

   speaking: _____ vocabulary: _____

   reading: _____ pronunciation: _____

   writing: _____

2. What is students' main language of communication in your English classroom at school? (*Tick ONE appropriate box and give your explanations, if you can.*)

	English	**Vietnamese**	**Why?**
(a) that is used?	☐	☐	
(b) do you prefer to be used?	☐	☐	

3. What sections in the books do you find _____? (*Tick as many boxes as appropriate. Key: (1) Reading; (2) Listening; (3) Speaking; (4) Writing; (5) Language focus)*

	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Interesting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Necessary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficult	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Boring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. For your reading lessons,

   (a) do you aim to study: ☐ the (sub)reading skills and strategies as required?

   ☐ the vocabulary and grammar of the texts?

   ☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____?

(b) how do you find the reading texts in consideration of your:

(i) Language level			(ii) Cognitive level			(iii) Interest		
☐ difficult	☐ suitable	☐ easy	☐ difficult	☐ suitable	☐ easy	☐ boring	☐ all right	☐ interesting

5. For your listening lessons,

(a) do you aim to study: ☐ the (sub) listening skills and strategies as required?

☐ the vocabulary, expressions and pronunciation of the texts?

☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____?

(b) Do you often read the listening script or often check your answers with the answer keys (available in the Teacher's Book and/or study guide books) before the listening lessons? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why (not)? _____

6. For your speaking lessons,

(a) do you think in your classroom you have had enough practice of the language functions in focus?

(b) what do you often do after the lessons, if any, to reinforce and improve the knowledge and (sub) skills just learned?

_____

For your writing lessons,

(a) which area(s) do you often have the greatest difficulty in? (*Tick one box only.*)

☐ Writing grammatical sentences ☐ Using appropriate vocabulary

☐ Finding & developing ideas ☐ Expressing ideas appropriately & clearly

☐ Organizing your points ☐ Applying appropriate genres

☐ Using correct spelling and mechanics (*e.g.* punctuation, capitalization)

(b) Which of the areas above is normally the strongest focus of your classroom lessons? (*Circle ONE box.*)

(c) What source(s) of feedback for your writing can you find?

☐ your classroom teacher ☐ from your classmates or friends

☐ from yourself

☐ from teachers other than your classroom teacher (*Who?*):

_____

☐ Others (*Please specify.*):

_____

7. For your language focus lessons,

(a) do you think the explanations in the books and from your teacher are basically sufficient? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) what do you often do, if any, for further reference and practice of the points learned?

_____

8. What is the approximate weight of time spent on each of the following modes of interaction in your classroom as is perceived by you yourself? (*Put your answers in percentages, which should total 100%.*)

   _____ Students work in pairs or small groups with teacher's management.

   _____ Students work as a chorus class with teacher's direction (*e.g.* choral repetition).

   _____ Students interact with the teacher (*e.g.* the teacher makes questions and the students give answers).

   _____ Students work individually under the teacher's direction.

   _____ Others: (*Please specify.*) _____

9. (a) Generally speaking, do you find the classroom activities appropriate to your learning styles? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   (b) What are the problems, if any? _____

10. Do you find the classroom activities useful for your learning of English?

    ☐ Yes ☐ No

    Why so? _____

11. If you have used EFL commercial books by international publishers (*e.g. Headway, Interchange, Interactions, Cutting Edge*), please indicate (a) the names of some of the books, (b) how effective for English learning they are in comparison with the textbooks mentioned, and (c) in what way they are more/equally/less effective, especially in reference to your needs and interests.

Name of commercial books (*Please specify.*)	**Effective** (*Tick ONE box for each title)*			**In what way?**
	More	**Same**	**Less**	
_____				
_____				
_____				
_____				

Thank you for your time and efforts in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix F.1

Student post-observation questionnaire – Rural High School (RHS)

Please answer the following questions based on what happened with your study of Units 10 and 11 of English 10 – Intensive Program *for the past weeks.*

1. Would you mind telling what you did to prepare for the coming lessons and to practise for past lessons, if any, at home and at school?

	Preparations for the upcoming lessons	**Practice for the past lessons**
Reading	…… ……	…… ……
Listening	…… ……	…… ……
Speaking	…… ……	…… ……
Writing	…… ……	…… ……
Language Focus	…… ……	…… ……
Supplementary exercises	…….. …… ……..	…… …… ……

2. The following are my observations of the past lessons. Would you mind providing more information about those observations:

Observation 1: For the Reading section, after the Lead-in, students had a few minutes to read the reading excerpt before they were asked to answer the questions of the textbooks.

1.1 How did you find the questions of the textbooks, suitable or too difficult/easy? (*Please explain.*)

……

1.2 Did you understand the reading excerpt? (*Please explain your difficulty, if any, with vocabulary, grammar, subject knowledge.*)……

1.3 Would you like your teacher to explain more about the excerpt or translate it into Vietnamese? (*Please explain.*)

…….

Observation 2: For the Listening section, students had to answer the questions of the textbooks after 2-3 readings of the script.

2.1 Were you able to answer the questions after the first reading? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.2 Did you find 2-3 readings enough for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.3 Did you often listen to the script in advance (e.g. at home)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.4 Did you often read the listening script in advance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.5 If you practise your listening at home, did you often follow the procedures that normally took place in the class? (E.g. Seeking to learn about the topic the listening is about; please explain.)

……

Observation 3: For the Speaking section, it was complained that the practice of the language functions and the use of the words/expressions provided in the Reading and Writing sections was repetitious and boring.

3.1 Do you agree with the complaint? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3.2 As for yourself, was the practice in the class enough? Would you like more practice of some other types? (*Please explain according to your needs.*)

……

3.3 What did you often do after class to further practise your speaking skills? (*Please explain.*)

……

Observation 4: As I have noticed, for the Writing lessons, many students seemed to be more interested in and excited about the pre-writing activities intended as a lead-in than the writing activity itself.

4.1 Was the observation true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

4.2 If my observation was correct, what do you think might have been the causes for that?

……
……

4.3 What did you do after your lessons, if any, for your writing practice?

……
……..

Observation 5: Regarding the supplementary lessons, did you feel

☐ yourself involved in the lessons? ☐ the lessons necessary?

Observation 6: I noticed that most students were more excited at the time for game play than that for doing the tasks of the textbooks.

6.1 Do you think the observation was true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

6.2 What do you think might have been the causes for that? (*Please explain.*)

……

Observation 7: Generally, students were more interested in doing exercises of vocabulary and grammar than practising communication skills.

7.1 Do you think the observation was true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7.2 Please explain your answer just above:

……..

Observation 8: In my opinion, the current testing and assessment formats for your exams seemed to neglect listening and speaking.

8.1 Do you agree with the observation? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

8.2 Please explain more about your response just above:

……

8.3 If the observation above was true, could you tell us whether the neglect had any way affected your study of the two spoken skills? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How was effect? (*Please explain.*)

…….

Observation 9: The Work Book accompanying the Student Book of *English 10 – Intensive Program* was not seen used in your classroom lessons for the past weeks.

6.1 What did you do with the exercises in the Work Book in your own time?

☐ I did them all ☐ I did some of them ☐ I did none of them

6.2 Would you prefer your teacher spend some of the classroom time on the exercises of the Work Book? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why (not)?

…….

Observation 10: Students did not seem to be excited in the lessons.

10.1 What do you think were the causes for that? (Because, for example, students might not have known the answers or simply they did not like studying.)?

……

10.2 Are you happy with that or how would you like to change it? *(Please explain.)*

……

Observation 11: Students' pronunciation was not really good.

Would you mind telling about the conditions available for and your practice of pronunciation? (*Please explain in detail.*)

……..

Thank you very much.

Appendix F.2

Student post-observation questionnaire – Urban Selective High School (USHS)

The following questions have been made based on my observations of the classroom lessons of Unit 14 and the first part of Unit 15, English 10 – Intensive Programme. *Please give your responses by completing the spaces provided and/or tick the appropriate box(es).*

Observation 1: The lesson speed per unit you were going at (e.g. Unit 14 and the first part of Unit 15) was very fast, approximately 4-5 periods per unit.

1.1 What about the lesson speed for the other units as it was in your classroom lessons?

☐ the same speed ☐ slower speed ☐ faster speed

1.2 How did you yourself find the speed of 4-5 periods per unit?

☐ Fast ☐ All right ☐ Slow

1.3 Did you generally review or do those tasks (before or after the lessons)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1.4 No matter what lesson speed it was, *Language Focus* was always fully covered in the classroom lessons. What do you think was the possible reason for that? …….

Observation 2: Quite an amount of supplementary exercises other than those in the textbooks were used in your lessons.

2.1 What were the possible reasons for that? (*Please tick ALL the boxes that apply and circle ONE most important one.*)

☐ The textbooks are easy and students can do their exercises on their own. The classroom time should be spent on more challenging exercises.

☐ Students might just need to consult teachers, classmates, and practice books, *etc.* for their study of the textbooks, so students would prefer exercises other than those of the textbooks.

☐ The textbooks are boring and out of date.

☐ The supplementary exercises can better prepare students for exams (graduation and university admission ones).

☐ Others (*Please specify.*): .....

2.2 Which of the following would you prefer to take place?

☐ To speed up on the textbook tasks and spend the time on the extra exercises

☐ To completely skip the textbooks

☐ To spend more time on the textbooks

☐ To focus on the textbooks only

Observation 3: Generally, students were more interested in doing exercises in vocabulary and grammar than in practising their communication skills.

3.1 Is the observation true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3.2 Please explain more about your response of "Yes/No" just above: .....

Observation 4: In my opinion, the current testing and assessment formats for your exams seemed to neglect listening and speaking.

4.1 Do you agree with the observation? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

4.2 Please explain more about your response just above: .....

4.3 If the observation above was true, could you tell us whether the neglect had any way affected your study of the two spoken skills? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How was effect? (*Please explain.*) .....

Observation 5: The Work Book accompanying the Student Book of *English 10 – Intensive Program* was not seen used in your classroom lessons for the past weeks.

5.1 Which of the following was often the case concerning the use of the Work Book in your classroom in the other previous units? The Work Book was _____.

☐ not used either ☐ used sometimes ☐ always used

5.2 What did you do with the exercises in the Work Book in your own time?

☐ I did them all ☐ I did some of them ☐ I did none of them

5.3 Would you prefer your teacher spend some of the classroom time on the exercises of the Work Book? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why (not)? .....

Observation 6: There might have been something about the textbooks that helped you learn English effectively, whereas something else about the materials might need improving. Would you mind listing, if any: (Examples regarding Units 14 and 15 preferred)

6.1 Three things about the textbooks that helped you learn English effectively?

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

6.2 Three things about the textbooks that need improving?

a) .....

b) .....

c) .....

Observation 7: Your classroom lessons of the textbooks went quite well with quite an amount of English used by both the teacher and students.

7.1 Would you mind telling how much you understood of what was spoken in English in the classroom time?

☐ about 1/4 ☐ about ½ ☐ about ¾ ☐ all

7.2 What did you normally do to prepare for the coming lessons and to practise for past lessons? (*Please fill in the spaces provided in the table below.*)

	Preparations for the upcoming lessons	**Practice for the past lessons**
Reading	…… …… ……	…… …… ……
Listening	…… …… ……	…… …… ……
Speaking	…… …… ……	…… …… ……
Writing	…… …… ……	…… …… ……
Language Focus	…… …… ……	…… …… ……
Supplementary exercises	…… …… ……	…… …… ……

Thank you very much.

Appendix F.3

Student post-observation questionnaire – Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)

Please answer the following questions based on what happened with your study of Units 10 and 11 of English 10 – Intensive Program *for the past weeks.*

1. Would you mind telling what you did to prepare for the coming lessons and to practise for past lessons, if any, at home and at school?

	Preparations for the upcoming lessons	**Practice for the past lessons**
Reading	…… ……	…… ……
Listening	…… ……	…… ……
Speaking	…… ……	…… ……
Writing	…… ……	…… ……
Language Focus	…… ……	…… ……
Supplementary exercises	…… ……	…… ……

2. The following are my observations of the past lessons. Would you mind providing more information about those observations:

Observation 1: For the Reading section, after the Lead-in, students had a few minutes to read the reading excerpt before they were asked to answer the questions of the textbooks.

1.4 How did you find the questions of the textbooks, suitable or too difficult/easy? (*Please explain.*)

……

1.5 Did you understand the reading excerpt? (*Please explain your difficulty, if any, with vocabulary, grammar, subject knowledge.*)……

1.6 Would you like your teacher to explain more about the excerpt or translate it into Vietnamese? (*Please explain.*)

…….

Observation 2: For the Listening section, students had to answer the questions of the textbooks after 2-3 readings of the script.

2.1 Were you able to answer the questions after the first reading? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.2 Did you find 2-3 readings enough for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.3 Did you often listen to the script in advance (e.g. at home)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.4 Did you often read the listening script in advance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.5 If you practise your listening at home, did you often follow the procedures that normally took place in the class? (E.g. Seeking to learn about the topic the listening is about; please explain.)

……

Observation 3: For the Speaking section, it was complained that the practice of the language functions and the use of the words/expressions provided in the Reading and Writing sections was repetitious and boring.

3.1 Do you agree with the complaint? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3.2 As for yourself, was the practice in the class enough? Would you like more practice of some other types? (*Please explain according to your needs.*)

……

3.3 What did you often do after class to further practise your speaking skills? (*Please explain.*)

……

Observation 4: As I have noticed, for the Writing lessons, many students seemed to be more interested in and excited about the pre-writing activities intended as a lead-in than the writing activity itself.

4.1 Was the observation true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

4.2 If my observation was correct, what do you think might have been the causes for that?

……

4.3 What did you do after your lessons, if any, for your writing practice?

……

Observation 5: Regarding the supplementary lessons, did you feel

☐ yourself involved in the lessons? ☐ the lessons necessary?

Observation 6: I noticed that most students were more excited at the time for game play than that for doing the tasks of the textbooks.

6.1 Do you think the observation was true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

6.2 What do you think might have been the causes for that? (*Please explain.*)

…….

Observation 7: Generally, students were more interested in doing exercises of vocabulary and grammar than practising communication skills.

7.1 Do you think the observation was true of yourself? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7.2 Please explain your answer just above:

……

Observation 8: In my opinion, the current testing and assessment formats for your exams seemed to neglect listening and speaking.

8.1 Do you agree with the observation? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

8.2 Please explain more about your response just above:

……..

8.3 If the observation above was true, could you tell us whether the neglect had any way affected your study of the two spoken skills? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How was effect? (*Please explain.*)

…….

Observation 9: The Work Book accompanying the Student Book of *English 10 – Intensive Program* was not seen used in your classroom lessons for the past weeks.

9.1 What did you do with the exercises in the Work Book in your own time?

☐ I did them all ☐ I did some of them ☐ I did none of them

9.2 Would you prefer your teacher spend some of the classroom time on the exercises of the Work Book? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why (not)?

…….

Observation 10: Quite a number of you appeared to have good pronunciation (in comparison with year 10 students' level).

Would you mind telling about the conditions available for and your practice of pronunciation? (*Please explain in detail.*)

…….

Thank you very much.

Appendix G

Classroom teacher pre-observation questionnaire

NB: This questionnaire should be answered by teachers who have used at least some part of the textbooks English 10 – Intensive Program*, which are the very subject of evaluation.*

Please check (☑) ONE appropriate box unless otherwise instructed and, where needed, provide your own response(s).

A. About yourself & your familiarity with the books

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female Age: ____ School: _____
2. English Language Teaching (ELT) qualifications:

   (a) degree:

   ☐ BA in English studies/education

   ☐ Postgraduate diploma in TESOL

   ☐ MA in TESOL

   ☐ Others *(please specify):* _____

   (b) Total training time, if any, in a country where English is the language of education (Australia, England, Singapore, USA, *etc.*): _____
3. How have you updated yourself with EFL methodology developments in the past five years?

☐ attending conferences, workshops and seminars:

total duration: _____ hours

organized by _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____ , _____, and _____

☐ member of a ELT interest group/forum/club:

_____

_____

☐ self-improvement with readings (*Please specify several.*): _____, _____, _____, _____

☐ others (*Please specify.*):

_____

_____

_____

☐ None of the above

4. Roughly speaking, how much of and how many times have you taught the books? (*You may tick more than one box and, if necessary, provide some explanatory notes.*)

How much?		**How many times?**			**Notes**
☐ The whole books		☐ 1 time	☐ 2 times	☐ 3 times	
☐ About half of the books:	☐ 1st half	☐ 1 time	☐ 2 times	☐ 3 times	
	☐ 2nd half	☐ 1 time	☐ 2 times	☐ 3 times	
☐ ¼ of the books		☐ 1 time	☐ 2 times	☐ 3 times	

5. Please indicate your response to each of the following statements (1. Strongly agree; 2. Agree; 3. Disagree; 4. Strongly disagree) and give your further comments, if any.

To what extent do you think you have been well prepared for the use of the books?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Further comments**
You had time sufficient time to learn how to use them.					
You have received sufficient clear instruction how to use them.					
You have got helpful organized support on how to use them.					

6. How clear is each item of the following information about the books made to you? *(Tick the appropriate cell(s) with this key:* 1. Not clear; 2. Not really clear; 3. Clear; 4. Very clear *and provide further comments, if any.*)

Information on	**How clear?**				**Further comments, if any**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	
approaches & methods					
aims & objectives					
specific outcomes (knowledge and (sub)skills)					
types of activities/tasks & classroom strategies/techniques required					
your primary role (to impart knowledge or manage classroom activities)					

B. About *English 10 – Intensive Program*

Please give your own ratings of the books by responding to the following statements as follows:

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. I don't know

	1	2	3	4	5
STUDENT BOOK					
I. Organization					
1) There is good coherence between this series (*English 10 – Intensive Program*) and the other four (*English 6, English 7, English 8,* and *English 9*) in lower secondary edcuation.					
2) There is a good coherence (good link) between the units of the books.					
3) There is a good coherence (smooth transition) between sections and subsections within each of the units of the books.					
4) The language input is well graded so that it presents no significant difficulty to students' learning from lesson to lesson.					
II. Content/subject matter					
5) The amounts of skills and language knowledge are well-proportioned.					
6) The topics and subtopics are interesting enough to make students interested.					
7) The cognitive level required is appropriate with the students' level of maturity.					
8) The language level required is appropriate with the students' language proficiency.					
III. Tasks/activities					
9) The tasks/activities provide communicable situations for students to practise using English.					
10) The tasks/activities are meaningful and relevant to the students' immediate environment.					
11) There are tasks and questions that cater to the levels of different types of students, *e.g.* bright, average, weak.					
12) The tasks are achievable in consideration of their complexity and the classroom conditions.					
13) The procedures of tasks/activities are both consistent enough to be implementable and varied enough to be interesting.					
IV. Other aspects					
14) The rubrics of the tasks are clear and easy to understand.					
15) The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning.					
16) The design and layout of the books are good enough so as not to cause confusion.					

17) The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful for students' learning English.					
18) The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful for teachers' teaching English.					
TEACHER BOOK					
19) The instruction on how to use the books is sufficient.					
20) The suggested ways of lesson planning recommended in the book are generally useful.					
21) The classroom procedures recommended to follow are generally doable.					
22) The aims and objectives of the lessons described are generally feasible.					
23) The answer key provides convincing answers.					
24) There are helpful notes on cultural and societal features needed to know.					
WORKBOOK					
25) The workbook provides good tasks for review and reinforcement of the knowledge learned in the Student Book					
26) The workbook provides good tasks for further practice development of the skills learned in the Student Book.					
OVERALL					
27) Given the allocations of the curriculum, the books allow flexibility for the teacher to be creative in your teaching in the classroom.					
28) The use of the books will basically result in the fulfilment of the aims and objectives set out by the curriculum.					
29) What the books offer meets students' needs.					
30) What the books offer cater to what students' wants.					

C. About the context of use

1. Time allocation:

   a. As for you yourself, is the time allocated by the curriculum sufficient to satisfactorily teach the load specified? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b. What is the first priority in terms of amount of time you actually spend in the classroom?

      ☐ teaching what is needed for students to do the exercises required by the books

      ☐ organizing activities and managing tasks for students to use English communicatively

      ☐ teaching students to the tests/exams students will or might need to take

☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____

2. (a) Have you found some discrepancy in the following issues? (*Please tick the appropriate box(es))*

(b) If yes, how serious? (*Please tick the appropriate cell(s) in the same row with the ticked box(es):* 1. Not serious; 2. A little serious; 3. Serious; 4. Very serious. *You might want to add comments, if any.*)

Issues of discrepancy	**Serious?**				**Further comments, if any**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	
☐ (1) your principles and beliefs in the "right" ways of EFL teaching and learning *vs.* the ELT approach/theory of the books					
☐ (2) the ELT approach/theory of the books *vs.* reality (*e.g.* students' needs & wants, class size)					
☐ (3) the outcomes prescribed by the curriculum (knowledge and skills) *vs.* results actually targeted (by the school, the parents, yourself, students, who, for instance, might be driven by performance at exams)					
☐ (4) the techniques and procedures required for the activities *vs.* the real context (activity too noisy or irrelevant/unfamiliar to students' environment)					
☐ (5) the linguistic requirements *vs.* students' linguistic level					
☐ (6) the cognitive requirements *vs.* students' cognitive level					
☐ (7) the content and tasks required by the books *vs.* students' interest					
☐ (8) the constraints of the curriculum *vs.* teacher's creativity in teaching					
☐ (9) time allowed *vs.* time really needed					
☐ (10) Others: (*Please specify.*) _____ _____;_____					

3. Please rate the following in the order of focus in your teaching: 1: 1st strongest focus; 2: 2nd strongest focus… (*Please write the numbers on the lines provided.*)

_____	Reading
_____	Listening
_____	Speaking
_____	Writing
_____	Language focus

4. For your reading lessons,

(a) do you aim to teach: ☐ the (sub)reading skills and processes concerned?

☐ the vocabulary and grammar of the texts?

☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____?

(b) how do you find the reading texts in consideration of your students'

(i) Language level			**(ii) Cognitive level**			**(iii) Interest**		
☐ difficult	☐ suitable	☐ easy	☐ difficult	☐ suitable	☐ easy	☐ boring	☐ all right	☐ interesting

5. For listening lessons,

(a) do you aim to teach: ☐ the (sub)reading skills and processes concerned?

☐ the vocabulary and grammar of the texts?

☐ others (*Please specify.*): _____?

(b) do you often want your students to do the exercises in advance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why (not)? _____

_____

6. For your speaking lessons, in your classroom,

(a) do you think your students have enough practice of the language functions in focus?

(b) what is your strongest focus? _____

_____

7. For your writing lessons,

(a) which area do you place strongest emphasis on in your teaching? (*Tick the ONE box.*)

☐ Writing grammatical sentences ☐ Using appropriate vocabulary

☐ Finding & developing ideas ☐ Expressing ideas appropriately & clearly

☐ Organizing your paragraphs ☐ Having appropriate genres

☐ Using correct spelling & mechanics ☐ Others (*Please specify.*): _____

(b) How do your students receive feedback on their writing? (In terms of frequency, teacher's feedback to individual students or the whole class, teacher-guided discussion of points of common errors, *etc.*) _____

8. For your language focus lessons,

(a) do you think the points in focus in the books are useful for your students? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(b) do you often provide your students with further reference and practice of the points learned? _____

9. Testing and assessment:

a) Do you think the current practices of tests and exams have caused neglect on one section and overemphasis on another in your classroom? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) What are the neglected/overemphasized sections, if any? Why?

Sections	**Why?**
Neglected: _____; _____; _____; _____	
Emphasised: _____; _____; _____; _____	

c) Generally, how are the tests and exams in your classroom normally like? (*Please tick appropriate cells; 1. Reading, 2. Listening, 3. Speaking, 4. Writing, 5. Language Focus.*)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
They are the very texts already taught.					
They are recycled from the texts and sentences already taught, *i.e.* same/slightly modified texts with new questions.					
They are texts and sentences that have never been taught before but are of similar topics and lesser difficulty.					
They are texts that have never been taught before but are of similar topics and similar difficulty.					
Others (*Please specify.*): _____ _____					

10. (a) Tick the current ratio of Vietnamese and English you are using the classroom, then (b) circle your preferred ratio, and finally (c) explain your choices.

(a) & (b)	(c)
☐ 0% Vietnamese – 100% English	
☐ 25% Vietnamese – 75% English	
☐ 50% Vietnamese – 50% English	
☐ 75% Vietnamese – 25% English	
☐ 100% Vietnamese – 0% English	

11. If you have used EFL commercial books (*e.g. Headway, Interchange, Interactions, Cutting Edge*), please indicate (a) the name of those books, (b) still with your students in mind, how effective for English learning and teaching they are in comparison with the textbooks, and (c) in what way, especially in reference to your needs and interests.

Names of commercial books	**Effective**			**In what way?**
	More	**Same**	**Less**	
_____				
_____				
_____				
_____				

Thank you very much for your time and efforts in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix H.1

‘Lesson proceedings recorder’
(for classroom observation, adapted from Spada and Frohlich (1995))

Province/City ..... Lesson ..... Visit .....
School..... Unit ..... Date .....
Class ..... Page(s) ..... Time length of session .....

TIME: ____:____ → ____:____				ACTIVITIES & EPISODES:	
PARTICIPANT ORG.		Class	T⇔ S/C ☐	.....	.....
			S ⇔ S/C ☐	.....	.....
			Choral ☐	.....	.....
		Group/ Pair work ☐		.....	.....
		Individual ☐		.....	.....
SS MODALITY		Listening ☐		.....	.....
		Speaking ☐		.....	.....
		Reading ☐		.....	.....
		Writing ☐		.....	.....
		Other: ……..….		.....	.....
MATERIAL	Type	Text ☐		.....	.....
		Audio ☐		.....	.....
		Visual ☐		.....	.....
		Other: ……..….		.....	.....
	Tb?	Yes ☐		.....	.....
		Partial ☐		.....	.....
		No ☐		.....	.....
MEDIUM	T	English ☐		.....	.....
		Vietnamese ☐		.....	.....
	SS	English ☐		.....	.....
		Vietnamese ☐		.....	.....
NOTES					

Appendix H.2
Guidelines on collection of evidence
(What will count as evidence of students' learning from the textbooks – in actual classroom work: indications of their picking up some English from the textbooks)

	EVIDENCE[28]	HOW TO SAMPLE	NOTE
	"HARD"		
A. Written Mode	1. Students have prepared something (related to the textbooks) & used it in the sessions observed, *e.g.* vocabulary list (meanings, translations, pronunciations), questions to ask the teacher, etc.	Obtain photocopies or take notes of all this "homework"	
	2. Students have written something (*e.g.* in their notebook or even on the textbook itself) related to a language learning task/ item.	Obtain photocopies of students' notebooks/ books. Could jot down in observer's notebook what was copied by students.	
	3. Students have completed – though not necessarily completely correctly, *e.g.* some worksheets/ handouts	Obtain photocopies of the worksheets/ handouts worked on or students' writings.	
	4. Students have produced answers on the chalkboard that reveal they have picked up something from the textbooks.	Take notes of the words/ phrases/ sentences produced.	
B. Spoken Mode	5. Students have spoken (in English) something they have learned from the textbooks, *e.g.* their role playing of a sample conversation in the textbooks, perhaps with some variations/ substitutions/extensions	Record the extended conversations, if any, and compare them with the samples in the textbooks. (Special attention to be paid to group/pair work activities)	
	6. Students' interaction (in English, student-student, student-teacher) in relation to something from the textbooks.	Take notes of what is said and how it relates to the textbook, the direction of interaction, who speaks most – the teacher/ students (how many of them).	
	7. Students help their classmates with clarifications (correct or nearly so) on some point in the textbooks.	Take notes of/ record what might be overheard from students' talks or seen from their clarifications in the written form.	
	8. Students' perform acceptably well at lesson reviews: reciting listening/ reading texts from the textbooks), playing roles by the sample conversation, producing sentences from the pattern studied.	Take notes and, if possible, voice record the recital.	

[28] This evidence does not equate with learning, only with engagement which is a necessary step toward learning. "Hard evidence" is more "tangible" and thus stronger than "soft evidence" in terms of their indications of students' learning from or engagement with the textbooks.

C. Action	9. Students are able to do as instructed by the teacher, *e.g.* opening the book to the right page, doing a particular task as instructed (not on Maths exercises, for instance)	If possible, move around, at least the eyes, to have an estimate of what students are doing & take notes.	
	10. If students mime as cues for other students to make guesses (of what the act(s) about) or as "instructed" (in English) by other students.	Take notes of the extent to which the descriptive miming match the guesses.	
	11. (*As other items of evidence might come up during the data collection itself, leave an open mind to capture them, if any.*)		
A, B, & C.	12. The students have done well (pass) classroom tests/quizzes (spoken and written) in work that is related in some way to the textbook. (only if the test/quiz is given during the sessions observed)	Obtain test scores/ have a look at students' answers.	Nunan (1991, pp. 121-122)
	"SOFT"		
A. Attitudes	13. Students pay attention, apply themselves in class, in relation to textbook-related work.	Estimate the ratio of students attentive to the teacher and/or busy with their study of English.	
	13.1 Students are engaged in doing a task related to the textbook.	Take notes of what the nature of the task and students' participation – the level (how much participation) and quality (how engaged are the students?).	
	13.2 Students actively respond to the books and/or the teacher (when (s)he is teaching from the books).	Take notes of the responsiveness of students and the quality of their responses. *E.g.* Count the number of hands raised to make contributions, questions, answers related to the textbooks.	
B. Teacher	14. The teacher has a very rigorous plan developing the points of the textbooks, which (s)he follows in the sessions observed.	Photocopies of lesson plans or take notes of them (from pre-lesson discussion)	
C. Textbooks	15. Textbooks are used in the classroom as principal learning materials and (almost) everyone has a copy.	Notes of the situation	
	16. The textbooks are often resorted to by the teacher and students.	Record the time the textbooks NOT being used by the teacher/students → ratio of time the books used/time the books not used	

Appendix I

Student post-lesson interview questions

1. In the lesson you've just had, what language point/task did you find the most
   a. interesting/boring? (your interest & learning styles)
   b. relevant /irrelevant? (your wants & needs)
   c. difficult/easy? (your English proficiency & cognitive level)
2. Which activity/ies in the lesson do you think helped you learn most? Why?
3. What language point/task would you rather your teacher had: (*Please give brief answers to each of the questions above.*)
   a. spent more time on? (because, for example, you enjoyed it/you found it useful)
   b. explained in more detail? (because, for example, you found it not easy to understand)
   c. spent less time on or even had skipped? (because, for example, it was easy/boring)

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix J.1

Classroom teacher pre- and post-lesson interview questions

A. PRE-LESSON DISCUSSION

Would you mind allowing me to glance over the lesson plan you might have prepared for the lesson today? Could you briefly explain why you planned what you planned?

Lesson: _____		
Items	**Why so?**	**Notes**
1. Aims & objectives		
2. Teaching points: knowledge/ skills, language input, time allowed		
3. Learning activities/ teaching strategies		
4. Preparations (realia, pictures, supplementary exercises, *etc.*)		
5. Anticipated problems & solutions		

B. POST-LESSON DISCUSSION

1. Why did you teach in the ways you taught?

What you did	**Why?**	**Notes**
a. You did something more than what had been planned.		2. Specifically, were the alterations intentional or just the normal discrepancies between planning and implementation?
b. You did not do something of what had been planned.		
c. You did these things exactly as planned.		

3. What was about the lesson today that you were happy/unhappy with? Why so?

Happy: _____

Unhappy: _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix J.2

Classroom teacher post-observation interview questions

NB. *The sub-topics should be used as prompts to the interviewee when necessary.*

1. What do you think about the new books and curriculum? Specifically, how do you think they are more or less effective than the previous series?

More effective: _____

Less effective: _____

2. This question has been made in the questionnaire but might I discuss it with you in more detail? About *English 10 – Intensive Program,* have you found some discrepancies therein in the light of the following issues?
   - ☐ (1) your principles and beliefs in the "right" ways of teaching and learning English *vs.* the EFL teaching and learning approach/theory of the books?
   - ☐ (2) the EFL teaching and learning approach/theory of the books *vs.* reality (*e.g.* students' willingness of classroom activity participation, class size)
   - ☐ (3) the outcomes prescribed (knowledge and skills) *vs.* results actually targeted (by the institution, students, their parents, yourself, etc., who, for instance, might be driven by performance at exams)
   - ☐ (4) the techniques and procedures required for the activities *vs.* the real context (*e.g.* the activity would be too noisy to conduct; the activity is culturally inappropriate)
   - ☐ (5) the books' requirements *vs.* students' linguistic, cognitive, and maturity level
   - ☐ (6) the content and tasks of the books and students' interest
   - ☐ (7) the constraints of the curriculum *vs.* teacher's creativity in teaching
   - ☐ (8) time allowed *vs.* time really needed
3. The following points have come to my notice during my observation of the classroom hours. Could you please clarify them?

Point 1: .....

Point 2:.....

Point 3: .....

4. Still about the lesson plans I have observed, ideally speaking, what would you have done differently in the classroom if you had been given all you might have needed?
5. What is it that normally makes you feel happy/unhappy with your lessons?
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the books, the program, your students, your context and yourself?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix K

Head teacher interview questions

NB. *The sub-topics should be used as prompts to the interviewee when necessary.*

1. Roughly speaking, how much of and how many times have you taught the books?

2. (a) To your understanding, for the use of *English 10 – Intensive Program,* to what extent would you agree that there has been enough teacher preparation in terms of:

   - The understanding of EFL theories and principles on which the writing of the books is based?
   - The training of methods, techniques, and strategies to teach the new books (*e.g.* how to organize the classroom activities as required by the books)?
   - The knowledge of subject matter (for the exposition of the input content and the presentation of language items)

   (b) Do you think the teachers are still using the methods and techniques they have been familiar with or have you noticed any significant change for the sake of the use of the new books?

   (c) How has the assignment of English teachers to classes of different programs (standard and intensive programs; grades 10, 11, and 12) been done at your school?

   (d) Is there any activity or program – formal or informal – available at your school that supports the teachers who are teaching the intensive program?

3. (a) For factual information, by whom are the tests and examinations designed? And what is the score percentage for each test/exam?

By whom?/Percentage	**Oral check**	**15' test**	**1-period test**	**Semester exam**	**End-of-year**
Classroom teacher					
Your ELT team					
Province's SOET					
National MOET					

(b) On what is the emphasis laid in tests and exams, knowledge or skills? How are listening and speaking tested?

(c) To what extent do you think the tests/exams affect students' ways and aims of English learning and thereby teachers' teaching?

4. The other series, *i.e. English 10 – Standard Program,* is being used by far many more classes and schools. What do you think are the possible reasons for its "popularity"?

5. With the innovation of textbook replacement, as far as you know, are students and teachers having difficulty, if any, only with the new books of English (Intensive Program) or the books of other subjects as well?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share with me, *e.g.* about the books, the program, your students, your context and yourself? Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix L

Textbook writer interview questions

NB. *Please answer the following as one of the authors of the textbooks in question* – English 10 – The Intensive Program *though the forms of address might leave an impression you are being talked to as if you were a teacher, which might very well be your case anyway.*

A. About the books and their use

1. (a) How different are the principles (of EFL learning and teaching) functioning as the foundations of these new books from those of the previous books, if known?

   (b) Why were the changes needed – according to what you may have heard or to your own judgement? Do you agree with them?

2. Do you perceive any gaps between your books (in reference to the aims and objectives, targeted outcomes, implied classroom procedures) and the context of use? In particular, discuss this question in terms of the readiness of
   - Teachers
   - Students
   - Teaching and learning context
3. To your understanding (*e.g.* from your field trips to schools), are the books being used in the way they were visualized to be used during your process of writing the books? (*Are the differences, if any, natural gaps between planning and implementation that have to be accepted or is there anything doable to bridge the gaps or prevent them from happening?*)
4. (a) Do you think the users of the books, the teachers first and foremost, have been acceptably informed of the implied nature of the books and the ways of teaching with them (*e.g.* teachers' and students' assumed roles)? (Via the Teacher's Book, training sections, instructive documents)

(b) What else do think could have done about the enhancement of the link between the writing and the use of the books?

5. To what extent do you think the current practices of assessment (from classroom assessment and testing to graduation examinations to university entrance examinations) affect the EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam?

B. About the process of writing the books

6. The creation of the books

(a) Would you kindly describe briefly the context in which the books were incepted and then introduced into use?

(b) How clearly were the profiles of the target users (students and teachers) and the context of use of the books drawn at the outset?

- Students: age, English proficiency, needs, wants
- Teachers: English proficiency, methodology, ELT beliefs, their context
- Context: resources available (*e.g.* library, teaching facilities), class size, time allocation, advantages and disadvantages of various regions

(c) How close to the frame curriculum were the books written? In other words, how much is the space for the writers' creativity?

(d) All through the construction of the books, what sources of feedback and comments did you manage to get from? What were they about? How helpful were they?

7. What did you do, if anything, to reconcile the interest and preferences of different stakeholders?

- Leaders (Ministry of Education and Training, Service of Education and Training, Publisher): the implementation of the writing project, the introduction of the books to high schools, framework curriculum

- Teachers: differences in English proficiency (between areas), in methodology, in ELT beliefs, attitudes towards innovation
- Students: differences in English proficiency, needs, wants, Vietnamese-only classroom
- Teaching and learning context: audio and visual facilities, resources for teachers and students, practices of assessment and testing
- Other stakeholders: media, parents

C. Others

8. (a) Would you mind discussing several **strengths** and **weaknesses** of the locally produced EFL textbooks like yours to foreign-related commercial counterparts like *Headway, Interchange, Interactions,* and *Cutting Edge*?

   (b) Do you think that some time in the future we should use EFL textbooks jointly created with foreign publishers (in terms of writing, editing, printing, etc.) or even their ready-made publications?

9. What else might you like to share with me? Might we, for instance, talk more about these issues?

   a. The construction and creation of the books
   b. The examination & improvement of the textbooks
   c. The teacher development as possibly needed for the use of the books
   d. The introduction of the books nationwide

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Appendix M.1

Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS)

Prior to the lesson observations, a questionnaire survey was done with the students in order to get an overview of the students' background information, their evaluations of the textbook, and the actual usage of the textbook from their own viewpoint. There were responses from 49 out of the 50 students of the class present at the time of the questionnaire administration, yielding a rate of return of 98%. Of the respondents, who were all 16 years of age, females were the vast majority (93.9%).

1. Status of English

As for these rural students, English seemed to be a very important school subject to study as it was perceived as being "necessary" by 20.6% and "very necessary" by 79.4% of the respondents. This recognition of the significance of English of 100% of the students should have been due to the sweeping influence of the national movement of learning English across the country in which good command of English was an advantage for advancement in study and/or at work. Concerning the extent to which they liked studying English, however, the rates were not that high. The survey results show that 72.3% of the respondents said they liked studying the language and 6.4% claimed they liked studying it very much. The remaining percentage was shared by those who said they did not really like studying English (19.1%) and those who did not like studying it at all (2.1%). This negative learning attitude towards English held by 21.2% of these students could be presumed to be a hindrance to the learning English in the classroom.

Concerning their needs of learning English, in reference to the percent of cases, roughly 80% or more of the respondents claimed they had the needs listed in the questionnaire, except for that of studying abroad (57.1%, see the "Percent of cases" Column, Table M1.1). Notably,

as many as 91.8% of the students claimed they needed to use English as a tool for their study, which was not very probable as all the other subjects were in Vietnamese, unless they were thinking about their study later in the future.

With regard to the percentages in the "Responses – Percent" column, they do differ significantly among the needs, all being 16.2% or lower. Please note that one respondent might have had more than one need and as a result the number of responses was (far) larger than the number of cases (i.e. respondents). These results do not shed much light on the differences, if any, between the students' major English learning purposes. As for Year 10 students, though, whose perception of their future needs is still perhaps unclear and subject to change over time, it was normal to achieve such responses, especially when the respondents concerned just needed to tick the boxes as their responses to the prompts provided.

Table M1.1

English Learning Needs of Case Study 1 Students

Needs of English learning	**Responses**		**Percent of cases**
	N	**Percent**	
(1) Need to use English as a tool for my study?	45	16.2%	91.8%
(2) Need to use English for general communication purposes?	42	15.1%	85.7%
(3) Need to meet the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program?	39	14.0%	79.6%
(4) Need to succeed at university entrance exams for which English is one subject?	40	14.4%	81.6%
(5) Need to study abroad?	28	10.1%	57.1%
(6) Need to develop thinking capacity?	41	14.7%	83.7%
(7) Need to develop language skills?	43	15.5%	87.8%
(8) Others	0	0%	0%
TOTAL	278	100.0%	567.3%

Note. N = Number of valid responses.

Therefore, further inquiry was needed to find out which of the needs listed was the most important for the students, thereby seeking to learn what were the key drivers of their English study. It was revealed by the survey results (see Table M1.2) that success at university entrance exams (for which English is one subject) was the most important for 38.8% of the respondents, a rate far higher than those for the other needs, such as that of fulfilling the requirements of their secondary education (20.4%). These results look reasonable as these students, as noted, were prepared to enter tertiary education via exams of which English is a key subject. Notably, developing thinking capacity and language skills, the needs of English study deemed important by the textbook, were not considered to be so by these rural students.

Table M1.2

Most Important Need of English Learning for Case Study 1 Students

Needs	**Frequency**	**Percent**
(1) using English as a tool for my study	5	10.2%
(2) using English for general communication purposes	7	14.3%
(3) meeting the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program	10	20.4%
(4) succeeding at university entrance exams for which English is one subject	19	38.8%
(5) studying abroad	1	2.0%
(6) developing thinking capacity	2	4.1%
(7) developing my language skills	5	10.2%
(8) Others	0	0%
TOTAL	49	100%

In addition, it is interesting to note that even in relation to the corresponding results in the “Responses – Percent” column in Table M1.1, the percentages of Needs (5) and (6) were considerably smaller in Table M1.2 (2% versus 10.1% and 4.1% versus 14.7%). The differences were mainly because their two questionnaire items were fundamentally different,

one asking about the needs that the students felt they had and the other about just one need that students perceived to be most important for them.

2. Textbook evaluations

This section reports the evaluations of a variety of aspects of the textbook (and its accompanying materials such as the Work Book and the audio disc) by the students. The students were asked to respond to favourable statements about the teaching materials by choosing one of the five options: 1. Strongly Agree; 2. Agree; 3. I Don't Know; 4. Disagree; and 5. Strongly Disagree. The students' responses are considered from two perspectives, "the positive side" and "the negative side". Whereas the former takes into account the percentages of the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses, the latter deals with those of the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses. These considerations are needed because among the five response options to the statements, there was "I don't know", an option made available so that the respondents would not be forced to choose one of the other four if they felt they were uncertain about them.

2.1 Favourable evaluations

The survey results showed that the teaching materials were very highly evaluated by the students. Except for Statements Bh (57.8%) and Bi (57.5%), the cumulative percent of the "agree" and "strongly" responses for all statements was 67.4% (Statement Bm[29]) or higher. These results imply that more than half of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with all the favourable statements about the textbook and its accompanying materials.

[29] The upper case letter (i.e. *B*) indicates the location in the questionnaire of the section where the statement concerned can be found and the lower case letter (i.e. *m*) indicates the location of the statement in that section.

To be specific, the first group of statements to be considered are those that had their percentage in the nineties (or higher). The following were those statements arranged in the order of their percentages from the highest to the lowest:

- Bk: "The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning": 100%;
- Ba: "There is good continuity between this series (*English 10 – Intensive Programme*) and the other four for lower secondary education (*English 6, English 7, English 8,* and *English 9*)": 95.9%;
- Bo: "The workbook provides good tasks for review and reinforcement of the knowledge learned in the Student Book" and Bq "The workbook provides good tasks for further development of the skills learned in the Student Book": 95.7%;
- Br: "I think these books basically meet my needs of English learning": 93.6%;
- Bl: "The design and layout of the books are good enough so as not to cause confusion": 91.9%; and
- Bb: "The language input is well graded from lesson to lesson so that it presents no significant difficulty to students' learning": 91.8%.

Concerning these results, the most encouraging is that of Br. If the students agreed (or strongly agreed) that the textbook and its components basically met their needs, the materials stood very good chance of being effective to the students. The only issue that needs further investigation is what exactly about the textbook that the students felt it met their needs.

Concerning the statements whose percentages were between the eighties and nineties, the highest was Bc (89.1%: "The topics and subtopics are interesting enough to make students interested"); followed by Bq (88.3%: "I enjoy studying with the books"); and then Bf (83.3%: "The tasks provide communicable situations for students to practise using English"). All these results were very positive indicators of the extent to which the textbook could have made learning happen as expected. Indeed, while students normally learn best with what can engage their interest and with what they find enjoyable studying, the

communicability of the situations provided by the tasks can facilitate students to develop their English communication.

With regard to the statements whose cumulative percent of "agree" and strongly agree" responses was within the seventies, the following are the results arranged from the highest to the lowest rates:

- Bn: "The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful for students' learning English": 77.3%;
- Be: "The language level required is appropriate with students' language proficiency" and Bg: "The tasks are meaningful and relevant to the students' immediate environment": 77.1%;
- Bj: "The rubrics of the tasks and exercises are clear": 76.1%; and
- Bd: "The cognitive level required is appropriate with students' level of maturity": 73.5%.

Of these results, the most encouraging are those of Be, Bg, and Bd as learning was highly probable when the majority of the students agreed (or strongly agreed) that the textbook was appropriate for them in terms of language and cognitive levels and that the tasks were meaningful and relevant to their circumstances.

Concerning the remaining statements (i.e. Bm, Bh, and Bi), the cumulative percent of their "agree" and "strongly agree" responses was respectively 67.4%, 57.8%, and 57.5%. Although these results still indicate that more than half of the respondents evaluated the textbook favourably, it is worth investigating further what the other respondents' evaluations about these features were. This question will be considered in the next section.

2.2 Unfavourable evaluations

As noted in the preceding section, the three statements Bh, Bi and Bm had the lowest per cent of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses. Considering their cumulative percent of

“disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses, however, Bh and Bi had the highest percentages, respectively 33.3% (28.9% for “disagree”) and 29.8% (23.4%). These results suggest that according to approximately one-third of the respondents, the class lessons were possibly having some difficulty in the actual implementation of the tasks. For Bh is related to the tasks’ achievability in consideration of their complexity and the classroom conditions and Bi to the consistency and the variety of the procedures of tasks. Regarding Statement Bm (“The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in your home study and practice”), the cumulative per cent (of the unfavourable responses) was 19.1%, meaning that as for quite a number of the respondents, the disc accompanying the textbook was not helpful for their study. Finally, it is notable that the percentage for Bj was 21.8%, which indicates that quite a number of the students even had difficulty in understanding the rubrics of the tasks (that are written in simple English).

Regarding the other statements, the cumulative percent of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses was quite low, and those results again suggest that most of the respondents had favourable evaluations of the textbook (and its accompanying materials). Indeed, for the majority of the statements, the rate was below 10%, e.g. Ba (4.1%); Bb (8.2%); Bc (6.5%); Bk (0%); Bl (6.1%); Bo (0%); Bp (2.1%); Bq (9.3%). As noted earlier, nonetheless, attention needs to be paid to Bd (18.3%); Be (18.8%); and Bf (14.6%), for these characterisations of the textbook (respectively appropriateness in terms of cognitive and linguistic levels and communicability of tasks) play a significant role in making effective lessons take place.

3. Textbook usage

3.1 Study of skills versus knowledge

The first survey item in this part sought to learn about the approximate amount of time per week students spent on the practice of skills and study of language knowledge. According

to the students' reports, their weekly time investment varied hugely, from zero to 480 minutes. On average, skills were given 58 minutes per week whereas knowledge 76. This result indicates that the students spent more time on knowledge learning.

Being considered separately, grammar got the largest share (102 minutes), followed by reading (88) and then vocabulary the third (77) whereas the others lagged behind: Writing 54 minutes; and Pronunciation 49; Speaking 48; and Listening 44. These results seem to be well related with the format of important tests and exams students were going to take, which laid emphasis on the three areas grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Importantly, the total amount of time that the students claimed they were spending on aural and oral skills (92 minutes) was still smaller than that of grammar alone (102).

Concerning students' evaluation of the five sections of the textbook, there were four questions. Regarding the question whether the textbook's sections were interesting to the students, Reading was rated to be so by the most respondents (nearly half of them, 48.8%), followed by Speaking (41.9%) and then Listening (27.9%) whereas Writing and Language Focus received very low percentages (respectively 4.7% and 2.3%). Particularly regarding Speaking, such a relatively high rate (i.e. 41.9%) can be seen as an encouragement for attempts to teach oral skills, which are much needed for successful communication.

In terms of necessity, Language Focus achieved the highest rate (79.2%), followed by Reading (62.5%) and then Speaking (54.2%) while Writing (39.6%) and Listening (35.4%) were quite behind. These results confirm the importance of mastery of language knowledge (taught in Language Focus) and the importance of reading skills, which were the foci of the current tests and exams. Notably, while most of the students did not consider Language Focus interesting, they deemed it necessary.

Regarding difficulty, Listening was seen to be difficult by the most respondents (60.9%), followed by Writing (43.5%) and then Language Focus (32.6%) and then Speaking (21.7%) and, quite far below, Reading (8.7%). Regarding listening, these results confirm a

common problem that aural skills are normally found to be the most difficult skill by students, especially when they are studying the foreign language in their native environment. What is hopeful for teaching English communication to take place in the classroom is that not many of the students (just 21.7%) reported they found the section dealing with oral skills difficult.

Finally, the students were asked whether they found the textbook's sections boring, a question designed not exactly as a cross check of the respondents' consistency in answering the questionnaire but to see their thoughts of the sections from the opposite point of reference (boring versus interesting). According to the survey results, the respondents were relatively consistent as the two sections previously considered "interesting" by the least students (i.e. Writing and Language Focus) were now rated "boring" by the most students. What is notable about these results, however, is that speaking was deemed "boring" by the least students (just 7.7%), suggesting there were perhaps opportunities to teach these oral skill to the students.

3.2 Points of focus in lessons

Concerning students' classroom lessons, the survey sought to learn whether skills or knowledge was the focus in students' lessons. As for reading, the survey results showed that the emphasis was on the latter, with 87% of the respondents saying it was the case while the percentage for the former was 60.9%. Please note that the added percentages totalled over 100% because respondents might have chosen to focus on both skills and knowledge. Regarding respondents who claimed they focused solely on one of the two, the corresponding results were 39.1% and 15.2%, which confirms the dominant position of the language knowledge in the students' lessons. With regard to the reading excerpts in particular, inquiry was made to elicit the respondents' opinions on the language level, cognitive level and interestingness of those texts. The survey results show that 63.3% of the respondents thought the language level was "suitable" whereas 34.7% rated them as "difficult" and only 2% chose

“easy”. Concerning the question whether the excerpts were suitable to students’ cognitive level, 59.2% of the respondents said they were so while 43.7% said they were difficult and a mere 6.1% percentage considered them “easy”. In terms of how interesting the excerpts were, 59.2% chose the option “all right” as responses, as many 36.7% ticked “interesting” and just 4.1% rated them “boring”. Generally, the reading excerpts appeared to be appropriate for more than half of the respondents.

Concerning listening lessons, the emphasis was again more on knowledge than skills. As many as 75.6% of the respondents said the focus was on vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciation of the listening texts while just 57.8% focused on the listening strategies and processes. Regarding the respondents whose emphasis was solely on one of the two, the corresponding rates were 41.3% and 13%. These results again demonstrate that the point of focus in the students’ lessons was language knowledge. Furthermore, for their listening lessons, 63.8% of the students reported that they either read the listening script or the answer key prior to the classroom lessons. That practice as reported by the teacher had made it difficult for her to conduct the lessons in the ways expected since many students had lost their interest once they had known the answers.

Concerning speaking lessons, 45.9% of the respondents said there had not been enough practice of the language functions for them in the lessons. Given the fact that more than 50 students shared one teacher during a 45-minute period allocated for the practice of the oral skills, the rate could not have been better. In compensation, however, many students reported that they had worked on their own to improve their speaking skills by, for example, saying repeatedly the functions (provided in the textbook) to themselves in front of the mirror at home.

Concerning writing lessons, among the issues of concern listed in the questionnaire, writing grammatical sentences was considered the largest difficulty by the most respondents, 82.6%. Meanwhile, other important issues like using appropriate vocabulary, organisation

and finding and developing ideas achieved much lower rates, respectively 34.8%; 47.8%; and 43.8%. This situation was reasonable because as for Year 10 students, grammar is still a problem to deal with in their writing. However, the results also indicate that it was as well because of the influence of exams, in which there were quite a number of items about grammar. Concerning the source of feedback available to the students, the respondents disclosed that the primary source was the classroom teacher (68.1%) while classmates and friends accounted for just 46.8%. Shared by 51 students, the teacher would have found it hard to meet the needs of all them.

Regarding Language Focus, the survey results show that just 59.2% of the respondents said they found the explanations provided by the teacher and the textbook had been enough. That being the case, nearly half of them would have had to rely on other resources of language usage guide. As for rural students, this was likely a problem as the English materials were not affordable to many of them.

3.3 Classroom lessons

Concerning classroom reality, the students were asked about the language (English versus Vietnamese) that was (i) actually used and (ii) preferred to be used in the lessons. Concerning the first question, the students' responses were quite different. Although they were all studying in the same classroom with the same teacher, while 26.5% said it was English that was normally used, 69.4% said it was Vietnamese and 4.1% said it was a mix of Vietnamese and English. Regarding the second question, the most favoured preference was English (65.3%) whereas as many as 22.4% of the respondents said they preferred Vietnamese (to be used) and 12.2% said they wanted a mix of both languages. Notably, several of the respondents while acknowledging their limited proficiency in communicating in English still insisted on using English instead of their mother tongue as an attempt to improve their English.

With regard to the classroom interaction, the survey results show that the students worked as a chorus at teacher's direction (e.g. repeating certain words) in one-third of the classroom time (32.6%). Alternatively, the time was reportedly used for the students as one party to interact with the teacher as another (26.6%). Consequently, the time for pair and group work, as reported by the students, took up merely 21% of the time. These results suggest that the teacher's role as the dominant centre was still common. Notably, students' individual work accounted for 15.7% of the classroom time.

Concerning the classroom activities, two questions were made to the students. First, they were asked if the activities were appropriate to their learning styles. Second, they were asked whether the activities were useful for their learning English. The results were very positive. Respectively 79.6% and 81.6% of the respondents said those were the cases for them. These results are hopeful for effective learning to take place in the classroom as students generally can learn best when they find the lesson activities appropriate with and useful for them. The lesson observations that followed this survey would help to confirm whether these were actually the cases in this class.

Appendix M.2 (pages 385-392) removed from Open Access version as it may contain sensitive/confidential content.

Appendix M.3

'Lesson Proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS)

Remarks: This appendix does not contain the „lesson proceedings" of the speaking lesson, which are already provided in the body of the thesis, Section 5.3.3.2.

1. Session 1

Minutes 1-8: (*The class did not start until eight minutes after the bell rang.*)

Minutes 8-10 Without reviewing the previous lesson (as is typical teaching practice in Vietnam), in these two minutes the teacher briefly explained what students were required to do in the task. The explanations were given in English with Vietnamese translation in between, according to the teacher, in order to make it easier for students to know what they were required to do. Students were to complete sentences with the correct forms of the words given in parentheses, a task that was in fact a verb-noun transformation exercise. Two points were emphasised for successful completion:

(i) Students should be able to identify the form of words that might fit in the gap;

(ii) Students should know or be able to find out the right form of the word as needed.

Minutes 10-15: In the next five minutes, the teacher led the students through the task (p. 133) by first reading aloud the gapped sentences and then randomly picking out a student to stand up and read the sentence completed with their answer. After each correct answer was given, another student would be picked to go and write their answer on the chalkboard. The rationale for this as explained by the teacher in the post-lesson discussion was to keep the attention of all the students. Also, according to the teacher, those chosen to be the writers were normally less strong students, a practice that aimed to get them involved in the lesson. All five sentences were correctly answered and written on the chalkboard, which students then copied down in their notebooks.

Minutes 15-18: The teacher then spent the next three minutes on further practice of the language point in question. Three gapped sentences were given out to complete with the correct forms of the words provided:

The chairman encouraged everyone to _____ *to the discussion.* (contribution)

If you are successful, you can expect _____. (promote)

The government is responsible for the _____ *of medical services.* (provide)

Students were left to do this task individually for about one minute, excluding the time taken to write down the sentences from the board (written by the teacher) into their notebook. About five students raised their hand to give answers to two of the three sentences (1. and 3.) and the chosen ones answered the sentences correctly. No student however knew the answer to 2., which was then provided by the teacher.

Minutes 19-23: The lesson now turned to the first grammar point of the section – *should.* In Vietnamese, the teacher asked what the modal was used for. One of the three students raising their hands answered correctly; "for making suggestions", they said. Complementing the answer, the teacher said *should* could also be used to give advice or an opinion. The teacher continued by asking for the translation of the modal into Vietnamese, which a student did correctly. The teacher then asked for a synonym and again another student answered correctly – *ought to.* The teacher then put the following on the chalkboard:

Should = Ought to = Had better

Minutes 24-24: The teacher briefly explained how to do Task A on page 134. She then chose two pairs of students to answer the first two questions. Her choice of students, as she informed the researcher in the next minutes when she was free, were intentional (targeting at better students) hoping their answers would be correct, which would then function as samples and thereby hopefully trigger students' confidence.

Minutes 25-26: Students were left on their own to work out the answers to the rest of the questions (exactly 1.5 minutes). They turned to work with their classmates at the same table.

Minutes 26-33: In pairs, students were selected to give answers. One student read aloud the question and the other gave answers using *should* and the given words. Naturally, the rest of the class had to be waiting before they were called by the teacher. As in the case with the vocabulary task, all the answers given were correct.

Minutes 34-45: From minute 34 towards the end of the period, which ended at minute 45, the class worked on Task B), which was of conditional sentences, type 2. The teacher began the section writing on the board this example, *"What would happen if people used gas without control?*" She asked how many clauses there were in the sentence. This took two students to obtain the correct answer after quite a length of silence. The teacher then identified the *if* and main clauses and asked what forms of the verbs were used in the clauses. Again, correct answers were not achieved after several students' attempts. The teacher then put the following the formation of conditional sentences (type 2, see below) on the board before she went on to explain about the uses of type conditionals – "referring to unreal things at the present", she said.

Subject + would/could + V0 ‖ S + V_2 (*be: were*)

Then, after giving an additional example, *"If I were you, I wouldn"tbuy that old car",* the teacher asked students to provide examples of their own. Within seconds, a student managed to produce this sentence, *"If I were a bird, I would be a pigeon".*

This student-made sentence caused a burst of excitement amongst the students because it was a translation from the one of the lyrics of a patriotic song quite popular among school students. The song-based translation might have triggered many more interesting student-produced sentences but it was time for the short break so as homework for the grammar point

studied the teacher requested the students to translate into English the next sentence of the song, which was also conditional.

All through the 45-minute period, the teacher-student communication was primarily in Vietnamese; English was used only when it could not have been otherwise, (e.g. the reading aloud of examples and reading sentences from the textbook. Moreover, the interaction was principally one way: from the teacher to the students. The students' role was to listen and respond when they could; teacher talk time was dominant.

(*Five minutes" break*)

Minutes 46-59: After the break, the class resumed with work on Task B), p. 135, another textbook task still on conditionals, type 2. Students were required to write answers to given questions employing the conditional type in question. After several minutes working on their own, students came up with the following responses (in bold face):

1. *A: What would happen if dwellers in this city didn" t save energy?*

B: ***They'd suffer from shortage of energy and air pollution.***

2. *A: What if local authorities didn" t control dynamite fishing?*

B: ***Local people would suffer from a shortage of fish for food.***

3. *A: What if oil tankers leaked?*

B: ***People would suffer from sea pollution.***

4. *A: What if poachers killed polar bears for fur?*

B: ***They would become extinct / disappear.***

5. *A: What would happen if more and more people used motorbikes?*

B: ***We would suffer from air pollution / shortage of energy.***

There remained responses to questions 6 and 7 to be produced but the teacher asked the students to work these out for themselves as homework, saving the remaining time for one more grammar point to cover. Through the production of the five sentences above, the teacher

intervened when needed, for example, by giving the hint “become extinct” at sentence 4 or doing the translation for “fish for food”.

Minutes 60-70: Just as in the case with the first grammar point, ten minutes was spent on conditional sentences, type 3. The teacher began with the following example:

If I had arrived at the airport 10 minutes earlier, I wouldn"t have missed the plane.

Reading aloud the example, the teacher wrote it on the board with its grammatical formation:

Would have + p.p. ‖ *had* + p.p.

The teacher then asked students about the uses of these conditionals. A student then gave an answer, which was correct – “used to express hypotheses of unreal past things”. The teacher then made the students work on Task B) available in the textbook. Not all the questions were worked through, though. Questions 7 and 8 were left to be finished on their own as homework so that the lesson had time to turn onto extra exercises provided by the teacher.

Minutes 71-79: The teacher and students worked on Exercise I in the teacher-provided handout (see Appendix ---). The exercise had eight four-choice questions about conditional sentences, all of types 2 and 3. Unlike with exercises in the textbooks, students managed to give just one correct answer (question 2); for the others, the teacher had to give hints and “lead-ins”. This difference in performance might have been due to a common practice that, as revealed by the teacher later in the post-lesson discussion, students would usually refer to the answer key (to the exercises of the textbooks) available in commercial self-study materials.

Minute 80: The teacher spent one minute reviewing conditional sentences type 1, because Exercise II in the handout required knowledge of all the three types of conditionals. The structure of this type of conditional sentence was put on the blackboard for students’ reference.

Minutes 81-87: Exercise II had eight questions with verbs provided in the infinite form for students to fill in the gaps. Students were asked to go to the blackboard to write down answers. Six of the eight answers produced were correct and two were corrected by the teacher in front of the class. The mistakes were essentially with issues other than the grammar point in question.

Minutes 88-90: The teacher spent the last three minutes of the two-period session reviewing the points studied, especially conditional sentences. And, as homework for students, the following task was given:

Homework: *Change the following statements into conditional sentences.*

I did not watch TV last night because I was busy.

It is very cold, so I can"tswim.

I don"thave her address, so I can"t write to her.

The teacher would have read the sentences aloud for students to write down in their exercise book but because students said they would have difficulty in writing the sentences correctly if they were read, she wrote them on the blackboard instead. The difficulty indicated students were struggling with listening.

5.1.1.1 Post-lesson interviews

After the lesson, interviews were held with two selected students and the teacher about the session just observed. The selection of student interviewees was based first on receiving research participation consent from the students and their parents, and then with respect to their performance and motivation in the class as informed by the teacher (who nominated the students to be interviewed from amongst those who had consented). One of the student interviewees represented highly performing and motivated students, while the other represented the average student. One student of a lower proficiency level could have been included if consent had been given and there had been more time for discussions after the sessions – the interview time available was 15 minutes at most. The interview questions were

primarily concerned with the lesson points the students (i) had found the most interesting/boring; relevant /irrelevant (to their wants and needs); difficult/easy; (ii) would rather the teacher had spent more/less time on and why. The interviews were conducted in the school corridor as soon as the lesson session ended and lasted up to four minutes each.

For the teacher interview, the research interest was in why she had taught in the ways she taught (e.g. more than or less than planned) and broadly whether she was happy/unhappy with the lesson and why. The interviews however did not take place as often or completely as expected because the teacher seemed not really willing to participate fully in spite of her giving prior consent. Also, it was quite difficult to locate her once she left the class and the researcher was finished with the interviews with the students. As compensation, therefore, when she was willing, the intended questions were put to her when she met the researcher later but in advance of the next session to be observed. The interviews normally lasted three minutes at most.

Student interviewee 1 found the whole session interesting, particularly the extra exercises, "because they meet my needs", which she disclosed was to go to a university of foreign language. She found the tasks in the textbooks suitable but as for the exercises in the handouts, she said more time would have been better for clarification of some grammar points and new vocabulary. As for student interviewee 2, who said she was going to take English as one the three subjects for the university entrance exams, she preferred the tasks in the textbook because thematically they were more related to the unit, and thus were more relevant. To follow the progress of Task B), both students reported they had previously made prior preparations because they found the exercises therein difficult. They required not only appropriate use of conditional tenses; students also had to have ideas and ability to build sentences on their own to give satisfactory answers. As for the other exercises, they simply picked the right choice of the one provided or at had already got the suggested expressions provided. As confirmed in the interview with the teacher later, the students of this class were

better able to do such mechanical tasks as the one on p. 135, which simply required using the right form of the given verb (and anything else was ready-made) than those involving some communication like Task B).

The teacher stated in her interview that she was just willing for a very brief talk via which she said that her students were just able to do the task on p. 136. As for Task B), p. 135, the demand was overwhelming for them. Also, the format of the questions was not those of the graduation or college/university entrance exams, thus failing to energise students to be wholly devoted (to doing the task). She said she would have liked to lessen the demands of exercise b), p.135 to make it appropriate with the vast majority of the students.

2. Session 2

Minutes 1-4: (*The class did not start until four minutes after the bell rang*.)

Minutes 5-13: These first eight minutes were spent on reviewing the previous lesson. One student was picked up to produce conditional sentences from the cues provided, which was the homework given in session 1. There was quite much hesitation on the student at the board to write down the answers. The following is what was produced by the student:

If I had busy, I wouldn"thave watch TV last night.

If it were not very cold, so I would gone swimming.

If I would know her address, so I were write to her.

Checking the sentences, the teacher turned on other students for their comments. Three students were then invited to the board to make corrections. They all did a good job at their first attempts, providing corrections as follows:

If I had not been busy, I would~~n't~~ have watched TV last night.

If it were not very cold, ~~so~~ I would go~~ne~~ swimming.

If I ~~would know~~ knew her address, ~~so~~ I ~~were~~ would write to her.

Minutes 14-15: After the lesson review, as a lead-in activity, the teacher showed flash cards of scrambled words for students to rearrange the letters to make up words:

CCNGƯƯƠPH; VBÌA; ÁÀTBC; ĐÔCOẢN; CHẠMÃBM

It was interesting to see that students managed to get the right words as soon as they were shown the flash cards: CÚC PHƯƠNG; BA VÌ; CÁT BÀ; CÔN ĐẢO; BẠCH MÃ, all names of major Vietnamese national parks. While the task might have helped to lead into the topic of unit and also the lesson, it was hard to see the rationale of the activity in terms of how it could make English learning happen.

The teacher then asked what the names above were about. Students correctly related them to national parks. "Have you been there?", the teacher said. "No", several students replied. "Can you tell me more of them?", the teacher elicited. Curious silence was the response – maybe because students did not know much about these places and/or it was too general a question and/or maybe students did not have enough English to give answers.

Minutes 16-21: Following the warm-up activity, the session went into the first section of the reading lessons, *Before You Read* (p. 137). Students were given three minutes to skim through three extracts which they were to match with three pictures of national parks named *Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma,* and *Nam Cat Tien.* The answers given were all recognised to be correct by the teacher. After the matching, the teacher asked a few more details about the parks, just simple questions, and the students all answered correctly. The session then moved to the next section, *The Reading Text* (p. 138).

Minutes 22-25: Students silently read the passage on page 138.

Minutes 26-30: Students having nearly finished their reading, the teacher hung up a carton board on which there were two self-made columns of words, all from the reading passage (Column A: 1. *rim*; 2. *annual*; 3. *established*; 4. *covers*; 5. *preserve*; 6. *provide*; 7. *caretaker*; column B: a. *set up*; b. *occupy*; c. *a person who looks after something or someone*;

d. *yearly*; e. *supply*; f. *edge*; g. *keep*). Students were asked to match words meaning the same, which they did quite well with only two mismatches.

The teacher then asked students to give the translations of the words. While some proved to try hard to think of Vietnamese equivalents as requested, it seemed as if the rest were just waiting to write down the translations once they were approved by the teacher.

Minutes 31-37: The teacher put on another carton board on which there were five self-made statements. The students were asked to decide whether they were true or false based on the information in the reading passage. For false statements, corrections were to be made. The students seemed to have considerable difficulty in doing the task and the teacher had to lead them through the statements with references back and forth to the passage. Their problem might well have been due to their difficulty in understanding the statements and/or the passage.

Minutes 38-43: The class turned to another task, which was now available in the textbooks. They were to read the passage once again and complete the chart provided. With the teacher's assistance, different students contributed to complete the chart. Notably, having been done with the completion, the teacher asked students, presumably those of weaker levels, once again to complete the chart again. This technique, as was learned later through discussion with the teacher, helped to ensure weaker students had caught the correct answers.

Minutes 44-46: One student was asked to reproduce the completed chart on the board. She did the assignment correctly by copying from her own book onto the board.

It should be noted that the three minutes 46-48 were of the 10-minute break the students were to be taking after this reading lesson. Minutes numbered 49, 50, and 51… onwards were actually the first minutes of the actual lesson period that followed.

Minutes 47-49: Students just came back from the break and as normal, it took several minutes to be ready for the lesson.

Minutes 50-53: One student was asked to write the English words, which had now been erased, that corresponded to the Vietnamese words in column A of the task done in minutes 26-30. The first word *caretaker* was written by the teacher as an example and for the six remaining words the task was done by three student writers. Student 3 however did not have the correct spelling for *establish* and had to be helped by a classmate.

Minutes 54-61: The teacher and students now turned to task b (p. 139). Students were given half a minute to skim through the graph in the textbook and then to answer the three *wh*-questions in the first part of the task. Six students were asked to give answers with the even numbered students almost repeating the odd-numbered ones. To assist, the teacher broke question 3 into three sub-questions, first about the number of birds, then reptiles, and finally amphibians. The students all gave correct answers.

For the second part of the task, there were gapped sentences to complete with the information from the passage. For each question, the teacher had two students involved: one was to read aloud the completed sentence and the other to write it on the board. This task was satisfactorily done by students.

Minutes 62-67: As for task c, the teacher had students work in groups of four to find words to complete the spidergrams of (i) national parks in Vietnam and (ii) species of animals. Hot discussions could be observed but they were primarily in Vietnamese. Students seemed to be more interested in getting the best answers rather than practising English.

Minutes 68-84: Different groups of students were asked to complete the spidergrams drawn on the board by the teacher while other students continued their discussions. Task (i) was completed quite easily and completely but as for (ii), students had difficulty. All the groups managed to produce merely four words (*swallows, tortoises, turtles,* and *bull-frogs*) and the teacher had to add her own (*eagles, nightingales, chameleons, crocodiles,* etc.)

Minutes 84-89: These last minutes were spent on a pronunciation task, which was more a practice for exams than for actually saying the words. It took time for the teacher to

write the words on the board and for the students to copy them down to their notebook, so there was just enough time to give answers to the first two groups. The following was the task given.

Pick out the word whose stress pattern is different.

national / endanger / annual / different

culture / preserve / maintain / provide

climate / become / fauna / number

condition / establish / develop / buffalo

species / unique / cover / rainfall

By far, it could be noted that students seemed to be more interested in and excited with the teacher-provided tasks than those ready in the textbooks, and this was also the case with this task. Later discussions with the teacher revealed that the teacher-provided tasks were completely new to students; everyone thus was on equal foot in the race for the correct and best answers. As for the tasks of the textbooks, some of the students might have used the answer key, thus failing to enjoy the challenge that should have been due.

3. Session 3

(*Minutes 1-45 were spent on the speaking lesson, the proceedings of which were presented in Section 5.3.3.2 in the body of the thesis*)

Minutes 46-47: (*There was no class activity as the teacher came back to the class two minutes later than scheduled.*)

Minutes 48-57: WRITING: ***Interpreting and describing graphs***

The writing lesson started with a pre-writing activity of filling the missing information of a passage by referring to a graph. Just as with most tasks in the textbook, the students were able to provide satisfactory answers.

Minutes 58-64: The students were working on another pre-writing activity designed to prepare the information needed for the writing task to follow suit. Again, there were two rounds of questions and answers. For the first round, the teacher read aloud the three questions and after each she picked up a student to give answers. All the three students answered correctly. For the second round, the teacher repeated the procedures but this time the students picked up were those of weaker level as an attempt to get everyone involved. The task though repeated, as explained by the teacher, was generally challenging to these students. Truly, it turned out that the third student had difficulty in giving the answer and the teacher had to help him.

The students then took one minute to look through the instructions, which were interpreted by the teacher as she read them along mainly by means of translation.

Minutes 65-71: The teacher worked with the students to get through the writing task. There were ready-made phrases beginning the individual sentences of a short paragraph from which students were to make complete sentences based on the information available in the graph. The teacher rewrote the phrases on the board and one student came to continue them with her own words. Other students might make suggestions, if any. After about five minutes, the paragraph was basically completed:

In the graph, the number of blowouts that occurred in Australia in 1965 ~~are~~ is shown. According to the paragraph, there were five gas blowouts ~~occurred~~ in Bass Strait and one in Timor Sea. In sum, there were six blowouts.

The paragraph looked encouraging; somehow more than what could be reasonably expected from rural students. Notably, the first of the two corrections was done by a student. The teacher provided some corrections to make the paragraph better.

Minutes 72-76: Students worked on task one in a similar practice exercise, i.e. filling in blanks of the gapped passage with the information available from the chart given. They had five minutes to silently read the passage and come up with appropriate answers. Students

might communicate with their neighbours to exchange ideas but the task was primarily individual work.

Minutes 77-78: The teacher selected students to go to the board to present their answers to the class. All the three students gave correct answers.

Minutes 77-78: The minutes that followed were spent on task c), p. 144-45 of the textbook. Since the requirements were quite complex, the teacher explained the instruction in more detail and even translated a substantial part of it into Vietnamese.

Minutes 79-79: The students worked silently on the task on their own. Meanwhile, the teacher drew the graph on the board.

Minutes 80-81: One student was selected to draw a graph according to their predicted numbers (of visitors).

Minutes 82-89: All students were asked to write sentences describing the graph – like for task b2. (p. 144). There were very few hands being raised as volunteers. The teacher therefore relied on a few select students who, she later disclosed in the post-lesson interview, would be called on when the tasks were so challenging. As expected, all the three students produced three correct sentences, if not to mention some teacher assistance to the last one.

Minutes 90-90: Homework assignment: Students were asked to do Task B in the handout.

4. Session 4

Minutes 1-4: *(The class did not start until four minutes after the bell rang.)*

Minutes 5-11: Lesson review

Minutes 12-22: The teacher spent as many as 11 minutes leading into the listening lesson because students seemed to be not very responsive to her questions as attempts to get them into the tasks. Students' difficulty might have been originated from the pausing of the teacher and her questions, which were perhaps vague. For example, the teacher made these questions consecutively, leaving no time for students to process them:

"What did you do at the weekend?" → "Have you been to a national park?" →

Do you like the trip?"

Minutes 23-26: The teacher played the talk to which the students listened. The disc was played twice. Between or during, there was no intervention from the teacher as an attempt to facilitate students' listening comprehension.

Minutes 27-29: The teacher checked the answers to task (b), p. 140 with the students – to check or not to check the boxes. The teacher stopped to ask students about the Vietnamese translation of "go trekking", and one student gave a correct translation.

Minutes 30-30: The students listened to the talk for the third time.

Minutes 31-33: Guided by the teacher, the students worked through the three questions in task c). Answers were given only to the first two. The third question was open-ended and was left to be answered until later.

Minutes 34-36: The students listened to the talk for the fourth time to answer the three questions on the handouts, which were all of multiple-choice format. It took five students to give three correct answers.

Minutes 37-39: The teacher let the students listen to the talk for the fifth time, just to make sure they had understood the talk. And then they now turned to question 3 of task c) because by now they were believed to have been quite familiar with the talk. Still, they could not.

Minutes 40-41: Students listened to the talk for the sixth time as another chance.

Minutes 42-44: The teacher helped the students to answer the question. One student managed to give an answer that the teacher modified to make it better.

Minutes 45-45: Homework was assigned; the students were asked to do Task D (p. 141).

Appendix M.4

Classroom teacher post-observation interview notes

– Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS)

Interviewee: Ms. Nu

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify her.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*What do you think about the new book and curriculum?* [2]*Specifically, how do you think they are more or less effective than the previous ones?*
2. **Ms. Nu:**
   - [1]The older books: more effective for rural students; they were able to make their better learning happen; (rural students just need) reading and language focus and writing; the older books: no listening; lax requirements of speaking; students would be feeling more relaxed without listening exams required.
   - [2]Meanwhile, the new material: the two „extra" sections (listening and speaking) giving more pressure to students in learning→ effectiveness of lessons would thereby be lessened.
   - [3]However, new textbook: better in these ways: amount of grammar knowledge required not so heavy and is well spread over three Years 10-12; change from the grammar-translation and direct methods to the communicative approach, which shifts learners" emphasis onto language skills rather than knowledge.
3. ***R:*** [1]*This question has been made in the questionnaire but might I discuss it with you in more detail?* [2]*About* English 10 – Intensive Programme*, have you found some mismatches:*

4. ***R:*** [1] *Your principles and beliefs in the 'right' ways of teaching and learning English* vs. *the English language teaching approach of the book?*
5. **Ms. Nu:** [1]Teachers are willing to teach the new textbook in the ways it is to be taught but there have been many problems arising from the circumstances. (*Those problems are discussed in the answers to the next sub-questions below.*)
6. ***R:*** [1]*The EFL teaching and learning approach/theory of the books* versus *reality (*e.g. *students' participation, class size, classroom activity)*
7. **Ms. Nu:**
   - [1]Extensive use of pair and/or group work required by the new textbook was hardly implementable because the students" level of English is very poor so their participation is very limited. [2]Lack of „nucleus" students whose English was strong enough to lead the group work activities and to keep the activities going.
   - [3]Had to teach in Vietnamese; if used English, lessons impossible to progress → to give up anyway.
   - [4]Communication in English and pair/group work: not needed for rural students, who only needed grammar lessons for exams.
   - [5]Physical conditions: too many students and tables fixed in rows → can"t move tables and students around as typically required by communicative language teaching activities
8. ***R:*** [1]*The outcomes prescribed (knowledge and skills) vs. results actually targeted (by the institution, students, their parents, yourself*, etc., *who, for instance, might be driven by performance at exams)*
9. **Ms. Nu:**
   - [1]Parents didn"t care much.

- [2]Priority of parents and the school board: Students to pass the admission tests to the university (50% of the parents want their children to be admitted to tertiary education institutions).
- [3]Only about five students (10%) had private classes and they were the children of educated parents.
- [4]What most of the students and their parents needed is: Their final score would be the pass mark or above and they would pass the university admission exams

10. *R:* [1]*The techniques and procedures required for the activities vs. the real context*

11. Ms. Nu:

- [1]New textbook: requires the use of pair and group work, so students need to use English in an extensive way but rural students are very limited in speaking and listening proficiency, and thus apt to refrain them from actively participating in the classroom activities. [2]„Weak students" will find the work even more difficult → turned to be "dreadful" of the pair/group work activities, gradually feeling alienated from participation.
- [3]Pair/group work activities: the students were incapable of doing this; just be able to communicate in Vietnamese.
- [4]Learning of teaching methodology: Teacher training for the use of the textbooks (of the intensive program) was not provided. [5]Advised to teach in the ways required by the textbooks of the regular programme → to teach based on our own study and interpretation of the Teacher"s Book. [6]Only five classes across the province using textbooks of the intensive programme → [7]Attention was only paid to the regular programme (in terms of teaching aids as an example), for it was not worthwhile to invest in the intensive programme.

12. *R:* [1]*2.5 The textbook's requirements about students' linguistic, cognitive, and maturity level versus students' reality.*

13. Ms. Nu:

- [1]Listening and speaking so difficult for students‟ level. [2]My students: Unable to understand spoken English and simply can‟t "open their mouths" to speak English.
- [3]Students can at best cope with other sections (Reading, Writing, and Language Focus), though.
- [4]Overall, the required level of the textbook: too difficult for rural students.

14. *R:* [1]*The content and tasks of the books* vs. *students' interest*

15. Ms. Nu: [1]Several topics are not really relevant or meaningful to rural students‟ life → hard for them to talk about those topics. [2]For example, as for "preservation of nature": students might have never heard of the term, so how could they have contributed to the lessons? [3]Urban students – with better access to information resources (e.g. newspapers) – might be better performers given better resources.

16. *R:* [1]*The constraints of the curriculum vs. teacher's creativity in teaching*

17. Ms. Nu: [1]Teachers might try changing the order of sections; replacing the questions with their own.

18. *R:* [1]*2.8 Time allowed vs. time really needed*

19. Ms. Nu: OK.

20. *R:* [1]*The following points have come to my notice during my observation of the classroom hours.* [2]*Could you please clarify them?* [3]*The first issue: Few students were proactive in contributing to the classroom lessons; few students raised their hands in order to answer teachers' questions.* [4]*Why?*

21. Ms. Nu:

- [1]Primary cause: students‟ level → "They had real difficulty in understanding the passages and task instructions"→ This affected the whole class.

- [2]Students‟ defensive mechanism: the weaker the students, the more defensive they would be → the more reluctant they would be to be involved in the classroom activities → the whole class negatively affected
- [3]Such problems affected the classroom ambience: good students (very few): afraid of being seen as "showing off"

22. *R:* [1]*The second issue: Students' pronunciation was very poor; many were even unable to read aloud what was already there in the textbook.* [2]*Why?*

23. *Ms. Nu:*

- [1]This problem: quite common here; and students‟ pronunciation: still worse in other classes.
- [2]In the lower years, students‟ pronunciation had never been taken serious. [3]Students only focus on what will be in the exams for which answers were to be given in writing (no spoken answers required).
- [4]The problem: became worse with some 20% of the students coming from mountainous and coastal areas; their level was even weaker and was unable to follow the programme. There is only a small amount of students from the townlet (children of civil servants, etc) can study well enough.

24. *R:* [1]*Students seemed to have difficulty in understanding the rubrics of the tasks.*

25. Ms. Nu:

- [1]Students‟ English was too poor to understand correctly what they were required to do (by the task rubrics).
- [2]I had to translate the rubrics into Vietnamese for students to exactly understand what they were required to do.
- [3]Students study the answer key from the Teacher Book to get the right answer without really knowing what the answers were all about.

- [4]As it turned out, even students who normally give good answers to the textbook-based tasks get perplexed with exercises provided by the teacher.

26. *R:* [1]*The fourth issue: The Work Book had not been seen used throughout the lessons observed.* [2]*Why not?*

27. Ms. Nu:

- [1]Work Book was not a required material to be covered.
- [2]Its answer key: available in commercial textbook-based practice materials, which students might have consulted.

28. *R:* [1]*Still about the lesson plans I have observed, ideally speaking, what would you have done differently in the classroom if you had been given all you might have needed?*

29. Ms. Nu:

- [1]More time for lesson planning: Currently teaching the four sessions of the class observed (intensive programme), three for another Year 10 class (regular programme) and three for a Year 12 class (regular programme) → [2]The teaching load is taking most of my time; still had to give private classes for extra income.
- [3]If only the class were smaller in size → encourage talking time with students in task activities and pay more attention to individual students; at the moment, it is impossible to teach the whole class and care about each student. [4]Large classes: difficult to make sure students were all participating; to provide adequate assistance to students upon request; [5]Can‟t keep all other students waiting as the teacher is engaged with one particular student.
- [6]The class should be more selective; shouldn‟t be composed of many students dropping out from competitions into other selective classes; such students were not keen on studying English → [7]Their lack of interest affected the learning atmosphere and momentum of the class.

30. *R:* [1]*What is it that normally makes you feel happy/unhappy with your lessons?*

31. Ms. Nu: [1]Unhappy:

- [2]The reading excerpts were "dry"; looked as if they had been those from geography textbook. [3]They could have been more effective if revised.
- [4]Too busy these days to prepare my own exercises, more of which should have been provided to check students‟ understanding. [5]Not believed that students answered correctly the questions of the textbook on their own (they might have used commercial textbook-based practice materials).

32. R: [1] *Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the books, the program, your students, your context and yourself?*

33. Ms. Nu:

- [1]Listening tasks: easier and more effective for students to choose an appropriate picture as the answer rather than writing complete sentences (students‟ limited English → difficult for them to write)
- [2]Speaking testing: sometimes part of lesson review but weight of marks not significant → [3]At the moment, students can‟t produce sentences on their own; they just read sentences already there in the textbook; students: unable to produce sentences of their own.
- [4]For students to be more interested in studying the textbook, there should be exercises in the format of (secondary education) graduation and tertiary admission exams; if speaking became a component of those exams, the current situation would possibly change.
- [5]Pronunciation: There should be a section for pronunciation in the textbook, like with grammar and vocabulary → [6]Teachers now have to design pronunciation practice exercises for students to because pronunciation constitutes one part of the exams.

Appendix M.5

Head teacher interview transcript – Case Study 1: Rural High School (RHS)

Interviewee: Mr. Ne

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify him.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*How many times have you taught using the* English 10 – Intensive programme *textbook*?
2. **Mr. Ne**: [1]I did it once.
3. ***R:*** [1]*Once, and you taught the whole textbook, didn't you?*
4. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, once; and it was for the whole school year.
5. ***R:*** [1]*Thanks.* [2]*Let's begin with a specific question: Would you please let me know if there has been enough preparation for the teacher especially about their understanding of English language teaching theories and principles on which the writing of the books was based?* [3]*Was adequate preparation done by the Service of Education and Training, the school board or anyone else?*
6. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The Service of Education and Training ran a training course, something like that. [2]Right in the year the new textbook for Year 10 was introduced, my whole team of English teachers went to Noi Ha for the seminar called teacher training for the introduction of new textbooks launched the Ministry of Education and Training.
7. ***R:*** [3]*Right, and was the training designed for the implementation of both programmes, the intensive and regular ones, or was it for each programme separately?*
8. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The training wasn't about the intensive programme; it was just for the regular one only.
9. ***R:*** [1]*Wasn't there any session for the textbooks of the intensive programme?*

10. **Mr. Ne:** [1]There was no training session for the intensive programme; it was all about the regular one. [2]Because there were very few classes taking the intensive programme, the Service of Education and Training didn't take into account the intensive programme. [3]Attention was given to the regular programme only.

11. R: [1]*If it was the case, generally teachers might have been left unclear about the intentions of the writers of the textbooks of the intensive programme?*

12. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's correct.

13. R: [1]*So, how long was the training course provided in Hoi An?*

14. **Mr. Ne:** [1]We were there in Noi Ha for four, three or four days.

15. ***R:*** [1]*Did it fall on a break?*

16. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The training was provided every summer break. [2]Of course there won't be another course this summer because there won't be any other new books introduced. [3]We had the training for Year 12 textbook last summer.

17. R: [1]*Does it mean that the training was done for three consecutive summer breaks?*

18. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, three.

19. R: [1]*So, if teachers were to teach the textbooks of the intensive programme, would they have to read the Teacher Book or any other resources?*

20. **Mr. Ne:** [1]I had to study and prepare lesson plans on my own. [2] Don't you think there's a difference between regular programme and the intensive programme? [3]The actual classroom lessons for the two programmes have similar lesson stages but the content should be different and we've had to study by ourselves to conduct our lessons. [4]And, right, we might as well refer to the Teacher Book for sure.

21. R: [1]*Concerning training of methods, techniques, and strategies to teach the new books, particularly the classroom procedures, was the training for not only the regular programme but also the intensive one?* [2]*Or did teachers of the intensive programme have to learn how to use the textbooks of the intensive programme on their own?*

22. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The training was for the textbooks of the regular programme, not for those of the intensive programme. [2]They talked about how to conduct lessons, for instance, those of speaking and reading and things like that.

23. R: [1]*Who were the trainers of the training in Noi Ha?* [2]*Were the writers of the textbooks…?*

24. **Mr. Ne:** [1]They were from the local Service of Education and Training.

25. ***R:*** [1]*The Service of Education and Training?*

26. **Mr. Ne:** [1]That means, before the training, a number of teachers were selected and sent to Minh Ho where they undertook some training. [2]And then those teachers came back to present what they had learned.

27. R: [1]*In respect of subject matter knowledge, there can be topics of the textbooks that are new to teachers, and then there is language knowledge.* [2]*Was there any channel of information and support for teachers or did they have to study it themselves?*

28. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Do you mean the content of the textbooks?

29. R: [1]*Right.* [2]*For example, concerning the subject matter knowledge, it's quite possible that some teachers, especially those from remote or disadvantaged areas, have never used email and now they're required to teach email exchange writing.* [3]*Regarding language knowledge, there are updates that have been incorporated into the textbooks by the writers.* [4]*So, were there any instructions on those new things to teachers in any way or did they have to study them themselves?*

30. **Mr. Ne:** [1]For sure, teachers had to do their own study. [2]Particularly for those in rural areas like us. [3]We've had to do that in order to keep ourselves abreast of the updates of the textbooks and teach our students.

31. R: [1]*I was asking so because the Teacher Book just provides general guidance and it was claimed that details would be provided in the training sessions.* [2]*My understanding is that they did it in Minh Ho but according to what you've told me and my understanding of*

what happened in Ty Kam, the intensive programme was almost left untouched in the training seminars.

32. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

33. R: [1]*So, do you think the teachers are still using the methods and techniques they have been familiar with using the former textbooks or have you noticed any significant change for the sake of the use of the new books?*

34. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Teachers base themselves on what they have learned about the regular programme. [2]The classroom procedures and steps are based on what was learned from the training seminars in Noi Ha, because the regular programme is designed to be taught basically the same way as those of the intensive programme in terms of the classroom procedures.

35. R: [1]*Are they affected in any way by the methods and techniques they used to apply with the former textbooks?*

36. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Things should be completely new for sure. [2]The former textbooks were much easier to teach, right; it was very easy to teach using those old textbooks. [3]But their topics were so obsolete; the reading texts were written several decades ago.

37. R: [1]*I mean, are teachers influenced by the techniques to conduct classroom lessons that they had been used to?* [2]*For example, the teaching could be primarily based on grammar and translation?*

38. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The new methodology has been used by all. [2]All used is the new methodology, right. [3]The new methodology has been brought into play.

39. R: [1]*How about the assignment of teachers to the classes of the regular/intensive programme?* [2]*Was it your practice here that teachers should be teaching a certain class for three consecutive years?*

40. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

41. ***R:*** [1]*You mean from year 10 to 12?*

42. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

43. R: [1]*Why was such an assignment of three consecutive years used?*

44. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Because once you've been familiar with the class throughout their Year 10, it might be better for you to continue with them in Year 11. [2]If the class were assigned to some other teacher, they would find it new. [3]One by one, the teachers of my team should be teaching the intensive programme. [4]At the present, there are three teachers doing so: I'm teaching Year 12, Ms. Nu is teaching Year 10 and Ms. Ky Du Year 11. [5]This might change next year, and there might be some more teachers involved in teaching this intensive programme.

45. R: [1]*Why don't we let certain teachers teach Year 10 classes only and others teach year just Year 11 instead of attaching them to the same class for three years?*

46. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It was all due to the timetable and the teaching shifts, morning or afternoon. [2] Compromises are needed for the assignment. [3]One teacher can't teach all the three years.

47. ***R:*** [1]*What I mean is one teacher might be teaching classes of a certain Year only.* [2]*That means, one teacher should be teaching Year 10 classes only, and another Year 11 classes only.*

48. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, no, no, that's not the case here. [2]One teacher should be teaching classes of two Years at least.

49. ***R:*** [1]*Why should it be at least two years?*

50. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Because there are not enough classrooms and also because of the availability of two shifts, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

51. ***R:*** [1]*So, the afternoon shifts might suffer the lack of...* [2]*What if a teacher were just teaching the morning shift classes?*

52. **Mr. Ne:** [1]That'd be all right anyway. [2]But there might be classes unattended then. If one teacher were teaching classes of Year 10 only, it might end up with the possibility that other teachers each would be teaching three to four classes of Years 11 and 12. [3]That'd be

a problem. [4]It'd cause some difficulty so a compromise has been made: One teacher should be teaching classes of two Years at least.

53. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

54. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One year would be all right, one teacher might be teaching one year only. [2]It all depends, of course, you know. [3]The assignment is flexible; it can't be rigid.

55. ***R:*** [1]*To my understanding of some other schools, teachers follow their classes for three Years 10-12.* [2]*I asked them why and they said that it was done so for teachers to be knowledgeable about their students' level and they would know what points have or haven't been covered.*

56. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It depends on each school. [2]Teaching three years would mean preparing lesson plans for three Years. [3]It would entail more work.

57. ***R:*** [1]*So, each teacher here is assigned classes of one or two years?*

58. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One or two, right.

59. R: [1]*I see.* [2]*When it came to teacher assignment, for example, when the first new textbook was introduced, it was you who was assigned to teach it, wasn't it?*

60. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, it was me in the first year. [2]I had to be teaching both the regular and the intensive programmes. [3]I was the first teacher teaching the intensive programme.

61. R: [1]*I see.* [2]*Was it true that the school board would assign the senior teachers to be the pioneers in the introduction of the new textbooks?*

62. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, the assignment was done by the school board.

63. ***R:*** [1]*So, would it end up with the problem that now you're teaching Year 12 classes, there will be hardly any senior teachers available to teach Year 10 classes?*

64. **Mr. Ne:** [1]At the present, I'm teaching Year 12, and for Year 10, it's Ms. Nu. [2]Ah, as I said earlier, there should be a new teacher assigned to be teaching the textbooks of the intensive programme so that eventually each and every member of the English teachers' team should have taught using the intensive programme textbook for year 10 at least once.

65. R: [1]*To my understanding, the other schools were doing the same things.* [2]*They ended up, however, with a problem that the first selected to teach the new textbooks was the head teacher or anyone else who was normally assumed to be of best quality.* [3]*When it came to the third year (for Year 12 textbooks), there might well have been some lack of quality teachers.* [4]*It was too late then, for it would have been impossible to assign the classes to the teachers who had been assigned classes.* [5]*Also, new teachers should take the responsibility to ensure continuity.* [6]*Has there been the same problem at your school?*

66. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Since there are as many as nine teachers in my team, I think the personnel are never inadequate. [2]There should be rotation of teachers if need be anyway. [3]I might come back to teach Year 10 students again, no problem, if, for instance, there is some teacher taking maternity leave or maybe if something else happens. [4]My teachers are all females, and I'm the only male, so it'll be my turn to come to teach Year 10 then. [5]If the lady teachers happens to be too busy with her children…

67. R: [1]*Relating again to what I've asked before about the teacher preparation and support made by the local Service of Education and Training: Is there any activity or scheme – formal or informal – provided by the school board that supports the teachers who are teaching the textbooks of the intensive program?*

68. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Well, we do have an English-speaking club…

69. ***R:*** [1]*Was it run by the school?*

70. **Mr. Ne:** [1]By the English teachers' team and supported by the school board. It's a venue for English discussion but it's generic.

71. ***R:*** [1]*Which means?*

72. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The club is exclusively neither for the intensive programme nor the regular one. It aims at any students who are interested in studying English. [2]Anyone who is interested in further study of English can join the club.

73. ***R:*** [1]*How often does the club meet, once a week?*

74. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Oh, no. [2]It'd be too much for us to do it weekly. [3]Once per semester is our best effort.

75. R: [1]*The club is for students; how about teachers, is there any activity or support program?*

76. **Mr. Ne:** [1]There's almost no support for teachers. [2]Sometimes teachers go to an event for "teacher training" purposes. [3]At such events, teachers from all over the province will get together at the Service of Education and Training of Nam Qua for several days.

77. ***R:*** [1]*During summer breaks?*

78. **Mr. Ne:** [1]They're called teacher refreshment courses.

79. R: [1]*Who are the trainers at such sessions?*

80. **Mr. Ne:** [1]They're the teachers with many years of teaching experience that have attended the (ministerial) training sessions provided, for example, in Hoi Na and Minh Ho. [2]Those teachers will be the trainers. [3]Besides, there are sometimes get-togethers of teachers from schools of the same area for exchange of teaching experience. It's impossible to get teachers from the whole province in one single place so teachers of the northern area will form one group and those of the southern one will make another. [4]Yeah, we have those teaching experience exchange symposia occasionally.

81. ***R:*** [1]*So how long are such meetings, half a day or several days?*

82. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Just one day.

83. ***R:*** [1]*Just one day?*

84. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One day.

85. ***R:*** [1]*What are the topics on the agenda for such meetings?*

86. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Teachers can raise questions and problems that arise in their classroom. It's mainly related to the regular programme rather than the intensive one. [2]The textbooks of the intensive programme aren't tabled for discussion; just those of the regular programme.

87. ***R:*** [1]*Because the intensive programme what not widely used, was it?*

88. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]Some schools didn't have any class taking the intensive programme. [3]So the content of the symposia is concerned with the regular programme only.

89. ***R:*** [1]*So are they yearly events?*

90. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Well, usually once a year, mainly during summer breaks.

91. R: [1]*Concerning yourself, who has taught using the Year 10 textbook of the intensive programme, is there anything about the textbook that you feel unsatisfactory with?*

92. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Just one moment; I want to be specific.

93. ***R:*** [1]Sure.

94. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Concerning the Work Book, this is my opinion. [2]There're almost no multiple-choice practice exercises.

95. ***R:*** [1]*Are you talking the Work Book?*

96. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The Work Book has almost no multiple-choice question exercises, whereas the current tests and exams have multiple-choice test items. So, that's where the book is inadequate. [2]I mean "almost none"… [3]In my opinion, listening and speaking should be omitted from the Work Book because they are unnecessary.

97. ***R:*** [1]*Why?*

98. **Mr. Ne:** [1]I propose omitting them because they are ineffective. [2]They use up space in the book, which isn't plentiful. [3]So we should omit them and instead have more space for multiple-choice test practice exercises.

99. R: [1]*What do you mean by "ineffective"?*

100. **Mr. Ne:** [1]That means they're never touched upon. [2]There's never been enough time to touch upon those sections of listening and speaking. [3]For us, the priority is to prepare students for exams, which come in the form of the multiple-choice questions. [4]The primary concern is their language knowledge, so there's not time to touch upon those two sections.

101. R: [1]*You're talking about the textbooks of the intensive programme, aren't you?*

102. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, I'm talking about the textbooks of the intensive programme. [2]And yes, the same things are true of the regular programme.

103. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, those sections should be replaced by multiple-choice practice exercises because they're not yet readily needed and the priority should be given to something else more important?*

104. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Correct. [2]If the Ministry of Education issued a decree that the oral test be a component of the graduation exam according to which there should be a five-minute oral presentation required of each student, we'd be teaching those sections.

105. ***R:*** [1]I see.

106. **Mr. Ne:** [1] Am I right? [2]Or that students should be prepared to take a listening exam for 30 minutes. OK, we'd then open the book to those pages concerned.

107. ***R:*** [1]*So, at the present listening is only a component at contests for outstanding students?*

108. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

109. ***R:*** [1]*And is speaking also…?*

110. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's just taught as need be. [2]Roughly so. [3]The listening and speaking competences of the students at this school are just weak or at the average. [4]Practically they don't dare to open their mouths. [5]We were talking about the Work Book, weren't we? [6]In my opinion, it should be supplemented with multiple-choice questions, which should be as many as possible and related to the topics of the units of the Student Book. [7]And this should be done with the textbooks of both the regular and intensive programmes. [8]Concerning the Student Book, I've got something to say about Units 2 and 12. [9]The Language Focus section of Unit 2 is about *wh*-questions but that of Unit 12 is about information questions. [10]My understanding is that information questions are those that are to seek information so the two units are overlapping in this respect. [11]They're a little bit overlapping. [12]The term "information question" is confusing to students.

111. ***R:*** [1]*The term…?*

112. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Any question is to seek information, isn't it? [2]I'm talking about "information questions" of this Unit 12. [3]You'll see it if you turn to Unit 12; have a look at the Grammar section. [4]They're *wh*-questions after all. [5]But they're already there in Unit 2 and they're mentioned again in Unit 12. [6]In opinion, it's unnecessary for them to be there and some other grammar point should take the place instead. [7]Right, some other grammar point. [8]For example, it could be cleft sentences; yes cleft sentences should be in this place.

113. ***R:*** [1]*You mean cleft sentences haven't been mentioned or given adequate attention to elsewhere?*

114. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]It seems that cleft sentences won't come up until Year 11. [3]It will be too long for cleft sentences to wait until then. [4]Another point, concerning phonetics, I'm surprised that there's nothing about phonetics in the textbooks of the intensive programme. [5]There's no phonetics section in the textbook. [6]In my opinion, phonetics should be included as a section of every unit just as it was the case with the textbooks of the regular programme. [7]For students taking the intensive programme don't necessarily have good pronunciation. [8]Their pronunciation is just like that of students of the regular programme. [9]So, I think there should be some aid to their pronunciation, by drawing pictures of the points of articulation, the tongue positions, the lip shape. [10]Looking at such drawings, students would find it easier to imitate the sounds; it's impossible for them to recognise how to say words just by listening to the tape. [11]With just that, students simply can't have a rough idea of what to do.

115. **Mr. Ne:** [1]There are 16 units altogether in the textbook and there are 24 vowels, and there are also consonants, and diphthongs. [2]I'd want to have a review of the sounds and have drawings for each of them, with a picture of the human head sketching where and how the positions of the tongue and teeth should be. [3]It'd be better to show them all this

before they were to listen to the tape. [4]They can't recognise what they need to do to produce the sounds by listening to the tape alone. [5]They don't know how to say a particular sound, do they? [6]The Work Book deals with phonetics but the textbook doesn't.

116. ***R:*** [1]*The Work Book doesn't have it?*

117. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, it does, in every unit. [2]Now coming to Unit 13, which is about…, yes, this section about attitudes in Language Focus, that I find confusing. [3]They're talking about adjectives of attitudes, aren't they? [4]That's what I understand. [5]I want to talk about this section: In my opinion, this should be omitted. [6]There are quite a number of adjectives here ending in *–ed* or *–ing* in the Work Book, such as *exciting, excited*, and *fright, frightening, frightened* and *concerned, concerning* that I think students should be taught about them. [7]Students feel perplexed with these words of attitudes. [8]"What's attitude?" they would ask and it'd be difficult to explain what it is. [9] "Adjectives of attitudes" is apparently an ambiguous term. [10]They are all adjectives of description; there's nothing attitudinal about them. [11]It will be another thing to express your attitudes; and I haven't heard of adjectives of attitudes. [12]As you can see here, just as an example, there's nothing attitudinal in *wonderful*. [13]Right? [14]To my understanding, it can be used to describe something, not…; right?

118. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, another term might be used instead?*

119. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]In my opinion, it'd be interesting to replace that section with this issue: Participles used as attitudes. [3]It could be present or past participles used as adjectives, and in this lesson, we might include such derivatives as *tire, tiring, tired; amaze, amazed, amazing;* n *surprise, surprised, surprising.*

120. ***R:*** [1]*How about words like* appreciative *and* impressive*, which don't belong to the categories you're talking about?*

121. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

122. ***R:*** [1]*And they should be left out?*

123. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, omit them. [2]It might be better to include them in sections talking about adjective formation sections or those dealing with adding prefixes and suffixes to produce adjectives. [3]Also, we'd better use English names instead Vietnamese ones such as Mai and Lan. [4]For Vietnamese names need diatrics and students will ask whether this guy's name is Ba, Bà, or Bá and I don't know what to tell them.

124. ***R:*** [1]*"Vo de" can become "vỡ đê" (dykes get broken) or "vợ đẻ" (wife delivering a baby).*

125. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The names can be just Bill, Tom, or John. [2]We might need to use English names for students to get acquainted with foreign names, which could be a good idea, right?

126. R: [1]*Right. Cao Xuan Hao*[30] *has the same viewpoint but the Ministry of Education and Training makes it mandatory there should be Vietnamese stuff in textbooks.* [2]*There are many issues…*

127. **Mr. Ne:** [1]And have a look at Unit 11, where the reduced relative clause with -*ing* verb is taught. [2]Relative clauses can be reduced with V-*ing* or past participle. [3]This section, I think, can be combined with the grammar section in Unit 14. [4]I mean the two sections in Units 11 and 14 can be put together. [5]Can you open the book to Unit 14? [6]Have a look at the heading: *Base Form of Verb as Modifier,* which sounds… difficult to understand to students. [7]We might try saying something like this to our students: reducing relative clauses with an infinitive verb, which would be simplest and easiest to understand. [8]For this task as an example, you can tell them *you must follow* becomes *to follow,* and they'll have no trouble understanding that this one is the modifier but… [9]There're things that we teachers can understand but students will find them unfamiliar. [10]We can make it simple like this: "Use -*ing* and full infinitive (*i.e.* infinitive with *to*) verbs to replace relative clauses. [11]That's it, and students will understand right away what we're talking about.

[30] A reputated Vietnamese linguist.

[12]What I mean is that the heading is in some way difficult to understand for students though its grammar and vocabulary are correct. [13]In addition, concerning the order of the sections, why don't we have the same thing as the textbooks of the regular programme? [14]What they have in there is Reading, which is immediately followed by Speaking whereas as for textbooks of the intensive programme this place is taken by Listening.

128. ***R:*** [1]*What's the order in the textbooks of the regular programme?*

129. **Mr. Ne:** [1]In the regular programme, Reading comes first, followed by Listening, Writing, and Language Focus. [2]In the intensive programme, the order is different; the position of Listening is changed. [3]In my opinion, the order should be the same between the two programmes – regular and intensive. [4]Ah, and this, this unit… this is very very good. [5]I find this really great, because readers wouldn't have to refer back to the contents pages, which would be inconvenient and take more time. [6]Why don't the Work Book and the Student Book (of the regular programme) have this for users' convenience, which will help faster navigation?

130. ***R:*** [1]*Doesn't the Work Book have this?*

131. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No; neither does the Teacher Book. [2]Yes, this is really good. [3]The textbooks of the regular programme don't have this. [4]It's troublesome to find some particular thing in the books without this.

132. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

133. **Mr. Ne:** [1]If we want to find something, we will need to go to the contents pages in the back, and then go back, which is inconvenenient.

134. ***R:*** [1]*You were talking about the Work Book, which means the material was in effect used in the classroom?*

135. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, it was. Students were assigned to do the exercises in there. [2]Our exams were even based on the Work Book. [3]But the time dedicated it was very little. [4]It was

already too much to cover the content prescribed in this Student Book. [5]Sometimes we couldn't cover what was required. [6]There wasn't enough time.

136. ***R:*** [7]And are there any other problems about the books you might want to raise?

137. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Units 8 and 16. [2]I've been paying special attention to Language Focus because it helps students to do their exams well. [3]Please open the book to Unit 16. [4]Look at these *although, even though, but, in spite of, despite…* [5]Got them? [6] What was already taught in Unit 8 was *because of, in spite of, despite.* [7]There's thus something repetitious here. [8]Why don't we have in this section *because, since, as* and *so* and *because of,* points I think had better be taught? [9]The point is to make it easier for students to remember, comparing the two grammatical structures with each other, right? [10]That means, this section should include clauses of reason and cause and Unit 16 should talk about the clauses of contrast, conflict, and concession. [11]These things can be put into this; this one is all right; and this one could be removed from this. [12]Because it's already there. [13]We will leave this out and put *because, because of* back instead. [14]Those are my preliminary remarks about the textbook.

138. ***R:*** [1]Thanks. [2]To continue, would you mind telling me about tests and exams?

139. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Not at all, there are three 15-minute tests per semester.

140. ***R:*** [1]*Three tests?*

141. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]And three one-period exams per semester, and one end-of-semester exam per semester.

142. ***R:*** [1]*And how is the final score calculated?*

143. **Mr. Ne:** [1]As for multiple-choice question exams, the calculation is… [2]For example, there are normally 40 items for a 45-minute exam; each correct response will score 0.25 points. [3]If the total score is 5.25 it will be rounded to 5.3; 5.75 to 5.8; and 5.5 will remain the same.

144. ***R:*** [1]Are there questions requiring students to write down their own answers?

145. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, that applies to exams for Years 10 and 11 students.

146. ***R:*** [2]Oh, why not year 12 students?

147. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The exams for Year 12 students are in the multiple-choice style only.

148. ***R:*** *And how about Years 10 and 11?*

149. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's up to the school board. [2]We can use multiple-choice exams for all the three years but the school board prefers self-completed exams to be applied for Year 11 so that students would practise their writing, their vocabulary use, spelling, their grammar…

150. ***R:*** [1]*So there are self-completed questions for Years 10 and 11 but for Year 12 there are just…?*

151. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Just multiple-choice questions.

152. ***R:*** [1]Generally for the exams for Years 10 and 11, what is the percentage of multiple-choice questions?

153. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Well, an exam has either 100% self-completed questions or 100% multiple-choice questions; the format can be alternate between exams. [2]The first exam consists of self-completed questions only and the second one has just multiple-choice questions.

154. ***R:*** [1]*The oral test is done by the classroom teacher?*

155. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's done locally. [2]It's done at the beginning of the lesson. A lesson is preceded with a lesson review of students' learning from the previous one.

156. ***R:*** [1]*How about 15-minute tests?*

157. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Still by the classroom teachers.

158. ***R:*** [1]*And what about one-period exams?*

159. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One exam will be administered for the whole school.

160. ***R:*** [1]*The person who makes the exam is the head teacher or a selected classroom teacher, isn't he?*

161. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One particular teacher will be selected to make the exam, which will then be used for the whole school.

162. ***R:*** [1]*How about end-of-semester exams?*

163. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Those end-of-semester exams for Year 12 are made by the Service of Education and Training and those for Years 10 and 11 by the school.

164. ***R:*** [1]*Those for Years 10 and 11 are made by the school.* [2]*And how about exams for the second semester?*

165. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The second semester? [2]The same thing.

166. ***R:*** [1]*So, how is the final score calculated?* [2]*What is the coefficient of the oral test, for instance?*

167. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's one for the oral test.

168. ***R:*** [1]*And these scores will be added up to others?*

169. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The coefficient is 1 for 15-minute tests; 2 for 45-minute exams; and 3 for end-of-semester exams. [2]Add them together and divide it by 3 and we'll get the final averaged score of the subject.

170. ***R:*** [1]*That means…*

171. **Mr. Ne:** [1]To make this more specific, three and six make nine; nine and three make 12, 13, 13, all divided by 13.

172. ***R:*** [1]*This one is one?*

173. **Mr. Ne:** [1]One.

174. ***R:*** [1]*Right, one, and three times for this one so that's four.* [2]*This one is six, 10, 11.*

175. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Thirteen.

176. ***R:*** [1]*Fourteen.*

177. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Fourteen? [2]Well, it's either thirteen or fourteen.

178. ***R:*** [1]*OK, and how about the final score of the whole year?*

179. **Mr. Ne:** [1]This one is…

180. ***R:*** [1]*Three.*

181. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The coefficient for end-of-semester exams is three; three and six makes nine; nine and three makes 12. [2]The total is 13, isn't it?

182. ***R:*** [1]*Right, 13.* [2]*And how about the total score for the whole school year?*

183. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's calculated by two times the averaged score of semester 2 plus that for semester 1 divided by three.

184. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

185. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's two times the averaged score of semester 2 plus that for semester 1 divided by three.

186. ***R:*** [1]*So it's up to the classroom teacher when it comes to the classroom assessment, for which the multiple-choice test format is impossible.* [2]*Concerning the one-period exams, however…*

187. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The same format applies, one self-completed and one multiple-choice exam.

188. ***R:*** [1]*What's the emphasis in tests and exams, language knowledge or skills?*

189. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, knowledge.

190. ***R:*** [1]*Knowledge, which means Language Focus?*

191. **Mr. Ne:** [1]The emphasis is on knowledge rather than skills.

192. ***R:*** [1]*So, are skills tested in any way?*

193. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Do you mean phonetics skills?

194. ***R:*** [1]*Skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing.*

195. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, they aren't tested.

196. ***R:*** [1]*No, OK* [2]*So are listening and speaking not tested at all or are they indirectly tested?* [3]*For example, students might be asked to respond to questions like "What would you say if…"?*

197. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's done in the oral test of the lesson review time.

198. ***R:*** [1]*Right, in the oral test.*

199. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's there in the oral test. [2]Students will be responding orally to the teacher.

200. ***R:*** [1]*Given the coefficients like these, students, particularly those who are more concerned about the final score as the benchmark for their study might prefer to study Language Focus, right?*

201. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

202. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, do these testing practices in any way affect the methodology recommended by the textbook?* [2]*To be specific, the priority is expected to be given to all the four skills or students' communication but listening isn't a component of the tests and exams at the school as well as at important exams in the final year and more importantly the university admission exams?*

203. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, it's sometimes ineffective when we're teaching in these ways and the exams are testing in those ways.

204. ***R:*** [1]*And in the classroom…*

205. **Mr. Ne:** [1]So, the target is to prepare students to do as well as possible at tests and exams.

206. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

207. **Mr. Ne:** [1]That's it. [2]It's the ultimate target, isn't it? [3]And in order to achieve the target exam success, you'll have to teach as much grammar as possible.

208. ***R:*** [1]*I've heard that in this province of Nam Qua some teachers were trained by British Council experts and they had later become the trainers of their colleagues.*

209. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, it was true…

210. ***R:*** [1]*And…*

211. **Mr. Ne:** [1]But it's no longer seen taking place for the two recent years.

212. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean the British Council training was done only once?*

213. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, they did it several times [2]Such things will have been more often in big cities like Nhang Tra, Dang Na, Vi, He Na, Hu, not in Nam Qua.

214. ***R:*** [1]*I've heard that teachers participating in that programme were observed and their teaching was evaluated according to the standards set by the British Council programme, so they had to… they felt constrained because on the one hand they had to respond to the demand of students' good exam performance…*

215. **Mr. Ne:** [1]You're right.

216. ***R:*** [1]*And on the other hand, they had to be teaching in the ways of…*

217. **Mr. Ne:** [1]I see, in the new methodologies.

218. ***R:*** [1]*Right, their lesson is expected not to teach more than eight new words or put too much emphasis on grammar…*

219. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

220. ***R:*** [1]*Does the same problem happen at your school?*

221. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, but it's not really serious.

222. ***R:*** [1]*Another question, the other textbook, i.e.* English 10 – Regular Programme, *is being used by far many more classes and schools.* [2]*What do you think are the possible reasons?*

223. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Are you talking about the textbooks of the current regular programme?

224. ***R:*** [1]*Yes.* [2] *Around a dozen Year 10 classes are using the regular programme here, aren't they?*

225. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

226. ***R:*** [1]*But there's just one class taking the intensive programme.*

227. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

228. ***R:*** [1]*So, what's the reason for one textbook being overwhelmed by the other in terms of the number of users?*

229. **Mr. Ne:** [1]That's because of students' choice of the programme they'll be following at the beginning of Year 10. [2]There are few students whose English is good enough to

follow the D stream to go to university. [3]Right, so for us, one class is itself a big achievement; we had to force students to have that class.

230. ***R:*** [1]Right.

231. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Or else… [2]We had to call for the participation of students from the regular programme. [3]If we hadn't done that, there'd not have been enough students for the one class (the intensive programme). [4]They are more interested in math, physics, and chemistry, and, as such, it's easier for them to take the regular programme of English.

232. ***R:*** [1]*Does that mean the choice of the textbooks is more up to students rather than the the textbooks themselves – poorer or better quality?*

233. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, it's more up to the students.

234. ***R:*** [1]*OK.* [2]*By the way, you've had experience in teaching both these textbooks, haven't you?*

235. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right.

236. ***R:*** [1]*Would you mind making some rough comparisons between the two?*

237. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Well, the level required by the textbook of the regular programme is much lower than that required by the textbook of the intensive programme.

238. ***R:*** [1]*Is it lower in terms of its requirements, its content?*

239. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Its content is lower. Its reading texts are reasonably all right. [2]The textbook of the regular programme is appropriate for a some number of students, not for the majority of students. [3]There're still some students in each class, I mean there many students who know almost nothing. [4]It's true.

240. ***R:*** [1]*What about the textbook of the intensive programme?*

241. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It is… [2]I've told you all about it earlier. [3]There's another point that I'd like to say is that it's quite above the level here. [4]It might be easy for urban students but it's higher than the level here, though.

242. ***R:*** [1]*Is there any difference between the two textbooks in terms of the procedures to conduct classroom lessons?*

243. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Regarding the content, you mean? [2]Regarding the content of particular lessons?

244. ***R:*** [1]*I mean the procedures to teach particular lessons.*

245. **Mr. Ne:** [1]I can see that they're parallel; it's all right. [2]Generally they're well matched. [3]However, in respect of the order of sections, which I mentioned earlier, there should be unity, for example, speaking and then listening. [4]In terms of presentation, there should be a heading for easy navigation, or something like that.

246. ***R:*** [1]*It looks as if you favour the order of the textbook of the regular programme; why so?*

247. **Mr. Ne:** [1]It's not important that listening should come earlier or later in the unit…

248. ***R:*** [1]*The order is reading and then listening in the textbook of the regular programme?*

249. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Reading and then Speaking.

250. ***R:*** [1]*OK, Speaking.*

251. **Mr. Ne:** [1]And then Listening.

252. ***R:*** [1]*Listening, Writing… Listening, Writing…*

253. **Mr. Ne:** [1]But the order of the textbook of the intensive programme is Reading and then Listening and then Speaking.

254. ***R:*** [1]*Why do you prefer the order of the textbook of the regular programme?*

255. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, not really so. [2]What I mean is the organisational unity of the two textbooks. [3]In my opinion, it's not important to have listening in the front or in the back as long as the order is the same between the two textbooks for my convenience to record in the classroom lesson log book. [4]It's not good to be mistaken one programme for another, right?

256. ***R:*** [1]*With the innovation of textbook replacement, as far as you know as the head English teacher, are students and teachers having difficulty, if any, only with the new books of English or with the books of other subjects as well?*

257. **Mr. Ne:** [1]To my understanding, there are also problems with the textbooks of the other subjects. [2]Yeah, they have problems too. [3]If I remember correctly, the textbooks of physics, Vietnamese, and some other subjects have the same problems.

258. ***R:*** [1]*So far, have the criticisms cooled down?*

259. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, they've cooled down. [2]People will gradually get used to things.

260. ***R:*** [1]*Is the cooling, in your opinion, due to people's recognition that the methodology is appropriate or is it simply because people have been discouraged to voice their opinions so long as their comments haven't been responded to?*

261. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]I think it's the latter reason.

262. ***R:*** *(laughing).*

263. **Mr. Ne:** (*laughing*) [1]It's the latter reason.

264. ***R:*** [1]*So, apart from what was discussed above, do you have any comments on broad issues such as the teaching methodology recommended by the textbook?* [2]*Is it appropriate with students, especially those from remote schools?*

265. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]The majority of students are below average in terms of listening and speaking. [3]That's why I used English just 25 % of the time of my lessons. [4]It's about listening. [5]With regard to speaking, it seems that students are too shy to open their mouth. [6]And if they speak something, they don't pay attention to the intonation. [7]Yeah, they don't care about the intonation or the naturalness of the sentences they're speaking. [8]Also, their vocabulary is too poor.

266. ***R:*** [1]*So, as for those students, the number of new words of a reading text will exceed eight, the number recommended ...*

267. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right. [2]They will even consider new vocabulary the words that have been taught. For they…(*laughing*)

268. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think that in order to promote the learning of listening and speaking, one of the changes to take place is…*

269. **Mr. Ne:** [1]We need to change; those skills should be included in exams. [2]The Ministry of Education and Training would have to enforce the testing of listening and speaking. And the topics should be those of the textbooks. [3]If told so, students would… [4]The exams shouldn't be about something else other than the textbooks; they should just be based on the textbooks.

270. ***R:*** [1]*At the present, there are many test practice materials available.* [2]*Do you notice that your students might have had look at the answer key before the class lessons…?*

271. **Mr. Ne:** [1]There are a wide variety of practice books for students. [2]There are a huge number of grammar books for students, which aim to prepare students for their exams. [3]The practice test books are to prepare students to do their exams well.

272. ***R:*** [1]*What I'm referring to is the commercial textbook-based practice materials.* [2]*WITH these books, students will look at the answer key there in advance.* [3]*As a result, their answers to the questions of the textbooks will possibly look very good but if we gave them a different text then…*

273. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, what I've been doing is different. [2]I will be using a different text. [3]Some of the test items are based on the textbook and the rest are made by myself. [4]I use the same content but my test items ask about something different.

274. ***R:*** [1]*That means you're…*

275. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Trying to prevent them from using the answer key from practice books to answer my questions.

276. ***R:*** [1]*Are you talking about what you're doing in your lessons or your exams?*

277. **Mr. Ne:** [1]In my lessons.

278. ***R:*** [1]*Right, in your lessons.*

279. **Mr. Ne:** [1]And the same applies to exams. [2]The test items of the exams are taken from the textbook, around 20%. [3]And the rest from elsewhere. [4]By "elsewhere", I don't mean that the test items are not what that is covered by the textbook. [5]They are still what is prescribed by the textbook and the curriculum.

280. ***R:*** [1]*Relating to curriculum, I'd like to take this opportunity to ask if teachers have had a chance to read the curriculum, apart from the Student Book and the Teacher Book.*

281. **Mr. Ne:** [1]What do you mean by "curriculum"?

282. ***R:*** [1]*I mean the Ministry of Education and Training has promulgated…*

283. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, we have the curriculum.

284. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

285. **Mr. Ne:** [1]This week you'll be teaching this section. [2]For example, Unit 1, the Reading section, lesson 2, and so on so forth.

286. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*And has there been guidance about the methodology adopted as the foundation of the new textbooks?*

287. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, they were about teaching innovations, or something like that. [2]The skills, including the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing, should all be taught.

288. ***R:*** [1]*What's said might be different from what's done.*

289. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Right, it all depends on the conditions of the class you're teaching. [2]It's up to the conditions of the class and the school.

290. ***R:*** [1]*May I ask if you think your students have the needs of learning listening and speaking?*

291. **Mr. Ne:** [1]They practically have no such needs.

292. ***R:*** [1]*Practically no such needs, OK.* [2]*So they might be learning those skills if they are tested in exams; but since exams don't test those skills, students won't need to learn them.*

293. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Students selected for contests for outstanding students will care about those skills, right, they will care. [2]The rest won't. [3]Such lessons of listening and speaking are very boring hours, very boring indeed.

294. ***R:*** [1]*So, the only way to make students learn those skills is to have the skills included in exams.*

295. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Correct.

296. ***R:*** [1]*Listening is a component in Olympic contests and provincial contests for excellent students), isn't it?*

297. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Yes, it is.

298. ***R:*** [1]*And what about speaking?*

299. **Mr. Ne:** [1]No, it's not included.

300. ***R:*** [1]*Not included, OK.* [2]*You have had experience as a teacher and/or a student in the so-called two different regimes.* [3]*The testing of the aural oral skills used to be done in the old regime but they are now thought to be so much troublesome.* [4]*Do you think the testing of such skills can still be done now?*

301. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Given the current situations, I don't think it'll be plausible. [2]For the number of students (sitting for exams) at my time was small. [3]There were between twenty to thirty students in a class. [4]The class size is too big now. [4]And it'll take a lot of time to do this, not to mention money, very time-consuming indeed. [5]The exams will take quite an amount of time. [6]That's why I don't think it will be plausible.

302. ***R:*** [1]*And there might be this problem: To my understanding, it seems that teachers in the old days used to have a stronger sense of justice whereas now they might have been affected by the market mechanism.* [2]*If aural and oral exams were done as compulsory components, the tendency of having private lessons with possible examiners could become an even more serious problem than what parents have been complaining, right?*

303. **Mr. Ne:** [1]I think if such components are added, corruption will happen with examiners. [2]It'll be inevitable, for both examiners and students. [3]This is a social problem, you know. [4]Corruption is an ulcer of the community, isn't it!

304. ***R:*** [1]*To your understanding, was there corruption (in education) at your time?* [2]*It might have been there but the extent…*

305. **Mr. Ne:** [1]My perspective as a student at that time was very limited; I couldn't see clearly such problems. [2]I remember that when taking the oral exam, I… [3]The oral exam wasn't taken until the written exam was passed. [4]I just remembered things vaguely. [5]When I had passed the admission exam, which was a written exam, I proceeded to the oral exam. [6]Those who failed the written weren't called to the oral exams. [7]The oral exam wasn't administered to all.

306. ***R:*** [1]*So the admission exam was composed of a written exam and an oral exam.*

307. ***R:*** [1]The written exam was followed by the oral one.

308. ***R:*** [1]*And there was no oral exam in high schools just as it is the case now, right?*

309. **Mr. Ne:** [1]Probably not.

310. ***R:*** [1]*Thank you very much for the interview.*

311. **Mr. Ne:** [1]You're very welcome.

Appendix N

***English 10 – Intensive Programme,* Units 10, 11, 14 and 15**

(From Tu Anh et al. 2008, pp. 126-147; 180-199)

Note.

- Copyright permission has been granted by the Education Publishing House (Vietnam).
- The original page numbers of the textbook are retained for reference. The thesis page numbers are in black.

10 Conservation

READING

Before You Read

Look at the pictures showing environmental damage. Match the solutions with the pictures.

Reading Text

Read the text and do the tasks that follow.

NAM CAT TIEN NATIONAL PARK

A. Conserving human heritage proves to be an act of great cultural value and of an advanced lifestyle. A large mosaic of forest and a diversity of wildlife in Nam Cat Tien have been protected by Nam Cat Tien National Park since it was established by the central government in 1992. If there had not been that establishment, most of the area's ecosystem would have been greatly damaged. At present, Nam Cat Tien National Park is exploited as an ecotourism site because of its beauty and its economic development.

B. This park has a wide diversity of species. There is a total of 1,610 flora species with seven different habitat types. The forest types and geographical sites are home to unique tropical fauna: species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish, and insects. Ecotourists like traveling there because they can both enjoy the beautiful landscape and contribute to the conservation of the natural environment.

C. As an ecotourism site, it can provide tourists with beautiful landscape in the biosphere reserve. Tourists can trace wild animals and watch them hunting their prey at night. Also, they can go boating along Dong Nai River to Bau Sau to view peacocks' graceful dances.

D. At present more and more visitors come to Nam Cat Tien National Park on their ecotour. Thanks to this, the economy in the local area is flourishing. This makes local authorities more interested in developing ecotourism there because it can promote the economy and provide more funds for conservation.

a) Match the headings with the appropriate paragraphs.

1. Tour Discoveries	Paragraph A
2. Benefits of the Park	Paragraph B

3. Nam Cat Tien National Park as an Ecotourism Site — Paragraph C
4. Significant Biological Diversity — Paragraph D

b) Match the words or phrases in column A with their appropriate meanings in column B.

A	B
1. ecotourism site	a. use something fully and effectively
2. diversity	b. the protection of animals, plants, forests etc., to prevent them from being spoiled or destroyed
3. exploit	c. a natural area where people can visit and learn about it in a way that will not hurt the environment
4. biosphere reserve	d. a piece of land in which animals and plants can live
5. conservation	e. a range of different things

c) Give brief answers to the following questions.

1. Why is Nam Cat Tien National Park exploited as an ecotourism site?
2. Name different species found in this national park.
3. What do local authorities develop ecotourism there for?
4. What's the writer's viewpoint on the development of ecotourism in this national park?

LISTENING

a) In groups of four, make a list of some activities that cause harm to the natural environment. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. Hunting rare animals
2.
3.
etc.

b) Listen to a class discussion about ecotourism held by Miss Linh and fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

1. This is the class's first trip to a _____.
2. Students will be able to watch _____ in their natural habitat.
3. In an ecotour, tourists shouldn't _____ or _____ animals because these actions may harm animals' health.
4. Ecotourists learn that wild animals have their own _____ and habits.
5. Being friendly with nature means not doing harm to species of _____.
6. Ecotourism has its _____ purpose.
7. Littering, _____ young trees, and killing _____ or wild animals in a national park are not proper actions of ecotourists.
8. Every tourist should contribute to the _____ of the natural environment.

c) In groups, write a list of what you shouldn't do as ecotourists. Give reasons.

SPEAKING

Making Suggestions About Nature Conservation

a) Work with your partner. Take turns using the expressions in the box below to make up answers to these questions. The first one has been done for you as an example.

Useful Expressions

- It might be a good idea to ...
- I think you / we / they should ...
- It would be better if ...
- One thing you / we / they could do is ...

Nam	Mai
Have you ever thought of recycling?	Well, (1) I think we should recycle things such as bags, cans, and bottles.
Don't you think it might be a good idea to conserve nature?	Er, (2) _____
Why don't people save energy?	Well, (3) _____
Don't you think it might be a good idea to reduce water pollution?	Er, (4) _____
Have you ever thought of protecting wildlife from extinction?	Um, (5) _____

b) Work with your partner. Use the expressions above and the prompts below to make up exchanges about environmental damage and their solutions.

Prompts

Environmental Damage	Solution
• wildlife extinction • deforestation • littering • forest fire	• Keep rare animals in their natural habitat. • Control the burning of forests. • Control the cutting down of trees. • Don't use disposable products. • Use environment-friendly products. • Don't build campfires in national parks.

c) In pairs, think of a camping trip. Make a list of some do's and don'ts tourists should follow.

WRITING

Writing a Letter of Acceptance or Refusal

When writing a letter of acceptance or refusal, you might follow the format below.

FORMAT

- Date
- Salutation
- Thanking for the invitation
- Stating the | acceptance politely with delight / refusal politely with regret
- Closing

a) Read the invitation letter and reply letters below. Underline the language used to express acceptance and refusal in the reply letters.

1. Invitation letter

Dear Linh and Laura

As vacation is coming near, it'd be nice to see you here with my family, and we'll spend a few days on a camping trip in Cuc Phuong National Park, which is just two kilometers away from my house.

Please let me know if you can come on July 15.

With love

Van

2. Reply letters

Letter of Acceptance

June 15, 20 _____

Dear Van

Thank you very much for your invitation. I'd be very happy to come. It'll be great fun going camping in this national park.

See you on July 15.

Yours

Linh

Letter of Refusal

June 25, 20 _____

Dear Van

Thank you for your invitation, but unfortunately I'm quite unable to come. I have to go back to my hometown to see my parents and attend my sister's wedding.

I'm sorry but I can't make it.

Yours

Laura

Note that you might use the following language in writing your letter.

ACCEPTANCE

Thank you for your invitation.

I'd be	very pleased delighted very happy	to	come. accept your invitation.

Your invitation to …	is welcome. was a lovely surprise.

REFUSAL

Thank you for your …, but unfortunately …

It's not possible for me to …

I'm quite unable to …

I'm terribly sorry to have to refuse.

I'm very sorry but I can't make it / come.

b) Suppose you are asked to join a volunteer work to conserve nature.

1. *Write a letter of acceptance if you can go.*
2. *Write a letter of refusal if you can't.*

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Word Study

Word Forms

Complete the following sentences, using appropriate forms of the words in parentheses.

1. Ecotourism helps provide funds for _____. *(conserve)*
2. Burning forests will lead to the _____ of wildlife habitat. *(destroy)*

3. An ounce of _____ is better than a pound of cure. *(prevent)*

4. Poachers should be kept away from national parks for the _____ of rare animals. *(protect)*

5. Road construction and hotel building in national parks for ecotourism purposes will lead to forest _____. *(reduce)*

Grammar

a) The Modal Auxiliary *Should*

Example

A: Have you ever thought of recycling?

B: Well, we *should* recycle things such as bags, cans, and bottles.

Write answers to the following questions with should and the prompts in parentheses.

1. *A:* What should we do to reduce water pollution?

   B: I think _____ (treat toxic chemicals / discharge / river)

2. *A:* What should we do to prevent rhino poaching?

   B: _____ (not use horns / associated products)

3. *A:* What should we do to conserve forests?

   B: _____ (control / deforestation)

4. *A:* What should we do to prevent global warming?

   B: _____ (reduce / smoke / exhaust gas)

5. *A:* What should you do to prevent forest fires?

   B: _____

6. *A:* What should you do to reduce air pollution?

   B: _____

7. *A:* What should you do to save energy?

   B: _____

b) Conditional Sentences: Type 2

Example

A: What *would happen* if people used gas without control?

B: They *would suffer* from a shortage of natural gas.

Write answers to the following questions.

1. *A:* What would happen if dwellers in this city didn't save energy?

   B: _____

2. *A:* What if local authorities didn't control dynamite fishing?

   B: _____

3. *A:* What if oil tankers leaked?

   B: _____

4. *A:* What if poachers killed polar bears for fur?

   B: _____

5. *A:* What would happen if more and more people used motorbikes and cars ?

   B: _____

6. *A:* What if the Earth were hit by a large comet?

   B: _____

7. *A:* What if more hotels were built in national parks?

   B: _____

c) Conditional Sentences: Type 3

Example

If there *had not been* the establishment of Nam Cat Tien National Park, most of the area's ecosystem *would have been* greatly *damaged*.

Complete the following sentences, using appropriate forms of the verbs in parentheses. The first one has been done for you.

1. If chemical factories hadn't discharged toxic chemicals, city dwellers *would not have suffered* three days without running water. *(suffer)*
2. If hunters had stopped poaching rare animals for commercial purposes, and felling trees for wood, nature _____. *(conserve)*
3. The sea creatures there wouldn't have been killed if factories in this city _____ sewage into the sea. *(discharge)*
4. Global warming would have been prevented if people _____ exhaust fumes. *(reduce)*
5. If more garbage _____ into the sea, people would have suffered from sea pollution. *(dump)*
6. If humans had been more friendly with nature, they _____ natural disasters. *(endure)*
7. If people _____ more environment-friendly products, they would not have worried about global warming. *(use)*
8. If local authorities had controlled hotel building in this national park well, the forests there _____. *(destroy)*

11 National Parks

READING

Before You Read

Look at the pictures of some national parks in Viet Nam. Match each national park with the appropriate extract.

Cuc Phuong National Park

Bach Ma National Park

Extract A

This national park is in Central Viet Nam, only 20 km from Canh Duong Beach. This park is home to some endangered species such as the white ox and the wild buffalo.

Extract B

This national park is in northern Central Viet Nam. It is 45 km from Ninh Binh. This park is home to a unique species of tree called *kim giao*, whose wood was used to make chopsticks for kings and noble people in ancient times.

Extract C

This national park is in the Central Highlands. It is 240 km from Ho Chi Minh City. This park is home to the wild ox (the

Reading Text

a) Read the following texts and complete the chart that follows.

Grand Canyon National Park (USA), established in 1919, covers 4,931 square kilometers in northwestern Arizona. The north rim of the canyon has an average annual rainfall of about 660 millimeters while the south rim has only about 400 millimeters. The north rim has much colder temperatures than the south rim does because it is 365 meters higher than the south rim.

Grand Canyon National Park

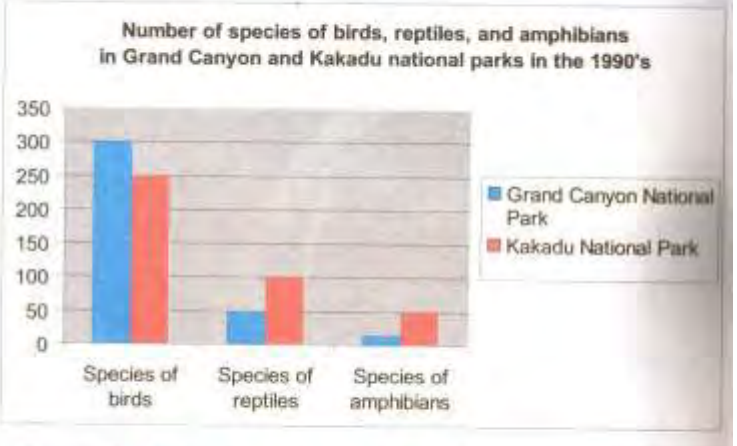
Kakadu National Park

Kakadu National Park (North Australia) covers an area of 12,432 square kilometers in northern Australia. The park was established in 1979 to preserve the culture of the Aborigines and maintain a good balance in ecology. The warm tropical climate provides good conditions for different species of fauna and flora to develop.

At present, there are about 300 Aborigines living in Kakadu National Park. A number of them are trained to become caretakers and managers of this park.

National Park	Year of establishment	Country	Area (square km)
Grand Canyon			
Kakadu	1979		

b) Below is the graph that provides more information about Grand Canyon National Park and Kakadu National Park.



Answer the following questions with the information found from the graph.

1. How many species of reptiles live in Kakadu National Park?
2. How many species of amphibians live in Kakadu National Park?
3. What is the total number of species of birds, reptiles, and amphibians in Grand Canyon National Park?

Fill in the missing information about the comparison between the two national parks.

1. The number of species of _____ in Kakadu National Park is twice as large as that in Grand Canyon National Park.
2. There is a difference of _____ species of amphibians between the two national parks.
3. _____ National Park has more species of birds.

c) In groups of four, complete the following spidergrams.

1. National parks in Viet Nam

2. Some species of animals

LISTENING

a) In pairs, discuss the following.

Have you ever been to a national park in Viet Nam? If yes, what did you and tourists do there? If no, guess what tourists can do there.

b) Van and Nam are in the cafeteria. They are talking about where to go during the weekend. Listen and check (✓) the boxes next to the correct information you hear from their conversation. You can check more than one box.

In Nam Cat Tien National Park, tourists may

1. go short or long trekking around the forests. ☐
2. go camping. ☐
3. go fishing. ☐
4. see various kinds of animals and plants ☐

c) Listen again and answer the following questions.

1. Where will Nam go on the next long weekend?
2. Which place is Van planning to go to?
3. What is Nam's opinion about environmental conservation there?

d) In groups of four, suggest some measures to conserve the environment of national parks.

SPEAKING

Asking for Permission and Giving Reasons for Refusal

a) Fill in the missing information in the bubbles below, using the suitable prompts provided.

Is it all right if tourists shoot animals in national parks?

1. _____

2. _____

I'd rather they didn't, the thing is, this will pollute the water.

Would it be all right if people use more and more motorbikes and cars instead of bicycles and public transportation?

3. _____

Prompts

a. Well, the thing is, they will suffer from air pollution because smoke from these vehicles pollutes the air they breathe.

b. It's sort of complicated, but you see, this practice will lead to wildlife extinction in the long run.

c. Anybody mind if tourists throw garbage into the lakes?

b) Work with a partner. Use the suggested expressions and prompts below to make up exchanges about ways to preserve the natural environment.

Useful Expressions

Asking for permission

- Is it all right if...?
- Would it be all right if...?
- I wonder if...
- Anybody mind if...?

Giving reasons

- Well, you see...
- The reason is...
- It's sort of complicated, but you see...
- ... and that's why I'd like to...
- Well, the thing is,...
- It's because...

Prompts

Things that could destroy the natural environment

- felling trees for wood
- shooting wild animals
- making a campfire
- dumping trash

Ways to preserve the natural environment

- growing trees for wood
- preserving rare animals from extinction
- preventing forest fires
- keeping waterways clean

You might follow this pattern:

A: Would it be all right if we felled some trees for wood?

B: I'd rather you didn't; the thing is, this would destroy the forest. We must grow more trees instead.

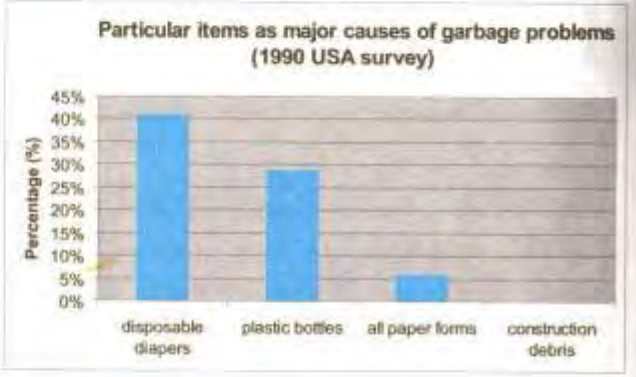
A: I see.

c) Work with your partner. Take turns asking for permission and giving reasons for refusal on other issues related to environmental protection (in the park, in the schoolyard, on the beach, etc.)

WRITING

Interpreting and Describing Graphs

a) Look at the following graph and fill in the missing information.

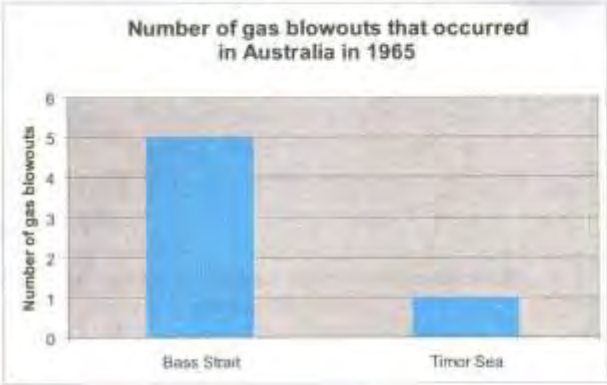


In the graph, the particular items considered as major causes of garbage problems are shown.

According to the graph, (1)_____ were identified by 41 percent of the survey respondents, (2)_____ by 29 percent, (3)_____ by 6 percent, and (4)_____ by zero percent.

In summary, the graph reveals that disposable diapers were identified as a major cause of garbage problems and construction debris has no effect on garbage problems.

b) Look at this graph:



1. *Give brief answers based on the graph.*

   a. When did the gas blowouts occur?

   b. In what country did the gas blowouts occur?

   c. According to the graph, how many gas blowouts occurred in total? How many in Bass Strait? And how many in Timor Sea?

2. *Write a short paragraph to interpret the graph based on the answers above.*

In the graph, _____

_____

According to the graph, _____

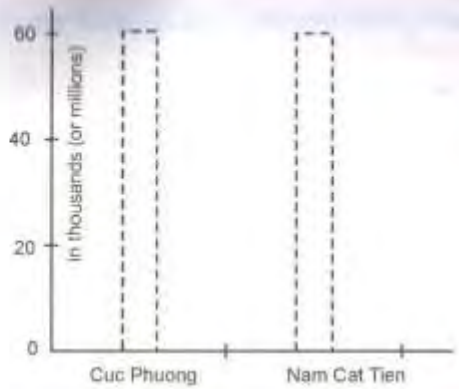
_____

In sum, _____

_____

c) In groups of four, predict the number of visitors to Cuc Phuong National Park and Nam Cat Tien National Park in 2010.

1. Draw a graph to show your prediction of the number of visitors to these national parks.



2. *Based on your prediction shown in the graph, write a short paragraph to interpret it.*

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Word Study

Preserve vs. Reserve

preserve *(v.)* keep something in its original state or in good condition

reserve *(v.)* keep something so that it cannot be used by any other person or for any other reason

preservation *(n.)* the act of keeping something in its original state or in good condition

reservation *(n.)* an arrangement for a seat on a plane or in a restaurant, a room in a hotel, etc. to be kept for you

reservation *(countable noun)* an area of land in the United States that is kept separate for Native Americans to live in

Complete the following sentences, using the appropriate form of the words in parentheses.

1. The paintings in this gallery are in an excellent state of _____ *(preserve / reserve)*

2. We have always tried to _____ peace with our neighbors. *(preserve / reserve)*

3. These seats are _____ for special guests. *(preserve / reserve)*

4. I'll call the airline and make a _____ for my trip to Ha Noi next week. *(preserve / reserve)*

5. In the nineteenth century, American Indians were forced to live in the _____ in the southern states. *(preserve / reserve)*

Grammar

a) Reduced Relative Clauses

Examples

- Vietnamese people try to protect species of fauna and flora which are living in Nam Cat Tien National Park from extinction.

  Vietnamese people try to protect species of fauna and flora living in Nam Cat Tien National Park from extinction.

- We should participate in the movements which are organized to conserve the natural environment.

  We should participate in the movements organized to conserve the natural environment.

Rewrite each of the underlined clauses to create a reduced clause.

1. The police are making great efforts to arrest those who kill and purchase wild animals.
2. People should change their inappropriate lifestyle that causes destruction to natural reserves.
3. There should be some measures to protect the humpback whale, which is considered an endangered species.
4. Poachers still try to kill rhinos that are kept in protected areas because of big profit.
5. Wild animals which are living in their natural habitat will have a better and longer life than those which are kept in protected areas.

b) The Passive Voice with Different Verb Forms and with Modals

Examples

- *A:* Are humpback whales an endangered species?

  B: Yes, they *are considered* an endangered species.

- *A:* Is it all right if rare animals *are kept* in protected areas?

  B: Well, the thing is, they *should be kept* in their natural habitat so that they can live longer.

Write answers to the following questions, using the passive verbs as directed.

1. *A:* What do you think of the purchase of wild animals?

   B: It _____ (ban / *Use the modal auxiliary "must."*)

2. *A:* What should be done to conserve the natural environment in the coming years?

   B: More activities _____ (organize / *Use the modal auxiliary "will."*)

3. *A:* How were the Aborigines in Australia treated years ago?

   B: They _____ to live in reservations. (force / *Use the past simple.*)

4. *A:* What shouldn't tourists do in national parks?

   B: They _____ to make campfires there. (not allow / *Use the present simple.*)

5. *A:* What happens to the natural environment of Phu Quoc Island for the time being?

   B: It _____ because of excessive litter thrown by tourists and local people. (destroy / *Use the present progressive.*)

6. *A:* Why are you still here? You _____ on the flight to London. (be / *Use the modal auxiliary "must" and the perfect aspect.*)

   B: Well, my flight was canceled due to heavy snow there.

14 The World Cup

READING

Before You Read

a) Describe what you see in the picture below. Name one of the players.

b) Work in groups to ask your partners the following questions to see how much they know about soccer and the World Cup.

1. How often is the World Cup held?
2. What does the abbreviation FIFA stand for?
3. When and where was the first World Cup tournament held?
4. Who is considered the all-time best soccer player?
5. When was the World Cup first held in Asia?
6. Is there a World Cup tournament for women?

Reading Text

Read the text and do the tasks that follow.

Soccer is the most popular sport throughout the world. The most famous competition in soccer is the World Cup, which is an international soccer tournament held every four years. There is one tournament for men and another for women. More than a billion people around the world watch the World Cup on television.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was founded in 1904. In 1930 the first World Cup tournament was held in Uruguay with just 13 teams. Now teams from some 200 countries participate in elimination games within their own regions before qualifying as one of the 32 nations in the final tournament.

The original World Cup trophy was given permanently to Brazil to honor that country's record third World Cup title in Mexico in 1970.

Many soccer fans consider Pelé, the Brazilian forward, the best soccer player of all time. He won fame for his amazing ball control and powerful shots. In 1986, Mexico became the first nation to host the World Cup twice. The 2002 World Cup was first held in Asia by Japan and Korea.

The Women's World Cup first took place in 1991 in China and has gained popularity steadily since then. China was named host of the 2003 Women's World Cup, but the competition was moved to the United States after severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) emerged as a serious health problem in China. Nearly 100 nations attempted to qualify for the 2003 event.

a) The following statements can be true (T) or false (F). Check (✓) the appropriate boxes. Then correct the false statements.

	T	F
1. Thirty-two nations participated in the first World Cup tournament.	☐	☐
2. The first time Brazil won the World Cup was in 1970.	☐	☐
3. Mexico hosted the World Cup for the second time in 1986.	☐	☐
4. The 2002 World Cup was held in two Asian countries.	☐	☐
5. The 2003 Women's World Cup was held in the United States.	☐	☐

b) Read the text again and answer the following questions.

1. When was FIFA founded?
2. How do you know that soccer is the most popular sport throughout the world?
3. Why do many soccer fans consider Pelé the all-time best soccer player?
4. When and where was the first Women's World Cup held?
5. Why was the 2003 Women's World Cup moved from China to the United States?

c) Complete the following sentences with suitable words from the reading.

1. Why is soccer so _____ throughout the world?
2. How many teams _____ in this tournament?
3. Our team got all the way through to the _____ tournament before being beaten.
4. A great cheer went up from the crowd when he held the _____ proudly aloft.
5. Will our team attempt to _____ for the World Cup next year?

d) Work in groups. Tell your partners what you know about soccer tournaments in Viet Nam.

LISTENING

a) What games are people playing in the pictures below?

b) You are going to listen to five reports of athletes at their games. Match the recordings with the correct pictures.

c) Listen to the recordings again and complete the following sentences.

1. Baggio places _____ in front of the goal mouth and walks slowly back. Then, he _____ and kicks.
2. Capriati _____ cross-court and all her opponent could do was to watch _____ out of her reach.

3. The favorite, Disneyland, jumped badly at _____ fence and almost _____ the jockey.

4. So far he has won both the men's 100 meters _____ and 50 meters _____.

5. Jack attacks consistently and with just a move of the _____ he puts the opponent's castle and knight under _____.

d) Listen to the commentary of a game between the Boston Celtics and the Los Angeles Lakers and answer the following questions.

1. What sport is being played?
2. Who won the first game?
3. What is the score in this game now?
4. Who is favored in this game?
5. What do the fans anticipate?

e) Work in groups. Report on a sporting event you have recently watched or participated in.

SPEAKING

Describing Popular Sports

a) What games are people playing in the pictures below? Work with a partner. Take turns to talk about the pictures.

a

b

c

d

e

f

g

b) In groups, describe how people play the games above.

- How many players take part in the game?
- Does it need any equipment?
- What are the rules of playing the game?
- How do players score or win the game?
- How long does the game last?

Prompts

- soccer
- basketball / two teams of five players / large ball / high net hanging from a ring
- hurdles / runners or horses / race / jump over / a series of upright frames
- tennis / two or four players / tennis racket / ball / net / court
- volleyball / two teams of six players / their hands / large ball / net / not to let the ball touch the ground on their own side
- table tennis / two or four players / bat / plastic ball / net / table

Example

Describing How to Play Soccer

Each soccer team has 11 players.

Players can use any part of their bodies to hit the ball, except their arms. Players generally use their feet and heads as they kick, dribble, and pass the ball toward the goal. The goalkeeper is the only player allowed to touch the ball with the hands while the ball is in play.

The other players are divided into defenders, midfielders, and forwards. Defenders try to stop the opposing team from reaching the goal with the ball. Forwards, also called strikers, do most of the scoring. Midfielders, or halfbacks, play defense but also try to score.

Most soccer games are 90 minutes long. They have two 45-minute halves divided by a fifteen-minute break, or halftime.

c) Work in groups. Take turns to talk about your favorite sport and how you benefit from it.

WRITING

Writing an Announcement

a) Read the following announcement. In pairs, make a Wh-question and an answer for each line of the announcement.

Example

Who is the announcer?

Le Van Minh, Manager of the Sports Club.

SPORTS CLUB

In Celebration of the Youth League's Foundation Day

Friendly Volleyball Match

Local Language School vs. Sports Club

4 p.m. Saturday, March 07, 200__

School stadium

All students are invited.

Le Van Minh
Manager of the Sports Club

b) Write an announcement of a sporting event or an activity in your school.

c) Read your friend's writing and report to the whole class on what you have read.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Word Study

Words Used in Soccer

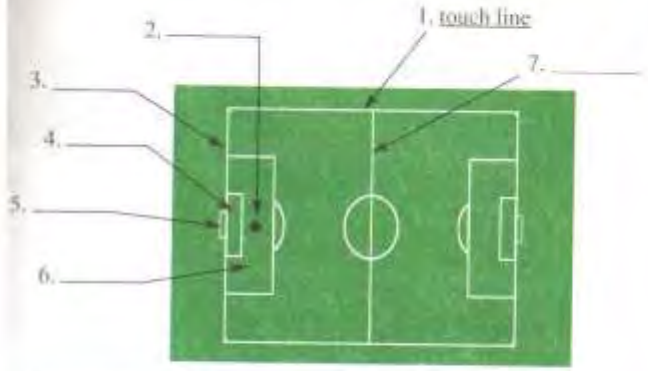
a) Use the correct forms of the words given to fill in the blanks. You can use one word twice.

win	beat	defeat	score

1. Our team was easily _____ in the first round of the competition.
2. Our hopes and ambitions for this tournament have been _____ by the weather.
3. Do you know how many times Italy _____ the World Cup Championship?
4. Has either team _____ yet?

b) Locate the following on the map of a soccer field, using the words and phrases in the box.

goal line	**penalty spot**	**center line**	**touch line**
penalty area	**goal**	**goal area**	



Grammar

To + Base Form of Verb Expressing Purposes

To + Base Form of Verb As Modifier

a) Check (✓) the sentences in which the underlined parts express purposes.

1. The original World Cup trophy was given permanently to Brazil to honor that country's record third World Cup title. ☐
2. In 1986, Mexico became the first nation to host the World Cup twice. ☐
3. People do regular exercise to keep fit. ☐
4. Is it the first team to qualify for the final? ☐
5. Students are encouraged to take part in a team game to learn how to get along with others. ☐
6. Students should manage their time wisely to participate in a kind of sports. ☐
7. Is there any interesting soccer game to watch on TV tonight? ☐
8. The referee can add extra time at the end of each half to make up for injury time. ☐
9. A goalie guards the goal to prevent the other team from scoring. ☐
10. He used the top of his foot to give the ball a powerful kick. ☐

b) Rewrite the following sentences, using to + base form of verb phrases as modifiers.

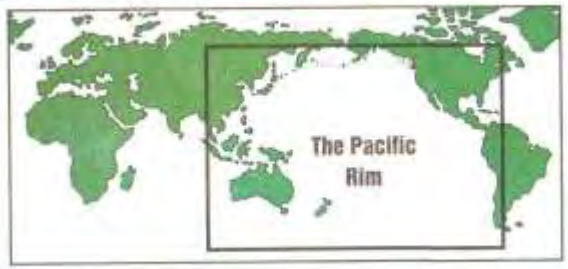
1. In 1986 Mexico became the first nation that hosted the World Cup twice.
   In 1986 Mexico became the first nation to host the World Cup twice.
2. The goalkeeper is the only player who is allowed to touch the ball with his hands when the ball is in play.
   _____
3. Which nation became the first one that won the World Cup trophy three times?
   _____
4. It is an important rule you must follow in this game.
   _____
5. Was he the only player who scored in that game?
   _____
6. Cooperation is a lesson you can learn from team sports.
   _____

15 The Pacific Rim

READING

Before You Read

a) Work in groups of four to explore the world map and identify the names of the continents on which lie the Pacific Rim countries.



b) Work in pairs to write the names of the countries under the flags.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

c) What are the names of the capital cities of the four countries in part b?

Reading Text

Read the text and do the tasks that follow.

The Pacific Rim region offers great diversity – with the economic dynamism of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore; the highly advanced technological development in Japan, Korea, and the western United States; the natural resources of Australia, Canada, the Philippines; and the Russian Far East; the human resources of China, Indonesia, and Viet Nam; and the agricultural productivity of Chile, New Zealand, Mexico, the Philippines, and the United States, among others. Some theorists say that the center of the world economic activity may refocus on the Pacific Rim.

Japan, a country of over 3,000 islands, extends along the eastern or Pacific coast of Asia, covering 377,835 sq. km (including 3,091 sq. km of territorial waters). The capital and largest city is Tokyo and the population is 126,771,660. Japanese is the official language. Present-day Japan ranks among the world's leading industrialized countries. It is also the third largest exporter after the United States and Germany.

The Commonwealth of Australia is in the southeast of Asia between the Pacific and Indian oceans. The country comprises the continent of Australia, the world's smallest continent, and a number of islands. It has an area of 7,682,300 sq. km and a population of 19,357,594. Canberra is the capital and Sydney is the largest city. The official language is English. About 94 percent of the people are of European descent. Australia is the world's leading producer and exporter of wool. The country also ranks as a major exporter of wheat, meat, dairy products, and other foodstuffs.

The Republic of Singapore is an island city-state in Southeast Asia with a total area of 692.7 sq. km and a multiracial population of 4,425,720. The biggest city and capital is Singapore City. Official languages are Malay (National), English, Chinese, and Tamil. After Singapore became an independent republic in 1965, foreign investments have stimulated the country's rapid growth. Today, Singapore has one of the highest standards of living in Asia, with its economy centered on the production of electronic items, ship building, petroleum refining, tourism, international banking, and international trade.

Canada stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Canada is the world's second largest country with an area of 9,970,610 sq. km. The capital is Ottawa, and the largest city is Toronto. The population of Canada is 31,592,805, and about one-third of the people are of British origin. One-fourth are of French origin, living mainly in Quebec and maintaining their language and culture. The official languages are English and French. About four-fifths of Canada's exports are to the United States, and over two-thirds of its imports are from this neighboring country.

a) Complete the table below with information from the text.

Country	Area	Capital City	Largest City	Population	Language(s)
Australia					
Canada					
Japan					
Singapore					

b) Find the words in the text with the following meanings.

1. authorized _____
2. top _____
3. chief _____
4. inhabitants _____
5. shoreline _____

c) Answer the following questions.

1. Which countries are larger exporters than Japan?
2. Which country is the largest in area among the four mentioned?
3. Which of the four countries has the smallest area?

LISTENING

a) Work with a partner.

1. Find the names of the countries nearest to the North Pole.
2. Find the people who are fond of hamburgers and pumpkin pie.
3. Find the country whose national emblem has a merlion.

b) Listen to three speakers speaking about their countries and write down the names of the countries.

Speaker	Country
A	_____
B	_____
C	_____

c) Listen to the recordings again. The following statements can be true (T) or false (F). Check (✓) the appropriate boxes. Then correct the false statements.

	T	F
Speaker A		
1. The country has a lot of diamonds.	☐	☐
2. The country is in South Asia.	☐	☐
3. Four official languages are spoken in this country.	☐	☐

Speaker B

4. The country is the biggest in the world. ☐ ☐
5. The country has different climates nationwide. ☐ ☐
6. It is very cold in the north of the country. ☐ ☐

Speaker C

7. The population of this country is 300 million. ☐ ☐
8. Most people live in cosmopolitan cities. ☐ ☐
9. Two popular sports are football and basketball. ☐ ☐

SPEAKING

Asking for and Giving Information About Cities

a) Work in pairs. Look at a world map and locate the countries in which these cities – Mexico City, Tokyo, Sydney, and Toronto – can be found. Then read the information concerning these cities.

Mexico City and its surrounding area	Tokyo and its surrounding area
• Founded: 1325 • Area: 1,547 sq. km • Population: 9,815,795	• Founded: the 12th century • Area: 2,180 sq. km • Population: 7,966,195
Sydney and its surrounding area	**Toronto and its surrounding area**
• Founded: 1788 • Area: 1,580 sq. km • Population: 3,738,500	• Founded: 1793 • Area: 5,868 sq. km • Population: 4,263,757

b) In groups of four, use the information above to prepare a talk about these cities, using a world map to identify the particular location of the country and city.

Example

Hi, everyone. I would like to give you some information about *(name of the country)* and particularly, the biggest city (/one of the biggest cities) of this country *(name of the city)*. Well, the city and its surrounding area were founded in *(year)* with a total area of *(number)*. At present, the city's population is about *(number)* . . . Thank you for your attention.

Work in groups to collect information relating to your city/province (and for your group's presentation next week).

WRITING

Writing a Postcard

a) Put the sentences on the right in the appropriate order so that it fits the model given on the left.

1. Salutation
2. Body
   - Your feeling
   - The weather
   - The place
   - Things you have done
   - Future plans
3. Closing
4. Signature

a. See you soon.
b. Dear Mary
c. We are having a wonderful time here in Viet Nam.
d. Our hotel is very near the beach.
e. Yesterday we took a boat trip to a small island and spent the day lying on the beach and exploring the island.
f. The weather is wonderful.
g. We are visiting a coastal village and enjoying seafood today.
h. John

b) Imagine you are on vacation in one of the cities below. Write a postcard to an American pen pal.

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Word Study

Countries, Nationalities, and Languages

a) Work in pairs to complete the table below.

Country	Capital City	People	Language(s)
Australia	Canberra		
Canada	Ottawa		
Chile		Chilean	
Indonesia	Jakarta		
New Zealand		New Zealander	

Peru	Lima	Peruvian	
The Philippines			English
Singapore	Singapore City	Singaporean	
Thailand		Thai	
The United States	Washington, D.C.		
Viet Nam		Vietnamese	

b) Complete the following sentences with the appropriate words from the table above.

1. This expert comes from Japan. He is a _____ and he can speak three languages besides _____.
2. Although she was born in _____, she is not an Australian. She can speak _____ and Vietnamese.
3. *A:* Is he _____?

   B: No, he isn't. He's living in Kuala Lumpur now with his family but he cannot speak _____. He uses English in his work.
4. *A:* Where does he come from?

   B: From _____, I guess, because he said he was born in Montreal and speaks _____.
5. _____ used to be occupied by many countries before it became independent. _____ speak Tagalog and English.
6. *A:* What are the official languages of _____?

   B: Well, Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil.
7. *A:* You travel to Bangkok several times a year. Can you speak _____?

   B: Well, not very well, because I'm not a native. I often use English in my work.
8. The capital city of _____ is Washington, D.C. Although the country is multiracial, _____ is the first language of most people.
9. He is a New Zealander. Nevertheless, he was not born in _____ but in Spain. So he can speak both languages, _____ and Spanish.

Grammar

a) **Comparisons** (Revision)

A tourist has just been home from his world tour. Here are some of his opinions about the cities he has visited. Complete his sentences, using correct degrees of comparison of adjectives.

1. In my opinion, Melbourne is interesting, but Beijing is (1)_____ because of its spectacular sights and ancient architecture.
2. In some ways Ha Noi is the (2)_____ interesting of all the cities I visited in Viet Nam. The natural features of the city's environment together with its historic sites arouse a sense of nostalgia.
3. It is hot in Melbourne, but not as hot (3)_____ in Ho Chi Minh City. For me, Ho Chi Minh City is the (4)_____ during the dry season.

b) Reread the information about Tokyo, Mexico City, Sydney, and Toronto. Then write sentences comparing their history, area, and population.

Examples

TOKYO

- Tokyo has a *longer* history *than* Mexico City. It was founded in the twelfth century while the latter was founded in 1325.
- Tokyo is *larger than* Mexico City. Its area is 2,180 sq. km while the latter's is 1,547 sq. km.
- Tokyo is *not so densely populated as* Mexico City. Its population is 7,966,195 while the latter's is 9,815,795.

Appendix O.1

Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS)

Prior to the lesson observations, a questionnaire survey was done with the students in order to get an overview of the students' background information, their evaluations of the textbook, and the actual usage of the textbook from their own viewpoint. There were responses from 17 out of the 25 students of the class present at the time of the questionnaire administration, yielding a rate of return of 68%. Of these respondents, who were all 16 years of age, females were the majority (88.2%).

1. Status of English

As for these urban students, English seemed to be an important school subject to study as 100% of the students considered English either as a "necessary" (17.6%) or "very necessary" (82.4%) school subject to study. Nevertheless, concerning the extent to which they liked studying English, the respondents' opinions were different. Whereas 58.8% of the respondents said they liked it, 29.4% claimed they liked it very much yet 11.8% said they did not like it very much. These results indicate that the majority of the urban students held positive attitudes towards English learning, which implies their strong motivation and effort for learning English.

Regarding their needs of learning English, more than 70% of the respondents claimed they had the needs listed in the survey (see the "Percent of cases" column in Table O1.1). Notably, 94.1% of the respondents claimed they needed to use English for communication purposes and 88.2% of them said they would need English for their overseas study. These two needs were perceived to be quite authentic for these students who lived in one of the most developed cities of the country and studied in a national selective high school where it was quite common for its students to go abroad for study when they were still in Year 11 or 12. In

reference to the percent of responses, there seem to be no real difference between the percentages of responses to the various needs listed by the questionnaire. Please note that one respondent might have had more than one need and as a result the number of responses was (far) larger than the number of cases (i.e. respondents). These results do not shed much light on the differences, if any, between the students' major English learning purposes. As for Year 10 students, though, whose perception of their future needs is still perhaps unclear and subject to change over time, it was normal to achieve such responses, especially when the respondents just needed to tick the boxes as their responses to the prompts provided.

Table O1.1

English Learning Needs of Case Study 2 Students

Needs of English learning	**Responses**		**Percent of cases**
	N	**Percent**	
(1) Need to use English as a tool for my study?	14	14.4%	82.4%
(2) Need to use English for general communication purposes?	16	16.5%	94.1%
(3) Need to meet the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program?	13	13.4%	76.5%
(4) Need to succeed at university entrance exams for which English is one subject?	14	14.4%	82.4%
(5) Need to study abroad?	15	15.5%	88.2%
(6) Need to develop thinking capacity?	12	12.4%	70.6%
(7) Need to develop language skills?	13	13.4%	76.5%
(8) Others	0	0%	0%
TOTAL	97	100.0%	570.6%

Note. N = Number of valid responses.

Further inquiry, therefore, was made to learn which of the needs listed was the most important for the students, thereby seeking to learn what were the key drivers of their English

study. The survey results showed that (see Table O1.2) that the percentages for the needs listed now varied significantly. Learning English for tertiary education access exams was seen as the most important reason by most of the respondents, 43.8%, a rate far higher than those for the other needs. The results implied that studying for exams was a significant purpose for the students. In addition, it should be noted that the percentage for "studying abroad" was quite significant, 18.8%, which was the second highest percentage in Table O1.2. Notably, the developing thinking capacity and language skills, the needs of English study deemed important by the textbook, were not considered to be so by these urban students. The results imply that there was a considerable difference between the students and the textbook in terms of what is necessary to be learned/taught.

Table O1.2

Most Important Need of English Learning for Case Study 2 Students

Needs	**Frequency**	**Percent**
(1) using English as a tool for my study	2	12.5%
(2) using English for general communication purposes	2	12.5%
(3) meeting the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program	1	6.3%
(4) succeeding at university entrance exams for which English is one subject	7	43.8%
(5) studying abroad	3	18.8%
(6) developing thinking capacity	0	0%
(7) developing my language skills	1	6.3%
(8) Others	0	0%
TOTAL	16	100.0%

In addition, it is interesting to note that even in relation to the corresponding results in the "Responses – Percent" column in Table O1.1, the percentages of Needs (3), (6) and (7) were considerably smaller in Table O1.2 (6.3% versus 13.4%; 0% versus 12.4%; and 6.3%

versus 13.4%). The differences were mainly because their two questionnaire items were fundamentally different, one asking about the needs that the students felt they had and the other about just one need that students perceived to be most important for them.

2. Textbook evaluation

This section reports the evaluations of a variety of aspects of the textbook (and its accompanying materials such as the Work Book and the audio disc) by the student respondents. The students were asked to respond to favourable statements about the teaching materials by choosing one of the five options: 1. Strongly Agree; 2. Agree; 3. I Don't Know; 4. Disagree; and 5. Strongly Disagree. The results will be considered from two perspectives, "the positive side" and "the negative side". Whereas the former is the consideration of the percentages of the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses, the latter is concerned with those of the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses. These considerations are needed because among the five response options to the statements, there was "I don't know", an option made available so that the respondents would not be forced to choose one of the other four if they felt they were uncertain about them.

2.1 Favourable evaluations

The survey results showed that the teaching materials were not highly evaluated by the students. Indeed, the cumulative percent of "agree" and "strongly" responses to all the statements were 58.9% or lower. Notably, for all the statements, the percent of "strongly agree" responses constituted a very small contribution, being at most 12.5% (Statement Bm[31]) and zero in quite a number of instances (Ba, Bb, Be, Bf, Bg, Bi, Bn, Bq, and Br). These

[31] The upper case letter (i.e. *B*) indicates the location in the questionnaire of the section where the statement concerned can be found and the lower case letter (i.e. *m*) indicates the location of the statement in that section.

results indicate that the textbook was unlikely to be an effective material for the majority of the students. The only exception was Bh ("The tasks are achievable in consideration of their complexity and the classroom conditions"), with which 70.6% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed). This agreement of the students suggested that the textbook's tasks were implementable in their classroom.

Specifically, there were seven statements whose cumulative percent of "agree" and "strongly agree" was higher than 50%. Their percentages were almost equal:

- 58.9%: Bj: "The rubrics of the tasks and exercises are clear"; Bk: "The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning"; Bl: "The design and layout of the books are good enough so as not to cause confusion"; and Bo: "The workbook provides good tasks for review and reinforcement of the knowledge learned in the Student Book"; and
- 58.8%: Bb: "The language input is well graded from lesson to lesson so that it presents no significant difficulty to students' learning"; Bd: "The cognitive level required is appropriate with students' level of maturity"; and Be: "The language level required is appropriate with students' language proficiency".

It can be observed that few of the statements above strongly suggested that the textbook was effective and appropriate teaching material (for these students). Though they may contribute to effective learning, well-graded lessons, clarity of rubrics, effective illustrations and design and layout, and even a good Work Book are not truly fundamental factors making up an effective textbook. Furthermore, whereas Bd and Be indicated the textbook was suitable with more than half of the students, the cumulative per cent of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" for each of them was considerably high, and this issue will be considered in the section that follows.

Concerning the other statements, the cumulative percent of "agree" and "strongly agree" was below or well below 50%, so they will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Indeed the percentages for those statements were in the forties, such as Bg and Bp (both 41.2%); in the thirties (Ba: 35.3%); in the twenties (Bc, Bi, and Br, all being 29.4%); Bm (25%); Bf (23.5%); and, as noted earlier, even zero (Bn). Of these results, the one of greatest concern is that of Br, which is about the extent to which the students thought the textbook met their needs of English. Still worse, concerning Bq ("I enjoy studying with the books"), the percentage was only 17.6% with no respondent choosing the option "strongly agree". These two results are negative indicators for the textbook's effectiveness and appropriateness because it would be difficult to expect effective learning to take place as a result of it if so few students did not find it relevant to their needs or enjoyable to study with.

2.2 Unfavourable evaluations

Regarding the statements that received a considerably high cumulative percent of "disagree" and "strongly disagree", those with the highest percentages included Bf (76.5%: "The tasks provide communicable situations for students to practise using English"); Bn (76.5%: "The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in exposing you to a variety of contexts where English is spoken"), Bc (70.6%: "The topics and subtopics are interesting enough to make students interested"), and again Bq (70.5%: "I enjoy studying with the books"). These results were quite worrying, indicating difficulty for effective learning English communication with the textbook to take place, for the lack of communicable situations, interest, and enjoyment are certainly not conducive to the students' learning.

The statements with the second highest cumulative percent of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" included Bg and Br (58.8%: "The tasks are meaningful and relevant to the students'

immediate environment" and "I think these books basically meet my needs of English learning"); Bm (56.3%: "The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in your home study and practice"); Bi (52.9%: "The procedures of tasks are consistent enough to be understood and varied enough to be interesting"); and Ba (53%: "There is good continuity between this series (*English 10 – Intensive Programme*) and the other four for lower secondary education (*English 6, English 7, English 8,* and *English 9*)"). Regarding these results, the largest concern is with those of the first two statements (Br and Bg) because the lack of meaningfulness and relevance of the tasks and the relevance of the textbook to students' perceived needs would negatively affect their learning with the materials. Particularly regarding Br, as noted above, since only 29.4% of the respondents agreed that the textbook met their needs, it was expected that there would be considerable difficulty for the students to study with the textbook.

The third group of statements were comprised of those whose cumulative percent of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses was in the forties. Those statements were Be (41.2%); Bd (41.1%); and Bl (41.1%). (As discussed in the previous section, the cumulative percent of positive responses for these statements was in the late fifties.) Particularly concerning Bd and Be, which were about the appropriateness of the linguistic and cognitive requirements of the textbooks, further inquiry was apparently needed to see whether the students found the textbook's requirements too difficult or too easy.

Regarding the remaining statements, the most noticeable were Bk ("The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning": 35.2%) and Bp ("The workbook provides good tasks for further development of the skills learned in the Student Book": 35.2%). It would be interesting to find out why the textbook's illustrations and workbook were not highly evaluated by more than one-third of the respondents would possibly yield interesting information.

3. Textbook usage

3.1 Study of skills versus knowledge

Concerning students' classroom lessons, the survey sought to learn whether skills or knowledge was the focus in students' lessons. It was disclosed that students' time investment for their study of English skills and of knowledge varied considerably, from, for instance, no minute to 150 minutes weekly for reading and to 480 minutes for listening and speaking. On average, it was reported by the students that they spent 75 minutes for skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and 84 minutes per week for language knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). Though it is not a big gap between the two time amounts, it is evident that more attention was paid to knowledge learning.

Each being considered separately, writing was given the largest amount of time (on average 94 minutes per week), followed by grammar (90 minutes); and then vocabulary (86 minutes). While these results seem to be well related with the format of important tests and exams students were going to take, in which grammar and vocabulary were important parts, it was notable that writing was given the most time. Concerning listening, speaking, reading, and pronunciation, the amounts of time were respectively 64, 67, 72, and 77. These results all mean that the aural and oral skills were given the least attention, though they are typically the skills that common communication involves.

Concerning students' evaluation of the five sections of the textbook, the survey revealed interesting results. In terms of whether students thought the sections in question were interesting, not many students would agree so. Indeed, except for Speaking (57.1%), the percentages of students thinking that the other sections were interesting were below 50%. As for Language Focus, the percentage was particularly low, 14.3%. Concerning the question whether students found the sections necessary, Reading and Language Focus were both

considered to be so by the highest percentage of respondents, 68.8%, a rate far higher than those of the other sections. These results indicate the dominant importance of language knowledge for the students who found it necessary probably as a result of the exam preparation. Concerning the question whether the students found the sections difficult, the most noticeable result (but within expectation) was that Listening got the highest number of yes responses, 50%. Meanwhile, the corresponding percentages for the other sections were 25% or lower. In a context like Vietnam where English is still absolutely a foreign language, students have little chance of listening to English on a daily basis and for practical purposes, it is quite normal that listening is a considerable challenge for the majority of students. It is interesting to note, however, that as for the question whether the respondents found the sections boring, Speaking was rated to be so with the highest percentage, 64.3% while Language Focus obtained the lowest, again 14.3%.

3.2 Points of focus in lessons

Concerning reading lessons, the survey sought to learn whether skills or knowledge or something else was the primary focus in students' lessons. It was revealed that the emphasis was on the latter (i.e. language knowledge) as reported by 41.2% of the respondents while the percentage for the former (i.e. skills) was simply 17.6%. These results once again indicate that language knowledge played a dominant part in the students' English lessons. With regard to the reading sections in particular, inquiry was made to elicit the respondents' opinion on the language level, cognitive level and interestingness of the reading excerpts. The results showed that the majority of the respondents reported the language level of the texts was suitable (82.4%) yet nearly half of them said the cognitive level claimed it was "too easy", 47.1%. This information helped to reveal what the students meant (in the previous section, responses to Statements Bb and Be) by rating the textbook as an inappropriate course book

for them. In terms of how interesting the texts were, 35.3% of the respondents said they were "boring" while 64.7% agreed that they were "all right" for them.

Concerning listening lessons, the survey results showed that the emphasis was again more on knowledge than skills. While as many as 41.2% of the respondents reported that they focused on vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciation of the listening texts, just 11.8% of them said the focus was on the listening strategies and processes. This was arguably a reasonable bias because there was generally no exam in listening but the vocabulary terms of the listening texts might appear in exam test items. In addition, it was revealed by the survey results that for their listening lessons, just 25% of the students either read the listening script or check their answers with the answer key prior to the classroom lessons.

Concerning speaking lessons, nearly half of the respondents (42.9%) said there had not been enough practice of the language functions for them in the classroom lessons. While "enough" is a variable term depending on individual respondents, further inquiry was to be made to seek why the students of such a small-sized class (25 students in total) reported they still had inadequate chance to practise speaking. One of the presumed problems was the limited time allocated for speaking lessons, which is typically 45 minutes per week, and normally part of it is taken by the review of the previous lesson that usually takes place at the beginning of lessons.

Concerning writing lessons, among the problems listed, writing grammatical sentences was considered the largest difficulty by the most respondents. Regarding the question which was their strongest focus, most students (71.4% of the respondents) still chose "writing grammatical sentences" (See Table O1.3). These results indicated that sentence grammar was the primary concern for the students. The possible causes for this mentality were that the current tests and exams were grammar-oriented and that they were primarily concerned with the sentence-level grammar. Concerning the source of feedback on their writing, the student

disclosed that the primary source was the classroom teacher. With a timetable packed with classroom lessons and with no classroom time officially allocated for providing feedback for students, the teacher might well be pressurised by this need of students.

Table O1.3
Areas of Strongest Focus in Writing for Case Study 2 Students

Areas of focus	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Writing grammatical sentences	10	71.4
Using appropriate vocabulary	2	14.3
Finding & developing ideas	1	7.1
Organizing your paragraphs	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	100.0

Regarding Language Focus, nearly half of the students said they did not find found the explanations by the teacher and the textbook adequate. While this could be a problem for the students from disadvantaged areas, it was possibly not so for these urban students, for whom there are plenty external resources to rely on that are available the school library and in bookstores.

3.3 Classroom reality

Concerning classroom reality, the students were asked about the language (English versus Vietnamese) that was (i) actually used and (ii) preferred to be used in the lessons. Concerning the first question, there was considerable variation in the results of the students' responses. Regarding the same classroom lessons, while 52.9% said that it was English that was used, 35.3% reported that it was Vietnamese and 11.8% said that it was a mix of the two languages. Regarding the second question, the most favoured preference was English (73.3%); few students opted for Vietnamese (13.3%) or a concurrent use of the two languages (13.3%). These results showed that even for a class in an urban selective school, it was hard for English to be the only language classroom and that some certain amount of Vietnamese

was still needed. The assumed reasons are the students were still in an early year of learning English (the fifth year) and, again, because English is rarely used outside the classroom.

With regard to the mode of classroom interaction, it was reported by the respondents that, on average, in most of the classroom time (35.6%), the interaction was between the teacher as one party and all the students together as another. This interaction mode was remarkably very common in Vietnamese classrooms, where the influence of the traditional techniques of the grammar translation method was inevitably considerable. It was encouraging to see, however, that pair and group work, the mode of teacher-students interaction promoted by the new textbook, accounted for 28.75% of the classroom time. In addition, as reported, the time for individual work was quite small, 14.5% of the classroom time.

Concerning the classroom activities, two key questions were made to the students. First, they were asked if the classroom activities were appropriate to their learning styles; second, they were asked whether those activities were useful for their learning English. The results were very positive. Respectively 93.8% and 88.2% of the respondents answered that those were the cases for them. These results indicate that effective learning may well take place in the classroom because students will generally be willing to learn and learn best if they find the classroom activities congruent with their learning styles and useful for their learning. This issue will be further explored in the lesson observations following this survey.

Appendix O.2 (pages 476-483) removed from Open Access version as it may contain sensitive/confidential content.

Appendix O.3

'Lesson Proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS)

Remark: This appendix does not contain the 'lesson proceedings' of the writing lesson, which are already provided in the body of the thesis, Section 6.3.2.2.

1. Session 1: Reading and Language Focus (Word Study), Unit 14

Minutes 1-8 (15:45-15:52): No class activity; the class did not start until eight minutes after the bell rang.

Minutes 8-9 (15:52-15:53): The first minutes were spent as a warm-up activity for the gap-filling activity based on the lyrics of *The Cup of Life,* a Ricky Martin song that became popular in Vietnam at the advent of the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France. After being given some time to skim through the gapped lyrics, the students were asked what song it was, for what (soccer) World Cup the song was played, and who the singer was. It was interesting to see that the students correctly answered all the three questions though the event had taken place more than a decade before.

Minutes 10-19 (15:54-16:03): The whole song was played for the first time for the students to listen and fill in the gaps. Due to some technical problems, though, the disc was rewound several times.

Minutes 19-24 (16:03-16:08): The whole song was played for the second time for the students to listen and fill in the gaps.

Minutes 25-29 (16:09-16:13): The teacher guided the students through the gap-filling task given in a handout in which approximately 20 words of the lyrics of the song concerned were omitted. It was interesting to observe that the students collectively managed to catch all but two of the words required. Leading to the theme of sports, which was the topic of the unit,

the teacher explained the “soccer” vs. “football” contrast and together with the students talked about the champion and runner-up of the 1998 World Cup and then its venue. Wrapping up the activity, the teacher asked, “In 2010, where will the World Cup be held?” Again, the students gave the correct answer, “South Africa”. The teacher then asked the students to open their textbook to page 180.

Minutes 30-33 (16:14-16:17): The students were to answer a number of questions about, in reference to page 180, “how much they know about soccer and the World Cup”, designed to be a lead-in activity into the reading text on the next page. With the teacher’s assistance, the students gave quite satisfactory answers. Referring to the students’ mother tongue, the teacher asked the students to translate “FIFA”, which the students did perfectly. The teacher then asked the students to go on to skim the reading text (page 181) and do the tasks that followed.

Minutes 34-38 (16:18-16:22): The students silently read the text on their own, sometimes asking the teacher the Vietnamese translations of the words they did not know.

Minutes 38-49 (16:22-16:33): Four students, one by one, were selected to read aloud the four paragraphs of the reading passage and once they each finished the reading, were asked what their paragraph was all about. The readers all did recitation well, and one of them did it with exceptionally good pronunciation. Also, their summaries of the paragraphs were quite good, indicating their comprehension. Notably, these questions were teacher-made, so students could not have known them beforehand.

Minutes 50-54 (16:34-16:38): Within these five minutes, the teacher and the students worked through all the questions about the information provided in the reading text. The teacher did not actually ask any specific student to give answers, though; they worked together. The teacher read aloud the question or simply indicated it and whoever had the answer would articulate it.

Minutes 55-62 (16:39-16:46): The teacher directed her students to silently work on the two vocabulary tasks of the Language Focus section: Task A (filling the gaps with the correct forms of the words given) and Task B (locating the map of a soccer field with the words/phrases provided). The teacher occasionally explained the words that some students found difficult, mostly in English. The teacher then checked the students' work; the students' responses showed they generally had no real difficulty.

Minutes 63-76 (16:47-17:00): The students worked on the crossword puzzles provided by the teacher, which was to "circle ten words connected with sport" based on the meanings of the words that were provided. Meanwhile, the teacher walked around the classroom to check students' concentration on the task and offered help if required. After more than five minutes, the students were then requested to go to the chalkboard to write down the words they had found. This activity was responded to with eagerness. The students actually competed with each other to write the words they had found on the board.

Minutes 76-81 (17:00-17:05): The students were given a reading comprehension task again provided by the teacher, which was about matching names of sports and games with appropriate sports reports. The students basically worked on their own, and sometimes discussed with their friends about possible answers.

Minutes 82-89 (17:06-17:13): Explaining the words that were predicted to be difficult, the teacher worked through the task with the students. The interaction was again mainly between the teacher and class as a group. For these minutes, extra effort was made by the teacher to keep the students calm, because some began to get distracted as the class was getting close to the end of the day.

Minutes 90 (17:14): The class was dismissed.

2. Session 2:

Minutes 1-7 (7:00-7:07): No class activity (*The lesson did not start until seven minutes after the bell rang.*)

Minutes 8-20 (7:08-7:20): The session began with the grammar part of the section Language Focus, which was about *to* + base form of verb expressing purposes and *to* + base form of verb as modifier. The teacher put the structures on the chalkboard and gave examples.

To + Infinitive = 1. purpose = *in order that* (e.g. "I surf the net <u>to/in order to/so as to</u> find some information")

2. modifier (e.g. "She is the first one. She receives that scholarship" → "She is the first one who/that receives//receiving that scholarship" → "She's the first one <u>to receive</u> the scholarship")

Minutes 20-26 (7:20-7:26): After the presentation came the practice: First, students had one minute to work through task a on page 189, which required identifying among the given sentences the ones (using *to*) to express purposes. Next, students were selected to read aloud, one by one, the sentences designated and to decide whether the underlined parts were an infinitive form expressing purposes or a modifier.

Minutes 27-42 (7:27-7:42): This time was spent on another practice activity, but it was about the function of the *to* + base form of verb as a modifier. Students were left to work on their own on task b (p. 189) for three minutes, rewriting the sentences provided using the construction in question. The teacher then went through the task with the students to check their work. Selected students read aloud their rewritten versions, and the teacher gave comments and explanations on each as needed, not necessarily about the grammar point in question. She talked about, for instance, the possible dilemmas of choosing "to be allowed" vs. "allow"; "to win" vs. "to have won"; and the "conversion" into the relative clause with relative pronouns; and the switch between *to*-infinitive and V-*ing*.

(*Minutes 43-102 were spent on the writing lesson, the proceedings of which were presented in Section 6.3.2.2 in the body of the thesis, and on a break*)

Minutes 103-108 (9:02-9:07): The session resumed with listening tasks. Over this time, while an English song was being played, the students were singing along. The song was from a handout provided by the teacher.

Minutes 108-114 (9:07-9:13): Having listened to the music, the students were asked to work on a listening task that followed. The students were left to skim through the five questions and then listen to the song three times to answer the questions.

Minutes 114-115 (9:13-9:14): The teacher checked the answers with the students.

Minutes 116-119 (9:15-9:18): A gapped conversation was played for the students to listen and complete. There were altogether 10 gaps to fill in. The disc was played twice.

Minutes 120 (9:19-9:26): The teacher checked the answers with the students. As they went along, she explained the vocabulary that the students found difficult. English explanations were given to the terms concerned, e.g. *tall tale* (= "exaggerated story"), *endure,* and *body-building* (= "build muscle strength").

Minutes 120-131 (9:26-9:37): Students were asked to do tasks A and B still from the handout. They were gap-filling exercises, of which the vocabulary was sports-related. The students worked individually for more than ten minutes.

Minutes 132-144 (9:38-9:50): The teacher checked the answers with the students. Of the 14 gaps of Task A, students managed to fill in 10, all correct though one was misspelt. Students performed better on Task B, for which 11 out of 12 gaps were correctly completed.

3. Session 3

Minutes 1-9 (15:45-15:54): No class activity (*The class did not start until nine minutes after the bell rang.*)

Minutes 9-18 (15:54-16:04): The teacher invited the researcher to talk with the students about his English learning experience and to advise on the ways of learning English effectively. The talk had not been prearranged but the invitation was accepted as a token of appreciation for being accepted in the class.

Minutes 18-22 (16:04-16:08): The teacher told students to prepare a postcard for the lesson next week, still relating to Unit 15, which would be "Writing a Postcard". The teacher explained what and how to do the task. A sample post card was available in the textbook (page 195) for them to begin with.

Minutes 22-35 (16:08-16:21): The students skimmed through the sub-sections of Language Focus, which was concerned with the vocabulary of "countries, nationalities, and languages" and the grammar of comparisons, and then did the tasks provided by the textbook.

Minutes 35-42 (16:21-16:28): The teacher checked the answers with the students. They got confused with questions 1 and 3 of Task A, Word Study, since there seemed to be no proper filler to be chosen from the table of words provided to use for the gap.

Minutes 42-63 (16:29-16:50): Having completed the exercises in vocabulary and grammar, the session went to the first section of the textbook, Reading. As a pre-reading activity, the teacher asked the students what the Pacific Rim was. As a reply, one student gave a translation, which was "vòng đai lửa Thái Bình Dương". The teacher reasonably did not agree with the translation, which was actually an equivalent of the Pacific rim of volcanic eruptions. The teacher then explained the term, referring the students to the map provided in the textbook (p. 190), where the Pacific Rim might be identified.

The class then turned to the reading text (p. 191-92). The teacher commented on the first paragraph, saying its first sentence was too long to read for her students. The students

however were asked to continue with the reading, which was about the Pacific Rim, the theme of the unit. The teacher assisted the students with the reading, explaining the words they found difficult. By the end of this reading comprehension time, the researcher was again invited to speak to the class, this time to comment on the orthographic forms of the name of the country. Since all the three forms could be found in the media, namely *Vietnam, Viet Nam,* and *Việt Nam,* the question was which one was "the most correct".

Minutes 63-83 (16:50-16:70): The remaining time of the lesson was spent on working on the reading comprehension exercises from the handout provided, entitled *Migratory Beekeeping,* which was thematically unrelated to the unit concerned, the Pacific Rim. The teacher told the students the techniques that could be used to deal with the exercises of completing sentences describing the beekeepers' movements and labelling the diagram described in the reading text. The students, however, were not very keen on doing the exercises probably because they were too difficult and/or they were thematically unrelated to the unit.

Appendix O.4

Classroom teacher post-observation interview transcript – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS)

Interviewee: Ms. Nha

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify her.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*Have you ever taught using the old textbooks?*
2. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Excuse me?
3. ***R:*** [1]*Have you ever taught using the old textbooks or have you ever heard of them?*
4. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The old textbooks are those of the non-intensive programme, aren't they?
5. ***R:*** [1]*The old textbooks were the materials used before the introduction of these textbooks of the intensive programme.*
6. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, I haven't.
7. ***R:*** [1]*They were the textbooks we used to study with in high school.*
8. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, I haven't.
9. ***R:*** [1]*The English textbooks you used to study with in high school were the old textbooks.*
10. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The old textbooks? [2]I don't remember clearly. [3]But, not yet, I haven't yet read through them for my teaching; I haven't taught using them.
11. ***R:*** [1]*But you should have used them as a high school student, right?*
12. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right.
13. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding…*
14. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Are those textbooks of the intensive programme? [2]Are they the textbooks of the regular programme? [3]There are two sets of textbooks, one of which is of the intensive programme and the other of the regular programme. [4]Are the textbooks you're talking about those of the regular programme currently in use?

15. ***R:*** [1]*No, what I was referring to are the textbooks you studied in your high school.* [2]*Compared those with the textbooks of the intensive programme in current use, do think the new materials are different in any way, that is, are they more or less effective?*

16. **Ms. Nha:** [1]To be honest, I don't remember clearly enough what programme was used when I was in Year 10. [2]In my opinion, however, it seems that the new textbbooks of the intensive programme in terms of… [3]I think the exercises are quite alike between the former textbooks and those of the regular programme. [4]The former textbooks were like the regular textbooks today, which are not as advanced as the textbooks of the intensive programme.

17. ***R:*** [1]*But have you seen any improvements between the former and the current textbooks?* [2]*Are they in any way better for you?*

18. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The improvements are, the reading texts are in more detail. [2]They seem to be... a little bit more advanced.

19. ***R:*** [1]*Does that mean the changes are positive or…?*

20. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Positive.

21. ***R:*** [1]*Can you be more specific about those changes?* [2]*In what way are they positive changes?*

22. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Specifically, the reading texts have deepened content and extended knowledge. [2]The reading texts of the regular textbooks are quite simple, how should I say it, they are short and contain little new vocabulary. [3]In these respects, the intensive programme textbooks are better. [4]Regarding the other aspects, the new textbook lays stronger emphasis on listening skills and the tasks for these skills are also of larger amount. [5]And to my perception, Language Focus remains as it was before: It still has the grammar section like before and there's not much change about it.

23. ***R:*** [1]*Next, this question has been made in the questionnaire but might I discuss it with you in more detail?* [2]*Concerning* English 10 – Intensive Programme*, have you found some*

discrepancies between your principles and beliefs in ways of teaching and learning English versus the EFL teaching and learning approach/theory of the book?

24. Ms. Nha: [1]The new textbook has four clear-cut sections such as reading and speaking but its difficulty doesn't seem to be appropriate with the levels of my students. [2]They are in some way lower than the levels of the students. [3]Whereas we might claim we focus on listening and speaking, these two sections of the textbooks are unable to create interest for students. [4]The topics provided for discussion are not interesting enough to engage students, so I have to look for other topics for students to discuss. [5]I can't use the topics provided in the textbooks.

25. *R:* [1]*Can you give an example of a topic from the textbooks that fails to be interesting to students?*

26. Ms. Nha: [1]The topic about dolphins in the unit of preservation, which I mentioned to you the other day, is really interesting to students. [2]This book (*interviewee pointing at the book she was holding*) is not mine; it's of a student of mine; I want to see how the student used the book. [3]This book is of a student studying at Nguyen Dao Tran School last year. [4]I can see that he didn't actually do the exercises of the last units. [5]I discovered that those exercises were too easy for him to do. [6]I just wanted to see how he dealt with the textbook; the year of publication of the book was 2006. [7]A number of his answers were wrong but they hadn't been corrected. [8]The teacher might not have done the corrections or simply there hadn't been enough time to do that perhaps. [9]I can see there are topics in the table that though they're related to students' background, there isn't much to talk about. [10]In most cases, I have to raise other topics. [11]That happen with topics of the initial units, namely "School Talk" and "Activities". [12]It isn't interesting in most cases to talk about these topics. [13]And these topics, which are in the later units, are the ones that students will certainly enjoy talking about, including movies and music. [14]You just raise those topics and your students will be engaged. [15]But if, for instance, you asked them to talk about

uniforms, which is a topic of the unit on School Talk (sic.), it wouldn't involve students in the discussions, just as it is normally the case with other school-related topics. [16]And to be honest, I don't feel these topics are as interesting as the topics mentioned just above.

27. ***R:*** [1]*It is recommended by the textbook, at least according to the Teacher Book, communication should be taught.* [2]*Is it what you think should be taught too?*

28. **Ms. Nha:** [1]I'd rather use the communicative approach, but the seemingly communicative topics, I mean such topics as the environment, are unable to engage the students even though they are in the news quite often. [2]Normally students aren't interested in such topics. [3]Because of their lack of interest, they won't be eager to participate. [4]We want them to speak and listen, right? [5]But those topics, just by their names, sound too boring for the students to get involved talking about them. [6]That's the problem with the topics, so... [7]The three Units 9-11 are all about conservation and the environment, but these topics, I think, could be condensed into one, some sort of larger topic, instead of treating them separately. [8]Likewise, the topics of "School Talk" (*sic.*) and "Daily Activity" *(sic.)* overlap in their similarity. [9]Occupying the three initial units, they will get students bored because they're repetitious. [10]Having been done with Unit 9 and now moving onto *Conservation,* you'd be wondering how they could have sounded so similar, feeling as if I had just defended that point and now I was going to do it again. [11]All the three Units 9-11 were about the environment; why not combine them into one? [12]Unit 10 is about conservation. [13]The lesson on dolphins have these questions and I think they are good questions. [14]I have made my students not only talk but also write argumentative essays on those questions. [15]But there aren't many units that have such good questions to discuss.

29. ***R:*** [1]*Secondly, I'd like to talk about the EFL teaching and learning approach/theory of the books versus reality.* [2]*Do students, for example, like to learn English communication, which is what the textbook wants to take place?*

30. Ms. Nha: [1]Students they will certainly prefer to study in such a way that they don't have to take so many notes (*laughing*), so that's for sure. [2]Students will enjoy studying something that they can be playing while they are learning, without many notes to take, or exercises to do. [3]But that would be in opposition to the tests and exams. [4]We definitely can't just let our students play because we can't just have oral tests. [5]If you went to a communicative class at a language centre, it would be plausible because they don't have to care about grammar. [6]But the key point here is you should teach in such a way that students can do well at tests and exams. [7]Good performance at tests is to be prioritised, because the priority is the students' tests and exam results. [8]This is something that can't be disregarded even though I might really want to.

31. *R:* [1]*Concerning outcomes prescribed by the curriculum (in respect of knowledge and skills and particularly communication skills) versus results actually targeted by students, or first of all by their parents, which are good test results, is there any discrepancy between the outcomes targeted by the curriculum and the results aimed at by the school, the parents and students themselves?* [2]*Are high test results the main driver?*

32. Ms. Nha: [1]For sure parents would just look at the final scores before they are interested to learn what their children have acquired. [2]Scores are an evaluative criterion. [3]As for teachers, they will get happy with students' active participation. [4]If you teach in a class where the students will just sit there, you will not want to conduct activities any more. [5]And if the next time you still don't see your students responsive, you won't… [6]As for an active class, you'll see they are active in their character. [7]When they participate, you'll appreciate it because they are courageous enough to stand up and speak, which means they have somehow overcome themselves by being willing to talk. [8]When the Class 10Van students are willing to talk, I will be happier than I would with students from the other classes, for sure. [9]The students of this class won't start talking until they perceive things to be better, and to be friendly enough. [10]There are various ways of teaching that

depend on individual teachers; I don't know which is better. [11]One approach is to encourage students to speak, the other to correct mistakes immediately. [12]Which approach do you think is better? [13]We can't say which one is better but all that depends on what class we're dealing with. [14]I've seen many… [15]I have studied about this, I have done my MA course, but what I can observe on some teachers is their tendency of extinguishing any mistakes their students have just spoken out.

33. *R:* [1]*Do you mean those teachers would be interested only in doing corrections?*

34. Ms. Nha: [1]It's inadvisable to do corrections intently; it's not advisable to interrupt when students aren't yet finished with their sentences. [2]It'd be incorrect to do so when you haven't had enough time to complete the sentences. [3]Would you speak up the next time? [4]I wouldn't if I were caught like that. [5]These students are quite similar; these students from this class are timid by nature. [6]I want to encourage these students to be more outspoken. [7]Unlike the time when the school year was just beginning, the timid students are starting to speak more freely. [8]They have started to speak up. [9]That's the biggest improvement that I've observed of these students. [10]They're no longer afraid of making mistakes. [11]They can go to the blackboard without being afraid of making mistakes. [12]They are no longer afraid of being called to go to the blackboard or of the answer review time. [13]Now they'll come forward upon request. [14]It's a good point.

35. *R:* [1]*Do you mean that has happened since the beginning of Semester 2?*

36. Ms. Nha: [1]Since the mid-Semester 1. [2]When Semester 1 was just starting and people were just getting to know each other, you'd have seen they were even slower than what you might have seen. [3]Just a few would come up in spite of my numerous calls. [4]But they've turned very much responsive.

37. *R:* [1]*So is there any discrepancy between the outcomes targeted by the curriculum and expected outcomes of the school management and the parents, not mention their targets of tests and exams results that they would prioritise in their review?*

38. Ms. Nha: [1]Could you say that again?

39. *R:* [1]*I'd like to ask if the outcomes expected by the curriculum, which is students' communicative competence in particular…*

40. Ms. Nha: [1]And?

41. *R:* [1]*Are in discrepancy with the outcomes targeted by the school management and the parents?*

42. Ms. Nha: [1]Definitely no discrepancy in terms of what is being aimed at. [2]Are you talking about the outcomes outlined by the curriculum?

43. *R:* [1]*I mean the outcomes.*

44. Ms. Nha: [1]The outcomes are the very results. [2]The results as outlined by this curriculum are to increase communicative ability. [3]What is it compared with?

45. *R:* [1]*With the outcomes that are actually targeted.*

46. Ms. Nha: [1]Compared with the actually expected outcomes? [2]The exam doesn't contain the other test, the oral test. [3]As for high school students, if any oral test is made, it will only be put in the 15-minute test, or the oral test. [4]It will possibly come up as a score but the school management or parents won't know whether it's the score of the written or spoken test, though it might come up in the oral test column. [5]This oral mark might be scored collectively because there's not much time to do it on individual students. [6]That's why the (oral) assessment could just be done through the discussions by giving pluses to students' good performance.

47. *R:* [1]*As a classroom teacher, are you influenced by the expectations of students, other teachers, and/or the school management?*

48. Ms. Nha: [1]Of the school management?

49. *R:* [1]*Right.*

50. Ms. Nha: [1]There are no constraints set by the school management. [2]Compared with other schools, this place is relaxing for teachers. [3]There is no regulation enforced by the school;

all I was given was a document saying in how many periods I should have covered a unit, which is a general regulation. [4]But it all depends; if we are done with a unit, should we just be sitting there and waiting until when all the seven periods are over? [5]It depends on reality, and the guidance is quite general, applicable to all schools. [6]It's also flexible when it comes to the number of tests that can be done.

51. ***R:*** [1]*And are there any pressures by parents, who might set expectations on the scores their children should achieve?* [2]*Particularly for the graduation exams and then the university admission exams?* [3]*Are you pressurised by those expectations or do you simply teach communication and that's it?*

52. Ms. Nha: [1]That's why it's impossible to teach communication only. [2]That's the reason why we can't teach communication because if we did it, you'd not know how students would be able to answer the grammar points that come up in the exams made by the school. [3]For the end-of-semester exams, I'm not the only teacher involved in making the test items. [4]It's not a pressure but we need to make adjustments; there's no one who is making pressures on us at all.

53. ***R:*** [1]*That means, you might have your own vision but you might need to make adjustments so that it...*

54. Ms. Nha: [1]That's right. [2]Communication should not be taken as the constant target because if the lessons were driven by communication alone, the students would end up not doing well at exams. [3]Such a consequence would be certain to happen, as you might imagine. [4]Instead, you will become very keen to prepare your students for the exams. [5]The communication skills results are hard to see and proved but those in exams really are. [6]How would you explain if you got four marks? [7]As a result, while attempts to provide communicative lessons are made, exam scores are ultimately the most important targets. [8]We are studying with an aim to achieve the best exam scores possible. [9]There's no other

way other to prove how much progress students have made, and on what basis such progress has been achieved.

55. *R:* [1]*Concenring the techniques and procedures required for the activities (to take place) versus the real context, is there any problem?*

56. Ms. Nha: [1]What do you mean by "real context"?

57. *R:* [1]*That means, for example, a certain task-based activity is advised to be done by groups of three or four students and because the class size is too big, teachers might end up being unable to manage the implementation of the activity.* [2]*As another example, the task might require reshuffling the tables and benches but the furniture is already fixed in rows.*

58. Ms. Nha: [1]Oh, I'd be looking for the tasks that wouldn't require such changes. [2]Approaching holidays, however, I took time out to organise special activities for the students. [3]For example, celebrating the upcoming New Year days, we would move the tables and benches as required by the activities; all done for a change to energise the students. [4]These activities are very flexible. [5]It's all up to you; nobody demand that you have activities for a certain lesson. [6]If students have had several lessons focusing on knowledge acquisition, and they are tired enough, they'd be energised when given activities to do.

59. *R:* [1]*Do you have any difficulty with the techniques to implement the tasks?*

60. Ms. Nha: [1]In terms of task implementation, it's easier with the active class and much more difficult with the quiet class. [2]It's all due to the class situation and individual students. [3]There should be trial attempts. [4]For example, you might try with pair work and if students like it, you'd increase the amount of pair work for that class; otherwise your might turn to try with group work or chorus work. [5]It all depends on each class; and it's up to you how to organise the tasks, there's no requirement, nor is there anyone who imposes any requirements.

61. ***R:*** [1]*As for Class 10V for instance, I suppose they'd prefer pair work initially and thus group work took place later?*

62. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Well, for this class, I started with individual work. [2]For the students weren't well connected. [3]In fact, at the beginning when asked if the students (of the class) are participating in the extracurricular activities, those organised by the school for example, the student in charge of the extracurricular activities of the class, whose name is Tuan, sitting in the last row of the class, said there were appeals but nobody responded. [4]Just a few participated in those activities; in fact, those were the active students. [5]The students of this class were not really responsive to such activities. [6]I asked the whole class why they wouldn't participate as a class to have fun. [7]I asked why though I knew that those activities mentioned were not related to English study. [8]I was told that the students played together by groups. [9]I advised them to get together as a class and participate. [10]Talking with them, I recalled my experience as a student that the students in my class also got together by groups. [11]On one occasion, though, we had a party at a classmate's home, and everybody cooperated to have the party and by that experience, classmates turned out to be more connected. [12]After this talk, I gradually felt that they were better at collective tasks. [13]At first, it was so boring; they didn't respond to me at all. [14]So, pair work was gradually introduced; at first I let them do individual work; that was the only way at that time for sure. [15]But pair work had to be given, and I mixed the students, changing their seats. [16]I didn't let them remain where they were sitting, for changing seats would give them an opportunity to talk with somebody different. [17]But there was a problem that some students assigned to be together did not like each other. [18]Once they did not like each other, it was impossible to have the pair work done. [19]You wouldn't have known which student didn't like which student, but if they didn't like each other, they wouldn't cooperate. [20]Later, when we did group work, the students were allowed to remain where they were. [21]It seemed to be more effective because the students made friends by groups.

[22]They wouldn't work if they got separated. [23]I had been trying to get them to harmonise with each other but it didn't work after all. [24]The students just remained where they were; the reserved students would just sit there because if they were assigned to a different group, the other would monopolise the talk. [25]So as for this class, we started with individual work, followed by pair work, and then group work; group work has proved to be the most effective.

63. *R:* [1]*Are you saying that the students tend to be comfortable within their group?*

64. Ms. Nha: [1]Divided. [2]No, all classes are divided; it's a common practice in every class for students to get together by group. [3]This is the same for any class. [4]When I was a student, we played by groups, which were divided first by their family background and then their hobby, and thirdly by their character. [5]We didn't play together as a class; the whole class only got together when enforced; otherwise, we went out in groups.

65. *R:* [1]*So, that might end up with having groups composed only of reserved students, and no active member?*

66. Ms. Nha: [1]Right. [2]One example was the group which you saw in the class, the group that had a student whose hair was quite long, the girl who wrote about music bands. [3]It was the most reserved group. [4]The group of the students sitting in the two front rows were the most reserved. [5]The group in the table next to the last one, where you were sitting, were the most active. [6]The group on the other side was a mixture. [7]Anyway, if we mixed students, the pair work would be difficult to be done. [8]The students simply couldn't cooperate. [9]Concerning the other class, it was a mixture. [10]The majority of students of the other class don't really enjoy each other's company (as a class) but they still could work together. [11]So, it all depends.

67. *R:* [1]*And considering the books' requirements versus students' linguistic, cognitive, and maturity level, is there any difference?*

68. Ms. Nha: [1]It's all right for a number of topics, for others… [2]You were talking about the topics, cognition, weren't you?

69. *R:* [1]*About linguistic level, for example, do they understand the reading texts?*

70. Ms. Nha: [1]It depends on the topics concerned. [2]As for this class, I'll be talking about the classes separately because each is different. [3]As for this class, they will find something new in the textbooks, but for the other class, perhaps because their English is somehow better, they might have done good research on the Internet, and they might have read texts that are even more updated, it's likely that they will find the textbooks lower than their level. [4]As for the stronger class, just a few students will find something new in the textbook, and the majority already knows well about the topics and issues of the textbook. [5]As for the students of this 10V Class, there are a number of things they don't know because they don't do much research. [6]They don't specialise in English so they don't seek to learn about those topics.

71. *R:* [1]*How about the linguistic level?*

72. Ms. Nha: [1]You mean their reading comprehension?

73. *R:* [1]*Reading comprehension is more concerned with their cognition.* [2]*By linguistic level, I mean there might be some grammar structure or vocabulary in the textbook that the students don't understand?*

74. Ms. Nha: [1]You were asking if there's something in the textbook that they don't understand, weren't you? [2]They have problems mainly with vocabulary.

75. *R:* *Both classes?*

76. - Ms. Nha: [1]No, things are easy with the other class. [2]As for this class, the problem lies in their reading skills. [3]My aim is to improve their reading skills. [4]I want them to read more, I want to teach them to read more without reading the whole texts, I want them to be able to answer the questions without reading all the texts. [5]If they are faced with a reading text that is long and presents new vocabulary, they will spend time looking up the every single

of the words in the dictionary. [6]Take for example the reading text I gave them that was taken from an IELTS practice resources, even the class leader spent time underlying all the words he found new. [7]He asked me why it took him so much time to do the task given the fact the time allowed (for the test) was only 20 minutes. [8]I spent too much of my time on it, he said. [9]I asked him how he read the text and I learned that he spent time looking up words with a dictionary. [10]So I advised him first just to read through and then see what the questions were. [11]What was important was to answer the questions, I said. [12]I later checked with him how he did it with my advice and he said things had turned better. [13]He had been too occupied with individual words; he hadn't been aware that reading for the main ideas was more important. [14]These students are dreadful of new words because they don't know much vocabulary, and that has made them fearful of reading texts. [15]The cognitive level is in fact the same between the two classes. [16]They don't actually have problems with grammar. [17]There are some reading texts that need skimming only, reading for the main ideas; no thorough understanding is required. [18]In several instances, the reading texts don't actually have many new words; new words if any are explained alphabetically at the back of the textbooks, so they might want to consult that section if need be. [19]They might also use the electronic dictionary *Kim Tu Dien* that they each have one copy. [20]But they'll be all right with the reading texts from the textbooks only. [21]When it comes to the TOEFL or IELTS passages, they are out of breath; there are so many words they don't know.

77. *R:* [1]*And concerning the content and the activities, can the topics of the textbooks engage students?*

78. Ms. Nha: [1]Is this question similar to other one?

79. *R:* [1]*Which one?*

80. Ms. Nha: [1]The one as an answer to which I said there were topics that couldn't raise students' interest. [2]What was that about? [3]And what's this about?

81. ***R:*** [1]*Right, in that response, you were comparing the new and old textbooks, and talking about the topics.*

82. Ms. Nha: [1]I was saying previously that there were some topics that interested students; others didn't. [2]It's quite natural for you to be engaged in talking about the topics that you feel interested. [3]The topics of the environment and research will be boring from the outset. [4]It's certainly true, we can't complain. [5]But if the topics (of the textbooks) are all about entertainment, it's not advisable to do so. [6]It's impossible to have entertainment only.

83. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the implementation of the activities, such as group work or sometimes individual work, all students are generally ready for group and pair work, aren't they?*

84. Ms. Nha: [1]Yes, they are ready. [2]They were hesitant at first but they have been used to it since they have been together for quite a long time and they have also done group work at other subjects. [3]Now they are used to it…

85. ***R:*** [1]*Did it take them a semester to become what they are now?*

86. Ms. Nha: [1]I think it took two-thirds of the first semester. [2]Things turned OK after two-thirds of Semester 1 or by the end of it.

87. ***R:*** [1]*You've been teaching this class since the beginning of the first semester?*

88. Ms. Nha: [1]Yes, since the school year started.

89. ***R:*** [1]*So things were more difficult for you in the first than the second semester, at least in respect of the implementation of the tasks?*

90. Ms. Nha: [1]It was a bit discouraging in the beginning. [2]They were not used to me. [3]Things have now become much easier now.

91. ***R:*** [1]*And how about the constraints of the curriculum versus teacher's creativity in teaching, can you seen any gap?*

92. Ms. Nha: [1]As I told you, adjustments are necessary to make. [2]I have had to make adjustments depending on each particular lesson. [3]For example, if they have studied too much for the past days, or if they've had several tests, it will be boring to work on

grammar again. [4]They won't be receptive to regular lessons, and they had better need some activities instead. [5]You will be able to recognise whether the students are energised or tired as soon as you see them.

93. *R:* *[1]For the implementation of such activities, the conditions are favourable at the Urban Selective High School, where there are no constraints, right?*

94. Ms. Nha: [1]Right. [2]But I don't know what the situation is like is in other schools. [3]They must be stricter with the lesson plans. [4]It is more relaxing at this school. [5]At other schools, you might want to try some activities but it could be hardly possible. [6]For you're required to have covered some specified content within a certain period of teaching. [7]You might be required to give a test at a certain period as specified at other schools. [8]At this Urban Selective High School, you won't be worried until the end of the semester when you have to submit the students' scores and averages. [9]Normally, however, you don't necessarily follow the agenda of the school.

95. *R:* [1]*Regarding the time allowed versus time really needed, do you feel relaxed with teaching?*

96. Ms. Nha: [1]It depends, for there are requirements that say, for example, when it is the deadline to submit the students' scores. [2]The submission is expected to be in time, and that's all. [3]This is the curriculum distribution specifications, promulgated by the Service of Education and Training, which say that these are the number of periods allowed per week for the English intensive programme, Year 10; that tests should be administered by the end of what unit. [4]This document is quite formal. [5]Would you like a copy of it?

97. *R:* [1]*Thanks, may I have one if possible?*

98. Ms. Nha: [1]Sure. [2]What about this one?

99. *R:* [1]*If they are not personal, I'd have them all photocopied.*

100. **Ms. Nha:** [1]OK, this one is how to classify students. [2]This one is applicable for all the three Years, 10, 11, and 12, and both programmes, regular and intensive. [3]You might want to have a look to make comparisons.

101. ***R:*** [1]*What I was talking about was the amount of time allowed.* [2]*For example, one unit is allocated seven periods, but for the students of the Urban Selective High School you might cover a unit in two, three, four or five periods.* [3]*So, with the seven periods allocated…*

102. **Ms. Nha:** [1]I will have spare time.

103. ***R:*** [1]*Spare time, that means you are not pressed by time.*

104. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right, no worries about time.

105. ***R:*** [1]*Do you happen to know some teachers teaching Year 10 at other schools who might complain that the time allowed is inadequate?*

106. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, I don't know any Year 10 teachers from other schools but I have heard something from a student of mine. [2]I asked him, who is now in year 11 at Nguyen Dao Tran High School, how the textbook was used in his classroom. [3]He's still taking the intensive program by the way. [4]He said it was the same: Not much concentration was on the textbook and teachers weren't constrained, for instance, in terms of time, say five periods or something. [5]Without constraints, teachers might have their students do extra exercises instead. [6]That's because Nguyen Dao Tran High School is also a selective school. [7]I'm not sure how things are like in other schools, where there might be constraints, those of lesson plans, for instance.

107. ***R:*** [1]*Through the lessons I observed, I could see that as for the textbook you were teaching you might skip any section but Language Focus.* [2]*Why did you always retain that section in your lessons?*

108. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Why did I do that? [2]Because I think if… it was all due to the tests and exams. [3]Just in case I am not selected to make the test items for exams, my students will

still be prepared for what will be tested. [4]The school exams are based on the textbook, which is considered to be the backbone of the programme. [5]So, the test items can't be anything other than those points in the textbook. [6]That's why I always kept it (Language Focus) the point of reference for students. [7]The points in these sections might be easier than the supplementary exercises but I still want my students to know that they will be part of the test items. [8]Whether they come up in the exams, I'm not sure but…

109. ***R:*** [1]*But you should teach them so that no one could blame you for not teaching them?*

110. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, the question is not be afraid of being blamed, but because I've often supplied quite a number of extra exercises for those language points. [2]But I think we should have been finished with what is prescribed the textbook before we move onto the extra. [3]The supplementary exercises are to be based on the textbook and they have to be more difficult. [4]You were asking me why the textbook content was still necessary, I would consider it as the backbone to rely on so that students would know what points are to be covered. [5]It's like a summary of what is needed that students can refer to preparing for their exams.

111. ***R:*** [1]*So, the exams are based on Language Focus and its points, but what has been covered of the textbook in terms of reading and listening won't come up in the exams as they originally are?*

112. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The exams are all based on new texts. [2]What we often have in the exams, for reading for instance, is of the same topics. [3]They are of the same topics but not of the very reading texts of the textbooks.

113. ***R:*** [1]*Does that apply to this class as well?*

114. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right. [2]For I can see no reason why the same texts should be used again; it's not reasonable. [3]These students are no longer in the lower classes. [4]It'll be too easy to use the same texts again.

115. ***R:*** [1]*And what are the reasons for the supplementary exercises?* [2]*Is it the main reason that those in the textbook are too easy or too bad, or why?*

116. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, what the textbook has to offer is the basics. [2]And while you might say that they are easy, they aren't bad. [3]Many questions that look easy might be easy to be answered incorrectly. [4]Take as an example what you saw in Class 10D when they were doing the exercise on *that,* in Unit 14. [5]Many students might have thought those were easy and thus did not concentrate well enough, and the exercises would become difficult then. [6]Yes, I'm talking about these exercises. [7]They were not demanding but they were… [8]If these exercises were given to Class 10D, the students would be doing them more slowly. [9]They just thought the exercises would involve something complicated. [10]Meanwhile, the students of this class just did what was required, and they did the exercises of the textbook very quickly. [11]The students of the other class found those exercises difficult maybe because they had done so many other exercises that were even more difficult. [12]As for these exercises, they thought it couldn't have been as simple as substituting *too.* [13]That's the very problem. [14]There are things that are quite funny like that. [15]I thought those (exercises) would be easy for them to do but they couldn't do them. [16]So the advanced students might have more difficulty doing the average exercises.

117. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the supplementary exercises, the Class 10D students may have done them more quickly, right?*

118. **Ms. Nha:** [1]In the beginning I taught the same to the two classes, because I thought the new programme was the same for both classes. [2]As I had taught all those points to both classes, it was time for them to apply what they had learned. [3]The same amount applied to both classes anyway. [4]But I could see that Class 10D were able to do the exercises more quickly and the other class needed more explanations. [5]At first I thought the exercises might need to be easier for this class but later I thought why they should be treated differently. [6]I taught the same points to the same class and I even explained more to this

class, so why should their exercises be easier? [7]The reading texts might be shorter but for the points that had been equally covered, the same thing should apply.

119. ***R:*** [1]*Another observation was that the Work Book hadn't been seen used in the classroom, and the textbook was covered quickly.* [2]*Was it because the students would have been able to do its exercises on their own any way, they might have used the answer key, or because they might have tried its exercises and found them boring?* [3]*Or why else?*

120. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Because I think the Work Book… [2]I've got that book, which was also of the boy I was talking about. [3]These books both looked brand new. [4]I asked him to give it to me if he did not use it any longer. [5]I could see they looked really new, probably they hadn't been used at all. [6]I looked at the reading sections of the Work Book and I could see they were plentiful, and they were long enough to be used as supplementary exercises for the textbook but if the Student Book was covered quickly, why waste time doing the exercises of the same level? [7]That was why I didn't…

121. ***R:*** [1]*That means, the supplementary exercises you provided were more difficult?*

122. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right. [2]Meanwhile, the exercises from the materials written by Mai Lan Huong looked more complicated, didn't they? [3]But it was never too boring to do the exercises of those books whereas the layout of the other book (*i.e.* Work Book) was… [4]I don't know what to say about it. [5]The layout of the Work Book looked discouraging, probably because there are so many spaces (provided to fill in the answers). [6]It looked simpler. [7]I know that the topics of the book by Mai Lan Huong aren't possibly based on those of the intensive programme textbook, right? [8]No, they aren't. [9]They're based on the materials of the regular programme. [10]But it's very confusing to work with the Work Book, and students will be more dreadful of the book. [11]The Work Book was, I don't know what to say about its layout but the font size was large, and it has so many spaces. [12]It left an impression that the book was for younger students, because books for younger students normally leave many spaces to write in. [13]The Student Book looked better than

the Work Book. [14]The other book by Mai Lan Huong was filled in with lots and lots of words and many of its reading passages were taken from TOEFL practice materials. [15]Though quite a number of its exercises were taken from test practice materials, TOEFL for instance, it was closely related to the curriculum. [16]It also had pronunciation questions and all the types of questions possibly needed. [17]The Work Book also had those exercises but they were easier.

123. ***R:*** [1]*You were talking about pronunciation.* [2]*It has been suggested that the intensive programme textbook should also have a component on pronunciation, a section distinctively teaching pronunciation.* [3]*What do you think?*

124. **Ms. Nha:** [1]*What do you mean by "distinctively"?*

125. ***R:*** [1]*It means there should be a separate section dealing exclusively with pronunication, something the intensive programme textbook doesn't have and instead…*

126. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Oh, why do the regular programme textbooks have such a section? [2]Why?

127. ***R:*** [1]*What do you think then, should there be such a section?*

128. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Such a section wouldn't be necessary though there are pronunciation test items in exams. [2]I still don't think it is necessary have a section for pronunciation. [3]Do you mean it'll be needed for your doing the exams, right? [4]The exams always have five items on pronunciation, five items on (word) stress. [5]Pronunication is already learned in the lessons and students might also check the pronunciation on their own; so why is a section on pronunciation needed? [6]If you taught them such sounds as *a, o* or something like that, it wouldn't be effective. [7]They just need to know the words in the reading texts and they might need to differentiate them from other words, and that's it. [8]There is no need for a separate section of pronunciation.

129. ***R:*** [1]*Might we need, for example, to draw pictures of how to say the sounds as we used to have for phonetics practice before?*

130. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No, it'd be redundant; no one could remember those things. [2]To be honest, I found I myself had been unable to remember those things until I studied them again recently. [3]We can't remember those things though we might study them many times. [4]You wouldn't be able to speak with all that. [5]It'd be difficult to practice curving something to produce the sounds. [6]We used to study it as a required subject. [7]It would be a misstep to add it to the textbook, and they would complain. [8]It'd be OK to have pronunciation as a subject at the undergraduate or post-graduate level, for we might need to specialise in such an area once we decided to major in language study. [9]If such a section were included in the textbook, people would complain.

131. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, have your students managed to pick up something from the textbook, something concerning language and/or communication?* [2]*Or were they learning simply because English is a required subject?*

132. **Ms. Nha:** [1]What have they learned from the textbook? [2]The knowledge acquired is tested by exams and their skills, if any, had been pre-existing, I think. [3]Many students started learning English at very young age. [4]Yeah, their skills were not built up by the textbooks; they should have learned English from outside, where the lessons should have been more communicative, and where they had more opportunities to speak. [5]So when they were here, it was as if it was for fun.

133. ***R:*** [1]*Having read a story, we might have learned something, about the writer's ways of expressions or ideas as an example.* [2]*So, what do you think is the impact the Year 10 textbook might have left on the students?*

134. **Ms. Nha:** [1]They still remain the same; they haven't changed, nor have their thoughts about the textbook.

135. ***R:*** [1]*What are their thoughts?*

136. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The students' thoughts are that the textbook is easy, the point I told you the other day. [2]They have a look at the textbook and say the textbook is easy. [3]I don't know

what they might say about the textbooks of the other subjects, because as for subjects like math, about which it is hardly possible to say so. [4]As for English however, there are many resources. [5]As for the reading passages of the textbook, for instance, the students just need to take a quick look and they'll say that they're clearly easier than their level. [6]These thoughts are already there in their mind, and it's unchangeable in a few years, unless completely new textbooks are introduced. [7]Textbooks are something so close to students that they would think they are easier. [8]I don't know when those thoughts came up but they can't be changed at all.

137. ***R:*** [1]*As you were saying, the reason for the provision of the supplementary exercises is those of the textbook are easy for your students, isn't it?* [2]*Your students might need something more challenging?*

138. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right, and they'll be motivated to study if they find the exercises challenging. [2]If the exercises are easy and they could complete them in five minutes or so, they'll find there's nothing interesting to learn. [3]They're willing to learn something because it is new to them.

139. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning lesson plans, I couldn't see them either at other schools.*

140. **Ms. Nha:** [1]No lesson plans? [2]Not either? [3]No lesson plans? [4]Really?

141. ***R:*** [1]*As for the Urban Selective High School, I don't know, it might be because the atmosphere is relaxing like at a university, isn't it?*

142. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Correct.

143. ***R:*** [2]*But at other schools…*

144. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Do they have lesson plans?

145. ***R:*** [1]*There wasn't any lesson plan either.*

146. **Ms. Nha:** [1]There was no lesson plans available to see because you've visited selective schools. [2]Have you been to regular schools?

147. ***R:*** [1]*I've been to regular schools too.*

148. **Ms. Nha:** [1]*Have you?*

149. ***R:*** [1]*It was a regular school in a rural region, in Nam Qua; they generally didn't have lesson plans.*

150. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Did you seek to learn whether it was because the school management didn't require teachers to have lesson plans or it was simply because just the teachers concerned didn't make the plans?

151. ***R:*** [1]*The teachers said that the reason was that it was the first year the intensive programme had been used so the school management temporarily accepted lesson plans being made while teaching.* [2]*As for the Urban Selective High School, has there been check (by the school management) on the lesson plans?*

152. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Oh, no, no.

153. ***R:*** [1]*So, we might just envisage what we might need to have to teach for our lessons, and there's no need to write them up, is there?* [2]*But considering the handouts provided to students, there are de facto lesson plans, aren't there?*

154. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The handouts to students are practically our preparations for lessons. [2]Instead of drawing up a table showing the specific steps of a lesson plan, the handouts indicate what we might be doing, and there could be changes as needed. [3]If I see the students have played quite a lot, I'll have them study. [4]If they've studied too much, they'll be let play. [5]In my opinion, lesson plan should be understood as a notebook for the teacher. [6]If I have a notebook in which I jot down what I'll be teaching instead of drawing a table listing in columns what to do, such as what warm-up activities to include, it is itself the very lesson plan, isn't it? [7]The lesson plans are merely steps planned to follow in the lessons; there's no need to take pains to draw columns and rows showing what to do first, what next, and what next. [8]Am I right?

155. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

156. **Ms. Nha:** [1]We might need to estimate to foresee how students might react to something we might be teaching and we'll be reacting accordingly in the actual lessons. [2]In my notebook, I might just need to note down, for instance, what to do in the lesson. [3]If I'm requested to provide a lesson plan in ink and paper…

157. ***R:*** [1]*Still concerning the lesson plans I have observed, ideally speaking, what would you have done differently in the classroom if you had been given all you might have needed?* [2]*What do you wish you had done and hadn't?*

158. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Do you mean I was teaching differently because of your presence in the classroom?

159. ***R:*** [1]*Oh no, what I mean is, a teacher might say if I had a language lab, I'd do this.* [2]*Or she might say if she weren't pressurised by exams, she'd do that.* [3]*In other words, if you were given all the ideal conditions you might want, what changes would you have for your lessons?*

160. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Ideally, I'd prefer to teach a class without too much emphasis on grammar.

161. ***R:*** [1]*Without too much emphasis on what?*

162. **Ms. Nha:** [1]On grammar. [2]As for vocabulary, I might give them excerpts to read, and we wouldn't have to do the vocabulary exercises, and it's what students wish to happen.

163. ***R:*** [1]*No exercises?* [2]*But there would no problem with task-based activities, for example group work?*

164. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right, it's no problem do task-based activities. [2]And the others are about writing or something like that but…

165. ***R:*** [1]*Would the lessons be geared to tests and exams?*

166. **Ms. Nha:** [1]The lessons would be just like those at a language centre, where communication is emphasised. [2]I might then spend my time looking for more reading and speaking topics, though there might be centers where there are no speaking activities. [3]In my classes, I'm so much distracted here that I don't have time to look for something for

students to have fun with and something for them to the tests well. [4]You can't have a cake and eat it.

167. ***R:*** [1]*Any other wish in addition to what you've said?*

168. **Ms. Nha:** [1]What do you mean by "any other wish"?

169. ***R:*** [1]*You were saying that ideally you'd wish to teach a class without too much emphasis on grammar, without so many exercises.* [2]*So is there anything else other than that you have just said?*

170. **Ms. Nha:** [1]I wish there wouldn't be any lesson plan requirements.

171. ***R:*** [1]*What do you mean by that?*

172. **Ms. Nha:** [1]That means, I'd not be required to… [2]This is what you just mentioned. [3]I dislike being asked to do the paper work.

173. ***R:*** [1]*What is it that normally makes you feel happy/unhappy with your lessons?*

174. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Happy about what?

175. ***R:*** [1]*About your students, the how the lessons went, or about the textbooks.* [2]*For example, what is it that normally makes you happy when you leave the class?*

176. **Ms. Nha:** [1]It depends. [2]If students eagerly respond to what you offer and, how to say it, if students do the tasks quickly and well, I'll be happy because I know I've helped them know something new. [3]If the lesson goes the way other than what I have expected; for example, I had thought my students didn't yet know this point and I put it in the lesson and what turns out is they already know it, it's too easy for them, I'll then understand that I'll have to look for something different that they don't yet know. [4]It all depends on your mood.

177. ***R:*** [1]So student responses are very important to teachers.

178. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Right, if they are tired with something else, and if they look dull, you'll be bored, and you'll…, too.

179. ***R:*** [1]*Is there anything else you would like to tell me as your comment on the textbook?*

180. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Is this the last question? [2]Anything else? [3]I think textbooks won't definitely be discarded for any reason. [4]Whatever people might say, they can't be discarded in one or two decades, not the regular or the intensive programme textbooks. [5]It's not possible.

181. ***R:*** [1]*Why not?*

182. **Ms. Nha:** [1]I've told you the reasons, textbooks will first function as the backbone. [2]Also, what's the second point? [3]It's firstly a backbone. [4]Secondly, it's, how do you call it? [5]It's something safe. [6]If there's nothing else you will still have… [7]I don't know. [8]Can you tell me what it is?

183. ***R:*** [1]*If there's anything else prepared for the lessons, textbooks will be something for you to…*

184. **Ms. Nha:** [1]That means, I don't know how to say it. [2]The feeling is… [3]It's like what you said the other day. [4]Something like if you have a textbook and you come to your class without anything, you might not have to prepare your own materials for some different activities. [5]You still have your students do the activities of the textbooks. [6]Oh, no, I don't mean "not need to".

185. ***R:*** [1]*If in the future you're not required to adhere to the textbook but the curriculum instead, maybe…*

186. **Ms. Nha:** [1]Required or not required to adhere to textbooks? [2]Required to adhere to what?

187. ***R:*** [1]*That means, you'd just need to be working to the curriculum promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training by which, for example, you shall have covered these grammar points by this time.* [2]*Do you find the idea interesting?*

188. **Ms. Nha:** [1]So, there won't be any topics?

189. ***R:*** [1]*There will be but the point is teachers won't be required to use any particular textbooks.*

190. **Ms. Nha:** [1]I see.

191. ***R:*** [1]*A dozen of textbooks will be allowed to use, for instance.*

192. **Ms. Nha:** [1]It would make me more tired but I'd feel more challenged because you wouldn't have anything to fall back on. [2]You'd have to go and look for teaching materials yourself. [3]But your handouts will be unique. [4]If you try to look for something on the Internet and your material is unique, you'd receive a different response from your students, which would be better.

193. ***R:*** *Thank you very much.*

Appendix O.5

Head Teacher Interview Transcript – Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS)

Interviewee: Mr. Ngo

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify him.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** *First of all, may I ask if you have ever taught using this textbook or you have simply been a supervisor of the teaching of it?*
2. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]I have read through the textbook once and have also taught several of its units. [2]In addition, I have been supervising teachers regarding how they have been teaching the textbooks and carrying out the curriculum concerning their teaching and implementation of the curriculum.
3. ***R:*** [1]*Were those several units you just mentioned the content required to teach by the curriculum?*
4. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]I was teaching a class at that time. At the beginning, I tried with several units of the textbooks, the initial ones.
5. ***R:*** [1]*Was it a Year 10 or Year 12 class that you were teaching?*
6. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Year 10, right Year 10; I was trying with several initial units. [2]Later on, however, I didn't use the textbook any longer because the class I was teaching was a selective class specialising in English and the textbook was rather lower than the level of the students. [3]So, the textbook was not used later on for the class I was teaching, which was a selective class. [4]The textbook is applicable for the other classes who do not major in English.

7. ***R:*** [1]*So, to your understanding, have there been adequate preparations made by the Service of Education and Training or the school management for teachers to use the textbooks in their classroom, first of all concerning the theories and methods of teaching English adopted as the foundation for these textbooks?*

8. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Before the deployment of the new textbooks, the Service of Education and Training had organised seminars presenting the new points and features (of the textbooks) and the methods to be applied, and the techniques that may be required of the use of the new methods. [2]The training seminars lasted as long as a week. [3]They started with the ministerial seminars which were followed by provincial ones. [4]The problem was that not all the presenters of the seminars were able to do their job well enough. [5]The Ministry of Education and Training should withdraw some experience from their organisation. [6]The presenters should be some of the writers of the textbooks or experts in the field, maybe just of a small team, knowing well about the textbooks and the teaching techniques required so that the seminars might be more practical and relevant. [7]Such a way of doing would be more effective than what has been done, that is, cities or provinces each sending their several selected teachers to national seminars and then these people coming back to hold discussions and do sample teachings in their own provinces. [8]The key points unfortunately haven't been made clear to classroom teachers through discussions or sample teachings. The writer's intentions for the use of the textbook haven't actually been seen, by the seminar attendees, including those who went to the ministerial seminars. [10]Teachers were there at the seminars simply listening to the presentations only once, and it doesn't necessarily mean that they will have recognised the intentions of the textbook writers. [11]Many other things will need to be done for teachers to see what changes they need to make happen with the new textbooks. [12]Such seminars alone aren't enough. [13]There are many other contributing factors. [14]Take testing and assessment as an example of one of those contributing factors. [15]I mean the end-of-semester exams or graduation

exams, of which the adverse impact is visible. [16]It is quite common in Vietnam that people will study to the test and exams, and this practice has made sizeable influence on teachers' teaching.

9. ***R:*** [1]*That means, in your opinion, the seminars did not really succeed in unfolding…*

10. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The new points, the good things, the viewpoints of the textbook writers. [2]Teacher might as well have seen those things but they haven't been really interested, for those things haven't really made them feel engaged. [3]Some participants to the seminars complained that they had been to the seminars only to find nothing new. [4]This is especially common teachers who are also teaching at foreign languages centers and using new textbooks produced by foreign publishers and/or are exposed to new teaching methodology. [5]It's quite natural that they didn't find the seminars really useful or really interesting at all. [6]So, the teacher training seminars play a very important role. [7]They should be conducted in such a way that could make participants feel like taking actions as expected – this is the fundamental question. [8]With what has been done, people attended the seminars only because they had to, and that wasn't really effective. [9]In terms of administration, what the Service did was acceptably all right but it wasn't enough. [10]Attention should be paid to the quality of such seminars. [11]It has been suggested by many people that the seminars could be strengthened by using the staff from universities of education as trainers but the problem is, such lecturers don't regularly teach at high schools. [12]So, I think there should be a scheme to have such trainers. [13]Senior teachers from high schools might be selected to be trained to become teacher trainers for textbook used seminars. [14]Training trainers shouldn't simply mean sending teachers to ministerial seminars from which they would return to present summaries of what they had learned. [15]Such seminars will not be of good quality. [16]Attention should be paid to improve teaching capabilities since there should be long-term investment. [17]To my understanding, in some countries, trainers are to be those with high degree in teaching or teaching experts

with hands-on experience at high schools, making the teacher training easier. [18]In our country, most of the experts work in the ministerial level only and don't have hands-on experience, so when faced with the classroom lessons, their performance is not interesting enough. [19]Alternatively, if trainers are simply high school teachers (without formal training), it could well be the case that while they may be very enthusiastic, they are not necessarily knowledgeable, or maybe they are… oh, it's complicated. [20]The Ministry is now thinking of raising the teacher quality at the schools but it is uncertain when the idea will be materialised. [21]Such an ambitious plan will take a long time to be realised.

11. R: [1]*Concerning the methods, and techniques and strategies to teach the new textbooks, for example the procedures of classroom activities, how specific do you think the seminars were about those things?*

12. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]What was done at the seminars was that they provided the textbooks, the user's guide, or the games to use and divided the participants into groups, and let the groups did the activities required. [2]That's all. [3]Even the presenters of the activities didn't really know what to do. [4]When they were there, they would look at the textbooks and would do things in the way they thought how things should be done. [5]Neither did they receive the professional training nor were they updated of the new theoretical developments or practical techniques. [6]They just did what they understood of the guide book. [7]In my opinion, there should have been presentations that were interesting enough to attract the participants. [8]We, for example, might get a professor or an expert from overseas who specialises in teaching methodology as a presenter. [9]Such a presenter might make a presentation on a certain methodological issue that could be used to teach the textbook. [10]The ways things were being done now, that is, sending teachers to seminars and using them to train their colleagues, seems to be convincing to nobody of what should be done. [11]Think about the seminars organised by the British Council: The presenters were the writers of the textbooks concerned, whose pedagogy must have been very high.

[12]I think we might try something similar, having our textbook writers take over the presentations, which would have been better than organising concurrent seminars nationwide just as we did. [13]We might organise seminars for a particular city or province, or the whole region, which would entail assembling teachers to one venue, but the key thing is to have a group of presenters whose calibre is respectable enough to make participants convinced of what the presenters might be talking about. [14]Regarding what has been done, I would not comment on the initial steps, the national seminars organised by the Ministry, which looked all right. [15]But in relation to the seminars that followed, which were provincial seminars for classroom teachers, it seemed that the classroom teachers were not very keen on participating in those seminars; they were there simply because they had to be there. [16]They did not really believe that attending the seminar would bring really good benefits.

13. ***R:*** [1]*And at the seminars, did they present anything about the subject knowledge in terms of language knowledge and topical content might be needed for teachers, for instance, to deliver lessons?*

14. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The seminars didn't usually go far into such questions, for generally the trainers focused on methodology, mainly teaching the techniques. [2]Practically Vietnamese are reluctant to do that; they tend to be unwilling to present knowledge, particularly knowledge of language because they are afraid of making mistakes in the public. [3]Some might have talked about language knowledge but they touched upon questions that are clear-cut. [4]Normally people will avoid talking about knowledge, and discussions of knowledge, if any, happen only at the sidelines. [5]There wasn't much talk on language knowledge actually.

15. ***R:*** [1]*So, the workshop time was spent talking about general teaching methodology?*

16. Mr. Ngo: [1]Basically, what was done was practice-oriented. [2]For example, they delivered lessons as samples, which were then followed by feedback and discussion sessions. [3]Such

a way was all right for practical purposes but it would require trainers to be those who knew what they were doing. [4]If seminars were done by those who came back from the national seminars that they were not really excited about, the effectiveness would hence be limited. [5]It seemed quite common that new technology was being abused, and the new technology was taken for the new things in teaching and they had not yet thought that the new things should have been something else. [6]It should be something else, I think. [7]It should be more about the teaching techniques, and not anything related to machinery. [8]The techniques should be what is needed for the teacher to effectively deliver a lesson or prepare a good lesson plan. [9]Techniques might involve something quite commonsense like the order in which you are going to present your lesson, what should come first and what should follow; or the ways you are going to explain so that students could understand; or the questioning strategies that can facilitate students' understanding. [10]We have not gone far enough into such questions yet; what was focused on was the demonstration of technology use, for example the LCD projector and the Powerpoint presentation. [11]All that is actually quite superficial and is not yet something really serious, and is not actually effective. [12]People might have been more excited with the use of new technology but it was difficult to improve the learning effectiveness with it. [13]Whether or not learning effectiveness could be achieved depends on the very things we manage to transfer to students. I might need to see what questions I should or should not ask, for instance. [14]Teaching a certain word, as another example, I might want to think what to say first. [15]Teaching grammar, as still another example, I might want to see what question I should begin with so that it could be probing and interesting to my students. [16]These are the very questions that should have been more seriously addressed in the seminars.

17. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, how are teachers teaching the book of* English 10 – Intensive Program*? Are they using the new methodology or reverting to the traditional ways that they have been very familiar with?*

18. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]This question should be answered by considering the mindset teachers are in: Are they just doing what they have to do or do they have a sense of responsibility? [2]Most teachers have very good sense of responsibility; they are willing to do something new; they want to do something that can engage their students. [3]To realise all those wishes, however, there must be other factors. [4]Teachers who are devoted are willing to apply new methodologies but there remain constraints preventing them from doing that. [5]One common problem at high schools, for instance, is the organisation of the tables and benches; each accommodates three or four students; or two at least. [6]The almost fixed furniture constraints the implementation of classroom activities. [7]I usually say that Vietnamese students are chained to their study tables. [8]With this furniture layout it is difficult to have really active lessons. [9]Imagine that I am now teaching Class A or B. [10]Now that I'd like to start my lesson with something that could make my students relaxed and I would thus like to have them to do some action. [11]This would require some space. [12]The furniture will need to be arranged so as to be conducive for the implementation of pair and group work. [13]It would be just boring to turn around to the table behind just as what is the case now. [14]There is no mobility. [15]This is one of the constraints for classroom teachers. [16]It would be difficult to do something other than what they are doing now. [17]If better amenities are available each student would be assigned a table at best, which will then allow more flexibility for pair and group work activities.[18]This is because teachers could then move their students around and this mobility would make it easier, simpler and more interesting to conduct activities, and such activities are the core of lessons. [19]In order to have well organised activities there should be amenities that may be needed for such activities. [20]In the current situation, if pair work is done, it would involve two students sitting nearby or one student turning round to the student sitting behind. [21]If things continue to be like that, it will be boring, and nothing else could be done. [22]The tables are not moveable and we can't shuffle students around. [23]I hope the situation will

improve at international schools where they have better tables, but as for normal high school… [24]Teachers can't be blamed for their sense of responsibility. [25]They should be given proper physical conditions before they are asked to do what might be required by the textbooks. [26]By 'physical conditions', I don't mean such equipment as projectors. [27]We might need to start with the student tables and benches, which will have a stronger impact on the applicability of classroom activities.

19. R: [1]*Do you think teachers are mentally prepared to undertake changes if requirements of furniture are met as you just wished?*

20. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]They will certainly be. [2]They will not do what they think will waste their time. [3]Once they do it, it will be effective. [4]Teachers themselves know well that if something is useful for their students and makes their teaching effective, they will surely be dedicated. [5]They will do it thoroughly if required conditions are available. [6]In fact, we can't ask other people to do what we want them to do when the required conditions are unavailable. [7]We must first create the good conditions for them before we expect them to do something. [8]In our current situation, we can't blame teachers because sometimes they can't do as they might want to do. [9]One of the reasons is that too much attention is now being paid to equipment only, maybe because that's where they think change will possibly happen. [10]If they find that whatever they might be trying with will get stuck sooner or later, they will be discouraged to do it. [11]What is readily doable is to use the Powerpoint presentation, which means merely taking a projector to the classroom, it's quite easy. [12]The changes that are most long-awaited up to now yet very difficult to make happen are those of the tables and chairs in the classroom or the space, the number of students per class. [13]Improvements in those things should trigger the other changes. [14]The following suggestion of mine might sound impractical but we might try it: We, for instance, might try assigning two teachers to a class of 45 students. [15]We might cut the class into halves, each to be taught by one teacher and by then improvement might stand a

chance to take place. [16]Students' communication might improve then. [17]We now don't know what to do to enhance communication. [18]The problems lie in their writing skills; students are very good at doing grammar exercises.

21. R: [1]*And how is the assignment of teachers to different years (Years 10, 11, and 12) and types of programme (regular and intensive) done at your school?* [2]*Which is the case, teachers are to follow the class they are teaching from Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 or they may be required to teach any kind of class and thus need training for the use of textbooks of all programmes?*

22. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]My teacher assignment principle is like this: Teachers will be assigned classes (Year 10, 11, or 12; regular or intensive program) according to their seniority and/or capabilities. [2]I will take teachers' language knowledge as the primary criterion to assign appropriate teachers to classes of specialised and intensive programs. [3]More senior teachers should teach Year 10 and Year 12 students and specialised and intensive programs. [4]Teachers of the intensive program should certainly have better language knowledge than those of the regular program. [5]Those teaching the regular program may not have such good language knowledge or skills as teachers of the other program do. [6]My selection is based on teachers' language knowledge; those with better language knowledge will be assigned classes of specialised and/or intensive program. [7]The other teachers who still have problems will be given normal classes using the regular program. [8]And of course priority is given to Year 12 and Year 10 classes rather than Year 11 ones.

23. ***R:*** [1]*Why not year 11 classes?*

24. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Year 11 classes are not given priorities because they have been with the school for a year. [2]Year 10 gets special attention, to which more capable teachers are assigned, because they are new to school and they may have higher expectation. [3]As for Y11, it doesn't matter. [4]I have to make trade-offs when assigning teachers to classes. [5]Teachers are of varied quality and performance; they are not all alike. [6]The first priority goes to

Year 12, followed by Year 10, and Year 11 comes last. [7]Year 12 is most prioritised because English is one of the subjects of the exams they are going to take to graduate. [8]Year 10 students are newcomers; more priorities should be given so that they would not be disappointed or discouraged, which might make their following years difficult. [9]If they suffer from some sort of allergy to English, that would leave dire consequences on their use or learning of English in the future. [10]And such allergy is possible and apt to happen, quite often. [11]For English is not a favourite subject for all students, many of whom, particularly those who come from provinces or rural areas or those who are so absorbed in studying, for instance, math, physics, and chemistry, might forget the necessity to learn English well enough to get to the next higher steps. [12]They simply forget it.

25. R: [1]*Is there any activity or program – formal or informal – available at your school that supports the teachers who are teaching the intensive program or were there just the seminars organised by the Ministry and the Service of Education and Training?*

26. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The condition of this school is still limited. [2]What we have is mainly the experience exchange talk. [3]If my teachers have any difficulty regarding a certain unit or point, they might meet with me to talk or ask for advice. [4]What normally happens is the young teachers might pass by my office when they have spare time. [5]They come in and might ask what should be done with a particular issue. [6]This is quite common. [7]As I'm the supervisor here, the young teachers, who were my students, might want to pass by any time. [8]They will do so when they need. [9]Such regular talks are the very support they might need. [10]Meetings will just be formal. [11]That's all, and we can't afford to have better teacher support. [12]As an example, as for a certain question A, the young teachers might not understand it fully or if it is a multiple-choice question, they might be unsure which option to choose as the answer. [13]If such a question is deferred until a meeting, many would be reluctant to raise the question because they might be afraid that other people might see that they did not know the answer. [14]As the young teachers understand that I am

their teacher, they wouldn't consider it a problem asking me individually. [15]Our relationship is unique. [16]This school is different from others in the way that I was their teacher at the university, a relationship that makes our talk easier. [17]It is in fact an advantage. [18]At other schools, I think the head teacher that is senior or has experience could be a good point for young teachers to resort to learn. [19]Informal talk will possibly be better because culturally Vietnamese people would find it hard to raise a question at a formal meeting, being afraid of being negatively evaluated. [20]People will normally prefer to meet individually and ask, a practice they find more comfortable with. [21]It is not a big deal for a student to ask their teachers. [22]Alternatively, if the head teacher is a senior teacher, it will be easier for other teachers to ask since they could consider him as their teacher. [23]Such talks are more helpful for professional development than are formal meetings. [24]We also have classroom observation here but it is sometimes quite formal, thus failing to be really helpful. [25]I wouldn't reject classroom observation but I think it is one of the ways through which we can learn. [26]It is definitely not the only way. [27]We don't necessarily have to have classroom observation because when I'm observing your lessons, you'll be doing differently what you might be doing without my presence. [28]Things could be quite different.

27. ***R:*** [1]*Is the classroom observation to be notified in advance?*

28. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]It is. [2]In principle, we shouldn't let so much of the unexpected seen at the observation. [3]Also, there might be situations for which observation is not meaningful. [4]One of the situations is when the observation might fall on the periods for which tests are scheduled to take place. [5]Supervisors will normally avoid situations in which when notified of the observation to take place just before the lesson starts, teachers might respond saying they are giving a test today and you might come to observe (students doing tests) if you like. [6]Teachers might change what they have planned to do in their lessons upon hearing about the observation of their lesson; they might just want to avoid

something. [7]Therefore, I'd rather allow them flexibility, which means you might choose to let me in to observe the lesson of your choice at your convenience. [8]I wouldn't care what arrangements they could make, which is possible. [9]I want teachers to be comfortable with the lesson observation. [10]If the observation is not notified in advance, teachers might as well change what they might be doing. [11]For in principle lesson plans are subject to change, not necessarily fixed.

29. R: [1]*I would like to ask about the testing practices here: Is the oral test at the discretion of the classroom teacher?*

30. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The oral test is left up to the classroom teacher, and so are the 15-minute and the one-period tests. [2]Concerning the end-of-semester exams, there will be one exam applicable school-wide, that means, one teacher is assigned to make the test items for the exam, and the exam will then be used through all classes. [3]The exam-making is assigned to teachers.

31. ***R:*** [1]*And the end-of-year exam, which is itself an end-of-semester exam, is made by the teacher appointed by the teaching team, isn't it?*

32. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]That's right, one teacher of the team will be appointed to do that.

33. ***R:*** [1]*And the Service of Education and Training makes test items for Year 12 students only?*

34. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The Service just makes exams for Year 12 students at other schools; they aren't used for this school.

35. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

36. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The exams made by Service are just for year 12 students.

37. ***R:*** [1]*And the graduation exams are made by the Ministry or…?*

Mr. Ngo: [1]The graduation exams at the discretion of the Ministry, that means, the Ministry makes the graduation exams. [2]What is becoming common at a number of high schools is that the same one-period tests are used across all the classes but I wouldn't like it to happen here because, I think, you wouldn't necessarily have things under your

control by doing so. [3]On the contrary, using the same exams across all classes would leave teachers feel they are not to be held accountable for what they have done, and they will hence leave things up to the exams. [3]In fact, using the same exams for all the classes are not exactly a good idea. [4]Take the exams by the Ministry as an example: The same graduation exams are used for the whole country and standards are enforced. Testing can be done, [5]but that could end up with the problem that there would be attempts to make the exam supervision lenient and raise students' paper marks. [6]Alternatively, however, if the exams are decentralised, in spite of some people's carelessness, which is inevitable, the name of your school will be associated with the quality of your school. [7]Imagine a certain student A had a graduation degree conferred by this school A. [8]If that school is not doing correctly, its quality will in the long run affect its brand name, if you like, of the school. [9]Upon hearing about the name of the school, people will shake their head. [10]In contrast, still concerning student A, this time he takes his graduation exams from another school which makes its own exams. [11]If the school is serious about the exams it makes itself, its prestige and brand name will be gradually built up. [12]As I can see what is taking place in many universities in the United States, which I think will be applicable to high school education, institutions are responsible for their own admission of students and graduation. [13]It is unlike in Vietnam where the admission is under tight control. [14]Without any rigidity like us here, that means they are free to monitor their own admission and graduation, they still have their own quality. [15]They do not have exams universally applied to all institutions but quality is still assured. [16]For they are delivering educational programs according to the standards they are applying. [17]Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the Ministry monopolises the promulgation of standards and the administration of exams to monitor the standards. [18]It is because of this that the other stakeholders practically do not care about anything else other than having their students pass the exams. [19]If, as an example, you are the maker of exams and I am the classroom teacher, what should I focus on? [20]I'll

try my best to make my students be able to answer the questions of the exams and achieve the best exam results. It's quite legitimate to do so. [21]There is no one but aims at such targets. [22]But if I am the maker of the exams, I will certainly no longer be thinking of those things, because the exams are for my own students. [23]There are two options available, one of which is to give exams that are relaxing to my students but I will be damaging my own brand name myself by doing so. [24]For society will differentiate; you graduate and you go to work and people will see the difference. [25]Granted that the difference is hardly visible in the beginning, it will be in the long rum. [26]If you work hard, things will be easy.

38. *R:* [1]*And what about the coefficient of the tests and exams?* [2]*Is it one for oral tests?*

39. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Well, that of oral tests is one, and it's the same for 15-minute tests.

40. R: [1]*How many tests are administered for a semester?*

41. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]It depends; it varies actually, it all depends on what can be done; there is no fixed number.

42. ***R:*** [1]*And how many scores are there?*

43. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Four or thereabouts, I'm not (sure); let me see. [2]Three scores for oral tests, not exactly so but it is true for me. [3]There might be more and the extra can be put in place of another score. [4]It doesn't really matter anyway because the coefficient is just one. [5]Generally, the oral check and 15-minute tests, all of which are coefficient one, could be up to eight scores, eight at most. [6]There are regulations about the number of scores but in fact, take as an example these regulations of the subjects for students: There shall be three periods for English study, which means there should be four scores, four scores of continuous assessment, that means four scores for 15-minute tests and oral tests. [7]Four times at least, from four times up to eight times; there are eight columns for these. [8]We shouldn't be excessive of course, and it will be difficult to happen because of the large number of students of a class. [9]If you focus on one student, it'll be no good; teachers are

normally encouraged to divide their attention equally to all students. [10]The number of scores therefore can't exceed eight, if attention is given equally. [11]If some teacher merely concentrates on one or two students… [12]There is no rule about that but it isn't advisable to do so. [13]You can't practically be biased and lay too much emphasis on assessing one student.

44. R: [1]*And how about the number of one-period exams?*

45. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]That is defined in the instructions of curriculum distribution, normally twice per a semester, not to mention the end-of-semester exam.

46. R: [1]*What about end-of-semester exams?*

47. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Once per semester.

48. R: [1]*So how is the final score of the semester calculated?*

49. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The coefficient is two for one-period exams, and three for end-of-semester exams.

50. ***R:*** [1]*So, the final score is averaged according to the coefficient?*

51. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]That's correct; it's calculated according to the coefficient.

52. R: [1]*So, which is the emphasis of the tests and exams, knowledge or skills?*

53. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]We are a little bit more emphatic on language knowledge than skills in Vietnam, though skills are promoted in the curriculum. [2]It's difficult to test skills. [3]It is hardly possible. [4]The testing is possible for several skills such as [5] listening, reading comprehension, and writing, but the problem is, though writing skills are included in the curriculum, they can't best tested at the extent required. [6]Let me take an example, paragraph writing is listed in the Year 9 curriculum but it is never included in any test or exam. [7]And this will gradually lead to the neglect of teaching writing. [8]Emphasis is placed just on reading and listening comprehension in Vietnam; speaking has a meagre position. [9]For example, the sample exam questions and guidelines produced by the Service of Education and Training encouraged the testing of the two major skills of reading and

listening, going straight to focusing on language knowledge and the content covered. [10]Speaking is not listed as a component for testing and writing is tested at the sentence level only, such as transforming sentences. [11]It can't be higher. [12]Such testing policies don't actually correspond to the requirements of the curriculum.

54. R: [1]*Is it because there would be inadequate time to mark written paragraphs?*

***55.* Mr. Ngo:** [1]It is partly because it will be more than what teachers are capable of doing, I might say so. [2]The teacher capabilities are generally inadequate at most schools, if not to mention students' incapability. [3]In order to be a marker of writing, teacher should be able to write. [4]Your writing skills should be good enough for you to be a teacher of writing skills. [5]If you yourself are unable to write well yet… [6]Not all teachers are able to write well. [7]I was very surprised at the marking of papers of the Contest of Excellent Students organised by the Service of Education and Training where I could see that there were markers who didn't know the expressions commonly used in essays because they didn't… [8]That revealed to me one thing that they had never taught writing, and because they had never taught writing, they didn't realise that there were such expressions. [9]They might not have honed their writing skills either. [10]Meanwhile, all those expressions had been learned by their students who had prepared for the IELTS or TOEFL tests. [11]To my understanding, therefore, writing is perhaps a problem in high schools. [12]The problem could have resulted from the fact that writing hasn't been included in exams, and teachers had thus somewhat neglected the skills. [13]The second reason, not all students are able to write in English well enough, not to mention those from selective classes. [14]Writing presents a big problem for normal class students. [15]It is heavily influenced by the mother tongue, i.e. Vietnamese. [16]There remain many classes who, when learning to write in Vietnamese, they base themselves on sample essays. [17]And they transfer what they do with Vietnamese to English, which is unacceptable, for no one would accept students just writing down what they have learned by heart from the sample essays. [18]It's not writing, but it's rote learning.

[19]All this had made the situation more difficult for them. [20]There are many factors to make changes happen, one of which is to start with the format of the exams.

56. R: [1]*So, do you think the current testing and assessment practices have failed to activate the teaching of all the four skills?*

57. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Correct, such practices will absolutely be unable to ensure the teaching of all the four skills because in Vietnam teaching is normally geared to exams. [2]The more exams are centralised, the deeper people are pushed into preparing students for the exams, and nothing else. [3]You can't monitor anything by centralising exams, even graduation ones. [4]The more centralised exams become, the more monitoring measures there will be. [5]I still hold the opinion that the centralised graduation exams should be abolished and instead schools should be held accountable for making their own exams. [6]At the school level, centralised exams might not be advisable. [7]Instead, the same test items might be used all through the school but the questions of the exam should be made by the collaboration of the teachers of the teaching team of the school concerned. [8]If this were done, it would bring into play autonym and the power of the classroom teachers. [9]It would result in more favourable conditions than it is the case when teachers are deprived of their testing rights. [10]As a teacher in the classroom, I should know what to test, and I would then be concerned about something else rather than the tests. [11]For the moment, I just know that I'm being tested and I'll have to cope with that. [12]I will teach to what is tested. [13]In Vietnam, the high school graduation exam should be abolished and the university admission exams could be retained. [14]The common fear is that schools will let as many students of theirs pass as possible but the centralised exams are the very cause for producing so many graduates.

58. ***R:*** [1]*Is listening a component of the tests and exams administered at your school?*

59. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Listening is administered at all years, accounting for around five minutes of a test or an exam of 45 minutes. [2]I mean those are 60-minute exams.

60. R: [1]*What is the percentage of listening component in terms of the score weighting?*

61. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Between 15% and 20%.

62. R: [1]*How about the exams other than those of the school, graduation exams, for instance?*

63. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]There is no listening in graduation exams, which are just composed of multiple-choice questions.

64. R: [1]*Is the testing of speaking done at your school?*

65. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]It is only done in the classroom as part of oral test or 15-minute tests.

66. R: [1]*The English textbooks of the regular programme are currently used more widely than those of the intensive programme.* [2]*What do you think are the reasons?* [3]*Is quality difference one of them?*

67. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]Not really, it all depends on the stream students are taking. [2]Most schools are following the basic stream. [3]The number of followers of the social sciences stream is very small. [4]Many more of students are taking the basic program and they will normally choose math and the subjects of natural sciences other than subjects of social sciences, of which English is one, as subjects of intensive programs. [5]Very few will use the English intensive program because if I'm teaching the basic, I'll be sticking to the textbooks of the regular program.

68. R: [1]*Are all the classes at your school taking the intensive program of English?*

69. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]No, the intensive program applies to classes specialising in Vietnamese, English, and those taking the D stream. [2]The rest uses the regular program.

70. R: [1]*Concerning the introduction of the new textbooks, there have been quite a number of complaints.* [2]*To your perception, are those complaints concerned with the textbooks of English only or others of other subjects as well?*

71. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]There are problems with almost any textbooks and the first problem is the teaching load defined by the teaching curriculum is too heavy in any subject, eventually leaving students unable to finish the workload prescribed. [2]Whereas American students

study five or six subjects, Vietnamese ones have as many as 10 subjects, none of which is light. [3]The total load is thus too heavy for students. [4]My principle is to teach what young people need to know, not what they want to know, which means there are many things I haven't yet touched upon. [5]The above are the overall comments on textbooks; concerning the mistakes of the textbooks, almost any textbooks have some, it is possibly an issue of the organisation.

72. R: [1]*Do you have any other comment or thought about the English textbooks – intensive program?*

73. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]There should be reconsiderations for the textbooks of both the intensive and regular programs. [2]English teachers have complained that the units (of the textbooks) are each a separate topic, and there doesn't seem to be a clear thematic connection between the units or between the textbooks, in terms of grammar for instance. [3]Regarding the sections on language skills, one of the problems, with speaking skills as an example, is the speaking functions are not yet connected with something else. [4]The sections of some units are not well connected, leaving teachers feeling they are discontinued.

74. R: [1]*Do you mean that whereas the textbooks follow the thematic organisation, they seem to neglect the language connection between units?*

75. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]The writers of the textbooks might have paid attention to this question but readers of the textbooks haven't yet seen really clearly the language connection. [2]The connection within a textbook and between one textbook and another in terms of language structures and phonetics are not really good. [3]It's a practice in Vietnam to have a developmental circle for each level education, Years 6, 7, 8, and 9 making up one circle and Years 10, 11, and 12 another.

76. R: [1]*You mean two separate circles?*

77. **Mr. Ngo:** [1]I mean, the Years 10, 11, and 12 should be identified as a circle (the upper circle). [2]What has been presented in the lower will not appear in the upper circle. [3]It's a

good idea to do as what has been done, but it will be better to break them and have more combinations. [4]Most teachers are very keen on relying on textbooks, which is not a good point. [5]Teachers should have their own activities and textbooks should play the role of reference materials.

78. R: *Thank you very much.*

Appendix P.1

Summary of students' responses to pre-observation survey – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)

Prior to the lesson observations, a questionnaire survey was done with the students in order to get an overview of the students' background information, their evaluations of the textbook and the actual usage of the textbook from their perspectives. There were responses from 34 out of the 35 students of the class present at the time of the questionnaire administration, yielding a rate of return of 97%. Of these respondents, all of whom but one were all 16 years of age, females were the majority (79.4%).

1. Status of English

As for these semi-urban respondents, English appeared to be a very important school subject to study as it was perceived as being "necessary" by 31.3% and "very necessary" by 68.8% of the respondents. These results were within expectation as the students took English as their subject of concentration, not to mention the possibility that their opinions were affected by the rapidly increasing importance of English in the Vietnamese society. Concerning the extent to which they liked studying English, similar results were obtained as 29.4% of the respondents claimed they liked studying English and 70.6% claimed they liked studying English very much.

Concerning their needs of learning English, in reference to the percent of cases, most of the students claimed they had the needs listed in the questionnaire. As shown in Table P1.1, the percentages were from the seventies to the nineties for all the needs, except for the one relating to overseas study (55.9%). Also, the rates for the needs of learning English for general communication purposes, for language skills development, and for study were significantly high, implying that there was a favourable atmosphere for English learning in the class.

With regard to the percent of responses, however, the percentages of the students' responses to the needs listed by the questionnaire do not differ significantly; they were all 16.7% or lower. Please note that one respondent might have had more than one need and as a result the number of responses was (far) larger than the number of cases (i.e. respondents). These results do not shed much light on the differences, if any, between the students' major English learning purposes. As for Year 10 students, though, whose perception of their future needs is still perhaps unclear and subject to change over time, it was normal to achieve such responses, especially when the respondents just needed to tick the boxes as their responses to the prompts provided.

Table P1.1

English Learning Needs of Case Study 3 Students

Needs of English learning	**Responses**		**Percent of cases**
	N	**Percent**	
(1) Need to use English as a tool for my study?	30	15.6%	88.2%
(2) Need to use English for general communication purposes?	32	16.7%	94.1%
(3) Need to meet the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program?	25	13.0%	73.5%
(4) Need to succeed at university entrance exams for which English is one subject?	27	14.1%	79.4%
(5) Need to study abroad?	19	9.9%	55.9%
(6) Need to develop thinking capacity?	27	14.1%	79.4%
(7) Need to develop language skills?	32	16.7%	94.1%
(8) Others	0	0%	0%
TOTAL	192	100.0%	564.7%

Note. N = Number of valid responses.

Therefore, further inquiry was needed to see which of the needs listed was the most important to the students, thereby seeking to learn what were the key drivers of their study. It was revealed by the survey results (see Table P1.2) that success at university entrance exams (for which English is one subject) was the most important for 34.5% of the respondents, a rate much higher than those concerning learning English for communication purposes (24.1%) and for study purposes (20.7%) and the other needs. Together with those presented in Table P1.1, these results confirmed these students' need of studying for exams. Also, it can be observed that developing thinking capacity and language skills, the needs of English study considered important by the textbook, were not considered to be so by these semi-urban students. Concerning "studying abroad", this prospect was still too far-fetched for the majority of the students of a provincial city.

Table P1.2

Most Important Need of English Learning for Case Study 3 Students

Needs	**Frequency**	**Percent**
(1) using English as a tool for my study	6	20.7%
(2) using English for general communication purposes	7	24.1%
(3) meeting the requirement of studying English as a compulsory subject of the program	1	3.4%
(4) succeeding at university entrance exams for which English is one subject	10	34.5%
(5) studying abroad	3	10.3%
(6) developing thinking capacity	0	0%
(7) developing my language skills	2	6.9%
(8) Others	0	0%
TOTAL	29	100%

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, even in comparison with the corresponding results in the "Responses – Percent" column in Table P1.1, the percentages of Needs (3) and (7) had tremendously decreased in Table P1.2 (3.4% versus 13% and 6.9% versus 16.7%). The reason for such differences was that their two questionnaire items were essentially different, one was about the needs that the students felt they had and the other about just one need that students perceived to be most important for them.

2. Textbook evaluations

This section reports the evaluations of a variety of aspects of the textbook (and its accompanying materials such as the Work Book and the audio disc) by the student respondents. The students were asked to respond to favourable statements about the textbook and its accompanying materials by choosing one of the five options: 1. Strongly Agree; 2. Agree; 3. I Don't Know; 4. Disagree; and 5. Strongly Disagree. The results will be considered from two perspectives, "the positive side" and "the negative side". Whereas the former is the consideration of the percentages of the responses of "agree" and "strongly agree", the latter deal with those of the responses "disagree" and "strongly disagree". These considerations are needed because among the five response options to the statements, there was "I don't know", an option made available so that the respondents would not be forced to choose one of the other four if they felt they were uncertain about them.

2.1 Favourable evaluations

Generally the survey results showed that the materials were quite highly evaluated by the students. As for statements, the cumulative percent of the "agree" and "strongly" responses was 50% or higher. Indeed, the rate was the highest for Statement Bk[32]

[32] The upper case letter (i.e. *B*) indicates the location in the questionnaire of the section where the statement concerned can be found and the lower case letter (i.e. *k*) indicates the location of the statement in that section.

("The illustrations are generally relevant and help enhance learning": 94.1%) and the lowest for Bn ("The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in exposing you to a variety of contexts where English is spoken": 50%). These results were not really surprising because in comparison with the previous textbooks, the one under evaluation has considerable improvements in terms of decoration features and because the textbook is accompanied by only one audio disc produced primarily from the effort of the team leader's, not of the organisers of the textbook writing project concerned.

As for most of the statements, the cumulative percent of the "agree" and "strongly agree" responses was within the sixties- eighties range. Specifically, the highest rates were achieved for the following statements:

- Bo: "The workbook provides good tasks for review and reinforcement of the knowledge learned in the Student Book": 85.3%;
- Bj: "The rubrics of the tasks and exercises are clear": 82.4%;
- Bp: "The workbook provides good tasks for further development of the skills learned in the Student Book": 82.4%; and
- Be: "The language level required is appropriate with students' language proficiency": 82.3%.

Considering these results, the most important was perhaps that of Be, for the textbook's appropriateness with the students' level in terms of language requirements could help to make the textbook more useable for them. As for this class, this result was within expectation as the students were specialising in English.

The statements with the cumulative percent in the seventies formed the majority:

- Bl: "The design and layout of the books are good enough so as not to cause confusion": 79.9%;

- Bd: “The cognitive level required is appropriate with students’ level of maturity”: 79.7%;
- Br: “I think these books basically meet my needs of English learning”: 79.4%;
- Bi: “The procedures of tasks are consistent enough to be understood and varied enough to be interesting”: 76.6%;
- Bf: “The tasks provide communicable situations for students to practise using English”: 73.5%;
- Bq: “I enjoy studying with the books”;
- Bm: “The audio/video components (cassette tapes or CD discs) accompanying the books are helpful in your home study and practice”: 70.6%; and
- Bb: “The language input is well graded from lesson to lesson so that it presents no significant difficulty to students’ learning”: 70.5%.

Considering these results, the most notable were those of Bd, Bf, Bq and Br, because, again, the textbook was likely to be effective and appropriate teaching material for these students as approximately three quarters of the students found it appropriate with their cognitive level, communication-conducive, and importantly enjoyable to study with and relevant to their needs.

Regarding the sixties group, there are four statements:

- Ba: “There is good continuity between this series (*English 10 – Intensive Programme*) and the other four for lower secondary education (*English 6, English 7, English 8,* and *English 9*)”: 67.6%;
- Bc: “The topics and subtopics are interesting enough to make students interested”: 67.6%;
- Bg: “The tasks are meaningful and relevant to the students’ immediate environment”: 64.7%; and

- Bh: “The tasks are achievable in consideration of their complexity and the classroom conditions”: 64.7%.

Within this group, there were three important statements regarding the teachability of the textbook, namely Bc, Bg, and Bh. For the textbook would only be effective learning material if the students considered topical content interesting to them and its tasks meaningful, relevant, and achievable in their circumstances. These results indicated that there apparently needed to be external input as compensation for what the textbook failed to offer to the students so that more effective learning might accordingly happen.

2.2 Unfavourable evaluations

Regarding the statements that received a considerably high cumulative percent of “disagree” and “strongly disagree”, the most noticeable were those of Bg, Bh, and Bn, of which the percentage was respectively 35.3% (2.9 “strongly disagree”), 35.3% (20.6%), and 38.3% (5.9%). As partly noted in the previous section, two of these three statements (i.e. Bg and Bh) received the lowest results of the cumulative percent of “agree” and “strongly agree”. These results mean that slightly more than one-third of the respondents felt that the textbook’s tasks were not meaningful or relevant to their immediate environment or achievable in the classroom and the audio components accompanying the textbook were not helpful for their study. That being the case, the textbook’s effectiveness as for these students was likely to be challenged.

Another notable result was that the cumulative percent of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” was 29.4% for Bb, Bc, and Bm; 26.4% for Bf and Bi; and 23.5% for Ba. These results mean approximately one quarter of the students did not feel that the textbook’s language input was well graded from lesson to lesson; its topics were interesting to them; the audio disc was helpful to them; its tasks provided communicable situations for them to practise using English; the procedures of the tasks were effective; and there was good

continuity between the textbook under evaluation and those for the lower Years. Again, these are arguably inadequacies of the textbook that need to be addressed.

Regarding the other statements, the cumulative per cent was 20.6% (Bq) or lower. Of particular concern is the rate of Bq, which suggested that there were quite a number of students who did not enjoy studying with the textbook. This result was a considerable minus for the textbook as it would be hard for the textbook to be effective material if students did not like studying with it. Similarly, there were 17.7% and 17.6% of the students who did not feel that the language required by the textbook was appropriate with them and that the textbook basically met their needs of English learning.

3. Textbook usage

3.1 Study of skills versus knowledge

The first survey item in this part sought to learn about the approximate amount of time per week the students spent on the practice of skills and study of language knowledge. The results of the survey showed that that students' time investment varied significantly, from 10 to 1,260 minutes. On average, it was reported that they spent almost equal amounts of time on skills practice and knowledge learning, respectively 162 and 155 minutes per week.

Considering the figures separately, reading was given the largest amount of time (223 minutes), followed by grammar (203 minutes) while vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking and pronunciation were quite far behind, respectively 162, 151, 147, 125, and 98 minutes. These results seem to be well related with the format of important tests and exams students were going to take, in which reading and grammar received the strongest emphases. Notably, though speaking is generally an important skill for communication, the students' time allocation for it, as they reported, was among the lowest.

Concerning students' evaluation of the five sections of the textbooks, there were four questions. In terms of whether the students considered the sections interesting, Reading was rated to be so by the most respondents (57.6 %), closely followed by Speaking (54.4%) whereas Listening (27.3%) and particularly Language Focus (18.2%) and Writing (9.1%) were very far behind. The fact that Speaking was considered as an interesting section by nearly half of the respondents was encouraging for attempts to promote English communication in the classroom.

Concerning the question whether the students found the sections necessary for their study, it was not surprising to see the most the students claimed that it was the case for Language Focus (79.4%, while very few of them rated it as interesting). This was perhaps because language knowledge is a focal point of tests and exams. However, as for Reading, which is also a focal point of tests and exams, the rate was only 50%. Another notable and encouraging point was that Listening, Speaking, and Writing came just after Language Focus, all being considered necessary by nearly three quarters of the respondents (70.6%). These results indicated that the students gave good attention to the aural and oral skills.

In relation to difficulty, whereas Listening was considered to be a difficult section by the most students, none of them had the same claim for Language Focus. These results are understandable because it was quite common for Vietnamese students to have difficulty in listening to English and, considering the results about Language Focus, the students specialised in English study. Regarding the other sections including Reading, Speaking, and Writing, relatively small percentages of the respondents rated them difficult, another positive signal for the use of the textbook, particularly for the teaching of oral skills.

Finally, the students were asked whether they found the textbook's sections boring, a question designed not exactly as a cross check of the respondents' consistency in answering the questionnaire but to see their thoughts of the sections from the opposite point of reference

(boring versus interesting). As it turned out, the respondents were very consistent: an almost reverse order was obtained. There was an important note here: The sections related to three important skills of communication including speaking, listening and reading were rated "boring" by relatively small percentages of students, 11.1%; 16.7%; and 11.1%.

3.2 Points of focus in lessons

Concerning the students' classroom lessons, the survey sought to learn whether skills or knowledge was their focus. Regarding reading lessons, the results showed that according to the majority of the students the emphasis was both on the skills and strategies required and the vocabulary and grammar of the reading excerpts. The attention to knowledge learning is perhaps a common practice in the Vietnamese classroom where as EFL learners, students will typically want to make sure they understand discrete language-related points. Particularly regarding the reading excerpts, the majority of the students reported that they were linguistically and cognitively suitable for them and a vast majority of them (97%) claimed that their topical content was all right or interesting, all being favourable results for the textbook and hopeful for its effective usage.

Concerning listening lessons, the emphasis again appeared to be divided equally between skills and knowledge. Indeed, half of the students reported their lessons were a mix of the two whereas one quarter said it the focus was on listening strategies and processes and the other quarter said the priority was on vocabulary and pronunciation. Still regarding listening, asked if they had read the listening script or checked with the answer key prior to their classroom lessons, a popular practice deemed many teachers to present difficulty to their conduct of classroom lessons, just a quarter of the respondents (26.5%) said that they usually did so.

Concerning speaking lessons, nearly three quarters of the respondents (74.2%) said for them there had been enough practice of the language functions in the lessons. This percentage

was an encouraging result, unless the students were not keen on practising those functions (and thus considered what happened was just enough). An issue to be further explored was: Which was the case with the remaining 25.8%. Whether they would have liked more practice because they still had difficulty with speaking or they were simply uninterested.

Concerning writing lessons, among the issues listed, writing grammatical sentences was considered the area of the strongest focus by the most respondents; with more than half of them reported it was the case for them. Meanwhile, for the other issues, the rates were much lower, such as using appropriate vocabulary (20.7%), finding and developing ideas (13.8%), and using the correct genres (6.9%). These results indicated that grammar focus was still popular and/or an area of concern in this class. It should be noted, however, that the respondents were Year 10 students and thus might have been unaware of the problems other then sentence grammar (that need due attention to be paid to in writing). Concerning the source of feedback available to the students, it was revealed that they got their feedback from the classroom teacher (29.4%), classmates and friends (17.6%) and a mix of both (35.3%). Shared by 35 students, the teacher could not have been relied on as a provider of feedback for all students.

Regarding Language Focus, the respondents apparently did not simply rely on the textbook and the teacher for their study. As revealed by the survey results, a majority of them (73.5%) reported that they had not found the explanations by the teacher and from the textbook enough, which might mean they would have to do their own research. These results were within expectation as the students' subject of concentration was English.

3.3. Classroom lessons

Concerning classroom reality, students were asked whether English or Vietnamese was (i) actually used and (ii) preferred to be used in the lessons. Concerning the first question, students' responses were somehow different, which might be due to their different

perspectives. While half of them said it was English that was usually used in the classroom, 41.2% of them said it was Vietnamese and the remaining said it was a mix. Regarding the second question, all the respondents claimed they preferred English only to be used in their classroom lessons.

With regard to the mode of classroom interaction, the survey results showed that on average one third of the classroom time was for pair and group work under the teacher's management and another one third was for the students altogether as one party interacting with the teacher as another. Notably, choral work was relatively infrequent, consuming just 19.32% of the classroom time, and so was individual work, 14.61%. If all these results were true as it happened in the class, they indicated that basically the textbook was being used as it had been intended to be used.

Concerning the classroom activities, two questions were made to the students. The first question asked if they found the classroom activities appropriate to their learning styles and the second asked if they found the classroom activities useful for their learning English. The survey results showed that respectively 88.2% and 85.3% of the students said those were the cases for them. These results indicate that most of the students appreciated the classroom activities. What remains to be done is to seek to learn what those classroom activities actually were, and how they were done; this undertaking was carried out by the lesson observations following this survey.

Appendix P.2 (pages 550-557) removed from Open Access version as it may contain sensitive/confidential content.

Appendix P.3

'Lesson proceedings' of observed sessions – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)

Remarks: This appendix does not contain the „lesson proceedings" of the speaking lesson, which are already provided in the body of the thesis, Section 7.3.4.2.

1. Session 1: Language Focus, Unit 10

Minutes 1-3 (15:20-15:22): No class activity; the class did not start until three minutes after the bell rang.

Minutes 3-5 (15:22-15:24): The teacher reminded students of the upcoming one-period test, giving them an idea of the test would be about and what they might want to do to prepare for it.

Minutes 5-23 (15:24-15:42): Starting the lesson with two lists, one of verbs including *conserve, prevent, agree,* and *work* and the other of adjectives including *poisonous, dirty,* and *careful,* the teacher asked students about the parts of speech of the words. The teacher then asked them to change the words given into nouns. For both tasks, the students did a good job. Referring to *conservation* and *prevention* in particular, the teacher asked students to comment on their endings. Students giving answers, the teacher came up with the following word formation: Verb +*tion/ation* → noun

Asked to provide more nouns of the same formation, students suggest *preparation, education, transportation, protection, action, pollution,* and *selection.* The teacher then relating to another noun formation formula, i.e. verb + *ment* → noun, students continued to give correct answers including *entertainment, development,* and *treatment.* Still concerning noun formation, another formula was given, i.e. verb + *er/or* → noun, of which students again

gave good examples like *visitor* and *employer,* if not to mention *foreigner,* which was certainly irrelevant.

The lesson was carried on with two more noun formations including adjective + *ness* and noun + *ship,* to which students responded with correct examples like *luckiness, friendship,* and *relationship.* The teacher"s presentation of vocabulary then ended with the teacher"s request that students find words of the same formation in their own time as homework.

Minutes 23-27 (15:42-15:46): Following the teacher"s presentation, the lesson turned to practice with the exercises of the textbook. There were five gapped sentences to be completed with the appropriate noun forms of the verbs provided in parentheses. The students were asked to read aloud their completed sentences, which they did quite fast and correctly. Notably, the teacher asked students to give the translations of the words in focus.

Minutes 27-32 (15:41-15:46): Following the practice is the production session. Students were asked to produce their own sentences using the nouns recently made. Generally, students could be given credit for their meaningful sentences using the words specified. Some examples were:

We have an agreement on the picnic.

Because of her mother"sprevention, he can"t marry her.

Friendship is forever.

Finally, students were requested, as homework, to seek more about noun formations and practise writing sentences using the words they might come up with.

Minutes 32-37 (15:46-15:51): The class lesson then continued with grammar points, first of the modal *should*. Ignoring the lead-in example provided by the textbook, the teacher made her own question, "What should we do to conserve nature?" This question was well responded probably because students had been introduced to language and content input of

conservation, which was the topic of the unit they were studying, mainly in the previous speaking lesson. Examples of student responses were: *"We shouldn"tchop trees"* (which was edited by the teacher as *"...young trees", "We should use environment-friendly products", "We should recycle garbage", etc.*

The teacher then turned to the grammar point in focus, i.e. *should,* asking them to tell her the functions of the modal. Together, the teacher and students worked out a summary of what was essential of the word, including its meaning (to express/give advice), grammar (being a modal auxiliary), pronunciations (strong form, weak form) and contraction form (*should not* → *shouldn't*).

Minutes 37-40 (15:51-15:54): With such knowledge as the starting point, the students were asked to work in pairs to complete the conversational exchanges of task A, which was to ask and answer using *should* and the prompts provided. On call, pairs of students stood up asking and responding. As they went, the teacher explained the words that she thought might be new to students and gave their translations, such as *toxic chemical, discharge, rhino,* and *global warming.*

Minutes 40-45 (15:54-15:59): Students in pairs practised saying the exchanges. One asked by reading the ready-made questions and the other responded by using the prompts provided to form meaningful sentences.

Minutes 45-66 (15:59-16:20): Now came to the task, unlike the other ones, provided by the teacher, who hung onto the blackboard a black sheet containing six sentences written in yellow chalk prompting students to use *should*.

1. *A polluted lake will kill the fish.*
2. *This part of the river is rather deep.*
3. *Too many trees in this forest have been cut down.*
4. *Dolphins may be dangerous.*

5. *Students often throw litter over the place.*

6. *Why don't you turn off some lights? It's too bright here.*

The teacher asked students to respond to the above sentences, saying "What would you say in these situations?". Again, the students, sometimes with the teacher's assistance, responded with generally meaningful sentences. Respectively, their responses were:

1. *I think people shouldn't dischargepolluted chemical into the river.*

2. *We shouldn't we swim in this river/ I think we should build a bridge.*

3. *I think we should not "nuoi" (= "raise") dolphins.*

4. *I think we should educate children/ put garbage bins around school.*

5. *I think we should not waste electricity.*

Minutes 66-72 (16:20-16:26): The lesson then turned to another grammar point, conditional sentences, types 2 and 3. However, the teacher extended the coverage, reviewing all the three basic types of conditionals and putting their formations on the board like this:

Type	Main clause	*If* clause
1. Future possible	Simple future *Can/may* + infinitive	Simple present
2. Present unreal	*Would/could* + infinitive	Simple past (past subjunctive)
3. Past unreal	*Would/could* + *have* + past participle	Past perfect

Minutes 72-76 (16:26: 16:30): Students were asked to provide their own sentences using the formations recently reviewed. As it turned out, the sentences produced by students were all meaningful and in most cases grammatical. Wherever there were mistakes, the teacher corrected them. The following were what the students had to say:

1. *If I were millionaire, I will buy a villa.* (The teacher corrected *will* into *would*.)
2. *If it rains, I can't go for a picnic.*

3. *If we don't hurry, we don't miss the bus.*
4. *If I were a bird, I will fly into the sky.* (The teacher corrected *will* into *would*.)
5. *If I had been more careful, I'd have passed the exams.*
6. *If it hadn't rained, we'd have gone for a picnic.*

It is interesting to note that one of the students questioned the teacher's correction of the first sentence, saying why the second type conditional wasn't to be used if being a millionaire stood a chance of being possible. The question indicated the student's good understanding of conditionality.

The lesson then had a quick review of *unless = if... not* before the students worked on the exercises provided by the textbooks.

Minutes 76-88 (16:30-16:42): Following the presentation of the grammar points, the teacher turned students to tasks B and C of the textbook. Concerning the first task, which was an ask-answer one with the answer to be self-completed by students, the students were asked to work in pairs a few minutes on their own before some of them were called to stand up and read aloud their exchanges. The students proved to be able to do the task quite well, though some of them still made mistakes in using the conditional tenses concerned. For example:

A: What if oil tankers leaked?

B: The beach <u>will</u> be polluted.

The second task was about using the correct form of the verbs given using conditional tenses. Doing this "classic" form of exercise, students did not have real problems with putting the verbs provided in the correct forms.

Minutes 82-92 (16:42-17:00): Following the textbook-based tasks were again the teacher-provided exercises, which were done not only in writing but also orally. The teacher

showed students a sheet containing six prompts for students to write conditional sentences, such as:

The air in this city is not clean because there is so much smoke from factories.

We can"t bathein this part of the river because the water is too dirty.

Lam spent too much time playing computer games; therefore, he failed the last exam.

Students had several minutes to write their answers before they were called to put them on the board. Some students gave very good answers but others did not and those sentences were corrected either by their classmates (as appointed by the teacher) or by the teacher, and for one case, by the writer student herself. Examples of student-produced sentences:

If there weren't so much smoke from factories, the air in this area would be cleaner.

If the water weren't too dirty, we would bathe in this part of the river.

If Lam did not spend too much time… (Student"s self-correction five seconds later*: had not spent*)

2. Session 2: Reading, Unit 11

Minutes 1-50 (12:45-1:35): The students did the one-period test and thus no classroom observation was done.

Minutes 50-62 (13:35-13:47): Following the test, the lesson began with a lead-in into the new unit – Unit 11: *National Parks*. Slides of various national parks were shown on the screen in the front wall for students to watch. Some of the parks are the ones in focus in the pre-reading section of the textbooks. Projecting slides, each a park, the teacher asked students what park it was. It was surprising that students knew all the places, many of which were at least hundreds of kilometres away, but on second look, it could be seen that cues could be found at the foot of the pictures. The lesson being the most visual, it should be recognised

that students were very excited because of the lively colourful pictures on the screen, which, unlike the traditional board-and-chalk presentation, might have looked (and sounded) extraordinary to them.

Minutes 62-74 (13:47-13:59): These dozen minutes were spent on vocabulary as a preparation for the reading excerpt. Still using the projector, the teacher one by one provided students with prompts suggesting the five words she wanted to teach.

Prompt 1: "a member of the race of people who were the original people of Australia" → *Aborigines*

Prompt 2: "the amount of rain measured yearly" → *annual rainfall*

Prompt 3: "the edge of something in the shape of a circle" → *rim*

Prompt 4: "a situation in which different things exist in equal amounts" → *balance*

Prompt 5: "the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment" → *ecology*

It was interesting to see students managed to get all the correct words. Once they had come up with the words targeted, the teacher put it on the blackboard, gave some further explanations if needed, and their phonetic transcriptions, and then had students repeat the word after her. When they had had all the five words, the teacher again asked students to repeat them, first individually and then in chorus.

Minutes 74-77 (13:59-14:02): The teacher picked up several students to go to the board to write the words just learned. The words were to be written in the balloon corresponding to the definitions she was pointing at. After all the five words had been written down, the next slide showed all the words.

Minutes 77-83 (14:02-14:08): The activities pre-teaching vocabulary were then followed by the reading of the excerpts, which students did silently and basically

individually. Their task to fill in the chart with information about the two national parks as described in the reading excerpts, Grand Canyon and Kakadu.

Minutes 83:90 (14:08-14:20): Selected students read aloud the whole sentences instead of just the wanted information and they all did a good job, i.e. providing correct fillers. As it was a production activity, students were asked to make complete sentences with the information obtained recently, an assignment they again did well. The following was what they came up with.

The Grand Canyon was established in 1919 in the USA. It covers/Its total area is 4,931km^2.

Kakadu was established in 1979 in Australia. It covers/Its total area is 12,432 km^2.

The two options for the second sentences were provided by students, indicating they were able to manipulate their language well in this case.

Minutes 90 (14:20): Before the class was dismissed, the teacher asked students to learn by heart the words they just learned, read the excerpts again for better understanding, and look for more information about the national parks mentioned in the three extracts at the beginning of the textbooks.

3. Session 3: Reading (contd.) and Listening

Minutes 1-16 (15:19-15:34): In this third session, the reading lessons resumed with task B (p. 139), by which the students were (i) to answer questions and (ii) to complete gapped sentences about the two national parks in the previous lessons (*i.e.* Grand Canyon and Kakadu) based on the graph provided. The students had some time to work out the answers on their own before they were selected to stand up and, again in pairs, read aloud the questions and answers.

For the sentence completion task, the students again were selected to stand up and read aloud their answers, which they did individually, for they were single sentences. In addition, students also worked on the first part of task C, at which they completed a spidergram of national parks in Vietnam. It was noted that for these three tasks, the students were able to complete them very quickly, indicating their intake of the information previously learned, which they used for their answers.

Minutes 16-27 (15:34-15:45): Concerning the second part of task C, students worked in groups of four to put the words provided by the teacher in five categories of meaning-related words including "flowers", "birds", "reptiles", "amphibians", and "endangered species". This was an attempt on the part of the teacher to ease the requirements of the task. Instead of letting students to provide their own words as the textbook would, she distributed handouts containing the terms to be grouped. Students had around eight minutes to do the grouping.

Minutes 27-36 (15:45:15:54): The teacher reviewed the students‟ answers, which were rather good across groups. For some words that many students might have found new vocabulary, the teacher provided their Vietnamese translations.

Minutes 36-59 (15:54-16:17): Having finished with the reading tasks, the teacher and students moved on to playing games of vocabulary, which was about animal words. There were two teams named "Dragons" and "Dogs", which were the halves of the class divided by the aisle, competing to say the correct word of the animal concerned upon hearing the teacher‟s descriptions of it. The teacher read aloud one by one the descriptions between which there was a pause so that students had time to work out the answers, if need be. If they could not have the answer, the teacher would be continuing with the next description, and so on. For example, the teacher said, "It has five letters" and paused and, if students could not make out what word it was, she would say, "It eats grass" as further cue for students to make

guesses. If students could not still guess what word it was, the teacher would give another cue, “It lives in Africa”. The teacher would stop and move to another wherever a good guess was given. The earlier a good guess was made, the more points it would earn.

Students were apparently inspired by the competitive atmosphere. Students were exceptionally excited during this time. The final results were nine points for the Dragons (winner) and six for the Dogs. Very encouragingly, the students altogether made eight correct answers (e.g. *zebra, koala, camel,* and *monkey*) out of the nine questions.

Minutes 59-64 (16:17-16:22): The rest of the time was now turned to the lesson on listening. The teacher began with the prompt provided by the textbook, asking students whether they had ever visited a national park. In spite of the disappointing response “No”, the teacher went on with “Can you guess what tourists can do in a national park?”, which was another textbook-provided prompt. This time the students were very responsive, making very good “guesses”, some of which were not really grammatical though:

I think can go fishing.

They can enjoy fresh air.

They can get knowledge of land animals.

They can take photographs.

They can wander.

These student responses were occasionally mediated and modified by the teacher, who, as for “They can wander” as an example, said “It means, they can go trekking” and as for “trekking”, “It means „spend time walking, especially in the mountain‟”.

Minutes 64-66 (16:22-16:24): Also as a lead-in for task B, the teacher read the activities therein and asked students if they thought tourists might do those activities in Nam Cat Tien National Park including trekking, camping, fishing, *etc.* Students responded to the teacher about their perception of the possibility by “Yes, they may” or “No, they may not”.

Minutes 66-73 (16:24-16:31): It was the time for actual listening. Students did task B, which required listening to the script and thereby checking the correct boxes. The teacher let students have two hearings before she checked students‟ answers. Students all agreed on the checks except for one thing, whether camping was allowed in the park. Hence, there was a third reading for students to be more confident of their answers. After the listening, the agreed answer was yes.

Minutes 73-77 (16:31-16:35): The lesson moved on to task C, which required giving answers to three *wh*-questions about the talk students had just listened to. The teacher therefore played the script for another time for students to catch the words and information needed for their answers. After the listening, six pairs of students were picked up to ask and answer the three points raised by the comprehension questions; their answers were all correct. The teacher then asked the students to write down the answers in their notebook.

Minutes 77-84 (16:35-16:42): Students worked in pairs to provide answers to questions in task D, which was a post-listening activity requesting students to suggest measures of conservation of national parks. The teacher, however, spent two minutes on off-task topics – talking about preparations for the supplementary class the next day.

Minutes 84-88 (16:42-16:46): It was time for students to produce the sentences they had worked out together. Samples of student-generated conservation measures:

Tourists should not litter.

Tourists should not go camping for a long time.

I think we should not let tourists carry weapons like guns. They can shoot animals.

Minutes 88-90 (16:46-16:48): This time was again spent on off-task topics, talking about the test recently administered.

Minutes 90-100 (16:48-15:00): It was another game time, crosswords this time. There were 15 horizontal lines and one vertical one for students to fill in with the words

relating to the topics of the current unit and the previous one, respectively national parks and conservation, based on teacher-provided prompts. The game began with the horizontal lines and as it went, students, if they could, might suggest the word in the vertical line, which was somehow revealed by the words of the horizontal lines, and which would earn students the most points. The game activity was modelled after *The Wheel of Fortune,* a popular TV game show having been in existence for a while.

Right after the first horizontal word was found out, i.e. *extinction,* the students turned very excited and competed for saying the vertical word. One student said it was *national parks,* for there was an *n* in *extinction,* but it was a hasty answer – the vertical word required could not have been so long.

As they went through the other lines, the atmosphere was very exciting. Particularly, the excitement soared when the vertical word was looming. Importantly, the students appeared to be working really hard and excitedly for the competitive game via which the vocabulary related to the unit"s topic was effectively reinforced. Undoubtedly, the class were all highly engaged in the activity, for the learning was really enjoyable for them.

4. **Session 4: Writing** (*The proceedings of the Speaking lesson that preceded this Writing lesson was provided in the body of the thesis.*)

Minutes 43-54 (16:20-16:31): The class then resumed with the writing lesson, which was about interpreting and describing graphs. The teacher provided on the board a gapped passage defining what the graph is:

> *A drawing represents the relationship between --- sets of data, one set* (sic.) *represented on a --- scale or axis, the other on a --- scale axis. The relationship plotted where the two scales intersect, the line between meeting points generally being called the graph.*

And students were asked to fill in the blanks with the correct words. The task was done orally but it was mainly completed by the teacher, who occasionally explained the words that were perceivably difficult for most students like *intersect* and *axis*.

Minutes 54-58 (16:31-16:35)

Following the teacher-provided activity, students worked on Task A, another gap-filling task but provided by the textbook. Students were asked to look at the given paragraph and fill in the missing information of the passage provided, which interpreted and described the graph. The teacher began by asking students what the graph showed. Based on the caption available, students were able to give the answer easily. The teacher then continued with "What does the vertical line show?" to which students correctly responded "Percentage". Being more specific, the teacher asked what students could see on the horizontal line. Responding, students listed the items shown on the line. Upon each answer of students, the teacher wrote on the board the terms that were to teach to students such as *plastic bottles, disposal diapers,* and *construction debris.* She then explained primarily in English what the terms meant and encouraged students to translate them into Vietnamese.

Minutes 58-60 (16:35-16:37) These two minutes were spent on the pronunciation of the terms just studied. The teacher had students repeat the terms after her. After two attempts, she let them say in chorus the words that she was pointing at and made corrections wherever necessary.

Minutes 60-63 (16:37-16:40): Students were asked to fill in the four spaces of the gapped passage, Task A. Selected students stood up and said the fillers, which were all correct. Students then had approximately two minutes to study the completed sample passage for two minutes as a preparation for their writing activity that followed.

Minutes 63-65 (16:40-16:42)

The students continued with Task B, where they began with a graph of the number of gas blowouts in Australia in 1965. The teacher guided students through the interpretation by asking them about what was shown by the graph. Also, she explained the terms that were presumably difficult for students, and asked them about the translations.

Minutes 65-72: (16:42-16:49): Students did Task B2, which was writing a paragraph interpreting and describing the graph in Task B1. They had several minutes to complete their writing and upon completion, one student was called to read aloud their writing. The student did a good job. For reinforcement, the teacher read the paragraph again but not continuously. She paused occasionally and waited for students to supply with the phrases needed, if they could. While they were doing so, students wrote down the paragraph in their notebook.

Minutes 72-78 (16:49-16:55): The lesson now turned to Task C, by which they were asked to draw a graph to show their prediction of the number of visitors to the two national parks Cuc Phuong and Nam Cat Tien in 2010, and write a short paragraph based on the predictions. The teacher briefly explained what the students would need to do to complete the task, notably in Vietnamese. The students then drew the graph based on which wrote their paragraph while the teacher walked around the classroom to help students if need be. It was interesting to note that a student nearby asked the researcher whether the current textbook should be updated soon, drawing his attention to the task rubrics asking to predict the number of visitors to the national parks in *2010*, which he said would come soon.

Appendix P.4

Classroom teacher post-observation interview transcript – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)

Interviewee: Ms. Bo

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify her.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*You should have taught using this new textbook, just as you did with the former ones, right?*
2. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right.
3. ***R:*** [1]*And how did you find the new textbook, more effective?*
4. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It's more effective for sure. [2]It's clearer to me. [3]In addition, it has more interesting content. [4]The former books were too old to use. [5]They were used at our time, which was a long time ago.
5. ***R:*** [1]*What"s about the new textbook that is "clearer"?*
6. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It's clearer both in terms of content and the classroom procedures required, which facilitate teachers to implement their lessons. [2]Meanwhile, all the former textbooks had to offer, for instance, was a reading passage and teachers would have to design their own the tasks and exercises to teach. [3]But the textbook now has *Before You Read, While You Read,* and then *After You Read*. [4]It's more complete.
7. ***R:*** [1]*And what do you mean by "more interesting content"?*
8. **Ms. Bo:** [1]The content is more realistic.
9. ***R:*** [1]*By "more realistic", do you mean students will find themselves more interested in the topics?*
10. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right. [2]It's closer to students' life.
11. ***R:*** [1]*Let"s talk about* National Park *as an example: Is it…?*

12. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Students have had a chance to learn about national parks in their geography lessons. [2]They found the topic interesting because it's also a topic in their geography lessons. [3]With national parks as a topic in their English lessons, students have got some background information to start with. [4]They have studied about national parks in their geography lessons but the topic wasn't apparently studied in detail.
13. ***R:*** [1]*This question has been made in the questionnaire survey but might I discuss it with you in more detail?* [2]*About* English 10 – Intensive Programme, *have you found some discrepancies between teachers" beliefs in the "right" ways of teaching and learning English and the methodology of the book?*
14. **Ms. Bo:** [1]*Do you mean teaching English to students?*
15. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*What I mean is…*
16. **Ms. Bo:** [1]*What do you mean by your "beliefs in the „right"ways of teaching and learning English"?*
17. ***R:*** [1]*I mean, just as an example, teachers might believe that all students need to achieve is possibly passing their exams or perhaps learning a language is…*
18. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Is to use it?
19. ***R:*** [1]*Learning a language is learning about it,* that is *knowledge about language.* [2]*Meanwhile, at least according to what it claims it aims to do, the new textbook claims to teach communication.*
20. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Generally, there's not much difference, for the new textbook adopts the new English teaching methodology. [2]It'll be appropriate for us to use the textbook. [3]Students can both learn the grammar of the language, and have opportunities to practise communication. [4]When people wrote the textbooks, they adopted the new methodology.
21. ***R:*** [1]*Is that merely what was expected to take place?*
22. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, I think the book is useable.
23. ***R:*** [1]*Right, it is.*

24. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Did they talk about methodological innovations when you were starting to write the textbooks?

25. ***R:*** [1]*Yes, they did, but the curriculum and the actual usage of textbooks might be different.* [2]*Do you think there"sany discrepancy between the teaching methodology adopted by the textbook and reality?* [3]*For example, are students really ready to learn English communication?*

26. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are quite a number of students who aim to study for exam purposes only; they aren't learning English to use it. [2]Not only do they have no environment to use the language, they also have no such target or motivation. [3]Hence, for them it's just enough to study English and pass the exams required.

27. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean there are such questions even in this class specialising in English study?*

28. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are such students in the English class.

29. ***R:*** [1]I see

30. **Ms. Bo:** [1]And as for the students specialising in Vietnamese, their primary target is the marks.

31. ***R:*** [1]*Do you find any difficulty in implementing the speaking tasks for your classes, which are quite big?*

32. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't think that my classes are big. [2]The class size is 50+ in other schools, so it's just the right size to have 35 students here. [3]This is not a big class but when it comes to speaking practice, I have them work in pairs. [4]I walk around the class to make sure they're working. [5]For there are many students who don't want to do their practice; they just want sit there and listen.

33. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, how do the textbook meet students" nœds and interests?*

34. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I can see in my classes that they appear to enjoy the book.

35. ***R:*** [1]*Do they?*

36. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right, they appear to enjoy using the book.

37. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think students are fully aware of what their English needs are?*

38. **Ms. Bo:** [1]As they are still in Year 10, many students don't really know what their needs are. [2]Though they specialise in English now, it doesn't not necessarily mean that they will continue to do so in the future. [3]So, what they might need to do is just to attend to what is needed right now. [4]There are however some students who feel that English is really needed so they do a very good job at practising English on their own. [5]The students are just in Year 10… and though they now specialise in English, they might not take the D stream exams for their university admission. [6]Many students would end up with taking stream A or B.

39. ***R:*** [1]*Why do this class take the intensive programme in the three subjects of math, chemistry, and English?*

40. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Because they take the social sciences stream, their English programme should be intensive. [2]In addition, they have chosen to take two other subjects in the intensive programme including math and chemistry.

41. ***R:*** [1]*How about Vietnamese?*

42. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It seems their Vietnamese is of the intensive programme too. [2]Right, they're taking the intensive programme of English and Vietnamese. [3]As extras, they have chosen math and chemistry as two additional subjects of the intensive programme to allow more possibilities for their university admission pathways.

43. ***R:*** [1]*I see; so the other two subjects are also of the intensive programme.*

44. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]And that's why their work load is heavier.

45. ***R:*** [1]*The stream taken by the class specialising in English is that of social sciences.*

46. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Right.

47. ***R:*** [1]*And what is the stream of the class specialising in Vietnamese?*

48. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]The two classes are alike. [2]They are both of the social sciences stream. [3]They're taking the same stream.

49. ***R:*** [1]*There"s just one period of supplementary lessons for the class specialising in Vietnamese?*

50. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Correct. [2]That one period is spent on reviewing what has been taught from the textbook. [3]That means, there will be no new knowledge. [4]Nor will we further develop what they've learned. [5]No new knowledge. [6]As for the class specialising in English, there are two supplementary periods. [7]The term "intensive programme" is different from "supplementary". [8]The two periods for the intensive programme are spent on…

51. ***R:*** [1]*Extending what has been taught?*

52. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Right.

53. ***R***: [1]*And for the students taking the advanced training periods…*

54. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]"Advanced training" is even more advanced than "intensive programme". [2]There are two types of "advanced training": One is the "advanced training" for the whole class so that when they're in Year 11, they'll be taking part in national contests; another is that of preparing for the Olympic contests, which involves only three students. [3]That means, they will have two extra lessons. [4]There used to be provincial contests for excellent students but they no long exist now. [5]That's why students will take the national contests when they're in Year 11. [6]Year 11 students will be taking part in contests for Year 12 students. [7]The provincial contests are for Year 12 programmes only.

55. ***R:*** [1]*So there"retwo types of "advanced training", aren"t there?*

56. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Two types, right. [2]The preparation for the Olympic contests will be finished by the end of this March. [3]There are three student selected from each class. [4]The other training is done for the whole class so that when they're in Year 11, three of the students will be selected to sit for the provincial contest.

57. ***R:*** [1]*How many periods are there for the preparation for the Olympic competitions?*

58. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Three periods.

59. ***R:*** [1]*And there are only three students only?*

60. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Three periods, three students.

61. ***R:*** [1]*One teacher in charge?* [2]*Three periods per week?*

62. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Right. [2]Three periods per week.

63. ***R:*** [1]*And it has been done from the beginning of the school year till late March?*

64. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Right, late March. [2]They'll be sitting for the contest in late March.

65. ***R:*** [1]*And the training for the whole class has been taking place since the beginning of the year?*

66. **Ms. Bo:** [1]For the whole school year. [2]Three periods per week. [3]So, students have a dozen of periods of English learning per week.

67. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*And it"llbe a big load particularly for those students who are studying for the Olympic contest.*

68. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right, 12 periods. [2]Altogether 12 periods, if the students are sitting for the Olympic contest.

69. ***R:*** [1]*They"renow having with you…*

70. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Six periods per week.

71. ***R:*** [1]*And it"s fiveperiods per week for the Vietnamese class, isn"t* ***it****?*

72. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]It's four periods. [2]I mean four periods as prescribed by the curriculum and one period for supplementary exercises.

73. ***R:*** [1]*Five and three are…*

74. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Since the intensive programme is rather difficult for the Vietnamese class, they have one extra period per week, called "bam sat" period.

75. ***R:*** [1]*Another issue I"d like to ask for your comments, that is, the outcomes prescribed by the textbook concerning knowledge and skills* versus *results actually targeted by the school leadership and parents.* [2]*For example, while the textbook calls for skills practice,*

the school leadership and parents, I don"tknow, might prioritise the university admission results. [3]*Are these problems considerable?*

76. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Parents are more for the study of grammar, reading, and writing. [2]If there is anything else, it could be some listening. [3]But in reality students have to learn all four skills. [4]Do you mean to ask if they find their learning enjoyable? [5]Do they…?

77. ***R:*** [1]*Right, I mean, is there anything in the prescribed curriculum that students feel they"re studying for something they do not need, at least in the meantime?* [2]*It could be speaking practice, for instance.*

78. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I think they have been learning all fours skills since they started learning English. [2]They've had to study listening, speaking, reading, and writing since Year 6. [3]Listening is followed by speaking, which is followed by reading. [4]Oh, no, reading should come first. [5]And then listening, which is followed by writing. [6]They should have been familiar with how things are by now.

79. ***R:*** [1]*How about the idealised procedures for the classroom activities versus reality?* [2]*For example, there should be activities of pre-reading, pre-listening…*

80. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]*Pre* is followed by *while* and then *post*. [2]And there is individual work, pair work, and group work.

81. ***R:*** [1]*Is there any discrepancy between those things and reality?*

82. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Reality…?

83. ***R:*** [1]*By reality, I mean, for instance, the activities could be too noisy and are thus organised just once in a while, or…*

84. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, there are activities for almost every period. [2]They'll be noisy, but they're reasonably noisy. [3]Anything that might affect the classroom nearby is no good.

85. ***R:*** [1]*How about the activities that are unfamiliar with students?* [2]*For example, when it comes to practising dialogues, it might have been complained that the practice itself was repetitious and the same expressions were said again and again though students"*

speaking is not yet fluent enough. [3]*Learning a language is about becoming fluent in that language but students may just want to learn about English rather than learning English.*

86. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are a number of students who will do the speaking practice once or twice for a particular function, provided that… [2]If I asked them to practise again, they would be bored. [3]But what normally happens is there isn't much time for students to do as much practice as needed. [4]They might have up to three times of practice at most.

87. ***R:*** [1]*Three times for each pair?*

88. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]Alternatively, if there are four exchanges for students to practise, they will take turn to complete practising all the exchanges. [2]If, however, there is one sentence, it'll be all right to have two pairs to say that same sentence, each once.

89. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the selection of students to perform conversational exchanges, if you intend to have to pairs of students for one exchange, do you normally pick up weaker students for the second pair or do you just call students at random?*

90. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't know what other teachers would be doing but as for me, I will pick up two students who are perceived to be good enough to be the first pair, and the next two students should be those a little bit weaker, and the last pair should the students that I feel the slowest of the class. [2]That's the way the practice goes. [3]The good students should be the pioneers. [4]That's why I will want study about the students before I teach a certain class. [5]I will want to learn about my students. [6]For example, this class was taught by Ms. D. in the first semester, so when I began teaching these students, I had a look at their transcripts, to see who is the best, the average, and the slow. [7]We will learn a lot about students looking at their transcripts. [8]Also, by asking them several questions we can see who are good, who are slow.

91. ***R:*** [1]*And concerning students" linguistic, cognitive, and maturity level and the books" requirements, as the textbook has certain requirements on students in terms of cognitive*

levels and maturity, do you think students meet those requirements or maybe the requirements are higher or lower?

92. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I think they're acceptably well-matched. [2]And this would depend on what students we may be talking about. [3]For example, the textbook is appropriate for the students of the class specialising in English. [4]As for the Vietnamese class, however, we might need to spend more time for them.

93. ***R:*** [1]*So as for the English class…?*

94. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]They have better English background. [2]And I can also perceive that they're more active.

95. ***R:*** [1]*So, does the difference lie in their language level or cognitive level?*

96. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]I think it's all about their language level. [2]The cognitive level is alike between students, who are of the same age anyway.

97. ***R:*** [1]*Do you find it more difficult to teach the English class or the Vietnamese class?*

98. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I find more difficult to teach the Vietnamese class. [2]The English class is generally more active, which will inspire my teaching. [3]As for the Vietnamese class, it may sometimes take them ten or fifteen minutes to do an activity that would require just five minutes.

99. ***R:*** [1]*Is the school admission score higher for the English class than the Vietnamese one?*

100. ***Ms. Bo:*** [1]It's certainly higher for the English class.

101. ***R:*** [1]*Right. I used to teach a class specialising in philosophy.* [2]*As they just needed five marks for their admission score, they were very lousy in the class.*

102. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are two classes here, the biology and computer science classes.

103. ***R:*** [1]*Are they the best students?*

104. **Ms. Bo:** [1]*The weakest.*

105. ***R:*** [1]The weakest are students specialising in biology and computer?

106. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right, it's those students that are the weakest. [2]The Vietnamese students are not better. [3]The Vietnamese students are even weaker in subjects of natural sciences than those of biology and computer science. [4]Concerning social sciences… [5]Those students are good at Vietnamese only. [6]And also at history and geography, the subjects involving rote learning. [7]They are far behind the students of the other classes in terms of chemistry and physics.

107. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think students find interested in the content and the activities of the textbook?*

108. **Ms. Bo:** [1]The activities suggested the textbook and the actual classroom activities?

109. ***R:*** [1]*Right, and also the requirements of the textbook, especially the ones as suggested by the Teacher Book.*

110. **Ms. Bo:** [1]As for the textbook, I have had to process many sections. [2]The same content is taught but the activities could be differently conducted, not necessarily adhering to the prescriptions of the textbook.

111. ***R:*** *Can you give an example?*

112. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't remember. [2]I can do it but if I am asked to… [3]Let me see. [4]OK, for example, as for the questions that require group discussion, if the content is simple, I will instead have the pair work activities for those questions. [5]Doing in that way would make the activity less noisy and would be more effective.

113. ***R:*** [1]*Talking about the Teacher Book in particular, how do you find it useful?* [2]*Or is it simply…?*

114. **Ms. Bo:** [1]The Teacher Book can be best used as the answer key. [2]In terms of methodology, there is not much in there. [3]They just provide general guidance. [4]They have about two pages of guidelines for a unit, which I will be teaching over seven periods. [5]As for reading lessons, for instance, they will tell us to have students read the texts, and do

these tasks and then provide the key. [6]This is the reading text, and this is the key for the tasks. [7]That's all they have to offer.

115. **Ms. Bo:** [1]*So…?*

116. **Ms. Bo:** [1]So the Teacher Book is not used very often.

117. ***R:*** [1]*Is the answer key provided by the Teacher Book generally convincing enough?*

118. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It is generally so, but for some issues, there are more possibilities that are not provided there. [2]Teachers should be aware of this in order to provide students with other acceptable answers. [3]Basically, we can base on their key…

119. ***R:*** [1]*Was there a Teacher Book for the former textbooks?* [2]*There should have been one.*

120. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Yes. [2]There was. [3]But it was more or less the same as the current one. [4]Very simple. [5]I have almost never used the Teacher Book.

121. ***R:*** [1]*Is there any conflict between the constraints of the textbook and the teacher creativity?*

122. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Do you mean the regulations of the book?

123. ***R:*** [1]*For example, there may be requirements that this should be taught in these specified periods.* [2]*Or there might be certain aims and objectives to achieve that…*

124. **Ms. Bo:** [1]In my opinion, as for the new textbook, it has some kind of the core content and depending on who my students are, there will be modifications. [2]It's not too bad actually. [3]We will develop the basics it has to offer. [4]The developments will depend on particular classes. [5]For example, there should be something supplementary for the English class and for the Vietnamese class, the textbook is just enough. [6]Right, it all depends. [7]There won't be enough time for any supplementary stuff. [8]They'll be good enough if they can cover what is prescribed. [9]It's easier to use the current textbook than the ones we used before.

125. ***R:*** [1]*What do you mean by that?*

126. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It's clearer, easier to use. [2]And it's easier for teachers to teach using this current book.

127. ***R:*** [1]*What about the amount of time allowed and the amount needed?* [2]*Is there any conflict?*

128. **Ms. Bo:** [1]One unit is to be taught over seven periods. [2]Such a load I think is all right. [3]You might want to reallocate differently. [4]Ultimately, the load is lighter for students using textbooks of the intensive programme than for those of the regular programme. [5]There are just five periods allowed per unit for the textbooks of the regular programme.

129. ***R:*** [1]*What are those five periods spent on?*

130. **Ms. Bo:** [1]On five sections just as it is the case with the intensive programme textbooks. Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Language Focus. [2]They are the same sections. [3]There are though as many as seven periods for the intensive programme, leaving us more relaxed.

131. ***R:*** [1]*Seven periods per unit?*

132. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Yeah, it is usually two periods for Reading, another two for Writing. [2]If there's not much for Writing and there's quite much for Language Focus, we can spend two periods for the latter. [3]Speaking and Listening are each allotted one period.

133. ***R:*** [1]*So Language Focus can have one or two periods, it depends?*

134. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right, one or two. [2]The same thing applies to Writing, one or two periods, so long as there are altogether seven periods spent on one unit. [3]As I observe myself, within a particular unit, if there's much to teach in Writing, there won't be much either in Language Focus. [4]But as for this Unit 11, since there's not much in Writing to teach, the load for Language Focus is a little bit more. [5]That's the way they are; they are in proportion.

135. ***R:*** [1]*All right, let"s talk a bit aboutthe Work Book, shall we?*

136. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Do you mean the Work Book that accompanies the Student Book?

137. ***R:*** [1]*According to the curriculum specifications, the use of it is not compulsory, is it?* [2]*It isn"t required to be used, right?*

138. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't know what others are doing but personally I will usually ask students to do the work therein at home. [2]That's why several sections of my one-period tests are based on the work book. [3]Those who have worked on those exercises from the work book would have an advantage in doing the classroom tests. [4]This is to familiarise students with the practice of doing the exercises relating to content of the Student Book they've just learned. [5]For there's never enough time to check whether they have done their homework.

139. ***R:*** [1]*There"s one or two questions in your one-period test relating to the content of the Work Book, isn"t there?*

140. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Take the recent test as an example: I have used the writing section and four multiple-choice questions taken from the work book. [2]It means they account for three marks of the total score.

141. ***R:*** [1]*Three marks over ten?*

142. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right.

143. ***R:*** [1]*So did you use the same questions for your tests or did you…?*

144. **Ms. Bo:** [1]As for the writing section, the same writing prompts were used. [2]As for the multiple-choice question items, I altered the answer options a bit. [3]As for Writing, we couldn't have made any changes. [4]The writing task was about Writing a letter. [5]For the multiple-choice items, I just selected a number of them. [6]There were 10 items in the Work Book but I used just eight. [7]For there were two marks for Writing and it would be easier to calculate the score.

145. ***R:*** [1]*Is there any official regulation on the use of the Work Book?*

146. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No. [2]The Work Book isn't a required material. [3]It all depends on teachers. [4]We might pick up for our lessons the exercises that we feel useable.

147. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding phonetics, in your opinion…?*

148. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There's no phonetics section in the intensive programme textbook for year 10.

149. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*Do you think it should be included as a separate section as it is the case with the textbooks of the regular programme?*

150. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Yes, I think it would possibly be necessary. [2]There should be a section of pronunciation because many students are not yet able to read the phonetic symbols for their own pronunciation practice. [3]Their pronunciation is not good enough. [4]It's clearer there in the textbooks of the regular programme, where for each unit there is practice of two sounds that appear to be similar. [5]For example, the long /i:/ and the short /i/. [6]This will enable students to read the phonetic symbols, which is helpful when they use dictionaries. [7]There's no such section of pronunciation in the textbooks of the intensive programme. [8]But they have Word Study in place of phonetics. [9]I think phonetics should be part of the Year 10 curriculum. [10]For students need to learn the basics, as they did not do so in their junior secondary school. [11]It's too late for students to be still unaware of such things by Year 10. [12]I'm not sure whether the textbook for Year 11 has such a section.

151. ***R:*** [1]*No, it doesn"t; and neither does Year 12 textbooks.* [2]*The argument held by the textbooks is…*

152. **Ms. Bo:** [1]They take it for granted that students should have known that.

153. ***R:*** [1]*No, it"s not taken for granted but students are expected just to know how to pronounce words.* [2]*They don't need to know the phonetics symbols.*

154. **Ms. Bo:** [1]But there are questions about these things in exams.

155. ***R:*** [1]*Exams…*

156. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are pronunciation questions in any exams. [2]That's why I will draw their attention to the words whose pronunciation is little bit unusual. [3]It's a compulsory section in exams but it's not taught in the classroom. [4]Students asked me where they

could learn about such things and I told them they might want to consult a dictionary (*laughing*).

157. ***R:*** [1]*Their view is that students will learn pronunciation through listening and that will thus be tested through listening.* [2]*The objectives are to be able to hear and to speak English.* [3]*They won't necessarily have to…*

158. **Ms. Bo:** [1]But it isn't true. [2]They might be able to hear and speak English but there are sounds that they don't know exactly about. [3]That's why they will make quite a number of mistakes when they do phonetics exercises.

159. ***R:*** [1]*And about speaking lessons, when it comes to pair work where students are required to say the conversational exchanges from the textbooks, one asking and one answering.* [2]*Did you intentionally have the better student produce the exchange that is not provided there?*

160. **Ms. Bo:** [1]For pair work, it will be convenient to have two students sitting nearby. [2]It would be too far away if the students were from different tables. [3]I will prefer to choose two students nearby. [4]It'll then be up to the students to agree who will say what. [5]But it won't be necessarily the better student that should speak first or say the sentence to be created and the weaker student to say the ready-made sentence. [6]It all depends.

161. ***R:*** [1]*As for reading lessons, you will normally write the words on the board for students to copy them down in their notebooks.* [2]*Do you think whether they have prepared the vocabulary in advance?*

162. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Some have, for vocabulary is the only thing of the five sections of the textbooks I will let them get prepared for. [2]During the lessons, I will teach only the words that I feel they are necessary for them. [3]The other words should be their responsibility to prepare. I will teach six or seven words, not all.

163. ***R:*** [1]*As for Year 10 students, are they old enough to teach word attack skills like contextual cues or morphological analysis?*

164. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Not yet, they are not ready. [2]Those skills shouldn't be taught until tertiary education; it is still too early to do so in secondary education.

165. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning reading, what strategies are commonly brought into play in this class?*

166. **Ms. Bo:** [1]As for reading, skimming and scanning are the most common.

167. ***R:*** [1]*To my perception, the pre-writing activities are too many; do you think so?*

168. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It's true sometimes, but… it depends on particular units, not really too much. [2]Are you talking about the sections of the suggested expressions?

169. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*Take the Writing section concerning graph writing as an example, there are different sub-sections like A, which is a gap-filling task, and then B, which is…*

170. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Task B is completing a paragraph based on the graph provided.

171. ***R:*** [1]*Students may have got worn out by the time they reach the main writing task after they had to do quite a number of pre-writing activities, right?*

172. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, because I should have taught that section in two periods. [2]The first period was to be spent on Tasks A and B, in order to give them an idea. [3]And then at home they would have to work out the graph with their own data and then write a complete paragraph.

173. ***R:*** [1]*And what will you do to check their work?*

174. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I'd have them write their paragraphs on the blackboard, for which I'd be doing corrections.

175. ***R:*** [1]*Will you do it by picking some students at random?*

176. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Yes, at random. [2]If I have more time, just as what I did with Unit 10, I will spend two periods on writing. [3]One period, oh, no, when was it? [4]Oh no, it was when I was teaching about writing letters. [5]Yes, writing letters for Unit 10, it was about refusal and acceptance, which was simple enough for them to do the writing easily. [6]I mean the previous unit. [7]I had to spend two periods.

177. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the students" writing was good enough?*

178. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Some did a good job at writing but some would be writing as if they were writing in Vietnamese. [2]They would simply be doing a word-by-word translation.

179. ***R:*** [1]*When you select one student to go to the blackboard, do you mean to get a good student in order to inspire the whole class, leaving an impression that things are going well or would you do a random pick?*

180. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, it's at random, but my target is the students of average level, so that there are mistakes which I will be correcting for the whole class to learn from. [2]I just aim to do the corrections for the whole class because I don't have time to do for individual students. [3]Students can learn from the mistakes of the writing I point out. [4]The good students would quickly complete the work and there's not much to work on (*laughing).* [5]The students who are not working at the board would normally pay no attention; they will be attentive when I am correcting mistakes. [6]It's interesting only if there are some mistakes to correct, isn't it? (*laughing)*

181. ***R:*** [1]*I'd do the same.* [2]*I will usually look for some better students, particularly in the first classes, so that other students would be feeling that the tasks are doable.* [3]*If weaker students were selected, the work would be very slow, which would then a heavy impression.*

182. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, I will target average students because too weak students would overspend the time allowed. [2]If the students are so good at writing, there will not be much for me to correct. [3]The average will be perfect. [4]Besides, I will be walking around to see how students are writing. [5]While they're writing, and I will be talking to the whole class about the mistakes commonly made.

183. ***R:*** [1]*If given ideal conditions, what would you have done differently from what you did in your lessons of Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Language Focus?*

184. **Ms. Bo:** [1]In every single period of mine?

185. ***R:*** [1]*Right, if you had been given the conditions you might have wanted.*

186. **Ms. Bo:** [1]If more time had been available, I'd have organised more activities, for what I did wasn't enough. [2]With the same content, instead of working on the four questions provided, I'd not have had my students work on the ready-made questions. [3]I'd rather have modified the questions, and changed them a bit. [4]For example, as for Reading or Speaking lessons, I might have given them new speaking situations to practise. [5]For Language Focus, I'd certainly have given them more advanced exercises; there's not much variety in the tasks provided by the textbook. [6]Almost no unit has enough variety of question formats. [7]All they have is just the basic formats, and we will have to add something more. [8]That's the way it is.

187. ***R:*** [1]*What is it about your lessons that will normally make you the happiest?*

188. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Happy? [2]Generally, I find things all right, there's not much to be happy about. [3]I mean it depends. [4]I think it is all because students are not well prepared enough; for example, they didn't do their homework for the recent lesson, so there wasn't enough time for the classroom correction. [5]Otherwise, I will normally find myself happy, the classroom atmosphere relaxing, even when you were there observing our lessons. [6]Generally, I'm more relaxed than the other teachers in the classroom; I wouldn't be too serious about the lessons.

189. ***R:*** [1]*And as for yourself, for example, was there any occasion when you left the classroom you felt you were…*

190. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Still haunted by it? (*laughing*)

191. ***R:*** [1]*No, not really* (laughing).

192. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Or maybe uneasy because of something you weren't able to do?

193. ***R:*** [1]*Right.* [2]*Or maybe there was something you"dbeen treasuring and would prefer to have done it if better conditions were available?*

194. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Just as I was saying, if there had been more time available, I'd have provide more activities or I might have altered the content prescribed by the textbook. [2]For many students have got the guidebooks, called "study-well books", and they might have looked at the answer key, which they will reproduce in the classroom. [3]If I had had free time, I'd have modified the lessons, which would have been based on the textbook. [4]But there'd have been some changes in order to ensure students' understanding and whether they were really able to do the tasks. [5]About what I've been doing for the past three weeks, I think it is what it should be.

195. ***R:*** [1]*And for this question, which is an open one, do you have any comments on the textbook, the students, the curriculum, and your context of teaching and learning?* [2]*Or you might want to have some suggestions…*

196. **Ms. Bo:** [1]In relation to the students' levels, you mean?

197. ***R:*** [1]*Students"levels or the Vietnamese culture, by which, for instance, students might not want to share their original answers with the whole group because that would make their individuality invisible?*

198. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, students are learning, right, they're learning. [2]They will not hesitate to share their opinions with anyone else. [3]But their opinions will make other people appreciate their contributions. [4]Their classmates will acknowledge their contributions as they are. [5]They might think, well this guy/girl is really great, and (s)he won't be afraid of people's knowing his/her thoughts.

199. ***R:*** [1]*Are there any students who will not speak up their thoughts until the teacher calls them so that they could be recognised in front of the class for their ideas?* [2]*They would not have liked to speak up within their small groups.* [3]*Is there such a problem?*

200. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, I don't think so, because when they work together in groups, I'll be walking around to check and observing the students. [2]I can see that they will speak up what is there in their head. [3]They might even write them down for others to read.

201. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean they are doing it when you come to their group or maybe they would be waiting until your presence?*

202. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, that's the way they will usually do. [2]They don't know when I'll be coming, so they just do what they're doing. [3]I walk extensively to different places (*laughing*). [4]I rarely remain in my seat at the teacher's desk so they have to be working.

203. ***R:*** [1]*If you had some suggestions about the textbook, what would that be?*

204. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Suggestions? [2]Suggestions about the curriculum?

205. ***R:*** [1]*Right, suggestions about the curriculum, the content, the topics, the teaching methodology, or any other issue.*

206. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I'm going to tell you something that I'm not quite sure of. [2]I can see that as for the textbooks of Year 10, 11, and 12, the topics are repetitious.

207. ***R:*** [1]*Are they?*

208. **Ms. Bo:** [1]This might have been intentional, I don't know. [2]The repetition might have been intended. [3]For example, the Year 10 textbook has *Endangered…,* oh, no, it's *National Parks* and those of Year 12 have something similar. [4]I taught for Ms. D. once and on that occasion I could see it was something about the environment, the conservation of nature, or something like that. [5]They're topically repetious. [6]It seems that it is based on such a limited number of topics, isn't?

209. ***R:*** [1]*They had a theme and they followed the so called "developing concentrical topics" based on that theme.* [2]*You might be right.* [3]*Concerning* environment, *if we had been more selective or if there had been more time, we"d have chosen topics that were related but distinctively different.* [4]*The unit of the Year 12 textbook, as you said, might be overlapping too much with the one of the Year 10 textbook and that thus have reduced interest.*

210. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right, I'm afraid… [2]This problem happens with the textbooks of Years 10-12 only. [3]I'm not sure that would make students lose interest.

211. ***R:*** [1]*Does it mean that you want the topics to be more varied?*

212. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right. [2]Maybe, there was a limit of such 16 themes for the secondary education curriculum, and that's the way the textbooks have to be, I understand. [3]But the practice sections should be a bit different. [4]The topics and reading excerpts are similar so the some of the knowledge acquired through Years 10, 11, and 12 is recyclable. [5]That way of doing might admittedly have it own merit, I agree, but what I'm trying to say is some better students might have investigated the theme in the lower year and they might get bored in Years 11 and 12.

213. ***R:*** [1]*Do you have any other comment?*

214. **Ms. Bo:** [1]No, for I haven't taught all the three Years for which the intensive programme is applied.

215. ***R:*** [1]*What about Year 10 textbook in particular?*

216. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Concerning Year 10 textbook? [2]I have just completed teaching three units of it only.

217. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, why have more students chosen to study the textbooks of the regular programme?* [2]*Was it because they are better or was there any other reason?*

218. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Oh no, the themes and topics of the two sets of textbooks are the same. [2]There is in the regular programme whatever exists in the intensive programme. [3]But students will opt for the regular programme upon hearing the two names, regular *vs.* intensive. [4]Students specialising math, physics, and chemistry would be doing equally well if they took the intensive programme.

219. ***R:*** [1]*I see…*

220. **Ms. Bo:** [1]With my experience with the textbooks of the regular prorgamme, I can see that it might be more relaxing for them to use the textbooks of the intensive programme. [2]For the time allowed is seven periods for the intensive programme and just five for the regular one. [3]Have you ever looked through the textbooks of the regular programme?

221. ***R:*** [1]*I just did a quick reading.*

222. **Ms. Bo:** [1]The knowledge prescribed to learn is quite much, no doubt. [2]But the time allowed is shorter. [3]That's why it's easier to teach the textbooks of the regular programme. [4]I just teach what is required by the textbook and when I'm done with that, it's already the end of the time length allowed. [5]I won't need to do anything else for my lessons.

223. ***R:*** [1]*Teachers have said that they can¨tmake it within the time allocated teaching the textbooks of the regular programme.*

224. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Right. [2]Teachers can hardly make it. [3]It'll be an ordeal to complete teaching what is available in the textbooks. [4]I used to teach the textbooks of the regular programme in Semester One. [5]No sooner had I dropped the chalk down when the time was finished. [6]Never did I have one or two spare minutes to relax. [7]Very seldom. [8]Another problem is students' levels are quite different. [9]Also, the content is too much. [10]I'm now teaching two classes one of which is the English class. [11]They are doing very well, they do the tasks very quickly. [12]Sometimes, no sooner have I finished my question than they are raising their hand. [13]That's great. [14]I don't have to repeat the same thing many times (*laughing*).

225. ***R:*** [1]*What does "bam sat" (supplementary) primarily mean?* [2]*Is it the materials you supply to students?*

226. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It's usually concerned with vocabulary review, practice exercises to consolidate what was learned in the textbooks. [2]Just for consolidation purposes, it can't be more difficult. [3]That's what "bam sat" mean. [4]It sounds quite weird to have such a word. [5]If we had to translate this word into English, what would it be?

227. ***R:*** [1]*That¨swhy I¨ve left it as it is and used quotes for the term.* [2]*I¨m not sure how to translate the term.*

228. **Ms. Bo:** [1]"Nâng cao" (*Intensive*) sounds a better term, doesn't it!

229. ***R:*** [1]*It could be "reinforced"?* [2]*I am not sure.*

230. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't know. [2]But its purposes are what the term you suggest is all about, *reinforcement.*

231. ***R:*** [1]*Do "bam sat" periods apply to all schools?*

232. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I don't know. [2]It seems that it's unique of our province only. [3]I'm not sure about the other schools.

233. ***R:*** [1]*By the way, concerning "supplementary" time, there is one period for the Vietnamese class and two for the English class at this school.* [2]*At Yen Sao, it seems there is just one period.*

234. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Do they have "supplementary" periods?

235. ***R:*** [1]*Yes, they do.*

236. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It applies to this province only.

237. ***R:*** [1]*So, altogether there"re 10 periods.* [2]*And there are as many as three "supplementary" periods.*

238. **Ms. Bo:** [1]There are two periods for advanced training for contests out of the total of 10 periods. [2]I mean three periods.

239. ***R:*** [1]*No, it"s notincluded at Sao Nam.* [2]*The advanced training is separate.*

240. **Ms. Bo:** [1]*Is the advanced training separate?* [2]*Is it for the official curricular load?* [3]*Ten periods for the official curricular load?*

241. ***R:*** [1]*It should be eight periods?* [2]*Right, eight periods.*

242. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Eight. [2]Two are for the "supplementary" periods.

243. ***R:*** [1]*Right, two periods.*

244. **Ms. Bo:** [1]Are you talking about the selective class specialising in English?

245. ***R:*** [1]*No, they don't have such a class.*

246. **Ms. Bo:** [1]I see, they use the textbooks of the regular programme, the intensive programme, I mean. [2]Eight periods per week.

247. ***R:*** [1] *Eight periods per week.*

248. **Ms. Bo:** [1]It'd be too much to teach four periods per week. [2]There's just one topic. [3]Teachers will have to exploit hard that topic. [4]The teacher is out of stock, so what else can she teach now? (*laughing*).

249. ***R:*** *I'm done with the interview. Thank you very much indeed.*

Appendix P.5

Head teacher interview transcript – Case Study 3: Semi-urban Selective High School (SSHS)

Interviewee: Ms. Du

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify her.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*So, you're teaching Years 11 and 12 only, aren't you?*
2. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right, Years 11 and 12 only. I used to teach the former textbooks as well, and I taught Year 12 only. [2]And when the new textbooks were introduced, I taught Year 10 as well, but the textbooks used were of the regular programme. [3]Concerning the Year 10 intensive programme, I have assigned my colleagues to do it, and I thus didn"t teach its textbooks. [4]When the Year 10 students went to Year 11, there was a change of teacher. [5]The cohort of Year 10 students taking the regular programme was taught by Ms. D. and they are now in Year 12. [6]When they moved up to Year 11, they were taught by Mr. A., who continued to be with them throughout their Year 12. [7]So, the first cohort of students taking the new programme had two teachers. [8]The second intake was taught by Ms. T., who taught for two consecutive Years, 10 and 11. [9]At the present, they are in Year 11. [10]There have been two intakes of students taking the new programme. [11]Personally, I have never taught the new intensive programme. [11]My experience with it is just my rough reading of the textbooks; I didn"t read them thoroughly.
3. ***R:*** [1]*So, Ms. T. and Mr. A. were the two teachers who had taught classes over two consecutive Years.*
4. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right, A. taught one class for two consecutive Years, 11 and 12, and as for the Year 10 students, Ms. Ky Du was their first teacher.

5. ***R:*** [1]*Why wasn't one teacher assigned for all the three years once they started with Year 10?*

6. **Ms. Du:** [1]That‟s a common practice, particularly at selective schools, where one teacher is typically assigned to teach one class all through the three years. [2]But our problem is the lack of teachers whereas there are six course programmes to teach. [3]There are three years and for each year, there are two programmes, half for the intensive programme and half for the regular one. [4]So, we have six course programmes, and we have just six teachers, some of whom might be busy taking in-service training for their master‟s degree study, like B. or might be on maternity leave, and so on so forth. [5]What it means is we are constantly lacking teaching force and we thus have to find ways to meet the demands, *i.e.* having enough teachers for the classes. [6]So, it‟s impossible for us to follow that practice.

7. ***R:*** [1]*But what's the underlying reason for having one teacher teach the same class all through three years?*

8. **Ms. Du:** [1]Normally, it is thought that teachers in charge of one class for three consecutive years will know their students better. [2]For example, they will know what their levels are and what their strengths or weaknesses are. [3]And what they taught the previous year, and what they would need to teach this year in order to make necessary compensations. [4]That‟s the way it is at selective schools, not at regular schools, where teachers are subject to change.

9. ***R:*** [1]*By having one teacher for three years, students will not have an opportunity to be exposed to a variety of teaching resources, won't they?*

10. **Ms. Du:** [1]That‟s right, there‟re different arguments for and against that practice. [2]Some say that it would be beneficial for students and teachers, who know well about their students so that they could know what to teach to students. [3]Others say it would prevent students from being exposed to different teaching styles and resources, thus possibly getting bored, and this is something that is quite true. [4]I have taught a class for three

years. [5]But that happened once only. [6]For the other years, it did not happen again due to the demand of teachers. [7]Teachers had to be changed wherever necessary. [8]And also, I will typically teach Year 12 students, so the longest time lapse I have been with one class is two years. [9]Normally, for the three years at high school of one class, they will be studying with one teacher for two years, and another teacher for the other year. [10]That"s the average. [11]Rarely does one class study with one and the same teacher through three years. [12]For this year, I intend to let Ms. T. to continue with one of her classes, which will leave her teaching the same class for three years. [12]I myself don"t believe in this practice but… there are advantages and disadvantages for either way. [13]So, I will not take one side definitely, but I can see it is the favoured practice.

11. ***R:*** [1]*I'm surprised to see that practice being done at Yen Sao.*

12. **Ms. Du:** [1]Yeah, that seems to be a tradition. [2]I can see that"s been a traditional practice.

13. ***R:*** [1]*By doing that way, the problems of the class, if any, would be more effectively addressed.*

14. **Ms. Du:** [1]Students will also be very dependent on their teacher.

15. ***R:*** [1]*You're right.*

16. **Ms. Du:** [1]Yeah, students are apt to be dependent on their teacher. [2]And this is especially common at selective schools: That particular teacher is also the homeroom teacher of the class. [3]That means, students are even more dependent on the teacher. [4]In terms of emotions, of… a lot of things. [5]And it will affect students" style. [6]The impact of the homeroom teacher on the students is very considerable. [7]For the first cohort, I taught the class for three years consecutively. [8]For the second, Mr. A taught the class for two years and for the third year, he was reluctant to continue with the same students and pass them onto me. [9]And for the next cohort, Mr. A. taught for two years but not for three years, not ever. [10]For this year, I would let Ms. T. continue with her class not because I think doing so would be beneficial but because Ms. has never taught a Year 12 class, a selective class

of Year 12, since she began to teach at this school. [11]She is quite senior and if she is assigned just Years 10 and 11 and no higher class, it would hurt her prestige. [12]That"s why I have encouraged her to continue with her students to Year 12 so that she would have a respectable position. [13]Otherwise, students would not have really positive evaluations of her. [14]That"s it.

17. R: [1]*I'd now like to ask about teacher preparation for the textbook introduction.* [2]*Was it done by the provincial service of education and training or any other agency?* [3]*And were teachers introduced to the methodology of teaching English adopted by the textbooks?*

18. Ms. Du: [1]Yeah, there is usually a teacher training course every summer called „summer training". [2]When these textbooks were deployed, teachers were sent to the training sessions, which lasted about a week. [3]For the first course, the training was about the new methodology, called „the communicative approach". [4]The trainers were the local teachers who had been sent by the service of education and training to foreign-funded training projects. [5]It was about teaching methodology. [6]There were around nine teachers sent to the training projects. [7]These teachers then became the trainers for the local teacher training sessions. [8]As far as I remember, the first summer was spent on methodology, and the second was also on methodology. [9]When the introduction of methodology was completed, teachers were introduced to the new textbooks. [10]The primary focus was on the textbooks of the regular programme because only a few classes took the intensive programme. [11]The intensive programme was being used in just a few schools where the number of classes taking the intensive programme was small. [12]There were just one or two such classes in those few schools so they did not concentrate on the intensive programme. [13]The training was focused on methodology and when the textbooks were studied, the primary focus was on those of the regular programme, not the intensive programme. [14]At the third training session of the third summer, as they were done with

the theories, they worked on developing lesson plans used for the regular programme of Year 12.

19. *R:* [1]*Did the development of lesson plans cover all…?*

20. Ms. Du: [1]The units were divided between schools, meaning several schools being charge of one unit. [2]The textbooks had 16 units, which were divided by several dozen of the schools in the province, meaning several schools developing one unit. [3]So we did it, and for each unit there were five lesson plans. [4]We worked together based on the theories we had learned. [5]We computerised our plans and submitted them to the Service of Education and Training, who did the editing and posted them on the website. [6]Downloading the plans, teachers might want to make further modifications for their own classroom use. [7]That was the way we did it, and teachers may retain what they think is appropriate and make changes as they might like. [8]We did it just last year.

21. R: [1]*So were the lesson plans for the textbooks of the regular programme only? How about the intensive programme?*

22. Ms. Du: [1]They were for the regular programme only. [2]We had never touched upon the intensive programme. [3]That"s why teachers teaching the intensive programme would have to work harder because they had to develop their own lesson plans. [4]Little interest was given to it, to be honest.

23. R: [1]*So, when did the collective development of lesson plans take place?*

24. Ms. Du: [1]At the most recent course, which lasted about a week, given in early August. [2]We developed one lesson plan each training day, and it took five days to complete the five lesson plans. [3]We did it in the morning and then in the afternoon. [4]And the next morning, we presented what we did onto the screen for the whole hall to see and give comments. [5]As far as I remember, the northern schools were in charge of Units 1-8, and the southern schools… [6]Oh no, the southern teachers develop lesson plans for units 1-8 and the northern ones units 9-16. [7]So, on average three schools were in charge of one unit.

[8]Right, three schools on one unit. [9]We did it together in the afternoon, each in charge of a particular section, we did it with paper and pen and computerised it at home in the evening…

25. *R:* [1]*All the 16 units?*

26. Ms. Du: [1]Yeah, all 16, which are now available on the website.

27. *R:* [1]*The website of the Service of Education and Training.*

28. Ms. Du: [1]Right, the website of the Service of Education and Training.

29. *R:* [1]*I'd like to ask…*

30. Ms. Du: [1]It seems to be unavailable on the website of the Service of Education and Training. [2]Mine were copies from the teachers involved in the lesson planning. [3]Many teachers have got their copies from mine, so I‟m not sure the files are available on the website. [5]I‟m very bad at working online. [6]They may have put them there but it was not very soon.

31. R: [1]*Concerning the teacher training sessions, you were saying that they were about the textbooks of the regular programme, and not yet about the intensive programme?*

32. *Ms. Du:* [1]I mean it was when we were writing lesson plans. [2]The same methodology was supposed to apply to both programmes, though.

33. *R:* [1]*Both?*

34. *Ms. Du:* [1]The same methodology was to be used.

35. *R:* [1]*So was the training of the nine teacher trainers about the communicative approach in general or was it oriented to be applied for the new textbooks?*

36. *Ms. Du:* [1]No, no, that training was organised years ago, which had taken place before the introduction of the new textbooks. [2]There were many projects as far as I remember. [3]And there was a project, which was quite recent. [4]I don‟t remember exactly but it lasted for two years or so. [5]To my understanding, they lasted a month or so for each school year. [6]The selected teachers went for the project for a month or thereabouts and then came back

to their school and they went for the project again the next summer. [7]The project lasted for about three years. [8]As far as I remember, there were nine selected teachers but for the whole province, the number of participants might have been larger. [9]But as trainers for the local training sessions, there were about five or six teachers only. [10]For there were some junior secondary education teachers involved in the project as well. [11]Involved in the project were teachers from both junior and senior high schools.

37. ***R:*** [1]*Was the attendance paid by the Service of Education and Training or did the participants have to pay themselves?*

38. ***Ms. Du:*** [1]No, it was the Service of Education and Training that sent teachers to the training and that was why they were the payers. [2]Also, the participants might have got paid by the project organisers. [3]I was not involved in the project. [4]Normally, those selected will be attending the training as long as it lasts. [5]But the selected were of limited number. [6]So far, there have been Ms. T. P., who you know; Mr. Ch. in Thang Binh, whose full name is H. Kh. Ch; Mr. A, who joined the project later. [7]It was the same project but there were two cohorts, of which there were others for the first and A. was in the second. [8]A. was in the recent cohort.

39. ***Ms. Du:*** [1]*Was it the time he had been sent abroad?*

40. ***Ms. Du:*** [1]Right, he was sent abroad. [2]They sent teacher trainees overseas in all projects. [3]Ms. P. and Mr. Ch. went to Singapore, and A. went to England. [4]He went with Nh. from Nui Thanh, and they both went to England. [5]It was just a one-month trip. [6]And who else, Mr. M. from Noi Ha, oh no, it wasn‟t he, who was involved in another project, which was organised by British Council or something like that. [7]Mr. M. was not involved in this project, I just remember vaguely, but Mr. M. was quite often involved in training projects. [8]To sum up, the trainers of the local teachers included five teachers involved in the projects mentioned including Mr. M., Ms. P., Mr. Ch., and A. Mr. Nh. was in junior

secondary education and he wasn‟t thus invited to the training of senior high school teachers.

41. Ms. Du: [1]*So, who were the trainers for the use of the new textbooks?*

42. Ms. Du: [1]The methodology trainers were those selected teachers. [2]They taught us what they had learned about methodology. [3]Oh yeah, another of them was Ms. T. Th., who was an officer of the Service of Education and Training. [4]Normally, those people were selected by the Service. [5]In fact, Ms. Th. was the organiser and she might choose those who she thought would be appropriate.

43. R: [1]*So that means that their methodology could be quite different from the methodology of the writers of the textbooks?*

***44.* Ms. Du:** [1]Right, I think each project had it own ways. [2]I haven‟t attended their training sessions but I have sometimes gone to several workshops where I was introduced to a number of teaching techniques. [3]Those workshops were occasional events whereas the workshops organised for all the teachers of the province were the most thorough and most effective sessions. [4]I don‟t remember the name and you might ask A. later. [5]To my understanding, the trainers did exactly what they had learned previously. [6]They introduced to us the new methodology, they delivered sample lessons, and they adopted the evaluational criteria set out by their projects. [7]At that time, I could see that there were reactions from teachers who said there were so many constraints in the methodology they presented. [8]They wouldn‟t necessarily follow the ways set out by the project and their teaching would still work; those were the reactions of a number of teachers. [9]But these projects were supported by the Service of Education and Training so all the teachers in province had to do in their ways. [10]Ms. Th. was one of the trainers who imposed what they had learned previously, insisting on doing things in their ways. [11]Well, as an example, one of the methods we learned was Elicit Vocabulary, which to my understanding should be done like this. [12]Now imagine that we are giving an example,

which is "*Mr. T. H. G. is ---- of this Semi-urban Selective High School*". [13]Oh no, there should not be any blank there; instead, we have *headmaster* in the place, and we underline it. [14]Now we show students the example and ask them to guess the meaning of *headmaster.* [15]Given their context, in which students already know who Mr. G. is, students will understand that *headmaster* is the head of the school. [16]It was a vocabulary teaching technique of a certain project that I have always considered reasonable. [17]But if this technique were used, the trainers who attended the later projects would not agree, saying that their elicitation was that students would have to find out the words themselves and we would then have them practise reading the words before we could write the words on the blackboard. [18]Students shouldn‟t see the words until then. [19]That was their way of elicitation.

45. R: [1]*What does 'find out the words themselves mean'?*

***46.* Ms. Du:** [1]It means, for example, that teachers shouldn‟t show students the word *headmaster.* [2]Rather, teachers should tell students by some way; we might give cues so that students themselves could discover the word the word *headmaster.* [3]After that, we will model the pronunciation, *i.e.* practising their pronunciation, and we will then ask them what the word means, and they‟ll know the meaning of the word. [4]Not until then should we put the word on the blackboard for students to copy down in their notebooks. [5]Yes, that‟s the technique taught by the recent project.

47. R: [1]*Did they base such a technique on some methodology?*

***48.* Ms. Du:** [1]Yes, I‟ll show you their course materials. [2]They‟ve got a theory that is very good. [3]Right, they‟ve got their methodology. [4]And they also have sample lesson plans, which are to be followed very arbitrarily.

49. R: [1]*Why did they make teachers adopt one single technique only?*

50. **Ms. Du:** [2]It was because these teachers from Nam Qua were trained by that project. [3]Once they were back, they would have to base themselves on the methodology they had learned, you see.

51. R: [1]*Well, their technique could simply be one of the options teachers might want to choose to use. Did they tell…?*

52. **Ms. Du:** [1]But that was what was applied for the whole province. [2]That"s why I could see that a number of teachers were not very happy. [3]They asked why they should have to do exactly in the ways required. [4]The methodology related to the appraisal of teachers" lessons as well. [5]For what they had was a complete package. [6]The so called trainers were very strict. [7]They told us to do exactly what they taught us. [8]Those selected teachers were trained to be trainers, and when back to the province, they trained local teachers as they had been trained. [9]The trainers were the teachers taking part in the projects and passing the requirements of the projects. [10]Those who did not pass were not to be trainers. [11]So, their package had all, and this one was only one of the materials provided to teachers; there were many other materials of course. [12]In fact, there were materials in teaching techniques of reading, grammar, vocabulary and so on. [13]The methodology was enforced by this province because it was what Ms. Th. of the Service of Education and Training had been taught. [14]Upon return, she applied exactly what she had learned.

53. R: [1]*It was Ms. Th., wasn't it?*

54. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right, it was Ms. T. Th. [2]She was also among the group of selected teachers participating in the projects and upon return, they applied exactly what they had been taught. [3]That"s why…

55. R: [1]*An additional question, the subject knowledge needed for teachers to deliver their classroom lessons of the intensive programme – in terms of language as well as content, to my understanding via other teachers, was not provided at the teacher training sessions, wasn't it?*

56. **Ms. Du:** [1]You mean knowledge of these things?

57. R: [1]*No, I mean the subject knowledge required to teach the intensive programme.* [1]*From what you were saying, the focus was on the regular programme, not the intensive one, right?*

58. Ms. Du: [1]The lesson plans focused on the textbooks of the regular programme. [2]Recently, after two years using the textbooks of Years 10 and 11, the Ministry of Education and Training organised the so-called "Conference to Comment on Textbooks". [3]They sent directives to the Service of Education and Training, who in turned asked each school to write a paper, which I did. [4]At the conference, writers of the papers presented what their comments were. [5]There were quite a variety of comments at the conference but I am not sure they would have created any impact. [6]My job was to give my comments, which were made following the experience of two years using the textbooks. [7]For example, if I saw a problem in the textbooks of the intensive programme or regular one, I would make a comment on it. [8]Yeah, that"s what was done. [9]And now I just heard from the headmaster that there has been a directive from the local Service of Education and Training saying schools should give their comments on the textbooks of Year 12, which should be submitted to the Service. [10]I am going to ask when will be the deadline.

59. R: [1]*So it means that the teacher preparation was focused mainly on the textbooks of the regular programme, and not on those of the intensive programme, in terms of methodology and content for teachers to teach them?*

60. Ms. Du: [1]The same methodology is applied here, with no particular reference being made to what methods should be used for the intensive programme. [2]We learned about one methodology and used it, no matter what programme you were following. [3]They did not say that this methodology was for these textbooks; no. [4]What was learned was to be applied for the new textbooks. [5]Concerning the lesson plans we created, they were about the textbooks of the regular programme of Year 12, not the earlier years. [6]But I could see

the other provinces like Dang Na had made lesson plans for the other years as well, so the lesson plans for Years 10 and 11 are available on their website too.

61. *R:* [1]*To your perception, are teachers still using the traditional methods or have there been significant changes following the training courses?*

62. Ms. Du: [1]I don‟t know what things are like at other schools but the new methodology is now being applied at my school. [2]The traditional methods are no longer appropriate. [3]For the new textbooks were designed to be taught through three stages, *before*, and then *while*, and then *pos*t, which we have had to follow. [4]We do as what we are expected to do but the question is the extent to which we are doing it. [5]In terms of methodology, we have to do the new ways but it‟s hard to say how active students‟ responses are. [6]For example, regarding teaching vocabulary, we will be teaching eight words, and not a dozen like before. [7]Also, we have to use such techniques as "Elicit Vocabulary" and "Checking", and so on so forth. [8]We use the new ways designing our lesson plans; no one use the old ways.

63. *R:* [1]*The word limit of eight words is based on the methodology proposed by the trainers from the British Council, isn't it?*

64. Ms. Du: [1]Right, according to their methodology, the maximum number of words to teach is eight, no more than that. [2]And after that, we will be checking students‟ learning by such techniques as "Rub out", "What" and "Where", and others, which are to reinforce what students have learned.

65. *R:* [1]*If the students are still weak, do you still have to teach just eight words?*

66. Ms. Du: [1]Right, you‟re not allowed to teach more than that. [2]It is defined by the methodology not to teach more than eight words. [3]Students will have to work on their own to find out more or… but the session the teacher must teach eight words at most. [4]In addition, there are regulations concerning timing, regarding what should be done it how many minutes, for example, how many minutes should be done for grammar, for

vocabulary. [5]Things are now clearer. [6]We didn‟t have the same things before with the former curriculum using the traditional ways, by which teachers might do whatever they might want. [7]There are constraints imposed by the new methodology; as for grammar, for instance, about five to seven minutes are spent on grammar. [8]And then there should be lead-in activities and the pre- activities for what you‟re going to teach today. Regarding vocabulary, there are guessing techniques.

67. R: [1]*To your perception, which is the case, teachers are changing because of the teacher appraisal done by the Service of Education and Training is based on the criteria of the new methodology or because teachers have recongised that the new methodology…?*

68. Ms. Du: [1]I‟d say it has resulted from the Service‟s enforcement, because it is the Service that organised the teacher training in such ways and it is the Service again that will check and evaluate teachers‟ performance. [2]I‟m not sure if there are actually other methods that could be used otherwise but that‟s what I can see being done in this province by the local Service of Education and Training. [3]The Service asked teachers to attend the training course and teach in such ways so teachers will do such things. [4]The new methodology was introduced when former textbooks were still being used; the new textbooks hadn‟t come out yet at the time. [5]We were taught the new methodology when these new books weren‟t published yet. [6]When the selected teachers came back from their training courses, they disseminated the new methodology. [7]It was what was required by the project. [8]They were trained by the project to be the nucleus to teach other teachers to do the same. [9]Any projects should aim to achieve some outcomes. [10]And they will check if there have been any outcomes. [11]At that time, when the new textbooks had not come out yet, it was really inappropriate to teach the former textbooks in the new ways. [12]So since the new textbooks have been in use, there is only one way, which is using the new methodology; it‟s impossible to use the traditional methods. [13]When the old textbooks were still being used and the new methodology was just being introduced, teachers were quite protesting after

some trials, maybe because they had not been used to it. [14]They didn‟t believe in it. [15]But gradually, they have had to accept it, and now they will consider it normal. [16]At the beginning, they would argue why it should be eight words only to be taught, how can that be done, and what should be done with the other words. [17]Generally, there were quite a number of negative reactions in the beginning. But after a while, no one would say anything else.

69. *R:* [1]*Because they were discouraged…?*

70. Ms. Du: [1]No, I don‟t know whether they were right or not but they‟d have felt that no matter what they got to say, they would have to do it. [2]And the teacher performance evaluation done by the Service of Education and Training was based on that methodology and its criteria. [3]As a result, teachers have had to apply the methodology eventually. [4]Besides, once they‟ve got used to it, they‟ll feel easier with it. [5]They may have felt more difficult in the beginning.

71. R: [1]*Were there any activities at your school – formal or informal – in order to support teachers using the intensive programme?*

72. Ms. Du: [1]Our team has meetings once a month. [2]We mainly talk about the administrative things and following those topics, about our teaching. [3]We review the use of the new textbooks to see how the teaching and learning is, and how the testing has been done. [4]Essentially, the topics of the meetings are more of administrative matters. [5]We might talk about how the testing should be done and how the exam items should be so that the tests and exams are appropriate with students. [6]We also make sure that adjustments are made in time, for example, the marks assigned to students should not be too much different between classes, either too high or too low. [7]That‟s it. [8]And if there is any assignment of the team, we will do it on those occasions. [8]Every year we also have the meeting of all the schools in the same location. [9]Schools are in different groups depending on their geographical location, about five or six schools in one group. [10]The meetings are

organised at different schools every year. [12]The meeting will have a theme for teachers to discuss. [13]Before the meeting, the theme will have been chosen by the school organiser and announced to participants. [14]Teachers will then attend the meeting each with their own papers. [15]Normally, there will be one or two sample lessons being delivered based on the theme of the meeting. [16]The lessons will then be followed by feedback from participants. [17]Also, we will be talking about the professional and technological developments and updates. [18]We talked, for example, about how to make multiple-choice test items for one meeting and at another, we talked about teaching techniques using PowerPoint slides. [19]We do it every year.

73. *R:* [1]*Is it done for one day?*

74. Ms. Du: [1]Just half a day, about three or four hours. [2]This year the meeting will be organised by my team, at this school. [3]Generally, I don‟t think it is very effective because the topics are too big issues to discuss in half a day. [4]The time is spent on sample lessons as well, which account for as much as an hour out of the three or four hours available. [5]The remaining time is to be spent on all sorts of things and comments and feedback.

75. *R:* [1]*Is the meeting attended by all the teachers from schools or just some selected institutions?*

76. Ms. Du: [1]All, sometimes half of them. [2]If teachers are to be on some urgent assignments, there will be fewer attendees, but all teachers are entitled to participate. [3]It‟s up to the school to send their teachers.

77. R: [1]*Concerning testing and assessment, the oral check is done by the classroom teacher?*

78. Ms. Du: [1]Right, the oral check is done by the classroom teacher. [2]This new methodology has made time unavailable to do the oral check. [3]Using the traditional methods, we might spend ten to fifteen minutes to conduct the oral check but with the new methodology, the time is limited. [4]Of the 45 minutes per period, grammar accounts for five muinutes; so if the check is about grammar, followed by some review of the previous lessons, there won‟t

be enough time. [6]And the time should be allotted to those three stages of teaching including post, after reading or something like that. [7]Sometimes we have had to omit this last stage though it is a required step because we ran out of time. [8]Usually we don‟t have enough time for the post- stage.

79. *R:* [1]*And the 15-minute tests, are they done by the classroom teacher too?*

80. Ms. Du: [1]Yeah, by the classroom teacher too.

81. *R:* [1]*How about one-period tests?*

82. Ms. Du: [1]Still by the classroom teacher.

83. *R:* [1]*And the end-of-semester exams?*

84. Ms. Du: [1]The test items are made by one teacher of the team who is assigned to do the job. [2]For example, if there are three teachers teaching the same year, one will be appointed to be the test-maker or they may take turn.

85. *R:* [1]*What if the test items are not appropriate across classes?*

86. Ms. Du: [1]Oh, there are specifications saying, for example, for Semester 1, you will need to test their knowledge up to Unit 14 or 15. [2]And the test-maker will base themselves on those specifications. [3]The assigned teacher will be making test items relating to what has been covered by Units 1-14. [4]That‟s the way it is. [5]The test-maker will need to use his or her own judgments of course. [6]You wouldn‟t make test items that are about something students don‟t know, for they haven‟t been taught such things.

87. *R:* [1]*How about the end-of-year exams?*

88. Ms. Du: [1]The same thing applies. [2]End-of-year exams are in fact exams for the second semester. [3]There is one exam for the first semester and another for the second. [4]The total score for the whole year is calculated by doubling the second semester score plus the first one divided by three. [5]You‟ll get the year score by doing that, right. [6]That‟s why students work harder in the second semester so that they might best improve their total score.

[7]Normally semester one exams are more difficult. [8]Teachers tend to be stricter. [9]For the second semester, we let loose. [10]We teachers tend to be willing to raise students‟ score.

89. *R:* [1]*So neither the Service nor the Ministry of Education and Training is in charge of making test items unless…?*

90. Ms. Du: [1]Yes, they are. [2]The ministry is in charge of making test items for important exams. [3]The Service of Education and Training normally make test items when it is necessary to see the average level of the whole province. [4]Usually, the service makes exams for the last years and for the second semesters. [5]As for the major subjects, which are part of the graduation exams, the service will make exams for these subjects.

91. *R:* [1]*So there are two exams made by the service?*

92. Ms. Du: [1]Two exams. [2]But it is true for Year 12 only. [3]The Service doesn‟t always make exams for Year 10 or 11. [4]When the streamed curricula were first introduced, the service made exams for that year in order to get an idea of the average level. [5]They haven‟t done it again since. [6]Also, they don‟t have the staff available to do that. [7]Before, Ms. Th. was the officer in charge of English teaching and learning affairs but for the past years she hasn‟t been in the position any longer. [8]Now the position is vacant so sometimes they have had to appoint some certain teachers in the province do it.

93. *R:* [1]*By 'major subjects', do you mean they are math, physics, chemistry, biology, English…?*

94. Ms. Du: [1]Math, physics, chemistry, biology, English are the subjects that could be tested for the graduation exams. [2]For these subjects, the exams are made by the Service. [3]And there is also Vietnamese as well.

95. *R:* [1]*How many times is oral check done per year per student?*

96. Ms. Du: [1]The regulation is like this: If the weekly number of periods is from 1 to 3, two-thirds of the students should have their oral check scores within a semester.

97. *R:* [1]*Within a semester?*

98. Ms. Du: [1]Right, within a semester. [2]But usually, I test the whole class for the oral check.

99. *R:* [1]*The whole class within the first semester?*

100. Ms. Du: [1]The whole class. [2]The oral check can‟t be done on all students but by some means, we can have a score to fill in. [3]As for me, I will pay attention to students‟ performance in the speaking lessons, when they are doing group or pair work activities. [4]We might also assign scores for students when they come up to make presentations. [5]And these scores are considered as those of oral check. [6]Alternatively, during the writing lessons, I will let my students practise writing and I will pick up a group in charge of a certain topic and mark their paper. [7]The score thereby obtained will be taken as the oral check score for the students in that group. [8]Only by doing these ways can I make it.

101. *R:* [1]*You mean the time?*

102. Ms. Du: [1]I mean, I can obtain the scores for oral check for the whole class. [2]If we check several students each lesson, there won‟t be time with the new methodology being applied. [3]It will impossible because it takes at least five minutes to do the oral check for one student. [4]Oh, no, five minutes are never enough. [5]Students may be lousy and it will then take as many as ten minutes. [6]So, the time is very limited. [7]I check my students quite frequently, and so do some teachers who are strict. [8]Some relaxing teachers are quite lazy with student assessment. [9]Or maybe they are not keen on checking students because they are afraid of running out of time. [10]If they don‟t do the oral check, they might try with something else. [11]I myself have tried different ways. [12]I especially pay attention to students‟ participation. [13]Also, I won‟t let them know when the testing would take place, it could be anytime. [14]So my students are always in a position ready to have a test. [15]If we said we would never do the testing, they would reluctant to study. [16]That‟s my way, I‟m always threatening that I may give them tests.

103. R: [1]*How many oral checks are done unto one student per semester?*

104. **Ms. Du:** [1]The regulation says it‟s one, and two-third of the students should have had their oral check. [2]But in reality, there may be two or more for one student. [3]Teachers keen on giving tests may increase the number. [4]The regulation is about the minimum, not the maximum.

105. ***R:*** [1]*How about 15-minute tests?*

106. **Ms. Du:** [1]Well, this is up to the type of subject and the number of periods for the subject concerned. [2]Like myself, I am teaching three periods per class per week and according to the curriculum, there should be three 15-minute tests. [3]Also, there is a limit for the number of one-period tests.

107. ***R:*** [1]*That's for a semester, isn't it?*

108. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right. [2]Three for a semester. [3]And I have three tests. [4]In terms of one-period tests, it‟s two, at minimum. [5]There should be a test every three units. [6]But I‟m talking about the regular programme, and concerning the intensive programme, it is every two units.

109. ***R:*** [1]*Two units?*

110. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right, and there should be five questions. [2]There must be a test administered every two units. [3]So, there are at least three one-period tests per semester. [4]Yeah, three one-period tests. [5]Also, there should be three 15-minute tests or more.

111. ***R:*** [1]*And for the end-of-semester exam, there is just one, of course?*

112. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right.

113. ***R:*** [1]*How is the total average score calculated?*

114. **Ms. Du:** [1]The coefficient is 1 for oral check and 15-minute tests; 2 for one-period tests; and 3 for end-of-semester exams.

115. ***R:*** [1]*The coefficient is 1 for both oral check and 15-minute tests?*

116. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right. [2]One for oral check and 15-minute tests. [3]Two for one-period tests and three for semester exams. [4]All are added together to be averaged.

117. ***R:*** [5]*Teachers must have spent a lot of time on these tests and exams?*

118. **Ms. Du:** [1]Lots of time, you‟re right. [2]According to the new curricula, teachers in charge of both the intensive programme and the regular programme will spend lots of time on marking papers and making lesson plans. [3]Particularly, it is painstaking to make multiple-choice test items, which is in fashion now. [4]Before, the test format did not take much of our time, the test items are quite short; but now taking the multiple-choice format, we have to make at least 40 items. [5]By the way, let me tell you something important. [6]The multiple-choice test format applies to Year 12 only and as for Years 10 and 11, the test regulations are in here. [7]It is requested by the ministry that students should be tested on what they have learned. [8]According to the current format, 30% or 40% should be self-completion, I mean 30-40%, it depends. [9]For example, there are four things, that is four skills in a unit, so we test what students have learned. [10]And those four skills should all be tested in a one-period test. [11]So, we have one skill that cannot be tested, i.e. speaking; but as for listening, it is required that listening should be included as well. [12]Sometimes if we strictly follow the instructions, there will be a listening component, which will be administered at the beginning of the test. [13]The questions are printed in the exam papers and the listening script will be played by the disc player. [14]The section of listening will then be followed sections of other skills. [15]We might do that if we strictly follow the regulation; but it would be inconvenient. [16]That‟s why sometimes we will do like this: We test phonetics, which is to test sound recognition. [17]Students learn about pronunciation in the regular programme. [18]So the phonetics test will replace the listening test, which means we don‟t prepare the tape, and instead we have got the phonetics test. [19]Testing pronunciation includes testing sounds or word stress and we use this as a substitute, for the listening component constitutes around two marks. [20]Between two to two and a half; you can assume it accounts for just a quarter. [21]Normally, I assign 1.5 to 2 marks for that component. [22]And then reading: For reading, there will be a

reading passage followed by multiple-choice questions or true-false statements, called multiple-choice tests. [23]And this component accounts for 2-2.5 marks. [24]Speaking is not mentioned here. [25]And following those are vocabulary and grammar, which are combined into one component. [26]They are also in the multiple-choice format. [27]This last component will usually be assigned a little bit more marks.

119. ***R:*** [1]*So, it's 2-2.5 marks for reading…?*

120. **Ms. Du:** [1]Two to two and a half marks for reading. [2]Phonetics usually one and a half to two. [3]Vocabulary usually gets three marks, something like that. [4]It varies from teacher to teacher.

121. ***R:*** [1]*Three marks for vocabulary and…*

122. **Ms. Du:** [1]Vocabulary and grammar. [2]And the last one is writing, which should make up approximately 1.5-2 marks. [3]The weighting of each section varies from teacher to teacher. [4]And it depends on students as well. [5]If we see that students are still weak, we reduce the writing component and we increase vocabulary. [6]Weak students normally prefer questions of vocabulary and grammar. [7]For these things are easier. [8]And students are more afraid of reading and writing.

123. ***R:*** [1]*And speaking is tested through phonetics items?*

124. **Ms. Du:** [1]Speaking is tested separately; sometimes if the speaking lessons, for instance, have conversational exchanges about inviting someone to some place, we might put them in the test in the multiple-choice format… [2]For example, we might ask what you would say to invite your friends to go for an outing. [3]And we will then provide four options A, B, C, and D for students to choose from. [4]We might call it testing of speaking, contextualised speaking (*laughing*). [5]I think the Minsitry"s regulations are not very satisfactory sometimes, and teachers are not really clear about them and as a result they keep asking and complaining. [6]Teachers have difficulty making test items. [7]The Minsistry is not consistent at all. [8]For example, for the first year, they promulgated this booklet of

regulations, saying whatever is taught should be tested, which means that the exams should be of both multiple-choice and self-writing, and they gave a format. [9]That was what we learned from the meetings with the Service of Education and Training. [10]At the same time, however, the Ministry also said that the graduation exam should all be of the multiple-choice format. [11]And that test format would begin with English. [12]As a result, our tests all turned to be of the multiple-choice format so as to familiarise students with the graduation exams, so that students would be prepared for their exams. [13]The multiple-choice format was now being used not only all through Year 12 classes, that‟s all right, but also for Years 10 and 11 at many schools as well; at my school, the tests and exams for Years 10 and 11 were based on the formats provided by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Service of Education and Training; only Year 12 students take exams of multiple-choice questions. [14]But exams administered at other schools were all multiple-choice questions. [15]Later at meetings, there had been criticism, and there had thus been changes. [16]It was quite inconsistent: Some schools administered multiple-choice questions only and some others had part of their exams to be of multiple-choice questions; there was no unification. [17]When the Service of Education and Training officer was aware of these problems, she didn‟t know how to deal with them, because she didn‟t not have an opportunity to do it. [18]The meetings took place once a year in the summer so there was not much that could be done. [19]What happened recently at a school nearby, T. C. V, was that the ministerial officers visited the school for inspectation.[20] What the officers said was it was incorrect to use only multiple-choice questions for exams; and there should be some test items for self-written answers. [21]The result was, teachers of the school reverted back to making test items for self-written answers (*laughing*). [22]I can‟t understand it, it‟s so funny. [23]And then, quite recently, the P. C. T. High School in Dang Na published these syllabi. [24]This is for Years 10 and 11, and all the question items are of the self-writing format. [25]Their tasks are cloze tests and the writing exercises are of sentence building and

transformation. [26]These exercises are called self-writing question items. [27]By cloze tests, I mean the kind of tests that require learners to work out the fillers by themselves, not to choose from a number of possible options. [28]To sum up, there is no unification in terms of the exam format.

125. ***R:*** [1]*Do think the multiple-choice question format have any effect on…?*

126. **Ms. Du:** [1]There are many problems with multiple-choice questions. [2]First, teachers aren‟t familiar with making multiple-choice questions, so there will be problems in the test items they produce. [3]Their items are not based on solid test-making background, which might result in items that are too difficult or too easy. [4]Second, it‟s the problem relating to teachers. [5]I believe teachers will become more skillful after some time making test items. [6]Anyway, there are occasional courses organised by the Ministry of Education and Training on these topics. [7]As for students, however, using multiple-choice questions might bring about the following benefits as I have observed. [8]Before, when the self-writing test format was still in use, students were very scared because they would have to write something. [9]If they were unable to produce any words, they would get no marks. [10]As for multiple-choice questions, however, they were quite assured, because they would be able to make a cross or a check no matter whether they knew the answers or not. [11]Leaving the exam rooms, students had all done some crosses, and they didn‟t necessarily care much whether they had had correct answers, right. [12]Also, there is a problem: cheating. [13]This is very likely to happen although there are five or six versions of exam papers for one exam.

127. ***R:*** [1]*Do the multiple-choice questions leave any adverse impact as the aim of the new textbooks is to teach communication skills?*

128. **Ms. Du:** [1]For sure there‟s incongruity between them. [2]Teachers were instructed to test what was taught. [3]So, speaking should be tested orally. [4]It should be the correct way but no one can do it. [5]But we can still do it at the time for oral check, can‟t we? [6]Yeah, but not

enough for speaking. [7]Writing is best tested by students‟ writing. [8]For how can the testing of correspondence writing be made in the multiple-choice format? [9]Most of our writing activities are about writing letters, writing resumes, or a narrative story. [10]All these are impossible to be in the multiple-choice questions.

129. ***R:*** [1]*So, while the test items are of the multiple-choice format, are students willing to learning speaking and writing as the textbooks expected?*

130. **Ms. Du:** [1]That‟s why what we are doing is not effective, and it‟s something I can see very clearly. [2]And that‟s why the test items are required to be a mixture of the multiple-choice format and self-writing for Years 10 and 11, and not multiple-choice questions only. [3]But, whatever is being done, students should be ready for multiple-choice questions when they are in Year 12. [4]If they are not given multiple-choice questions, they won‟t be familiar with this format, which is used for important exams. [5]That‟s why we teachers will have to prepare students for exams so that they could get best results. [6]This conflict is tiring. [7]As I was saying, the Ministry of Education and Training does not seem to be consistent. [8]It appears that what they say at different times is inconsistent.

131. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the textbooks of the regular programme, far more students are using them rather than the textbooks of the intensive programme.* [2]*What do you think are the reasons?*

132. **Ms. Du:** [1]The majority of them.

133. ***R:*** [1]*Right, the vast majority.*

134. **Ms. Du:** [1]The reason does not lie in the textbooks themselves. [2]Rather, the textbooks of the intensive programme are for students majoring in social sciences whereas most students tend to choose natural sciences. [3]For example, there are a lot of students taking stream A, math, physics, and chemistry, accounting for very high percentage. [4]The second largest group is stream B, math, chemistry, and biology, the number of which is considerable, but smaller than that of stream A. [5]After those two streams, there are

streams C and D, the former being Vietnamese, history, and geography and the latter Vietnamese and foreign languages. [6]These two latter streams make up social sciences, and students majoring these streams will take the intensive programme of English. [7]More students tend to major in natural sciences, so they will choose the programmes of natural sciences. [8]For the natural sciences stream, the regular programme of English is to be used.

135. ***R:*** [1]*Is it the regulation by the local Service or the Ministry?*

136. **Ms. Du:** [1]By the Ministry. [2]By their regulations, the natural sciences stream is to use the textbooks of the regular programme. [3]In the beginning, there were two streams, one of which was natural sciences, oh no there were three streams. [4]The first one is natural sciences including math, physics, chemistry, and biology; the second math, Vietnamese, and foreign languages, oh no, sorry, Vietnamese, foreign language, history, and geography. [5]The third stream is called the basic stream, which is not major in any subjects; they study without any subject of concentration like before. [6]This basic stream is the stream that is not affected by the reformation. [7]In the beginning, most people tended to take the basic stream, because they were afraid of educational reformation. [8]Later, however, it has been recognised that streams majoring in certain subjects would be beneficial for students‟ university admission, because university admission exams are based on streams. [9]Students taking these streams stand a higher chance of passing the exams. [10]For example, students majoring in natural sciences would be in a more advantageous position if they choose stream A for their university admission. [11]For you‟ll be studying the intensive programmes for the subjects you‟ll be taking exams on. [12]English is a subject of the intensive programme for students majoring in social sciences, whereas math is a subject of the intensive programme for students majoring in natural sciences. [13]It is more beneficial to study math of the intensive programme for university admission exams. [14]That‟s why the basic stream no longer exists. [15]Now there are only

two streams: natural and social sciences. [16]In practice, the social sciences stream has shrunk considerably, and it exists at this selective school only.

137. ***R:*** [1]*As I noticed, the English Class takes the intensive programme for math, chemistry, and English, and not Vietnamese.*

138. **Ms. Du:** [1]According to the curricula, they should have taken the intensive programme of Vietnamese, English; I"m not sure about history and geography. [2]On top of that, though, they are allowed to choose several subjects for which they will have an additional period of study based on the intensive programme. [3]It"s up to students to choose the subjects they want. [4]A consultation with the class is done asking in what subjects they would like to have the additional period. [5]Teachers might provide some advice. [6]If they"re taking the intensive programme of English, they won"t choose English of course. [7]If their English is weak and the English programme they"re taking is the intensive programme, they will choose to have one supplementary period for English, called "bam sat", which is the time to further exploit the textbook so that they understand the lessons better. [8]That"s why it is so called „bam sat". [9]If one of the subjects they"re studying is of the regular programme, *e.g.* chemistry, and the students, who are prepared to follow stream D, still want to take another stream, stream B for instance, they will choose to take the intensive programme of chemistry for one (extra) period per week. [10]That"s the way it is, roughly so.

139. ***R:*** [1]*Do they use the textbooks of the intensive programme?*

140. **Ms. Du:** [1]No, they the only use textbooks of the intensive programme for the other subjects. [2]"Additional intensive programme" is something different; course materials for that subject are to be provided. [3]The materials are not written by the Ministry of Education and Training but, as assigned by the Service, prepared by the institutional team of teachers. [4]The same thing is true for other subjects. [5]Some may have the materials produced by the Ministry but others have their materials prepared by the local teachers.

141. ***R:*** [1]*One period per week?*

142. **Ms. Du:** [1]Right. It varies.

143. ***R:*** [1]*It varies. Why didn't students choose to take the intensive programme for Vietnamese instead of chemistry?*

144. **Ms. Du:** [1]Because they want to be able to enter two universities of different streams. [2]They"re studying the intensive programme for English and Vietnamese and they can use that for their university admission through stream D. [3]Apart from that, however, they might want to take stream A or B for their university admission. [4]Now that they have got Vietnamese, oh no, I mean math, they want to choose chemistry, adding possibilities to their university admission. [6]If they add a different subject, they might have another stream. [7]That"s what students want to have. [8]Most will enter the university through stream A and now they"ve another path, via stream D. [9]They"re going to take exams in math, physics, and chemistry, and now, with their study of math of the intensive programme, they might choose to take the intensive programme for their foreign language so that they will have two streams. [10]Most students would prefer such an orientation.

145. ***R:*** [1]*Just another question, talking about this introduction of new textbooks, as far as you can see, do students and teachers have problems with English textbooks only or do they have difficulty with textbooks of other textbooks as well?* [2]*For example, do you hear if there are any problems with textbooks of, for instance, math, history, and geography?* [3]*Are these reactions typical to textbooks of English or…?*

146. **Ms. Du:** [1]I can see whatever is new is not readily convincing in the beginning. [2]They tend to negative comments in the beginning. [3]To be fair, though, the new textbooks appear to have many errors. [4]The textbooks of other subjects also have many errors. [5]On the other hand, there should be certain problems and that"s why there have been complaints. [6]Every time there was a conference to give comments on textbooks,

participants had given a lot of negative comments. [7]I have also heard negative comments on textbooks of other subjects too.

147. ***R:*** [1]*So these problems happen to all ...?*

148. **Ms. Du:** [1]Many subjects. [2]One year after the introduction of the new textbooks, there was a booklet of textbook errata published, and a lot of them are made available online. [3]I heard that there is a whole booklet of the errata printed out.

149. ***R:*** [1]*So, ultimately, what are the strengths, if any, of the textbooks of the intensive programme in comparison with the older textbooks?*

150. **Ms. Du:** [1]I think this is a difficult question to answer. [2]In the first place, students were admittedly more passive with the older textbooks. [3]The new textbooks are able to make students more active. [4]Also, students‟ speaking capabilities have improved in comparison with what was the case with the former textbooks. [5]On the other hand, students‟ grammar is worse in comparison with the old curriculum. [6]Students‟ grammar is now not so solid like it was with the old textbooks.

151. ***R:*** [1]*Apart from the issues I've raised so far, is there anything you'd wait for an opportunity to speak up?*

152. **Ms. Du:** [1]All in all, I don‟t think the new textbooks are very much satisfactory. [2]There have been many comments. [3]I myself don‟t study much about methodology but what I can see is that the introduction of these new textbooks has presented quite a number of issues, making my teaching not very satisfactory. [4]Yeah, it‟s not easy. [5]The class size at my school is quite ideal with thirty plus students but I have found myself sometimes really tired. It is very difficult. [6]Much less rural schools or institutions where there are forty to fifty students in one class. [7]It is impossible to teach speaking periods, very tired. [8]My school is the most ideal institution because the class size ranges from thirty to thirty five and students are of better academic levels, so we are still able to make it. [9]At the other schools, where the class size is 50+, in speaking periods, the best scenario is several good

students may be saying several sentences and the rest will just be sitting there and waiting for the bell to ring. [10]It is a little more effective to teach listening. [11]Speaking is more difficult. I think the speaking problems lie in the textbooks themselves. [12]I used to teach at language centers before and I could see *Streamline* was quite effective. [13]For they have dialogues, which are samples, and I could have my students learn by heart those dialogues. [14]When my students were in a similar situation, they might be able to produce an appropriate sentence. [15]For example, if we want to request somebody else to pass the salt, or to invite them to the discotheque tonight, we might choose such dialogues for them to play roles and learn by heart. [16]And students would be able to retain something. [17]But the current textbooks don‟t have dialogues; all they have are "useful expressions" as language input and there are no dialogues for students to learn by heart. [18]So our students might say something only to forget everything afterwards. [19]So I think we might adopt the ways the foreign textbooks use and students will be able to learn better. [20]*Streamline* was in use for quite a long time and it became outdated because of the content. [21]Much of its methodology was very effective, though.

153. ***R:*** [1]*So, the provision of expressions without a context has affected students' retention, right?*

154. **Ms. Du:** [1]It‟s the question of students‟ retention that requires the provision of a context. [2]I can see all these things of this textbook are reasonable but students might end up without remembering anything. [3]The best way for their retention is to provide a dialogue. [4]Besides, I don‟t know why the work load for Year 10 is too heavy; it‟s lighter for Year 11 and 12. [5]By "lighter", I am talking about the knowledge to be studied. [6]The language is of course more complex in the later years. [7]But the grammar knowledge amount is lighter. [8]In Years 11 and 12, there‟s nothing else to teach, I mean the textbooks are developed in such a way that whatever is taught in Year 10 will be taught again in Years 11 and 12. [9]You can take tenses as an example. [10]The passive voice, as anther

example, is taught in semester one and then in every year thereafter. [11]The difficulty seems to be rising every year and it is the most difficult in the last, that‟s the way it is. [12]But I can feel that the load is lighter in Year 12. [13]There‟s more to teach in Year 11.

155. ***R:*** *Were you talking about the textbooks of both programmes or those of the intensive programme only?*

156. **Ms. Du:** [1]I just teach the textbooks of the regular programme and those are my comments; I don‟t know about the textbooks of the intensive programme. [2]As far as I heard from teachers using the textbooks of the intensive programme, they said those books had good reading passages, because they are extracts from some good sources. [3]When they taught, they felt those were good passages. [4]The passages of these textbooks, however, were written by the Vietnamese writers, and they sound unnatural. [5]Examples of such passages are the ones of P. V. V. and the ones from the *School Talk* unit. [6]It‟s unnatural because Vietnamese writers don‟t write as well. [7]Most of the reading texts of these textbooks were written by Vietnamese authors. [8]Concerning these textbooks (*i.e.* intensive programme), I heard that they received little criticism though it might have been some because they were not widely used. [9]But it was perhaps because they have good reading passages. [10]And it‟s easier to teach with these textbooks. [11]D. might have better comparisons because she was teaching the textbooks of both programmes. [12]Oh, let me show you this section of this textbook of the regular programme. [13]It provides a situation of a boat trip on Michigan Lake. [14]You are asked to imagine you‟re taking the trip and you are to arrange the seats for the participants. [15]For example, this guy is seasick, that guy loves taking photographs, and you‟re to give them their seats. [16]Two students are requested to talk to each other about the arrangement of seats, *i.e.* who should be sitting where. [17]I feel this task is so difficult, very difficult to teach. [18]And the expressions are quite heavy, for example, *I think Mary should sit on the deck.* [19]Our students would find it hard to say these things, which sound literary, not really spoken English. [20]And they don‟t

provide contexts. [21]It is necessary to provide students with language input that they could use to speak. [22]Normally, there is not much language input; there are just suggestions. [23]Teachers should provide language input needed so that students could speak. [24]The problem is teachers are generally weak in spoken language, and they don‟t have much spoken language input, so they find it difficult to teach speaking. [25]Very difficult to teach speaking. [26]The teacher training courses were all about teaching vocabulary, grammar, listening but there was nothing about teaching speaking. [27]As for teaching writing, there was just a little. [28]That‟s it.

157. ***R:*** *Thank you very much.*

Appendix Q.1

Interview transcript – Textbook Writer 1

Interviewee: Mr. Ni[33]

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher.

R: Researcher

1. **Mr. Ni:** (*Referring to the interview question concerning the use of language teaching material by foreign publishers, which the interviewee picked up from the list of interview questions*) [1]This is the issue on which I have quite a number of comments. [2]I"ve been thinking about it for a long time, for dozens of years. [3]Not long ago, when the Ministry of Education and Training submitted to the National Assembly a plan on multiple textbooks, which was just a draft anyway, some people suggested using British or American books. [4]It looked as if such people were those of my age, quite senior, for whom *English for Today* was used as textbooks then.
2. ***R:*** *[1]They were favourite textbooks…*
3. **Mr. Ni:** [1]You studied those books and you are now successful, so you"ll tend to think those were good books. [2]I am in the field, and I have ever had such a thought. [3]There were many suggestions. [4]I knew straight way who it was that made such a suggestion. [5]They must have been senior people of the older generation who used to study *English for Today*. [6]Their main argument was, I used to study with those books and I am now this successful, so why not do it like before? [7]They didn"t deepen their thoughts.
4. ***R:*** *[1]Why don"t you think those textbooks would work now? [2]Why were those textbooks* (English for Today*) more appropriate at that time than they would be today?*

[33] Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify them.

5. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Well, in comparison with British and American books, our home-grown materials are appropriate, for regarding content, we are based on the aims of Vietnamese education. [2]Such writers as those of *Headway* are not aware of such aims. [3]Even if they were, they would be unable to realize them in textbooks. [4]Secondly, we talk about Vietnamese stuff, which could be done only by Vietnamese. [5]My contention is there would be no foundation for things to be done otherwise. [6]Foreign publications are better than ours in terms of language. [7]This issue is very easy to deal with but the Ministry of Education and Training is yet to find out how to, for they haven‟t seriously thought about it. [8]Employ a British or American as a language advisor who will review our textbook drafts and the problem of language will then be cleared. [9]That‟s the very key point. [10]*English for Today* was to teach and talk about what happened in the UK and the USA. [11]I still remember what it was about because I used to teach with the books. British students might want to learn about such topics, but what would Vietnamese students have learned such stuff for? [12]I will instead need to teach about a waterfall in Da Lat, right?
6. ***R:*** [1]*May I ask you first of all about the foundations for the creation of these new textbooks?* [2]*How are they different from those applied for the former textbooks, of which you were also the senior writers?*
7. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I‟ve been commissioned to be the senior writer of the two sets of textbooks, the former and these new books. [2]By „former‟, I mean the time from 1983 to 2000, the period during which the relation between Vietnam and other nations was virtually nothing. [3]It was a diplomatic relationship, and there wasn‟t educational exchange. [4]As was it the case, we created books because students needed textbooks to study. [5]There was no curriculum to base on and importantly, we were not updated of the most recent methodological developments by that time. [6]Consequently, what we put in those textbooks was outdated at that time. [7]Now with these new textbooks, such a discrepancy has been bridged. [8]That

means, we have no difficulty in getting foreign publications, and we are exposed to new teaching methodologies. [9]That‟s the key difference between the two sets of textbooks.

8. ***R:*** *[1]Specifically, is the methodology of the new textbooks oriented to the communicative approach?*
9. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Well, by the time we wrote these books, the dominance of communicative approach had partly declined. [2]That means, the approach was no longer holding the position as if it were the only way of teaching as had it been the case when the approach came into existence. [3]After several dozen years, it had been given a more accurate status. [4]Now, to my understanding, teaching methodology collates many things, in which the communicative approach plays an important role.
10. ***R:*** *[1]Does that mean these textbooks are partly based on the communicate approach only?*
11. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Partly but it is a significant component.
12. ***R:*** *[1]What of the communicative approach is adopted as the foundation for the new textbooks?*
13. **Mr. Ni:** [1]To put it in a way that is the easiest to understand, the new textbooks urge students and teachers
14. to listen and speak more and lay stronger focus on practical things and what is taking place around us, such as my family, my school, my community. [2]Yeah, stronger focus on those things.
15. ***R:*** *[1]Does it mean that the focus of the previous books used to be on broader issues?*
16. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Right, broader and more theoretical issues.
17. ***R:*** *[1]So, of the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the new textbooks have brought into play listening and speaking, but which one is intended as the key skill to develop?*
18. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Do you mean which skill is considered more important?
19. ***R:*** *[1]Right.*

20. **Mr. Ni:** [1]During our writing process, we were always trying to give all the skills equal importance. [2]But it‟s not the point in the Vietnamese context; the problem lies in the implementation of the curriculum and the textbooks by teachers and students, who are strongly driven by the format of national exams. [3]In the meantime, there‟s a big difference between the format of national exams and the methodological points we used for the textbooks. [4]In particular, we have wanted listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to be equally important and we have tried to closely follow methodology textbooks but in practice, teachers are being pressurized by exams, which are in writing and in the form of multiple-choice test items. [5]In those exams, listening is not included as a component and speaking has never been a component for a long time. [6]Listening is now excluded as well. [7]Worse, recent exams have excluded writing skills as well. [8]What remains is grammar and reading comprehension. [9]Now, these two are what exams are about.
21. ***R:*** [1]*Excuse me, reading and what?*
22. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Reading comprehension and grammar. [2]Regarding reading, the questions are concerned with comprehension only, while the other sub-skills (of reading) are excluded too, for example, inference.
23. ***R:*** [1]*To your understanding, why have there been such changes in textbooks?*
24. **Mr. Ni:** [1]We had been aware of what we would need to do when we started writing the textbooks. [2]Though exams were then different from what they are now, we had been aware of the problematic points. [3]Our contention, therefore, was to create textbooks following the ongoing teaching methodologies; we did not aim to change teaching practices and exam formats, which was beyond our authority. [4]Despite our awareness, the textbooks we wrote were more or less based on theories of teaching methodologies, and not reality. [5]But if we had catered for reality, it would not have been writing textbooks.
25. ***R:*** [1]*What I meant I was, why have there been changes between the textbooks, the older and the current?* [2]*Was it due to the changed social circumstances or…?*

26. **Mr. Ni:** [1]As I said before, it was the time between 1983 and 2000, when there was virtually no educational relationship with other nations, particularly the UK and the USA. [2]And there were no resources coming in from overseas. [3]And now the two changes have made the new textbooks far different from the older ones.

27. ***R:*** [1]*So, the changes you've made in the new textbooks were more because of changes in teaching theories than of political policies?*

28. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They were partly due to political policies but the policies were too general. [2]So when we got down to write the textbooks, we decided how we were going to write the textbooks as they are.

29. ***R:*** [1]*That means, even if there had not been political policies concerned, the textbook writers would still have written in the new methodology, once the new situation had been unfolded.*

30. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The books would not have been written without the Ministry of Education and Training"s policies, because textbook writing consumes lots of effort while royalties are too low. [2]Writers would not have taken the job without the Ministry of Education and Training"s policies. [3]That means, it was true they did it partly for their own reputation but before that could happen, there should have been policies. [4]In other words, we would not have initiated the writing of the textbooks and sold them in the market; we wouldn"t have done so despite prospects of good sales.

31. ***R:*** [1]*I meant, were there policies related to the new methodology?*

32. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The (textbook writing) policies applied to textbooks of all school subjects, not solely to those of English. [2]In 2002 or so, the Ministry of Education and Training thought the older textbooks had been in use for too long a time, so the project was to create new textbooks for the both the primary and secondary education levels.

33. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the change from traditional teaching practices to the communicative approach, if it had not been supported by the ministerial policies, you would not have adopted such a change, would you?*

34. **Mr. Ni:** [1]No, we would not have written textbooks.

35. ***R:*** *What I meant was, suppose that the Education Publishing House placed an order of textbook writing and there was no policy held by the State concerning the adoption of the communicative approach, would you still have adopted the approach or would you…?*

36. **Mr. Ni:** [1]What the State wanted to take place, in fact, was just the creation of new textbooks. [2]Concerning the extent to which textbooks should be communicative and to what extent new methodologies should apply, it all depended on the creation of the two teams of textbook writers. [3]By "creation", I mean we decided what to put in the textbooks by drawing from what was taking place in the UK or the USA. [4]The Ministry held no policies that were so descriptive. [5]They just asked to create new textbooks.

37. ***R:*** [1]*Writing these new textbooks, had you perceived any differences between the materials and teachers" actual teaching in terms the aims and objectives, targeted outcomes, classroom organization?*

38. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Big differences, very big. And we were not disappointed with these differences; we had anticipated then. [2]Writing the new textbooks, we already knew that there should certainly be differences, because given the current situation in Vietnam, it would be impossible to have exams aligned with the methodology we promoted in the textbooks. [3]To be specific, it was because teachers were so heavily influenced by national exams, which paid special attention to grammar and reading comprehension.

39. ***R:*** [1]*Apart from exams, are teachers affected by anything else so that they are not ready to teach the new textbooks?*

40. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The pressure comes from parents as well. [2]Particularly in southern provinces, where many still believe that their English learning was better than their children"s is.

[3]The belief is not scientifically supported, but can parents consider the issue in a scientific way?

41. ***R:*** [1]*Apart from exams, are teachers affected by any other drawbacks; for examples they are not updated with teaching developments or…?*

42. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yes, it‟s a point to talk about. [2]Yes, they are. [3]In the first place, teachers‟ level is not up to the requirement.

43. ***R:*** [1]*In terms of their teaching methodology or language?*

44. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Both, for which there is an important cause relating to Vietnam‟s economic development. [2]Why did I say so? [3]Because with the country‟s economic developments, English teachers accordingly have a lot of work to do and as such they have to work even harder to earn even more money. [4]As a result, their professional self-development has been neglected, which has left serious consequence. [5]For all these reasons, teachers‟ pedagogical level is unable to meet requirements, for they have not cared to improve themselves.

45. ***R:*** [1]*How about students?*

46. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Students are very passive, a problem impossible to be solved solely with textbooks. [2]In order to solve the problem of students‟ passivity, there should have been really large social policies, which were beyond what textbook writers can do.

47. ***R:*** [1]*What do you mean by "social policies"?*

48. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The catchphrase that the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training will normally use, namely "student-centered classroom", is just a buzz word, which for them is to be printed in legal directives only. [2]Yet, there haven‟t been any particular policies regarding how to achieve student-centeredness and how to reduce teacher-centeredness. [3]It is so big an issue and there haven‟t been any policies to deal with it. [4]And what is being done with exam indicates they are doing in the opposite direction.

49. **R:** [1]*Regarding exams, why haven"t there been any listening exams?* [2]*Was it because of unavailability of conditions?*

50. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It is another huge question, related to which is corruption with sweeping influence.

51. **R:** [1]*Is it the question of ensuring confidentiality of exams?*

52. **Mr. Ni:** [1]There are many ways of corruption. [2]The Ministry of Education and Training wants to crack down on it and they have hence imposed centralised exams using the same test items for the whole country. [3]As an example, let"s take an issue that anyone would possibly agree with, particularly academics. [4]University admission exams should be made, administered, and marked by the institution concerned. [5]But if that there would then be an issue that few are aware of. [6]If we let it be the case, test-makers and markers of the institutions would be bribed by students. [7]It is very likely to happen. [8]Students would go and find out who are the test-makers and attend their private classes. [9]If I were the teacher of such private classes, I would not need to identify which points I am going to include in the exam questions I would be making. [10]I would just repeat my explanation of the points in focus several times, marking its difference from others, for which I would have only one explanation.

53. **R:** [1]*And students will be intelligent enough to make out what"s the point, won"t they?* (laughing)

54. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yeah, it"s a form of bribery. Universities were suffering from this problem. [2]Itself being aware of the challenge, the Ministry of Education and Training has had to resort to a measure of centralized exam administration that is not proper and violates the rights of universities. [3]It would be very difficult to explain all this to the wider society, very difficult indeed.

55. **R:** [1]*So those are the two points concerning teachers and students.* [2]*What about teaching and learning conditions?*

56. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Teaching and learning conditions are very poor but the impact is not so serious as are the other factors. [2]For Vietnamese students are used to being tolerant, which has long become a tradition. [3]In the past, disciples would take lessons with their village masters despite lack of decent seats and still there were those who thrived.

57. *R:* (*laughing*)

58. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They are not used to asking for amenities… [2]There‟s very clear evidence for this. [3]Despite the availability of schools that claim to meet national standards (of physical conditions), parents are not interested. [3]I will just need to send my children to schools that have high student pass rates and reputated teachers. [4]The so-called schools of national standards with reasonable class size and availability of playgrounds and sports facilities do not fall within the interest areas of parents.

59. ***R:*** [1]*As you may have seen through your field trips to schools, do you think the textbooks were used in the ways you had envisioned they would be used?*

60. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I can tell you straight away that there were considerable differences. [2]I have mentioned the causes, which were the influence of traditions and national exams. [3]Most teachers said the same thing, that is, with this number of classroom periods allocated per year, if I were to follow the procedures suggested by the textbook, my students would be failing exams. [4]That scenario was referred to by most teachers. [5]Teachers in Vietnam are apt to lose jobs if they let many of their students fail exams. [6]What is considered important is the loss not of the primary but the secondary job. [7]The secondary job comes from the primary job. [8]Because the secondary job brings about higher income, I will have to be a classroom teacher in a public school so that many students will be drawn to my secondary job in my own private classes. [9]That‟s what really matters to them. [10]So, teachers should teach in such a way that there will a high student pass rate.

61. ***R:*** [1]*Are the differences an inevitable discrepancy between planning and implementation to be accepted or could they have been lessened?*

62. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I would not agree they are inevitable differences. [2] It"s just because the Ministry of Education and Training has not had policies to eradicate these problems, not because they are inevitable. [3]Yeah, we have to accept them. [4]We have to accept them as they are in the meantime, but they are definitely not inevitable. [5]They are remediable anyway. [6]The Ministry of Education and Training should have large policies, and there should be leadership more talented than now, who are determined to make a change.

63. ***R:*** [1]*In testing practices, for instance?*

64. **Mr. Ni:** [1]There are many problems, of which testing practices are just one. [2]The problems include testing practices, private classes, entering schools and institutions via personal connections… [3]Lots of problems indeed.

65. ***R:*** [1]*So, you had been aware of such differences when you were beginning to write the textbooks and you still wrote the textbooks as they are.* [2]*Why did you do so?*

66. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The reason is, it"s better to write than not to. [2]I had been aware of such differences but if I had turned down the commission to write the materials, there would have been more harm to society. [3]Also, I had also hoped the social situation would be getting better some time later.

67. ***R:*** [1]*Why weren't there adjustments made right at the beginning so that your textbooks could have been closer to reality?* [2]*Adjustments regarding classroom organization of activities or subject matter requirements, just to mention a few?*

68. **Mr. Ni:** [1]There have been such adjustments, but as textbook writers, we put them in the Teacher"s Book and presented them at teacher training seminars. What else should have been done above that was beyond our authority. There was a clear presentation of such adjustments in the Teacher"s Book and teacher training seminars. Attendants to the training sessions were aware of such things. We were all in the profession and those attendants were of some calibre and no one would disagree that such things are not yet

possible to be carried out in the current situation. It‟s not exactly that they will be absolutely impossible.

69. ***R::*** [1]*What if you had been asked to create textbooks that were to cater to reality? That means, you would have had to adapt your textbooks to what was let going on by the Ministry of Education and Training …*

70. **Mr. Ni:** [1]My immediate answer is I would not have been involved in such textbook creation, and anyone else might want to try with it. [2]In fact, such books have been published. [3]There have been publications so called textbook-based materials or exam practice materials. [4]They are based on our textbooks but the questions are in the exam format, for students‟ exam practice. [5]And these publications have in some ways met the practical tastes.

71. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, have the methodology and techniques of the textbooks, for example those concerning the roles of teachers and students in the classroom, been adequately communicated to users of the materials, at least to teachers?*

72. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yes.

73. ***R:*** [1]*I mean to local teachers.*

74. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]Yes, but it hasn‟t been completely done and for the moment, teachers are still learning how to use the textbooks, that means they are yet to master the foundations of the textbooks.

75. ***R:*** [1]*That means, despite the time lapse of three years to date …*

76. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Well, they are not yet ready, for this question relates to their self-development, which is still very weak. [2]Generally, teachers are now still very weak so it will take some more time. [3]Most of the comments in the media are not really accurate. [4]They give comments in order to get paid; the comments are not really accurate, for they haven‟t got enough time.

77. ***R:*** [1]*What happened at teacher training sessions?* [2]*Did textbook writers train "core teachers"*

78. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yes, they're called "core teachers".

79. ***R:*** [1]*And those teachers subsequently trained other teachers?*

80. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The second stage was done very poorly because it was the responsibilities of the province where the role and prestige of the service of education and training was very weak in comparison with other provincial services. [2]None of the provincial leadership was from education. [3]The highest ranking official from education is the director of the service of education and training but its role is currently weak, which is true even in this X City. [4]Consequently, there have been very funny stories. [5]For example, they would like to invite a textbook writer to come and talk to their teachers, and everyone would agree that it was what needed doing. [6]When the request was submitted to the provincial leadership the answer was that there was no funding for this item. [7]Yet, what was definitely sure was that that provincial budget could have afforded such expenditure. [8]All that means that the textbook writer's talk was deemed unimportant by the leadership.

81. ***R:*** [1]*As it is the situation, what do you think should be done in order to strengthen the connection between….*

82. **Mr. Ni:** [1]We should now accept the existence of the textbooks, which have been officially approved for use and should continue to be used in the next dozen years. [2]That means, it is now not the question of changing textbooks for the moment. [3]What remains is the question of applying the textbooks into reality, which would subsequently require the Ministry of Education and Training to have its policies. [4]Policy-making is just the first step, and the next one, which is more important, is determination, which consists in the leadership who should be talented and determined enough. [5]Such people would be rare. [6]And there should be enough means to achieve the targets, of which finance is essential. [7]There is little financial investment in education at the present; the budget is barely

enough for spending on facilities and teachers‟ payment. [8]So, there should be some money allocated to do that. [9]A larger issue is to change the exam format, which is too big an issue for me to discuss.

83. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean language skills should also be included in exams so that there would be positive backwash effect?*

84. **Mr. Ni:** [1]This could be done by the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training and textbook writers. [2]In order to make this happen, however, there should be substantial changes regarding how exams should be made, and that would be related to very big issues.

85. ***R:*** [1]*Now question number 4, which further develops what you have been talking regarding the current assessment practices…*

86. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]Do you mean the textbook evaluation?

87. ***R:*** [1]*No, student assessment.* [2]*At the moment, from within the school to the wider society …*

88. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They are all affected by the national exams.

89. ***R:*** [1]*The problem is…*

90. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Society.

91. ***R:*** [1]*Yes, its society, who does not believe that the Ministry of Education and Training will be able to carry out fair student assessment…*

92. **Mr. Ni:** [1]That belief is held by many people but the conditions to make it happen are yet to be available. [2]When I had a chance to talk with the leadership, for instance, there was more understanding though such leadership did not have the expertise. [3]They still understood what I was saying as I had a reasonable way of presentation to lay people. [4]And such leadership agreed that conditions were yet to be available anyway.

93. ***R:*** [1]*Are the conditions concerned with the multiplication of exam papers or anything else?*

94. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Many things else. [2]What I mean is the exam administration, and related to this issue are a multitude of other things like learning and teaching traditions and corruption, etc.

95. ***R:*** [1]*So, to your perception, if conditions were ideally met, would the organisation of listening and speaking be feasible?*

96. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yes.

97. ***R:*** [2]*On what scale?* [2]*Within a school, across the whole province, or all through …?*

98. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It should be done by the Ministry of Education and Training. [2]It has proved to be feasible at lower levels. [3]Take Ho Chi Minh City as an example, there has been a directive on the percentage of spoken and written exams. [4]But this is uncommon and not very influential. [5]People still pay more attention to national exams.

99. ***R:*** [1]*With these questions in Part B, I would like to ask about the context of creations.* [2]*You were previously saying that the project started in 2000?*

100. **Mr. Ni:** [1]2002.

101. ***R:*** [1]*And when was it initiated?*

102. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I"m not sure, but it shouldn"t have been too long before. [2]It normally takes a month or so to make a policy, for the policy-making is not ever thoroughly done. [3]As an example, the curriculum wasn"t descriptive enough; it wasn"t a decent curriculum. [4]It was not that the designers were unable to do it but that they did not take pains to do it. [5]If multiple textbooks had been allowed to be created based on that curriculum, there would have been a chaos. [6]For the creation of multiple textbooks, there should be a curriculum that is thoroughly designed and specified. [7]The current one is far from being such a curriculum.

103. ***R:*** [1]*Is it not descriptive enough?*

104. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Not descriptive and fails to highlight the key points.

105. ***R:*** [1]*My understanding is the curriculum came into being after the creation of the textbooks.*

106. **Mr. Ni:** [1]What do you mean by "after"?

107. ***R:*** [1]*I mean on the basis of the textbooks we had created, those people started…* (laughing)

108. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It was how the older textbooks were created. [2]There was no curriculum ready for the older textbooks, and my team created it for our own use. [3]Regarding the new textbooks, however, the curriculum had been in existence. [4]What you perceive as "after" is because you were referring to the textbooks of the intensive programme. [5]When the idea of the intensive programme was adopted later on, the curriculum was modified, which was not a point worth mentioning. [6]So, the curriculum had been in existence prior to the textbooks, but not long before. [7]The main problem is, the curriculum"s specifications were not good enough for textbook writers to develop textbooks.

109. ***R:*** [1]*But regarding textbooks of the intensive programme, it appeared that it was not until we had completed the textbooks that they started to…*

110. **Interviewee:** [1]It was the writing of the textbooks of the regular programme when both teams were based on one and the same curriculum.

111. ***R:*** [1]*One and the same, right.*

112. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]When we were writing textbooks for the pilot period, we based on the same curriculum. [1]Later on with the modifications the intensive programme came out.

113. ***R:*** [1]*When the textbooks of the intensive programme were completed, the so-called intensive curriculum …*

114. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Was developed by just adding several items and sections.

115. **R:** [1]And the added stuff was drawn from our textbooks; it had not previously been created by the curriculum designers ...

116. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I did it myself.

117. ***R:*** [1]*Aha, did you?*

118. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]Well, they… [2]Roughly speaking, they wanted convenience so they said now that additions were to be made you might want to go here and make additions as you wished, for your own convenience as well. [3]You were not breaching any regulations by the Ministry of Education and Training anyway. [4]The only problem they had told me in advance was that my name would not be listed among the curriculum designers. [5]What happened was that the additions were made by textbook writers ourselves. [6]The reason was understandable: They just wanted convenience for us.

119. ***R:*** [1]*May I ask how the profiles of the users of the textbooks including teachers and students had been developed?* [2]*Did we have some needs analysis or something of the type?*

120. **Mr. Ni:** [1]There was no research for the textbooks to be based on but my own comment, which I told you previously, is that teachers aren‟t yet able to implement textbook writer‟s intentions. [2]Regarding students, they are so heavily influenced by parents, who are not scientifically reasonable thoughts.

121. ***R:*** [1]*That means, for information regarding students" English background, interests and needs, we as textbook writers mainly based on our experience but…*

122. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yeah, the current teaching is substantially based on experience. [2]The following example will duly illustrate this point: Most teachers complained that textbooks were too long for them to cover. [3]Having said so, teachers demonstrated that they were teaching in traditional ways. [4]That means, they taught every single word and explained every single grammar point. [5]Teachers did not seem to meet the requirements of the new methodology yet they kept complaining that the textbooks were too long.

123. ***R:*** [1]*Before the writing of the textbooks, it seemed that you did not have a chance to observe classroom lessons at schools so that…*

124. **Mr. Ni:** [1]No, we did it several times.

125. ***R:*** [1]*After or before?*

126. **Mr. Ni:** [1]After, while the writing was in progress. [2]But the classroom lesson observation wasn‟t well-organized. [3]They did it because it was an item on the plan. [4]The poor organization was evident by the fact that there was no preparation taken at all on the part of the school or province we visited.

127. ***R:*** [1]*Some school visits seemed to have been paid while the writing of the textbooks was in progress but the lesson observation was quite limited,, wasn"t it?* [2]*Two or three periods or thereabouts.*

128. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Limited observation was one question but what mattered was the visited school did not make any preparation.

129. ***R:*** [1]*What do you mean by ‚preparation'?*

130. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]As an exam…, let me tell you, Tho, one incident that happened. [2]This related to a woman teacher, oh no, to the whole team of English teachers at a school we visited. [3]Talking with them, I stressed the following point: We are textbook writers, and we are here to look for teachers‟ and students‟ comments on the textbooks in order to make textbook adjustments. [4]And upon hearing that, one of the teachers responded straight away. [5]Oh, no, let me correct myself. [6]I made it clear to them the following point: We are not inspectors, meaning there won‟t be performance appraisal of Teacher Nguyen Thi A or Teacher Nguyen Van B, nor will there be any recommendation of an award or a punishment. [7]We are teachers ourselves, and we suggest you teach your classes as you will normally be doing every day. [8]I repeated that point several times. [9]One teacher apparently representing his colleagues stood up right away and said: Dear Sir, we are sorry we will be unable to do as you want. [10]For everyone here, parents, the principal, the deputy principal, any person involved, and students will all consider this… [11]There will be huge consequences if we are praised or despised. [12]As a result, we will be unable to teach as we will normally be doing. [13]That means the lesson observed had been pre-

arranged. [14]The classroom teacher should have assigned which student to answer which question. [15]Such incidents had rendered the school visits fruitless.

131. ***R:*** [1]*How about an analysis seeking to learn about the availability of teaching amenities and resources such as teaching aids, cassette players and other facilities…*

132. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They are seriously inadequate.

133. ***R:*** [1]*But your understanding of the situation seemed to be based on your experience only; wasn"t thereany investigation?*

134. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yes. [2]We knew it when we visited the classrooms. [3]For example, there were crowded classes, there were big differences between students" levels, and there were also big differences between teachers" levels. [4]Two teachers were teaching the same textbook but there were big differences. [5]The classrooms were so close that when the tape was played in one classroom, the teacher of the classroom next door would pass by to complain. [6]Also, we recommended students be let to speak up and be seated in groups but those things were impossible because they had been fixed to their seats. [7]No school would care to have a particular classroom for language teaching.

135. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding the development of the textbooks from the curriculum, did writers have a chance to be creative or did you have to closely adhere to the curriculum?*

136. **Mr. Ni:** [1]There was very little creativity. [2]There was some creativity relating to specific points but overall the curriculum was closely adhered to by textbooks of the both programmes (intensive and regular).

137. ***R:*** [1]*Because you were required to be adherent?*

138. **Mr. Ni:** [1]That"s why the curriculum should have been more descriptive. [2]For what is appreciated in the Vietnamese culture is the unification of what is being done. [3]But such is too big an issue for us to overrule.

139. ***R:*** [1]*For the textbooks you created, whose feedback did you receive?*

140. **Mr. Ni:** [1]That of the committee of examiners. [2]Regarding teachers, we got feedback through connections, not through organised attempts. [3]There was also feedback obtained through the Ministry of Education and Training which I read but it wasn‟t scientifically-based yet. [4]The Ministry of Education and Training called for feedback, and it was obtained from different circles including the leadership, experts, and teachers but the feedback was generally inadequately scientifically proven. [5]Those who were really confidential and properly educated would not care to give their feedback. [6]Those who provided feedback were driven by their own individual rights. [7]What were individual rights? [8]Maybe I was providing some feedback because I was aiming at some possible position that I had to take pains to prove that I was interested in order to be promoted or transferred to a better position or in order to catch the attention of the provincial or ministerial leadership. [9]To sum up, those who were really credible, impartial and properly educated did not care to provide feedback.

141. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean those who spoke up about the textbooks were driven by something?*

142. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They were not driven by educational purposes.

143. ***R:*** [1]*But when you claim that their feedback was not scientifically-based, you mean their evaluation was…*

144. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It was impulsive. [2]What‟s more, those who gave their comments are not (secondary education) teachers, maybe they‟re university lecturers, so their comment was not very empirical. [3]They should have had teaching experience, which was to be accumulated over two or three years and they should be interested and dedicated. [4]But these things are unfortunately rare. [5]University lecturers or heads of departments who were cited had never taught the textbooks (they were talking about).

145. ***R:*** [1]*So, each stakeholder was speaking from their own particular position.* [2]*The leadership aimed to prevent corruption so they insisted on centralized exam administration; teachers had to teach in such ways compatible with their circumstances;*

and students wanted to achieve good exam results and they… [3]*What do you think should be done to reconcile the interests and expectation of stakeholders?*

146. **Mr. Ni:** [1]These problems will have to be dealt with step by step, and it‟s an extremely huge question. [2]There should be, as I said before, big policies and talented and determined leadership. [3]Big policies should be accompanied by budget allocation.

147. ***R:*** [1]*The budget is for…?*

148. **Mr. Ni:** [1]For the implementation of such plans.

149. ***R:*** [1]*What do you think such plans should be about?*

150. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The first plan to be carried out is to start with tertiary institutions, where internal corruption should be reduced. [2]The rector of the university where I used to work at was aware of this problem and he got protested for doing the following thing.

151. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean he was fighting to reduce corruption?*

152. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Right, I‟ll tell you right now. [2]This is a true story I‟m going to tell you, but I am not going to tell the name of the institution. [3]This year, he said, I‟m going to take over the assignment of exam-makers and also the administration of exams as well. [4]University admission exams were still taken over by the institutions concerned at the time. [5]You might want to call this a test-run, he said. [6]He didn‟t explain why but I was there and knew what it was (*laughing*). [7]Who I would assign as exam-makers is my own business, and no one may know it. [8]We aren‟t going to tell students about this, and not to society either, and I‟m going to do this myself. [9]And he did it as he announced. [10]And he got under fire after the exams because people lost their benefits. [11]Their benefits might have not instantly lost that year because students had not know what happened, still assuming this lecturer would be the exam-maker this year. [12]Also, by the time the rector made the announcement, they had been taking private lessons with their lecturers, for such classes started almost a year before. [13]But if the change continued to be implemented the following years, students would find out the truth. [14]So, it‟s an example indicating that

this will be an extremely difficult question. [15]No one would disagree with the suggestion that university admission exams should be organised by the very institutions concerned, for it is so reasonable, but the Ministry of Education and Training would find it difficult to make it happen properly. [16]So, the question is to clear these problems, and remedial measures should be started with tertiary education sector. [17]It would be too big a question to ask where we could find incorruptible personnel (*laughing*), that would be beyond my level; yet that‟s the way it should be, that is return to tertiary institutions their rights to administer their own admission exams.

153. ***R:*** *[1]Regarding teachers, given the differences even between those within the same locality and between provinces…*

154. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Well, this is what I have failed to mention so far; it‟s a big question. [2]To my evaluation, universities of teacher education have not actually fulfilled their roles, particularly regarding teacher training, which they did very poorly. [3]Even worse, many have done nothing. [4]When we say that many teachers‟ levels do not meet the requirements set out or that they are well below the levels, it means those are the problems to be solved by universities themselves. [5]At the present, institutions of teacher education have not fulfilled their responsibilities regarding that function.

155. ***R:*** *[1]What about teachers who are already on the job?*

156. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They too will need to undergo training, no matter how good they are. [2]But who would be doing the training? [3]It should be taken by universities of teacher education.

157. ***R:*** *[1]Those teachers appear to think that they would not need to do any further study.*

158. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They are satisfied with themselves, for they are earning a lot of money, yeah heaps of money.. [2] It comes from what I‟ve mentioned based on their job rooted in their school, or the positions of senior writer or deputy. [4]People are fighting to teach year 12 classes from which they may have profitable private classes for exam practice. [5]Too much

money has made them self-satisfied. [6]I don‟t need any self-improvement at all, they thought.

159. ***R:*** [1]*Imagine that there is now a directive that teachers should take some training…*

160. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They‟d avoid such training. [2]If the training were long enough, the problems mentioned could be solved. [3]Those problems aren‟t too difficult after all. [4]For example, there are six teachers in a team teaching a certain subject. [5]Now I need six teachers but the provincial leadership should give me seven tenured positions so that I would always have one extra teacher who I should sent to long-term training classes. [6]By "long-term", I mean to say three months. [7]This is easy to do but the leadership of provincial services of education do not know it, or maybe they do but they won‟t do it. [8]Teachers are now very reluctant to undertake long-term training.

161. ***R:*** [1]*Their income would get affected then.* (laughing)

162. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Individual benefits would be lost. [1]Now, there must be a policy to be promulgated regarding the extra teacher tenure, and universities of teacher education should submit their training plans.

163. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning students, what was done to deal with the differences in background, needs, and interests?*

164. **Mr. Ni:** [1]The biggest problem is their being passive and affected by parents regarding exams, which is a sweeping influence.

165. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding differences between localities, maybe…*

166. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Yeah, that will be too big a question, and it results in these consequences. [2]With the same centralised exams to apply for the whole nation, textbooks that are to be suitable for all students would be impossible, for textbooks are to be focused on the majority, as is commonly shown by the parabol. [3]That‟s the way it is, it can‟t be otherwise. [4]Consequently, there will always be classes, parents, teachers, and students who do not find the textbooks appropriate with them. [5]It‟s something inevitable. [6]Those who don‟t

find the materials appropriate will speak up, while those find them all right will not voice their opinions. [7]As a result, that causes an impression on the media audience that textbooks are inappropriate. [8]In fact, the majority find the books appropriate but they would not make their voices heard. [9]If the materials are all right for me, why should I complain? [10]But what else could be done now? [11]The policy now is to administer national centralised exams; otherwise how could they deal with the question that students from some provinces or remote areas choose to do their tertiary study in Saigon or Hanoi? [12]Even if there is a community university in your area but parents and students will not want to do their study at that local institution; any parent would prefer to send their children to Saigon or Hanoi. [13]This problem is getting more serious now as more parents can afford to send their children to Saigon or Hanoi, and this did not use to be the case before when many were willing to study locally. [14]I recently read some news from the newspaper that I am not sure how true it is. [15]It‟ll be great if it is. [16]The news is, according to statistics, there are more and more students enrolling in provincial universities or institutions in the region. [17]If it is the case, it‟s great news. [18]The news would mean almost nothing if you do not read between the lines but if the rates keep increase in the next ten years, we‟ll be reaching a great situation. [19]In order to make that happen, regional universities should be developed. [20]There‟s been a policy that every province should have a university but in Vietnam policies tend not to be implemented. [21]If there were some big budget to be invested in provincial universities, a lot of our problems would be solved. [22]If this could be done plus the decentralization of exam administration, we might be able to solve many questions. [23]In that scenario, with the same textbooks, the difficulty of exams might vary depending on the levels required of the institutions and regions concerned. [24]There won‟t be any problem of breaching the regulations if we do that, so long as exams are about what is covered by textbooks. [25]In order to solve our problems, regional universities will need to be strengthened to be able to attract their local students.

167. ***R:*** [1]*How about audio tapes/discs that are still perceived to be of poor quality in provincial areas?*

168. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It‟s a problem very easy to solve, if there is determination. [2]Technology is very good now; the problem lies in poor determination and dedication.

169. ***R:*** [1]*When I visited Province X, I met a principal who was very straightforward, saying his school was investing in math, physics, and chemistry only, and English was left neglected…*

170. **Mr. Ni:** [1]That‟s quite common elsewhere. [2]Not because they do not recognize the importance of English, but because it would be more difficult to improve the education of English than that of the others. [3]So, I‟d also have picked up the easier option myself. [4]It would be easier to get good grades; it‟s more likely to get 10 marks for math than for English.

171. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding the other stakeholders such as the media and parents, do you think they have been too critical or…?*

172. **Mr. Ni:** [1]They‟ve been too critical on the whole. [2]It should be admitted that the media are not professional enough. [3]Given the current conditions, they can‟t be professional enough, for they do not have enough money. [4]Even if they had, it would be uncertain that they could do it, for it would require enough expert writers. [5]Part-time writers with expertise would do though.

173. ***R:*** [1]*You mean experts in the field they are writing about?*

174. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Right, they‟re suffering from serious lack of expertise in the fields concerned.

175. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding parents, what role do you think they play in the reception of the new textbooks?*

176. **Mr. Ni:** [1]I think there‟s only one problem regarding their thoughts, which are not scientifically-based. [2]First, many still think it‟d be better to study in the ways they did

using American textbooks. [3]Second, they will normally complain about the teacher performance, saying teachers are now under qualified.

177. ***R:*** [1]*The classroom teacher at a school in the town I visited told me a little while after my classroom observation that though she knew I was visiting her class for my research project, which would not affect her performance appraisal, she anyhow had to take pains to travel to City Y in order to obtain the listening disc for the textbook.* [2]*I apologized her for the unwanted trouble, which she said she did not mind anyway. It was notable to see, nevertheless, she had to painstakingly get the disc for the lesson observation though she understood my presence would not affect her job.*

178. **Mr. Ni:** [1]She was highly responsible, wasn‟t she!

179. ***R:*** [1]*It was something like what you told me before.* [1]*In spite of my repeated assurance that I‟d not be appraising her teaching, she still took pains to travel to City Y to get the disc.*

180. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]She might have had something else to do anyway, home visit for instance. [2]You might try to incorporate in your report what I would like to emphasize now. [3]Recently, there have been questions on the media that why the very British or American publications were not brought into use instead. [4]Those who made such questions were relating the question to their times, when *English for Today* was in use. [5]I studied those books then and I am like this now, indicating such a way was effective. [6]What I would like to emphasise is that official textbooks of all schools and institutions, even in tertiary education, are to be created by Vietnamese writers. [7]This hasn‟t become a practice at tertiary education yet, not because that principle is incorrect or that doesn‟t work for them, though that‟s taken place in a number of institutions by now. [8]The problem lies in the calibre of lecturers, which should be admitted. [9]We would not discuss this issue now and instead focus on secondary education. [10]This principle should be emphasized regarding textbooks, even for materials teaching foreign language and also sciences. [11]To narrow

down our topic to foreign learning textbooks, the largest aim of textbooks, including those in other subjects, is to carry out national educational aims. [12]Yes, national educational aims, of which there are political aims. [13]This principle being applied, the biggest problem is non-Vietnamese writers would be unable to understand what aims are about. [14]And even if they did, there‟d be no need to use their books. Be Vietnamese. [15]For example, books for British learners will talk more about Europe and they will mention things like a summer vacation in Greece. [16]As for a Briton, it will be an important thing to do, for he lives in an unfavourable climate. [17]When he‟s got money, he‟ll be thinking of spending their time in Italy or Greece to enjoy the warmth, which is reasonable. [18]But how can he understand that a 17-year-old Vietnamese student will not need to know such places?. [19]That‟s an example I‟d like to use to illustrate the point above. [20]The example is just for illustration purposes but the key point is the national educational aims, which only Vietnamese are able to understand. [21]I have got at home a whole set of English-teaching textbooks in use in Singapore. [22]They completely apply that principle. [23]Not only are the textbooks written by Singaporeans, the reading passages are excerpts from works written by Singaporeans. [24]Whereas what we are doing here are excerpts from Hemmingway and Dickens, the literature works they use for secondary education are those of Singaporeans. [25]This is what I have paid very special attention to; they‟re applying the principle very strictly. [26]For them, works by Hemmingway or things of that type are taught at tertiary, not secondary education. [27]That would be impossible in our context because we haven‟t got Vietnamese who are able to write English like that. [28]I have given this example, however, in order to stress the point that national educational exams should be carried out by the very people of that nation, not those of other nations. [29]I‟m very interested in this principle. [30]So, the resultant situation is like this: People are criticising Vietnamese writing English in terms of their language abilities. [31]English is not our mother tongue so naturally there will be mistakes; it‟s inevitable but easy to be corrected. [32]If the leadership

is willing to hire an educated native speaker as a language adviser, the problem will be solved, and the situation will become easier. [33]There will even be no need to have a budget for the royalties for that work to be done. [34]I would just contact the British or American embassy for the language support, and they"d approve it straight away. [35]Not only would they give the required support, they"d be happy to do so as well. [36]They would be willing to pay for the adviser to help us with all that. [37]So, the language problem will then be solved. [38]We do not have the ambition to be able to write English like a native speaker and we have to admit we are unable to. [39]But that problem can be solved. [40]Those who questioned why British or American books were not brought into use instead were primarily concerned with language problems, and not with national educational aims. [41]In addition to what I"ve been talking about, there are heaps of other discrepancies as well. [42]For example, British or American books might talk about young people going dancing or cohabitation, which are taboo topics in Vietnam.

181. ***R:*** [1]*Another question regarding the strengths and weaknesses of textbooks, home-made versus. foreign publications, you were stressing that Vietnamese textbooks should be created by Vietnamese writers for their national educational aims, which are unique.*

182. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Not only are textbooks of one nation different from those of other nations, they are subject to change to the will of the leadership of the nation as well.

183. ***R:*** [1]*If another generation of textbooks were to be created, what areas do you think should be improved regarding the construction of textbooks?*

184. **Mr. Ni:** [1]We would need to do it even better; what has been done is all right. [2]There are several things that need improving, for example the curriculum is not descriptive enough, but the current ways of doing are all right.

185. ***R:*** [1]*Concerning the examination and revision of the textbooks…*

186. **Mr. Ni:** [1]What has been done is all right. [2]It is yet to be better but in the meantime it is all right. [3]The textbook draft underwent the review of the committee of examiners and

once the books were basically completed, there was feedback from parents, teachers, and experts. [4]But this should have been done better.

187. ***R:*** [1]*You mean the feedback providing stage?*

188. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Specifically, in order to have a proper evaluation, evaluators should have been made to be more interested. [2]For example, they should have recorded what the lesson concerned was about, and what negative or positive comment there were. [3]And such comments should be treated with respect. [4]At the moment, there has not been anyone collating the feedback. [5]They just left comments as they were. [6]It"d be a big job to collate the comments. [7]The comments that were made by many evaluators yet were related the same point should be group together in one place.

189. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the teacher preparation was adequate?*

190. **Mr. Ni:** [2]Not yet, and the weakest point is the role of universities of teacher education has not been brought into play. [2]One piece of evidence is that though the textbooks have been in use for several years, University Z, the institution I am the most familiar with, has not got a teacher education programme for the new materials yet. [3]What is urgent is the allocation of budget for institutions of teacher education to carry out long-term teacher education, which should be related to the textbooks first of all.

191. ***R:*** [1]*Haven't they got any training programme for their teacher students or teachers in service?*

192. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Their attention is directed to their students only.

193. **R:** [1]*Do you mean they have methodology courses yet they are not customized to the teaching of the new textbooks?*

194. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Very slightly; it"s not adequately done. [2]It appears that they have a practicum by the end of the third year of training. [3]The practicum is assigned to local classroom teachers, though and lecturers from universities of education pay very little

attention. [4]They are there anyway but the attention is inadequate. [5]They are all my friends, A, B, and C, *etc.*

195. ***R:*** [1]*And do you think the launch of the new textbooks was all right?*

196. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Good, the textbook distribution is good. [2]It was unfair for the Education Publishing House to be criticised for their textbook sale. [3]They have done a good job, I think. [4]And it"s also unfair to say that recommended retail price is too high; no, it isn"t. [5]Too unfair for them. [6]The critics have unjustly quoted the total sales amounts, several hundred or several thousand billion. [7]It"s because there are a large number of students; but the retail price per copy is not high. [8]Gosh, it was very effort-consuming to produce the books, which are each several hundred pages long and each just sells at ten thousand dong or so.

197. ***R:*** [1]*By that question, I mean…*

198. **Mr. Ni:** [1]It"s all right. [2]The Education Publishing House and provincial companies of books and educational aids have done a good job. [3]What"s wrong is teaching expertise.

199. ***R:*** [1]*That"s what we were talking about regarding teacher education…*

200. **Mr. Ni:** [1]Right, teacher training. [2]If done well, it would be able to compensate for other bigger weaknesses. [3]It would surely. [4]Particular attention should have been paid to provincial and local teacher training, which should have been undertaken by universities of teacher education. [5]Too bad that this very important stage tends to be neglected, that is provincial teacher training.

201. ***R:*** [1]*You mean teachers should every year be…*

202. ***Mr. Ni:*** [1]It depends on the local situations. [2]Yeah, it"s up to the local situations, but it is essential. [3]At the moment, it"s not responsibly done.

203. ***R:*** [1]*Thank you very much.*

204. **Mr. Ni:** [1]No worries. [2]Many things will need to be done. [3]If my time is available for three days, which I might have… yet there"s no organized event for me to present my

ideas. [4]I might need to revise what I‟ve been talking with you today. [5]There‟re many things to say. […] [6]I want to work for the good of society. [7]In my situation, at this age, I‟ll be happier to be able to do something for society. [8]It‟s no longer a big deal how much money I can get; it‟s not important to me anymore.

Appendix Q.2

Interview transcript – Textbook Writer 2

Interviewee: Ms. Na[34]

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher.

R: Researcher

1. ***R:*** [1]*First of all, to your knowledge, what are the differences between the principles of EFL learning and teaching functioning as the foundations of these new books from those of the previous books?*
2. **Ms. Na:** [1]You mean the textbooks for Years 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 or just 10, 11, and 12?
3. ***R:*** [1]*I mean the new series, ranging from Year 6 to Year 12.*
4. **Ms. Na:** [1]The older textbooks were also for years 6-12.
5. ***R:*** [1]*Yeah, but I'm asking about the textbooks for years 6-12.*
6. **Ms. Na:** [1]I wasn't in the team of writers of the older textbooks but I did the teacher training for those textbooks, so I knew what they aimed at was also the communication. [2]The aims of the curriculum were defined by the Ministry of Education and Training, which were to teach students (English) communicatively. The composition of those materials was very different. [3]That means, there was discrepancy between how the textbooks were composed and what they were expected to achieve. [4]The aim was communication but the foundation methodology was principally the audio-lingualism, that means listening and speaking are the cores. [5]In addition, the materials were purely audio-lingual, that means, they had drills based on repetition and substitution, and as a

[34] Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify them.

result the means were not perceived effective to achieve the aims. [6]Meanwhile, the new textbooks, those for Years 6, 7, 8, and 9, also take communication as the aim and adopt the thematic approach. [7]The textbooks for Years 10, 11, and 12 continue to adopt the same approach, so there are topics like family, environment, and friendship, *etc.* all through Years 6-12.

7. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the composition of the textbooks have helped to achieve the aims of communication as claimed?*
8. **Ms. Na:** [1]The composition of the new textbooks?
9. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*
10. **Ms. Na:** [1]Those new textbooks have all the four skills included, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which is a reasonable composition that is no different from that of (language teaching) materials by foreign publishers. [2]What the Vietnamese textbooks have to offer should be reconsidered, though.
11. ***R:*** [1]*What do you mean by that?*
12. **Ms. Na:** [1]The effectiveness of the textbooks, and its scientific value and its accuracy.
13. ***R:*** [1]*That means…*
14. **Ms. Na:** [1]And there should be reconsideration of the language and also the knowledge they teach.
15. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, there remain…*
16. **Ms. Na:** [1]The organisation of the textbooks is good; there's no problem with that.
17. ***R:*** [1]*You mean there are inaccuracies in language and knowledge?*
18. **Ms. Na:** [1]Or lack of updates.
19. ***R:*** [1]*Can you give some examples?*
20. **Ms. Na:** [1]The following is not to do with the scientific value but with reasonable continuity. [2]This looks to be a small point but it is not: Regarding the textbooks for Years 6-9 created by the team led by H. D., the language is American English, entailing the use

of American English all through their vocabulary and grammar. [3]When it comes to textbooks for Years 10-12, Mr. Ni., the leader of the team creating textbooks of the intensive programme follows the same route, i.e. using American English. [4]Those of the regular programme, however, use British English. [5]I don't mean to say which dialect is the correct way to use but it all indicates lack of continuity between Year 9 and the upper years. [6]As a result, the teacher and students might be confused, a problem especially aggravated in those Year 10 classes which take the regular programme in the morning and the intensive programme in the afternoon. [10]This difference in language between the textbooks of the two programmes makes clear the lack of scientific and reasonable textbook development […]. [11]Regarding accuracy, during our training of teachers using the textbooks for Years 10-12, we heard of a number of problems in terms of language use raised by teachers which I forwarded Mr. Ni. [12]Corrections have accordingly been made following the feedback but there certainly remain many more mistakes that have not been identified.

21. ***R:*** [1]*To your understanding, why have there been such changes as you said from the audiolingualism to…*

22. **Ms. Na:** [1]To CLT, that is Communicative…

23. ***R:*** [1]*Language Teaching*; *why have there been such changes?*

24. **Ms. Na:** [1]First, it's an indispensable change, for it's the teaching trend that is widely accepted all over the world. [2]Second, it's due to pressure of society, which expects the educational output to be communication abilities. [3]While private language centres have turned to be using new teaching approaches, the older textbooks would not have been able to meet the current demands.

25. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean to say new approaches had been brought into use by private language centres before these textbooks were created?*

26. **Ms. Na:** [1]More or less so.

27. ***R:*** [1]*Personally, do you agree on the changes of the new textbooks?*

28. **Ms. Na:** [1]From the old to the new?

29. ***R:*** [1]*Right.*

30. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, of course. As I said, new approaches can meet the demands of the trends. [2]In the first place, the changes are in line with the new ways envisioned by the new textbooks, i.e. the communicative approach, while the older textbooks wouldn't have been.

31. ***R:*** [1]*While you agree on the changes, do you believe such changes would be possible to take place?* [2]*In other words, do you think communicative language teaching is doable in the current circumstances?*

32. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, if there are supporting measures. [2]However, according to my own experience of teaching my own children – I don't teach in high school, if communicative language teaching is strictly applied, it won't be effective because of our testing formats. [3]People here study in order to take exams, not just to use . [4]Also, we don't have an environment of second language, but that of foreign language in Vietnam, meaning there's no opportunity to use English. [5]In addition to practical use, exam-taking is another goal of learning, which is in fact the very primary goal. [6]In the meantime, exams are not communicative. [7]Consequently, teaching my children, I use the grammar translation method, and sometimes audio-lingualism, or any method that is effective, i.e. they should be able to achieve the best exam results.

33. ***R:*** [1]*So, no matter what, no matter how, the most important thing is that learning should lead to taking exams successfully, and communication is just a secondary goal, right?*

34. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right.

35. ***R:*** [1]*Considering the extent to which teachers, students, and teaching conditions are ready for the new textbooks, do you think there're differences between the new materials and reality regarding outcomes to be achieved?*

36. **Ms. Na:** [1]I can see there're big differences, first of all considering teachers. [2]To my understanding through field trips and personal connections, I can see that teachers do not understand the goals and the ways of teaching the new textbooks effectively. [3]It follows quite clearly that the teacher training was a waste, failing to achieve the target outcomes. [4]The (ministerial) training was for the core teachers only. [5]But who were the core teachers? They were officers from provincial services of education and training and head teachers from local schools. [6]The problem was, there were just three or four selected teachers from each province. [7]So when it comes to what actually happens in the classroom, it's uncertain how things are actually done there and whether local teachers are doing what textbook writers have envisioned to be taking place. [8]There's been a big discrepancy between the central and the local. [9]So, I think teachers play the most important role in the successful implementation of the textbooks. [10]It doesn't matter what textbooks are being used; it's teachers that are the most significant factor.

37. ***R:*** [1]*Do you mean that the training of which you were a trainer was not provided directly to…*

38. **Ms. Na:** [1]The training was only given to core teachers, not classroom teachers. [2]Let me give you an example of the teacher training class I convened at the Open University, in which there were a number of high school teachers. [3]So, I was teaching them a course in language practice teaching, which was mainly about classroom teaching. [4]When I related to the issues I had already talked about during my pervious training for core teachers of Ho Chi Minh City, they completely did not understand at all what I was talking about. [5]It indicates that those core teachers did not transmit what I had told them to classroom teachers. [6]As another example, when I talked to my students about *webwest*, nobody knew what it was about. [7]Meanwhile, *webwest* was among the key concepts of the teacher training course material about educational technology that the Ministry of Education and

Training used for training teachers for year 12, which was intended to help teachers to create their own projects for their classroom lessons.

39. ***R:*** [1]*Is* webwest *is the term coined by the Ministry of Education and Training?*

40. **Ms. Na:** [1]No, it's a term referring to a technique or a project which is now being widely used as it is to facilitate task-based learning. [2]*Webwest* is a kind of project that teachers create on the computer links to websites around the world. [3]Learners, with webwest, will just need to complete the tasks required. [4]That's how it works. [5]There's a whole chapter about *webwest* in the training documents for core teachers.

41. ***R:*** [1]*Can you later on lend me those documents, if you have them?*

42. **Ms. Na:** [1]I'll check to see I can still find them.

43. ***R:*** [1]*And what are the differences between the textbooks and reality in terms of students' preparedness for the textbooks?*

44. **Ms. Na:** [1]I'm not actually teaching students so I would not venture to make any evaluation. [2]If just based on the children of my own and my relatives', there'd not be enough data for my evaluation. [3]Some of my nephews and nieces are studying in Years 10-12. [4]Because their backgrounds are quite good, they understand the textbooks very well. [5]The situation is quite good even for a niece of my husband's who lives in Phan Ri. [6]We had a vacation there last summer so I asked her, who was studying the (English) textbook of the intensive programme, for her thoughts about the material. [7]She said it was very good and it became clear from my check she understood the lessons of it. [8]However, since she was a good student at a selective school, my evaluation could not generalised from this particular case.

45. ***R:*** [1]*Did you get any comment regarding students – how prepared students were with the textbooks – from teachers in your training sessions?*

46. **Ms. Na:** [1]Most teachers from remote and disadvantaged areas would say that students were too weak for the textbooks to be implementable. [2]Also, facilities were inadequate;

by saying so, they were apparently relating to teaching conditions. [3]Next, listening lessons were reportedly taught differently in provincial areas. [4]They said they didn't have audio tapes or discs and if the script were read by teachers, it would… (*laughing*) be very ineffective. [5]Even for Ho Chi Minh City, there are still problems despite Mr. L.'s attempts to make listening tests take place.

47. ***R:*** [1]*But do you perceive students are enjoying the new ways by which all the four skills are taught?* [2]*Or do they still prefer to stick to traditional ways?*

48. **Ms. Na:** [1]During my training sessions for Year 11, I asked teachers about their teaching of Year 10 classes and during those for year 12, I asked them about their teaching of Year 11 classes. [2]And they all said students would have enjoyed lessons if the teaching had strictly adhered to what should be done with the new textbooks. [3]But it would have been true only of wherever the local conditions were good enough. [4]Otherwise, both teachers and students would have tremendous difficulty. [5]Too bad for me to discover from my own investigation that many of them were teaching the new textbooks in the old ways… [6]They were teaching in the old ways the new textbooks of Years 6-12, which adopt the communicative approach, i.e. they were using audiolingualism and/or grammar-translation.

49. ***R:*** [1]*Did this happen in remote and disadvantaged areas or even in Ho Chi Minh City?*

50. **Ms. Na:** [1]Such feedback was provided by those from remote and disadvantaged areas. [2]For there'd not have been complaints from areas where the textbooks were teachable.

51. ***R:*** [1]*And how about teaching conditions? Are they ready for the use of the new textbooks?*

52. **Ms. Na:** [1]Not yet, to my understanding, because it's quite clear that there's not been adequate equipment anywhere. [2]With the new textbooks, the minimum requirement is a cassette or disc player, but this condition is not available in many places. [3]That is not to mention those that are becoming a trend now, projectors as an example, which are available in several urban schools. [4]For the new methodology to be implementable, the

question is concerned with not just teachers but students as well. [5]For students to play an active role, there should be enough facilities for them, as example, to search for resources needed for them to make reports and presentations. [6]But the reality is that such machines are not available, and they have to manage themselves without them, and consequently the lessons are less interesting.

53. ***R:*** [1]*Right, without resources and internet access being available, the reports would turn boring.*

54. **Ms. Na:** [1]And teachers would then fall back to the traditional ways.

55. ***R:*** [1]*Through field trips, which you should have made, did you see the new textbooks were used as you yourself as a textbook writer had envisioned?*

56. **Ms. Na:** [1]Our trips were to… [2]Let me see, one was in Nha Trang, another in Dong Thap… [3]What I could see at the schools we visited was that they were teaching the textbooks very well. [4]The biggest impression for each and every one of us visitors was made by the Dong Thap school, for Nha Trang was a big city and what we saw and what we had expected was not really different. [5]What happened in that school in Dong Thap was beyond our anticipation. [6]It seemed that you didn't join us on the trip, did you?

57. ***R:*** [1]*No, I had something else to do then.* [2]*Was it the trip that brought back some disc recording?*

58. **Ms. Na:** [1]The trip to Dong Thap was joined by Ms. H. and some others. [2]You might have been overseas at that time. [3]The local teachers were very young and active, and the machinery was really good though it was a poor school. [4]When we were there, the flood water had just receded, evidenced by the stain lines on the classroom walls. [5]But they had all the machinery required including cassette players, disc players, and even as many as four projectors though they were not a rich school.

59. ***R:*** [1]*So impressive, wasn't it!*

60. **Ms. Na:** [1]Four projectors at one and the same school. [2]I asked the school board how they could afford four projectors like that, and they said their school was among the selected institutions on experimental projects. [2]That means, the Ministry of Education and Training picked up several schools in a certain region that were then privileged to be allocated budget to purchase the equipment required. [3]And they chose to buy such machinery, which their teachers exploited to their utmost. [4]We observed a number of their classroom lessons and we could see they used the equipment very well and their students proved to be familiar with such equipment, meaning what they demonstrated was genuine. [5]They did not need any screen or air-conditioner in their classes; they had quite regular classrooms. [6]They showed pictures on their white-painted walls, that was it. [7]But it was very effective.

61. ***R:*** *Had the school visit been announced in advance?*

62. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, it had. [2]We had to ask for their permission prior to our visits and they should have made their own preparation. [3]But I looked at the teachers' and students' familiarity with what they were doing and I knew it was not fake at all. [4]Those teachers' pronunciation was unfortunately not very good, but their methodology was excellent, and their enthusiasm was beyond urban teachers'. [5]So, if any other institution could become that school, I don't see why there would be any difficulty with the implementation of the textbooks. [6]The point, in my opinion, was the support provided by the local authorities and school board in order to encourage teachers to teach the new textbooks in the new ways. [7]Next, it should be the role of the head teacher. [8]Still in Dong Thap, there were other schools that we visited and that also had young teachers. [9]One head teacher at one school had virtually driven Mr. Ni crazy because Mr. Ni still remembered her face. [10]In the previous teacher training session, he had given her the list of errata and asked her to forward the handouts to her colleagues. [11]When we met with the local teachers, however, it turned out teachers had not received the errata. [12]When asked, the head teacher said she

had forgotten all about the list, which she herself didn't remember where she had left *laughing*. [13]It isn't too difficult to make out how such a head teacher could have led her teachers.

63. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the differences discussed are an inevitable discrepancy between planning and implementation to be accepted or could they have been lessened?*

64. **Ms. Na:** [1]I think they could have been lessened, and it is necessary for them to be lessened. [2]The point is the leadership should do something about it. [3]For with what I saw in Dong Thap, a province that could be classified as a remote region, I assume we can duplicate elsewhere what happened in a remote school like the one we visited in other schools and in other provinces.

65. ***R:*** [1]*Did you say that the observers made a recording of their lessons?*

66. **Ms. Na:** [1]I'm not sure whether they did it.

67. ***R:*** [1]*I watched a video recording of some classroom lesson that got praised but I'm not sure it was the class you mentioned in Dong Thap.*

68. **Ms. Na:** [1]I don't know; I'm not sure.

69. ***R:*** [1]*In your opinion, have the methodology and techniques of the textbooks, for example those concerning the roles of teachers and students in the classroom, been adequately communicated to users, first of all to teachers and students?*

70. **Ms. Na:** [1]As I told you before, it was clear that classroom implementers of the textbooks were not directly trained. [2]The training they got was intermediary, that means, through core teachers, who unfortunately did not work effectively enough. [3]The natural consequence was the link between stage one and stage three was broken.

71. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the teacher training could be directly done in the present circumstances?*

72. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, it could be done in following way. [2]Let me talk about the textbooks for Years 6-9. I was involved in the training for those textbooks as a core teacher. [3]That means, for the ministerial training provided by the Ministry of Education and Training,

my college of teachers' training sent their staff to attend the training together with core teachers from the districts and by the end of it, the local service of education and training sent us to do the summer training for local teachers. [4]There were in our group altogether 10 teachers or thereabouts, that means the number could be 10, 11, or 12 or 8 or 9. [5]We were sent to local districts to do the training for local teachers. [6]There was no other intermediary stage, for we were intermediaries ourselves. [7]But we learned from textbook writers and if there was anything still unclear, I would ask them straight away. [8]Besides, I was a trainer from a college of teachers' training, where teachers were educated, so I understood textbook writers' visions of how the textbooks should be used. [9]Concerning the training I provided, I would not guarantee but it was 99% true of textbook writers' intentions. [10]At the moment, we are still conducting these regular training sessions. [11]My institution is a college of teachers' training and we regularly work with local districts on these issues for junior secondary education. [12]We are now doing with the third cohort of teachers– we started with the first cohort – and as such teacher trainees might raise any questions with which we would be dealing straight away. [13]But all this cannot be done with high schools. [14]For among the trainers were some, about two or three, from the University of Teacher Education and when it came to teacher training, I don't know what they actually did. [15]The training was provided by the Service of Education and Training and I don't know how they organised the teacher training so that local teachers could be directly trained.

73. ***R:*** [1]*You mean the textbook use training for teachers in upper secondary education was …*

74. **Ms. Na:** [1]Poorly-organised, I think. [2]The original intentions of textbook writers couldn't not find their way to local teachers, or maybe they did but there would have been variation.

75. ***R:*** [1]*Did the same problems happen to textbooks of Years 10, 11, and 12 as well?*

76. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, for Years 10, 11, and 12. [2]And in my opinion, it was due to the lack of support and cooperation by the University of Teacher Education, which was considered as the major locomotive. [3]Playing such a role, they should not have been there just as a mere participant but as the trainer of teachers. [4]They should have mastered what the textbooks were about and taught it to their teacher students. [5]Having been taught the new, graduates would form the key force of teachers. [6]But I would not like to make any evaluation, as I am also teaching at the University of Teacher Education. [7]And what I eavesdropped from my students there was the effectiveness of this major training institution was rather poor. [8]Worse, students hated this course very much.

77. ***R:*** [1]*You mean they hated to study methodology?*

78. **Ms. Na:** [1]They hated it very much. [2]If I continued to elaborate on this point, it would hurt them. [3]I was teaching a Research Methods course at the University of Teacher Education in which the mini project my students did as an assignment was a survey. [4]The goal of the survey was to seek to learn what courses students liked/hated. [5]The results turned out that almost every class hated communicative language teaching. [6]So I asked how comes that you as teacher students hated the course of teaching methodology (*laughing*).

79. ***R:*** [1]*How well do you think the methodology and techniques of the textbooks are presented to teachers via the Teacher Book?*

80. **Ms. Na:** [1]There're many units of the Teacher Book that are not well written enough. [2]Some guidance is quite simple in many places and is thus not useful for teachers. [3]It is quite mechanical sometimes. [4]For example, it tells what teachers should be doing in the *pre-, while-,* and *post-* steps, which teachers should have known without the Teacher Book. [5]As for some units, conversely, the instructions are so specific that teachers tend to strictly adhere to them. [6]Many teachers would copy and paste such guidance onto their lesson plans, considering them as safe harbours for them to hide themselves. [7]But if they

did it like that, it would not be effective, for it is necessary for the classroom teacher to have adjustments according to the background and circumstances of the class as well.

81. ***R:*** [1]*When the Teacher Book was written, were you any way affected by the Ministry of Education and Training's curriculum, for instance regarding the outcomes?*

82. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, of course. [2]We based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Training.

83. ***R:*** [1]*Did the Ministry of Education and Training provide any documents as guidance?*

84. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, they did. [2]Regarding the Ministry of Education and Training's guidance documents… [3]First, there were conferences for textbook writers and I went to Hanoi several times to attend the orientation sessions …

85. ***R:*** [1]*Did you attend as a textbook writer?*

86. **Ms. Na:** [1]As as a textbook writer, yes. [2]The trips were led by Mr. B. [3]We met with the textbook writers of the regular programme, and identified the general directions to develop our textbooks. [4]The team later studied the documents provided at the conferences, and those given later by Mr. B., which he received from his other meetings. [5]In particular, we had the curriculum books whose covers were blue and pink, didn't we? [6]We based on those documents in the creation of the textbooks.

87. ***R:*** [1]*What do you think should be done in order to strengthen the connection between the creation and implementation of the textbooks?*

88. **Ms. Na:** [1]I don't know what happened with the textbooks of the regular programme but for those of the intensive programme, contact information of trainers such as email addresses and telephone numbers was always given to teachers just in case later on they might need to ask something more. [2]Normally, I received emails from teachers within the first several weeks following the training, and so did Mr. B. [3]There were some questions that I could not answer so I forwarded them to Mr. B. [4]Upon receiving Mr. B.'s replies, I would get back to the teachers who made the questions concerned. [5]But after a while,

however, things got quiet. [6]There was no question or feedback from teachers. [7]That means, there was some connection between the trainers and the trainees, who were only core teachers, though. [8]Classroom teachers might not have known such contact information of trainers for direct communication.

89. ***R:*** [1]*Was the communication in those several weeks substantial or just minimal?*

90. **Ms. Na:** [1]It happened with several people only.

91. ***R:*** [1]*My impression is that they were not much interested?*

92. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right. [2]And for those who were interested, they might not have known who to ask.

93. ***R:*** *(*laughing*)* [1]*And those who contacted you were all core teachers?*

94. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, they were core teachers who had just attended the teacher training.

95. ***R:*** [1]*Out of how many teachers were there just a few who contacted you?*

96. **Ms. Na:** [1]For each time, there were four classes, each of which totalled more than 100 teachers, between 120 and 150, I would say. [2]That was for the Southern region, so there was another cohort of teachers of equal number from the North. [3]For there were two cohorts, one for the Southern and another for the Northern region. [4]So the total number for the two cohorts was about 250. [5]For there are 58 provinces plus a number of central cities in Vietnam, so the total number of provinces and cities are 65. [6]There were three teachers from each, but for Ho Chi Minh City the attendance was larger because the training venues were just nearby.

97. ***R:*** [1]*There were just several teachers among 120-150 trainees who went further to contact trainers; does that indicate a low level of enthusiasm?*

98. **Ms. Na:** [1]Very low.

99. ***R:*** [1]*This communication channel was created by yourself, Mr. B., and some other textbook writer trainers, wasn't it?*

100. **Ms. Na:** [1]We did it ourselves.

101. ***R:*** [1]*Was there any organised attempt?*

102. **Ms. Na:** [1]No. [2]We initiated the communication saying if you trainees had any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us on this number and/or at that address… [3]The communication is still on now between me and several teachers. [4]The interest proved to be stronger in teachers from the Central and Northern regions; no teacher from the Southern bothered to ask (*laughing*). [5]What they communicated about was the questions they might have had about the textbooks. [6]Once they asked about something but I am not sure whether Mr. B. forwarded the question to you, Tho. [7]It was one teacher who asked me so I forwarded the question to Mr. B. who forwarded it to you. [8]It's five or six months since then so I don't remember clearly enough.

103. ***R:*** [1]*Was it concerned with my units?*

104. **Ms. Na:** [1]Yes, yours. [2]The question came from a teacher who communicated with me.

105. ***R:*** [1]*Yeah, you may be right; I was overseas then.*

106. **Ms. Na:** [1]I told Mr. B. that I was asking this on behalf of a teacher. [2]I don't remember; it's been a while since.

107. ***R:*** [1]*So those several teachers still keep in touch with you?*

108. **Ms. Na:** [1]Still. [2]They will ask me via email whenever they have some questions.

109. ***R:*** [1]*This channel of communication was created by textbook writers themselves…*

110. **Ms. Na:** [1]We offered it ourselves.

111. ***Ms. Na:*** [1]*Wasn't there any organised attempt to facilitate such communication by the Education Publishing House or the Ministry of Education and Training?*

112. **Ms. Na:** [1]No, there wasn't. [2]The Education Publishing House should have collected feedback, comments, and questions, if any, on a yearly basis and given them to the team leader of textbook writers in order to revise the textbooks. [3]That work could have been done between the Education Publishing House and Mr. B. that I might have been unaware of.

113. ***R:*** [1]*The collection of comments and feedback, in your opinion, should have been done by the Education Publishing House or the Ministry of Education and Training?*

114. **Ms. Na:** [1]By the Education Publishing House. [2]For even if it had been done by the Ministry, it would have been forwarded to the Publisher after all. [3]But there's this point that I would like to tell you personally. […]

115. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding the current student testing, do you think the practices in the classroom as well as in graduation and university admission exams have had some influence on the teaching and learning of English and the use of the textbook of the intensive programme for Year 10?*

116. **Ms. Na:** [1]They have also affected the textbook for Year 12, which has been rolled out so far. [2]The Ministry of Education and Training might need to have a comprehensive evaluation once these Year 12 students have completed their education. [3]Personally, looking at the study of the children of my own and my relatives, I can see the four skills are not all taught as envisioned by the textbooks. [4]It becomes clear that teachers have had bias, and the four skills cannot be equally developed. [5]There's been some bias.

117. ***R:*** [1]*So teachers might have been aware that the textbooks are to teach the four skills yet they still don't teach them alll.*

118. **Ms. Na:** [1]For the teacher training, I was in charge of sessions in teaching listening and speaking. [2]So I asked teachers, to be honest, did you teach these aural and oral skills. [3]They said they did but the time for those skills was reduced. [4]That means, they had to teach all the four skills but you, for instance, would take some time from the allocation for speaking and spend it on Language Focus or Grammar, which would be more practical for exam purposes. [5]So, they did the teaching but it was perfunctorily done.

119. ***R:*** [1]*So, is the problem a matter of fact to be accepted or could there be some changes?*

120. **Ms. Na:** [1]In my opinion, there will and have to be changes anyway. [2]But the changes should be initiated by the leadership, who should spend investment on the education of

foreign languages to the right extent and into the right areas. [3]For there have been wasteful investments so far. [4]But machinery is definitely needed. [5]Also, there should be some reconsideration of how to organise speaking and listening exams properly. [6]Why are schools unable to do these things, which private language centres have been doing? [7]As you can see, Tho, A, B, and C exams include these spoken skills as their testing components. [8]So, it practically doesn't make sense to say that those things can't be done. [9]The key point is how to organise such exams.

121. ***R:*** [1]*You think the Ministry of Education and Training will be able to make changes happen, if they try their best, won't they?*

122. **Ms. Na:** [1]They will. [2]They will have to be determined and know how to make investments.

123. ***R:*** [1]*I'd like to learn about the creation of the textbooks.* [2]*The adoption of the new approaches of the new textbooks, as you said earlier, was due to their being widely used, which referred to the context of society.* [3]*Apart from that reason, was there any other?*

124. **Ms. Na:** [1]I would not deny the fact that the leadership have their own vision, for to my knowledge they have their own institute of strategies, so called the Institute of Strategies and Programming, or to be accurate, the Institute of Strategies, which is Hanoi-located. [2]So, they defined the orientations for the creation of the textbooks and the ways of teaching. [3]They were assigned to do the job by the Ministry of Education and Training. [4]So, as the locomotive of society, they should know the needs of society and on such basis, they will outline such strategies.

125. ***R:*** [1]*So, were those initiatives of the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming or those of the textbook writers?*

126. **Ms. Na:** [1]Of the Institute, for the directive documents were written by this Institute, which it submitted to the deputy minister to sign off. [2]And the textbook writers would just need to carry out the directives.

127. ***R:*** [1]*So, how were the profiles of the users of these textbooks, including students and teachers, and understanding of practical teaching conditions were developed?* [2]*Did you textbook writers base yourselves on the two booklets that had the blue and pink covers or did you…?*

128. **Ms. Na:** [1]The so called profiles were mostly based on textbook writers' experience. [2]As there was experience only, it was complemented by field trips in order to seek to learn more about students and teachers. [3]It is clear that the textbook for Year 10 now is markedly different from the earlier versions. [4]After the field trips, we recognised that it would be impossible to teach the book if we just let it as it was. [5]With the feedback of various sources from different localities plus our observation from the field trips, we could see that we needed to lower its level and make adjustments to the composition of the textbook. [6]As far as I remember, initially a typical unit began with Lead-in or something like that, which was then followed by Speaking and Listening. [7]And Reading came somewhere later. [8]It was not until very later did we move Reading to the front, which is where it was now. [9]The composition of the textbook changed as a result of the feedback the textbook writers got from different sources. [10]After the field trips, it became clear that there should be some input provided in the beginning before some learning could take place. [11]It was clearly an adjustment triggered by reality.

129. ***R:*** [1]*How about a needs analysis to see what was liked or disliked by, for instance, students?*

130. **Ms. Na:** [1]This (analysis) was not done for sure. [2]We mainly based on Mr. H.'s opinions (*laughing*). [3]And earlier on those of Mr. L's as well. [4]They were both high school teachers. [5]We would just ask Mr. H. if students would find this interesting, for we were not high school teachers. [6]Mr. H.'s opinions were a reliable source for the textbook writers.

131. ***R:*** [1]*To your knowledge, the Institute of Educational Strategies and Programming didn't not carry out this needs analysis, did they?*

132. **Ms. Na:** [1]They just gave us directives, which we then carried out.

133. ***R:*** [1]*How about the profile of teachers regarding, for instance, their English level, their pedagogy, and their educational beliefs?*

134. **Ms. Na:** [1]We didn't have such information and we had to seek to learn it by ourselves. [2]Personally, I would say that teachers are now of notoriously variable backgrounds. [3]Some are graduates from universities of teacher education; many of them were 45 or 40 or older; quite a number are not high school English teachers by trade, meaning that they have not had formal study in English education. [4]They might have been upgraded from lower secondary education, meaning they had just done some in-service training and become high school teachers. [5]They might have taught subjects other than English and with several certificates they just collected, they become English teachers. [6]Consequently, the backgrounds of teachers and English levels varied tremendously. [7]I am very disappointed with the classes I've been teaching at the O. University regarding their level. [8]Their pronunciation is too bad to be intelligible, for the subject I'm teaching is language practice. [9]When I hear them speak English, I will say to myself, oh, my God, with this level, they won't be able to teach the textbooks. [10]There have been presentations they have to make in my class and my feeling is they will be hardly able to teach the textbooks.

135. ***R:*** [1]*Was there any investigation into the teaching and learning conditions regarding, for instance, the resources available?*

136. **Ms. Na:** [1]No there wasn't, either.

137. ***R:*** [1]*Such information wasn't available, was it?*

138. **Ms. Na:** [1]No, it wasn't.

139. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, did the textbooks closely adhere to the curriculum?*

140. **Ms. Na:** [1]Very closely. We were flexible in several places of course. [2]For example, a certain grammar point was prescribed as compulsory in a certain place in the ministerial documents but Mr. B. made it flexible, allowing it to be moved to a different location provided it was not missing in the textbooks. [3]My evaluation, if permitted, is that the curriculum is quite weak in the following way: It specifies topics and sub-topics mainly for the two skills reading and writing while listening and speaking were left open.

141. ***R:*** [1]*Were they made dependent on the other skills?*

142. **Ms. Na:** [1]No, they were left open. [2]And textbook writers had to invent by themselves (*laughing*).

143. ***R:*** [1]*So what they meant by 'theme-based' was…*

144. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, there was just the themes. [2]For example, *Technology,* or *Future Life,* or *Undersea World,* that was it. [3]As for *Reading,* however, there were specifications regarding the word limit and the sub-topics. [4]But there were no such specifications for *Speaking*. [5]In reference to our textbooks, we had language functions like 'complaint', 'agreement' and 'disagreement' in our speaking section, all of which are specified by the curriculum. [6]The textbook writers had to work together and come up with what was deemed appropriate with the topics specified for other sections.

145. ***R:*** [1]*So, there were specifications for the two sections Reading and Writing only, weren't there?*

146. **Ms. Na:** [1]They mainly had specifications for those two sections. [2]And for Grammar as well. [3]And they apparently left the other sections open. [4]They just asked to talk about a certain topic, and that was it. [5]For example, they just asked to talk about *Future Life* or *Technology,* which was not specification.

147. ***R:*** [1]*To your perception, the textbook writers created the content and what else?* [1]*I mean, you wrote the textbooks according to the specifications of the curriculum, so, what was the textbook writers' creativity?*

148. **Ms. Na:** [1]There were specifications of topics only. [2]How to develop the topics was totally up to textbook writers. [3]As we wrote the textbooks, we had to teach ourselves how to do it. [4]We did not have any training in textbook creation regarding what steps should be taken. [5]In fact, the writers of the other books got some training, in the United States but they were not among the writers of these textbooks. [6]Ms. Th. V and Ms. B. H. were among those who got the training in the United States but when they came back, they were not among writers of these textbooks.

149. ***R:*** [1]*Were they not invited?*

150. **Ms. Na:** [1]I don't know. [2]But the team led by H. D. who wrote the textbooks for Years 6, 7, 8, and 9, were among those trained overseas. [3]That's why we learned from the experience of our co-writers like Mr. B., Ms. H., Ms. Th., who were the writers of the former textbooks. [4]They led us through the writing process and we learned by doing. [5]I accumulated some experience from all this writing. [6]The Year 10 textbook was our first textbook so it was mainly concerned with providing facts. [7]The writers crammed into the textbook whatever they found interesting. [8]Later with the feedback we got, we trimmed our book. [9]Personally, I had attended several conferences held by Mr. T. at the University of Teacher Education evaluating our textbooks and those of the regular programme, which were also attended by Ms. H. and Ms. Th. [10]At such events, I happened to see some of my units were praised while some others were criticised. [11]So I sought to learn about my units and I could see that the units that were highly human were well received by learners and were considered learnable and interesting whereas those that mainly provided facts were not. [12]As far as I remember, when I first wrote the unit of the *Undersea World*, it had lots of information about different kinds of fish that I was very passionate about. [13]When the textbook came out, however, teachers complained a lot about it. [14]On the contrary, as for the Consolidation Unit, my *Special Education* was highly evaluated by the lecturers from the University of Teacher Education. [15]So, I questioned myself why this

unit was highly evaluated while the other one I was very passionate about was criticised. [16]And I withdrew some lessons for myself. [17]I changed my direction and later on my units accordingly were well received and got little criticism.

151. ***R:*** [1]*Whose feedback did the textbook writers receive?*

152. **Ms. Na:** [1]It came first from teachers of all high schools, normally those in institution where the textbooks were being trialed. [2]For only those who were using the trial copies were able to provide feedback. [3]The Education Publishing House also managed to get the feedback from the lecturers from the institutions of teacher education. [4]Besides, the Service of Education and Training also provided a collection of feedback on the textbooks every year…

153. ***R:*** [1]*Every year?*

154. **Ms. Na:** [1]Every year. [2]I mean it was available when the textbooks were being trialed. [2]Mr. Ni collected all the feedback and asked us textbook writers to read through and make adjustments for the textbooks wherever possible. [3]For the feedback we did not think was correct, we might put it aside and provide our explanation later. [4]Also, there was the committee of examiners, who asked us to make changes before they approved the textbooks.

155. ***R:*** [1]*What was the feedback mainly about?*

156. **Ms. Na:** [1]About language accuracy. [2]Also, they might say, for instance, that this unit was too difficult or had so few tasks. [3]I think that the background of the people who gave feedback determined what kind of feedback they would give. [4]High school teachers, for instance, tended to comment on language use, grammar, and the ratio of exercises. [5]The lecturers from institutions of teacher education seemed to have a higher vision. [6]They would comment whether the content of the textbooks was appropriate.

157. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think the feedback was highly useful or not?*

158. **Ms. Na:** [1]Highly useful. [2]I think the feedback was great. [3]And I propose there should be feedback on a regular basis, every year. [4]We should not have left the textbooks as they were when they first came out.

159. ***R:*** [1]*The budget allocated for that might have run out* (laughing)*,*

160. **Ms. Na:** (*Laughing*)

161. ***R:*** [1]*Given the current circumstances, each side has their own problems to solve and their own areas of interest.* [2]*For example, the Service of Education and Training want to make exams that are simple to be administered and appropriate with a large scale; local schools also have their own concerns, and teachers have their own concerns as well, for example their private classes.* [3]*What did you do as a textbook writer in order to reconcile the interests and wants of all sides?*

162. **Ms. Na:** [1]My concern was to test-run whether my unit would be useable by learners. [2]That means, I was interested in their level first of all. [3]Once it was assumed to meet the level, my next concern was whether it would be interesting, that means, whether they would like it. [4]The answer to this question was to be given by myself but when I presented my unit drafts to my co-writers, I would usually ask Mr. H. for his comment as I said before. [5]For example, if there was something that I was not sure would be appropriate with students' level, I would ask for the opinions of co-writers, especially those who were high school teachers. [6]So, my utmost interest was the level, followed by the interest of students, i.e. whether students of Years 11 and 12 would be interested in my units.

163. ***R:*** [1]*In the textbook creation process, did you take into account teachers and particularly the differences between teachers of various regions?*

164. **Ms. Na:** [1]It was done in the Teacher Book. [2]Basically, we followed the standards prescribed for the textbooks of the intensive programme but in the Teacher Book we advised teachers might want to consider their own classes and teach the textbooks

accordingly. [3]If the class was weak, teachers might just need to do this; and if the class was good enough, they might want to that.

165. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding students, what was done in order to bridge the gaps between students of urban vs. rural areas?*

166. **Ms. Na:** [1]In the beginning as we didn't know which textbooks would be launched for mass use, we textbook writers were asking ourselves whether our textbooks would be too difficult. [2]The targeted users were unclear. [3]However, we were cleared of the question when we learned that the textbooks of the regular programme would be for regular students and ours of the intensive programme would be used for advanced students. [4]For if there are regional differences, the availability of the two programmes is there to suit different levels. [5]If students of a certain region are at the average level only, they should choose to study with the textbooks of the regular programme; otherwise, the intensive programme would be their choice. [6]The existence of the textbooks of two programmes is itself a good thing because they will be there to meet different levels of students.

167. ***R:*** [1]*As you said before, cassette players are currently unavailable in some places.* [2]*So, what did the textbook writers do to deal with such a problem?* [3]*For it would possibly be a long time before rural schools could be equipped with cassette players.*

168. **Ms. Na:** [1]The textbook writers do not have the authority to solve that problem.

169. ***R:*** [1]*What I mean is what they might have done with their own textbooks.*

170. **Ms. Na:** [1]Tapes or discs are definitely required of listening lessons, and it's the minimum requirement. [2]According to regulations, every school should have such electrical equipment but the problem is they don't have enough, and that results in the unavailability of conditions for administering listening exams. [3]Imagine that a school has just two cassette/disc players, they will be unable to conduct listening exams for all classes. [4]But you know what, Th., let's talk about a school located quite nearby in Thu Duc that I visited during the field trips. [5]Too bad that I don't remember its name. [6]Its

equipment was inadequate; they didn't have enough cassette/disc players to administer listening exams. [7]It was once proposed that classrooms should be equipped with loudspeakers so the tape/disc could be played in the school board's or staff's room and students in all classrooms would be listening to the same tape/disc. [8]Many schools have been equipped with such a network of loudspeakers. [9]Instead of installing loudspeakers outside, [10]each classroom should have one so that announcements could be made through this network. [11]Loudspeakers do not cost much, do they? [12]But without cassette/disc players, listening lessons would be 'plainly' taught. [13]This solution I am talking about is feasible; the point is whether the leadership will be willing to invest. [14]It seems that's what the T. Kh. H. School is doing, for they don't have enough cassette/disc players.

171. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding your textbooks, could you evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in comparison with foreign publications such as* Headway *and* Interchange… [2]*Some people in the places I had visited questioned why foreign publications had not been brought into use.* [3]*Now, could you tell me your textbooks' strengths and weaknesses?*

172. **Ms. Na:** [1]Foreign publications are naturally much better in terms of language; our textbooks still sound very Vietnamese. [2]Our pictures are quite good but not so good as theirs, since some of ours are manually drawn while theirs are photographs. [3]Not only are their photos are admittedly beautiful and meaningful, the currency of their content is also better. [4]On the other hand, our textbooks have strengths. [5]The topics are closer to the lives of the Vietnamese people, and that's the very issue that is emphasised by the Ministry of Education and Training, that is, one of the key educational principles is to use language to talk about our country and our people. [6]If foreign publications were used, teachers would have to think hard in order to meet that requirement. [7]They would have to know how to design tasks that are close to the lives of the Vietnamese people. [8]Textbooks created by Vietnamese will be more Vietnamese. [9]There's always the flip side; if this is satisfied, their internationality will be reduced. [10]It has recently been proposed by the media that

foreign publications should be instead used. [11]If I had authority, I'd prefer to use foreign publications. [12]As was it the case before, *English for Today*, though perhaps not the best textbooks, had its strengths in the way that we could learn foreign culture materialised in the textbooks as well. [13]Nevertheless, if the same Vietnamese testing format continues to be applied and the circumstances of high schools remain like this, there will still be no success, even if *Headway* or *Lifelines* were used. [14]We can see a clear difference between our school classes and evening private classes. [15]As for the latter, they study three nights per week; that is six periods per week. [16]Meanwhile, the time allowed for English learning in schools is only three periods, which is half of the amount. [17]Worse, lessons have to be rushed through because of the timeline prescribed; they are expected to have covered a certain amount of the textbook by a certain time. [18]There is less flexibility than is the case at private language centres. [19]Besides, exams at private language centres are related to all the four skills whereas those at schools are just concerned with just that. [20]So, there wouldn't be any success even if *Headway* or *Lifelines* were taught. [21]With the same current teaching practices, the outcomes would remain the same no matter what foreign publications were brought into use. [22]Otheriwise, if conditions permitted, our textbooks would be successfully used.

173. ***R:*** [1]*So, the question is how textbooks are implemented; textbooks by themselves are merely…*

174. **Ms. Na:** [1]They're just means or tools.

175. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think there should be a time in the future that English textbooks should and need to incorporate foreign expertise?* [2]*It might be their involvement in the creation of textbooks or the editing, typesetting, or language revision?*

176. **Ms. Na:** [1]As far as I know, there've been exchanges with the overseas. [2]For example, the team of Q., Ng. and V. was sent abroad, such as Singapore and Thailand for training. [3]That means, the exchanges between publishers are to make our textbooks more beautiful

and better quality. [4]I don't know how the typesetting team in Hanoi is like but Ms. H. rated them higher than the one in Ho Chi Minh City. [5]Their design is at the level of foreign publications. [6]Looking at the textbooks for Years 10, 11, and 12 typeset by the Hanoi-located team, you can see something. [7]Their work is more beautiful than the work done here. [8]It might have been the same in terms of colours but their layout is better.

177. ***R:*** [1]*You mean the textbooks for Year 12?*

178. **Ms. Na:** [1]For all the three Years 10-12. It was up to the typesetting team.

179. ***R:*** [1]*What I mean is, some foreign expertise might be involved in the team of textbook writers, for instance, as a language advisor.*

180. **Ms. Na:** [1]It happened in fact. [2]As far as I know, the team leader of the textbooks for Years 6, 7, 8 and 9 said foreigners were invited to be examiners, but I'm not sure how true it was. [3]For our textbooks, there was no foreign expertise except for the recording, regarding which Mr. Ni asked foreigners to participate as readers of the transcripts to ensure the pronunciation accuracy. [4]When they read the script, they also gave comments on the language of our textbooks.

181. ***R:*** [1]*But regarding organised attempts…*

182. **Ms. Na:** [1]There were no organised attempts.

183. ***R:*** [1]*In the future if another set of textbooks is to be created, would you agree that the creation should involve foreign expertise as textbook writers?*

184. **Ms. Na:** [1]I think it would be good. [2]The problem is financial pay for them. [3]By the way, regarding the initial textbooks, I mean the ones created even before our trial copies, there were the so called BAVE materials, which were created by a certain Filipino woman. [3]So, she was a foreigner, not a Vietnamese textbook writer.

185. ***R:*** [1]*Some of them were Vietnamese.*

186. **Ms. Na:** [1]Is that right! I'm not sure. I just heard from Ms. H. that the writer was a Filipino or a Singaporean. [2]Later on, the BAVE books were used as the basis for our 'experimental' textbooks.

187. ***R:*** *[1]Right. [2]To sum up, do you have any idea or suggestion on the development and creation of textbooks after several years…*

188. **Ms. Na:** [1]In my opinion, the teacher training, no, I mean textbook writers should be provided some training. [2]It shouldn't have been the case that those who received textbook development training were someone and later on actual textbook writers were someone else. [3]That is typically the way it is in our country by which the leadership will go out to receive some training only to return and assign somebody else to do the writing. [4]It was clearly lack of continuity. [5]You might want to pick up some people to make a team of textbook writers, whom you should then send to training courses. [6]If that could not be done, there should be some advice from foreigners, who should be textbook writing experts. [7]They should be the team leader of a textbook or all the textbooks. [8]They should play the role of locomotive leading Vietnamese writers to create textbooks under their direction. [9]That's the cheapest and most effective way.

189. ***R:*** *[1]You would want them to be the team leader or just a language adviser?*

190. **Ms. Na:** [1]They should be given the position of team leader. [2]Regarding language use, it'd good enough to have them as decision-makers. [3]This way of doing would be more economical than sending four or five textbook writers overseas. [4]We would just need one person, who would be the director. [5]It'd be just like the construction of bridges by which foreign engineers are here to transfer technology to our local engineers.

191. ***R:*** *[1]Regarding the examination of the textbooks, do you think it was satisfactory enough?*

192. **Ms. Na:** [1]Regarding the examination, I don't think it was reasonable. [2]First, there were all sorts of feedback from all sorts of committees. [3]For example, regarding the

textbook for Year 10, the examination committee said there were so many exercises in the book and they had to be reduced. [4]As a result, one grammar point came to be taught in two instead of three units like before. [5]When it came to the textbook for Year 11, a now different committee, by this time Ms. H. D. had withdrawn, said there were so few exercises and they had to be increased (*laughing*). [6]Different committees had different comments and in fact, not all the committee members were capable of examining our textbooks. [7]There were language issues that were so clear cut but the examination committee's calibre was questionable to examine our books.

193. ***R:*** [1]*It seems some of them did not know English?*

194. **Ms. Na:** [1]I don't know.

195. ***R:*** [1]*I'm serious. I can see…*

196. **Ms. Na:** [1]Or maybe they knew just a little.

197. ***R:*** [1]*Yeah, they could have been assigned a secretarial position (in the committee).*

198. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right. [2]What's more is the following problem, which I had been unaware of until later on. [3]The payment for the examination was too low. [4]For example, Ms. Th. Y. from the University of Teacher Education asked how much the remuneration would be when asked by the Education Publishing House to be an examiner of the textbooks. [5]She then declined to accept the offer when learning it was just 50,000VND or 100,000VND (Researcher's note: Equal AU$2.5-5, rate of exchange October 2011). The capable people would refuse to be involved. [4]So, the point I'd like to emphasise is the undue payment, which entailed the difficulty of getting capable examiners. [5]There were also those who did not care about money, like Ms. Th. H. from the University of Teacher Education, who perhaps didn't care whether the payment was just 50,000VND or 100,000VND, but there are not many people with such a passion. [6]Only those with such a passion will be able to do the job well.

199. ***R:*** [1]*As you said, such people are not many.* [2]*But many else would like to be involved in the committee.*

200. **Ms. Na:** [1]But not all are of the required calibre.

201. ***R:*** [1]*That's why.* [2]*Some did not know English.*

202. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, you're right, Tho.

203. ***R:*** [1]*Many people were competing for the well-paid position, aiming to be appointed as a secretary.* [2]*But their role was very important, because the secretary would take notes of the examiners' discussion which we as textbook writers later had to read as feedback about the textbooks.* [3]*We would not have a chance to read what the secretary missed in the feedback reports they wrote up..*

204. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, they were unable to collate the examiners' feedback, not to mention the abilities to examine the textbooks. [2]But they forced us to do what they had told us to do before they approved our textbooks. [3]I had to follow their feedback in an upset mood because I felt it was clearly unsatisfactory. [4]There were instances I had to make changes as required by the examination committee only to find teachers attending my training sessions asking why not keeping things as they had been in the trial versions. [5]Those teachers said the original tasks were more interesting, but I had had to make changes as required by the examination committee (*laughing*).

205. ***R:*** [1]*What do you think the teacher preparation should have done?*

206. **Ms. Na:** [1]My opinion is that the ways teacher training was done were both a waste of money and ineffective. [2]I believe there should be more cooperation from the teachers and educational institutions that should be ready to accept hardship. [3]We should do as what was done in the health care system. [4]That is, a number of leading hospitals trained their staff who they later sent to provincial areas. [5]These staff conducted on-spot training for the local staff for several months and came back. [6]What would happen if the same thing were done in education? [7]I mean, we would send our well-trained staff to regional areas

for a while. [8]It would be the best way. [9]And it would be the same as my opinion about textbook writing, by which a foreigner should be here to transfer technology. [10]I think it would be the cheapest and quickest way. [11]What is needed is the staff from teacher education institutions should accept hardship and do it.

207. ***R:*** [1]*Regarding the deployment of the textbook, do you think it was well done?* [2]*What else should have been done for better mass use of the textbook, particularly for the methodology adopted by the textbook?*

208. **Ms. Na:** [1]As the aim of teacher training was good enough yet the implementation was not, I was wondering if teacher training like that should continue to be done. [2]For the training should be ultimately for local teachers, not for core teachers as intermediaries. [3]We might do it in the way I have just outlined, step by step, textbook writers training the very local teachers every summer. [4]It might be done like what happened last summer. [5]After the training in Saigon, and then Do Son, Mr. B. and I flew back to Kien Giang to do the training for local teachers there. [6]I don't know how they did it but Kien Giang worked out the training plans with the Ministry of Education and Training who assigned Mr. B. from South Vietnam to undertake the teacher training. [7]So, Mr. B. asked me to go with him, for Mr. H. had something else to do in Hanoi. [8]So we went to Kien Giang straight from Do Son. [9]The training was attended by all teachers of Kien Giang Province.

209. ***R:*** [1]*Were the attendees Kien Giang teachers only?*

210. **Ms. Na:** [1]Kien Giang teachers only. [2]Mr. B. and I were there for four or five days. [3]We did what we did for the other teacher training, but it was direct from the textbook writers to local teachers. [4]I don't know how Kien Giang was able to make it happen, while other provinces were not.

211. ***R:*** [1]*Did it happen last year?*

212. **Ms. Na:** [1]Last summer, July last year or thereabouts. [2]But the payment for the trainers was done by the Ministry of Education and Training, not from the provincial budget, you know.

213. ***R:*** [1]*Really?*

214. **Ms. Na:** [1]Right, the province just paid for our accommodation and meals. [1]The Ministry of Education and Training took care of the pay and airfare for the trainers.

215. ***R:*** [1]*What could you observe when Kien Giang teachers had a chance to attend the training by the very textbook writers themselves?*

216. **Ms. Na:** [1]It was better, for sure. [2]Several days later, they even… because many of them were my former students. [3]Kien Giang used to have a teacher training cooperation project with my college of teachers' training. [4]I had a quite a number of students there in Kien Giang. [5]They exclaimed it was the first time they had known what textbook use training was like (*laughing*).

217. ***R:*** (laughing) [1]*I'm done with the interview, thank you very much.*

Appendix Q.3

Interview notes– Textbook Writer 3

Interviewee: Mr. Uan[35]

Remarks: This interview was conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher.

R: Researcher

(A. About the books and their use)

1. ***R:*** [1]*How different are the principles (of EFL learning and teaching) functioning as the foundations of these new books from those of the previous books, if known?*
2. **Mr. Uan:**
   - [1]The new textbooks are (i) mainly of the communicative approach, (ii) theme-based, and (iii) spirally-organised.
   - [1]In the Vietnamese context: reading and writing are still considered as part of the communicative approach, and some attention is paid to listening and speaking, the two skills deemed insignificant in the older textbooks.
   - [1]Older textbooks:
     - grammar-based, but not sure what approach was adopted, not exactly the grammar-translation method, direct method, or audio-lingualism;
     - apparently based on a combination of English teaching experience; the guidelines are unclear.
3. ***R:*** [1]*Why were the changes needed – according to what you may have heard or to your own judgment?* [2]*Do you agree with them?*
4. **Mr. Uan:**
   - [1]The announcement was: "Foreign language education is a key area that has been left neglected for a long time". [2]Graduates from high school, in fact, are unable to speak

[35]Pseudonyms have been used to substitute for the real name of the interviewee and for other content that might identify them.

despite 12 years of education. [3]This is a need driven by society, and not by education itself. [4]I completely agree with directives and guidance on classroom teaching, which the local Service of Education and Training have closely adhered to. [5]But the changes are not perceived to have actually taken place because:

- [6]Language learning requires an environment for practice which is now unavailable in our context. [7]Lessons keep going on in the classes yet what‟s learned there is not useable elsewhere. [8]In Singapore, for instance, what is learned in the classroom is readily applicable outside.
- [9]The classroom time allowed: is 3 periods per week, which is not enough for good practice.
- [10]Textbook use training is still inadequate for teachers, who are consequently yet to understand textbook writers‟ vision of how the textbooks are going to be used.
- [11]Teachers are using the new textbooks in the old way, focusing on Reading & Grammar.
- [12]Teachers said they could not teach the textbooks because of limited classroom contact time and poor classroom management skills. ([13]Please note Writing has been neglected in the classroom, for the textbook is too ambitious and teachers do not have time to cover all.)

5. ***R:*** [1]*Do you perceive any gaps between your books (in reference to the aims and objectives, targeted outcomes, implied classroom procedures) and the context of use?* [2]*In particular, discuss this question in terms of the readiness of teachers, students, and the teaching and learning context:*
6. **Mr. Uan:** *Regarding teachers:*
   - [1]The teacher quality is not good enough: a majority, roughly more than half lack practical experience. [2]Causes: teacher training is ineffective: The Ministry of Education and Training invited "core teachers" to the ministerial training where they

had 4-5 days to listen to lectures and watch sample teachings for which there were not genuine students (ie. teachers only) following that, the "core teachers" came back to teach their local colleagues.

- [3]The very teaching capabilities of teachers are not adequate. [4]Graduates from teacher education institutions have good language command but lack in teaching experience. [5]New graduates are embarrassed with reality.

7. *Regarding Students*

- [1]Students have interest (in the textbooks) but as they move into higher years, the textbook units turn "dry" for merely providing information, which students can obtain anywhere else, not necessarily from textbooks.
- [2]Students can still develop their language without textbooks. [3]I have seen students chatting online, demonstrating their good English communication. [4]They were able to use chatting short forms, indicating they could communicate effectively.
- [5]The textbooks are too easy for some students and too difficult for others due to differences in their English levels. [6]There should be flexible sections so that teachers could customise the materials by themselves. [7]At the moment, teachers still cover all that is there in the textbooks.

8. *Teaching and learning conditions*

- [1]The conditions are all right now but the problem is teachers‟ lack of resourcefulness. [2]As an example, many have been unable to teach the unit of *Sports* really interesting.
- [3]The class size is not small enough to conduct communicative activities in the meantime, the „ideally small‟ class in the present conditions has as many as 40 students.

9. ***R:*** [1]*To your understanding (e.g. from your field trips to schools), are the books being used in the way they were visualized to be used during your process of writing the books?*

10. **Mr. Uan:**

- [1]Having observed classroom lessons, I could see teachers haven‟t taught the textbooks as they were envisioned to be taught by textbook writers.
    i. [2]Reading is still taught in the traditional ways, that is teaching vocabulary and then translation.
    ii. [3]Writing: Students are asked to write but their papers are not marked due to lack of time, which gradually erodes their interest.
    iii. [4]Speaking: is taught in the classroom but there is not chance or need to speak English outside the classroom → what was envisioned by textbook writers did not take place.
    iv. [5]Listening: Teachers‟ teaching skills aren‟t too bad but the question is, "What‟ that for?" because there‟s no such a need for English listening outside the classroom. [6]Listening is also part of tests and exams but the teaching of listening is perfunctory rather meaningful. [7]Teachers teach listening just because the leadership asked them to do so.
- [8]What textbook writers have had to offer with the textbooks is good but it is beyond their accountability concerning what really takes place in the classroom. [9]The effectiveness of the teaching of the textbooks is even one step further beyond their authority.
- [10]Target outcomes might need to be reduced. [11]In terms of writing, for instance, it might be just enough to expect Year 10 students to write complete sentences.

11. ***R:*** *[1]Do you think the users of the books, the teachers first and foremost, have been acceptably informed of the implied nature of the books and the ways of teaching with them (e.g. teachers' and students' assumed roles) by means of the Teacher Book, training sections, instructive documents, etc.?*
12. **Mr. Uan:**

- [1]The textbooks are basically all right but teachers will need more instruction on how to use the new textbooks. [2]The pay for trainers to the training sessions organised by the Ministry of Education and Training was still meagre.
- [3]Textbook use training was defective: There were no genuine students in the sample teachings; classroom teaching involves genuine teachers and students.
- [4]There was no needs analysis; textbook writers appeared to make guesses based on their assumptions.

13. ***R:*** [1]*What else do think could have done about the enhancement of the link between the writing and the use of the books?*
14. **Mr. Uan:**
    - [1]Teacher training for the use of the textbooks is to be better oragnised.
    - [2]Feedback: Textbook writers might need to clearly acknowledge the feedback they‟ve received, at least regarding the feedback from teachers, who have always complained their feedback, particularly concerning the textbooks of the regular programme, has not been taken into consideration. [3]At least, there should be explanations why there have been or there haven‟t been changes in response to teachers‟ feedback. [4]I am not in a position to provide these explanations to teachers. [5]So far, there‟s hasn‟t been a channel of communication between textbook writers and teachers, and this should be established by the Ministry of Education and Training.
    - [6] My local Service of Education and Training would have liked to organise talks between teachers and textbook writers but there was no budget available.
15. ***R:*** [1]*To what extent do you think the current practices of assessment (from classroom assessment and testing to graduation examinations to university entrance examinations) affect the EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam?*
16. **Mr. Uan:**
    - [1] Seriously; In Year 12, only reading and grammar are taught.
    - [2] The local Service of Education and Training is unable to organise speaking exams. [3] The Service is now the organiser of year 12 exams but neither listening nor speaking

is included as testing components. [4] The two components are included in exams for Years 10 and 11, which are organised by individual schools.

- [5]Quite pleased with the quality of exams made by the Service in spite of some language mistakes, which are grammar-based.

(B. About the process of writing the books)

17. ***R:*** [1]*The creation of the books: (a) Would you kindly describe briefly the context in which the books were incepted and then introduced into use?*

18. **Mr. Uan:**

- [1]The creation of the textbooks was mainly driven by society. [2] Before the creation of the textbooks, there had already been supplementary teaching materials used, for example, *Countdown* and *Knockdown.*
- [3]If I had a right to choose, I‟d opt for the use of foreign publications for their good quality printing, good organisation, and trial.

19. ***R:*** [1] *The creation of the books: (b) How clearly were the profiles of the target users (students and teachers) and the context of use of the books drawn at the outset?*

20. **Mr. Uan:**

- *Students: age, English proficiency, needs, wants:* [1] Students have been taken into account and there are thus several topics appropriate for them. [2] Overall, however, the materials have not well responded to social developments regarding students‟ interests and hobbies → still unable to ‟explode students. [3] Students‟ profiles have been made but there‟s not been consideration of contexts of use, thus failing to have communicative environments → ineffective.
- *Teachers: English proficiency, methodology, ELT beliefs, their context:* [4]The textbooks might not have had enough consideration of teachers whose age range is 22-60. [5]It‟s a long time since many of them graduated. [6]Their teaching has been shaped, apart from experience, by what they have been exposed to. [7] All these have

resulted in differences in teachers‟ use of the textbook. [8]These differences could be (partially) bridged by teacher training.

- *Context: resources available (e.g. library, teaching facilities), class size, time allocation, advantages and disadvantages of various regions:* [9]It‟s OK. [10]Textbook writers were aware of the gaps but they were ordered to create textbooks to be used in the next 10-15 years, and their vision was that of the future, not merely of the present. [11]The textbooks were OK regarding teaching and learning conditions.

21. ***R:*** [1]*How close to the frame curriculum were the books written?* [2]*In other words, how much space is there for the writers' creativity?*
22. **Mr. Uan:**
    - [1]It‟s OK. [2]There‟s a difference between two sets of textbooks: Those of the intensive programme allow more creativity while those of the regular programme merely provide information → boring. [3]The excerpts of the intensive programme textbooks allow further discussion in classroom lessons.
23. ***R:*** [1] *All though the construction of the books, what sources of feedback and comments did you manage to get from?* [2]*What were they about?*[3] *How helpful were they?*
24. **Mr. Uan:**
    - [1]From teachers but textbook writers did not pay adequate attention to this feedback.
    - [2]Committee of Examiners: What they did was mainly „weeding‟, they have not yet touched upon broad issues. [3]Examiners were not trained to be examiners. Worse, examiners had not been ware of textbook writing requirements.
25. ***R:*** [1]*What did you do, if anything, to reconcile the interest and preferences of different stakeholders?*
26. **Mr. Uan:** *Concerning leadership:*
    - [1]It was very difficult for the textbook writers; they should have been released from the constraints originated from the leadership and rooted in the organisation of the textbook creation.
    - [2]The curriculum had not been thought of until the textbooks had been created.

- [3]There should have been needs analysis to ask for different opinions so that the textbook writing could be scientifically done.
- [4]The curriculum could have been outlined as a draft for textbook writers to comment on before its final revision.
- [5]The textbooks were trialled on a narrow scope → limited doability

27. *Concerning teachers (in reference to regional differences, their teaching methodologies, their attitudes to the innovation, etc).*
    - [1]There"s not much worried about teachers" attitudes to the new ways promoted by the textbooks but many things more are to be done to translate those attitudes to action. [2]For example, teachers might need to put away Asian cultural traditions when they are in the class, where they will need to be „actors/actresses". [3]Many teachers will yet to be overcome their inertia, which are still strong.
    - [4]The teacher training courses are not updated even at institutions of teacher education. [5]Teacher students still find the new textbooks embarrassing. [6]Teaching practicum has not been well organised. [7]There need to be personnel who are able to teach these textbooks effectively, which should be done by the collaboration of the services of education and training, institutions of teacher education and schools.

28. *Concerning students (in reference to their levels, needs, interests, purely Vietnamese speaking environment, etc,)*
    - [1]Very difficult. [2]I"m myself very concerned reading in the media that students are "unable to speak English after learning the language for ten years" but there is no environment for students to use English, and thus no motivation for them.
    - [3]For example: People do not need to be able to speak English for their bus transportation or shopping. [4]Though improved, textbook tasks are not meaningful.
    - [5]Foreign publications dare to incorporate „the authenticity" of the language.

29. *Concerning teaching and learning context (in terms of audio-video components, teaching facilities, resources for lesson planning, testing formatting, etc.)*

- *Testing and assessment*: [1]The multiple-choice exams should be abolished. [2]Students are very weak in communication at the moment. [3]People will teach to exams. [4]It will very difficult for the Ministry of Education and Training to give speaking exams and for listening testing to duplicate tapes/discs for exams in the whole the country.
- *Audio – video components and teaching facilities*: [5]Enough but the quality is a problem. [6]The recordings aren‟t authentic enough despite the voices of American speakers because there‟s no murmuring of water or train-whistle, just to name a few. [7]Even the materials produced by the British Council aren‟t good enough.

30. Concerning other stakeholders (the media and parents):

- *The media*: [1]There should have been thorough research of the question to be tabled for discussion in the media. [2]What the media are doing is to raise the question while they have not thoroughly understood them. [3]They were right in some of the questions they raised but the extent to which they did was too far.
- *Parents:* [4]Parents are always interested in their children‟s exam success, a problem difficult to be cleared in the short time. [5]In Vietnam, parents‟ orientation to education is to bring about better life; few would like their children to take vocational training.

(C. Other issues)

31. ***R:*** [1]*Would you mind discussing several* ***strengths*** *and* ***weaknesses*** *of the locally produced EFL textbooks like yours to foreign-related commercial counterparts like* Headway, Interchange, Interactions, *and* Cutting Edge?

32. **Mr. Uan:**

- [1]Strengths: Close to Vietnamese culture. [2]Meeting the „standard‟ requirements of politics of Vietnam. [3]For example, a unit on scouting in *English 8* has been requested not to be taught.
- [4]Weaknesses: Very clear: Not so „systematic‟ as foreign publications; unnatural language; not using English of everyday life. [5]In terms of methodology: not consistent. [6]In the Teacher‟s Book: no explanation provided regarding that

methodology is being used, the guidance provided in the Teacher‟s Book: ineffective, incomplete, mainly concerned with the accuracy of language.

33. ***R:*** [1]*Do you think that some time in the future we should use EFL textbooks jointly created with foreign publishers (in terms of writing, editing, printing) or even their ready-made publications?*

34. **Mr. Uan:**

- [1]My preference for a long time: Choose a set of foreign materials that are good enough and culturally familiar and politically correct. [2]The use of those books could be complemented by teacher training.
- [3]Just as an example: *Streamline,* though outdated, is very systematic.
- 4Vietnamese materials do not have updates like foreign publication. [5]For example, Vietnamese textbooks talk about the 22nd SEA Games while foreign publications about Nadal and Beckham, etc.
- [6]With the participation of foreign expertise: The language will become natural and they will help us with the „weeding‟ of mistakes. [7]If there is some collaboration with giant publishers, it would be even better. [8]This collaboration is to be concerned with the teacher training and tape/ disc recording.

35. ***R:*** [1]*What else might you like to share with me?* [2]*Might we, for instance, talk more about these issues?*

36. **Mr. Uan:** *The construction and creation of the books*:

- [1]There should be an English-speaking environment for students to use of English.
- [2]Teachers need to be regularly trained to master how to use the textbooks.
- [3]The textbooks need to be constantly updated and have its authenticity and language naturalness increased.
- [4]More broadly, there should be government strategic plans concerning teachers, the media, and creating social impact.

37. *The examination and improvement of the textbooks*

- [1]The evaluating of textbooks was not methodically done. [2]Examiners need to test textbooks on genuine students, which is yet to be feasible. [3]Their only concern now was with the accuracy of language use, the allocation of teaching content, teacher guidance. [4]They couldn‟t have been more.
- [5]The final revision of the textbook draft: It is to be done not just once; textbooks will need constantly revising and updating.

38. The teacher development

- [1]Preparation need to be done in terms of their capabilities, attitude, and mentality.
- [2]The teaching of reading, as an example, is currently following the traditional ways: reading the excerpts, teaching vocabulary (in too much detail), and making questions. [3]Regarding teaching speaking, information gaps are hard to bring into play because there is no genuine interest or need to bridge the gaps; also, there‟s inadequate interaction between students.

39. The national deployment of the books

- [1]What has been done is reasonable.
- [2]But, the decision that exams are to be based on the textbooks of the regular programme will leave the textbooks of the intensive programme eliminated. [3]With the current prescribed content coverage for exams, many people will abandon the textbooks of the intensive programme, thereby reducing the number of their users.

Thank you very much for the interview

Appendix R
Requirements of knowledge and skills of related sections of Units 14-15, *English 10 – Intensive Programme*
(Case Study 2: Urban Selective High School (USHS))

Remarks: This appendix has been created by the researcher based on his analyses of the sections concerned in the Student Book and the Teacher Book of English 10 – Intensive Programme *(Tu Anh et al. 2006, 2008).*

UNIT 14: THE WORLD CUP				
Section		**Task**	**Attainment Targets**	
			Knowledge	**Skills**
READING	**Pre-reading**	a) Describe what can be seen in a picture and name one of the players	Knowledge about football	Describing
		b) Answer questions about football		Speaking
	While-reading	a) Decide whether the statements provided are true/false) based on the reading passage	The football World Cup tournament and related information based on the passage provided	Skimming
		b) Answer comprehension questions		Text reading comprehension
		b) Complete provided sentences with words from a reading passage	Football vocabulary	Reading comprehension of sentences
	Post-reading	d) Tell partners about football tournaments in Vietnam	Football tournaments in Vietnam	Speaking (*group work*)

LISTENING	**Pre-listening**	a) Tell what games are shown in the pictures provided	Sports	
	While- listening	b) Match reports of athletes at their games with the correct pictures	Sports	Listening for general information
		c) Complete gapped sentences with appropriate words from the reports.	Sports words	Listening for specific information
		d) Listen to a game commentary and answer comprehension questions	Basketball and related language knowledge	Listening for specific information
	Post-listening	e) Report on a sporting event	Sporting event	Writing a report about a sporting event
SPEAKING	**Pre-speaking**	a) Describe pictures of sport games (with prompts and an example provided)	Different sport games including basket, football, hurdles, cycling, tennis, volleyball, table tennis	Speaking about pictures of sport games (*pair work*)
	While-speaking	b) Describe how the games in a) are played.	How basket, football, hurdles, cycling, tennis, volleyball, and/or table tennis are played	Speaking about how the games are played *(group work*)
	Post-speaking	c) Talk about one's favourite sport and its benefits	The favourite sport and its benefits	Speaking about one's favourite sport and its benefits (*group work, free practice*)

WRITING	**Pre-writing**	a) Ask and answer about the announcement provided	The messages of announcement	Asking and answering based on the announcement provided using *Wh*- questions (*pair work*)
	While-writing	b) Write an announcement of a sporting event or an activity in school	A sporting event or an activity in a school	Writing an announcement about that sporting event or activity
	Post-writing	c) Read classmates' announcements and report to the class	The messages of classmates' announcements and announcement writing	Reading comprehension and presenting
LANGUAGE FOCUS	**Word Study**	a) Complete gapped sentences with the correct words (provided) in the correct forms	(1) Meanings of and differences between the words provided, especially between *beat* and *defeat* (2) Derivational (and inflectional) forms of the words provided	Reading comprehension of the sentences provided
		b) Locate parts of a football field with the words provided	Football field and related vocabulary	Locating different parts of a football field
	Grammar	a) Check phrases beginning with *to* + base form of verb that express purposes	*To* + base form of verb expressing purposes *vs. to* + base form of verb as a modifier	Reading comprehension of the sentences provided
		b) Rewrite the sentences provided with *to* + base form of verb phrases as modifiers	Reducing relative clauses with *to* + base form of verb phrases as modifiers	Reading comprehension of the sentences provided and sentence building

UNIT 15: THE PACIFIC RIM				
Section		**Task**	**Attainment Targets**	
			Knowledge	**Skills**
READING	**Pre-reading**	a) Identify the names of the continents on which lie the Pacific Rim countries	Names of the continents concerned The Pacific Rim countries	Locating continents and countries
		b) Tell the names of the countries whose flags are provided	Flags of the countries concerned Names of the countries concerned	Speaking *(pair work)*
		c) Tell the names of the capital cities of the countries in b)	Names of the capital cities of the countries concerned	Obtaining the information required in reference materials
	While-reading	a) Complete the table with demographical information from the reading text about Australia, Canada, Japan, and Singapore	Demographics about the four countries as presented in the reading text	Skimming
		b) Find the words in the reading text that are synonyms with the provided words	The words provided and their synonyms in the reading text (and other words that might be similar)	Scanning
		c) Answer comprehension questions about the reading text	Understanding of the comprehension questions	Skimming, scanning, and critical reading

LANGUAGE FOCUS	**Word study**	a) Complete the table with demographical information about Australia, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, and New Zealand, etc.	Demographics about the countries concerned regarding their capital cities, people, and languages	Looking for the information required in reference materials (*pair work*)
		b) Complete the sentences provided with the appropriate words from the table	Understanding the sentences to be completed Vocabulary needed to complete the sentences	Scanning
	Grammar	a) Complete the sentences provided by using correct degrees of comparison of adjectives	Comparisons using adjectives Understanding the sentences provided Vocabulary needed to complete the sentences	Writing sentences expressing comparisons
		b) Write sentences comparing the history, area, and population of Tokyo, Mexico, City, and Toronto based on the information provided in the Speaking section	Comparisons using adjectives Adjectives required to compare the cities in terms of their history, area, and population	Writing sentences expressing comparisons