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**CAN I TEACH THESE STUDENTS?**  
**A CASE STUDY OF VIETNAMESE TEACHERS' SELF-  
EFFICACY IN RELATION TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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by  
**PHAN THI TUYET NGA**



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## ABSTRACT

The study looked at factors that influenced the self-efficacy in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) of a group of university teachers in Vietnam. Previous studies yielded contradictory results regarding the sources of self-efficacy information. Very little empirical research on the potential role of cultural factors on self-efficacy and on teachers' self-efficacy in EFL contexts has been done. Researchers disagree on whether participating in a new setting can enhance teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, this study explored the relationship between Vietnamese teachers' discourses of effective teaching practices and their self-efficacy beliefs, the influence of Vietnamese culture and context on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, and whether participating in the research led to a change in the self-efficacy beliefs of the teacher participants and of myself as researcher.

The research took the form of a qualitative case study. Participants were eight university teachers of the English language at a technical university in Vietnam. Data collection lasted six months. Data collection tools included focus group discussions, individual interviews, journaling, and observations. An inductive coding process and thematic analysis were used for analysing data.

Findings indicate that social persuasion was the most influential source of self-efficacy information. The study shows that different sources of self-efficacy information interacted with one another to influence the two dimensions of self-efficacy. Besides, it appears that teachers' understanding of a number of environment and workplace factors appeared to constrain some teachers into adopting the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) approach and possibly reduced their self-efficacy in adapting a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)-oriented approach. After participating in the study, the teaching approaches of study teachers and my own approaches seemed to be more CLT-oriented although most of us were characterised by a low sense of self-efficacy in adapting this approach in the Vietnamese classrooms. I also developed an enhanced sense of self-efficacy in doing the thesis.

Findings suggest that several aspects of Vietnamese culture, e.g. the concept of face, are likely to have influenced the way the study teachers selected, weighted

and interpreted efficacy-building information. There were certain features of context, e.g. the state of leadership practices, which may have affected what constituted sources of self-efficacy information and how they operated. In addition, it is plausible that changes in context, e.g. teaching different kinds of students, led to a change in the way the teachers and I weighed and selected self-efficacy information. Self-reflection, self-doubt and self-regulation were other factors causing fluctuations in the study teachers' and my self-efficacy.

My study contributes to a widening understanding of how different aspects of culture can impact on self-efficacy. It provides examples to challenge the claim that the self-efficacy of experienced teachers is stable and the widespread view that a negative sense of self-efficacy induces individuals to give up and make less effort. The study shows the relationship between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and their discourses of EFL instruction, i.e. their self-efficacy in using different aspects of a communicative approach fluctuated at different stages of the study. The study points to the need to improve leadership practice and teaching conditions at the faculty and university. Preparing teachers for regulation strategies, encouraging them to work collectively, and offering more professional development programs are likely to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy among teachers.

It would be useful if future research could focus more on classroom observations to avoid the reliance on self-report data. More studies on the influence of culture on teacher self-efficacy with an inclusion of scales to measure different cultural factors are needed. Longitudinal studies are desirable in understanding changes in teacher self-efficacy under the influence of context.

To the memory of my older sister, Dr. Phan Thị Thanh Hằng,  
a brave mother and woman

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I ignore these [lazy] students or I forbid them from attending exams. I'm sure I can do nothing to them. I think that I can't teach them. I'm not a saint to do impossible things. (NHUNG)

When students are not willing to learn, although we try a number of ways to teach them, we get nothing back. (ANH)

There was a supervisor who often stood behind my classroom window and stared into the classroom. I felt he was watching me and wondering if I was not teaching .... I felt irritated, uncomfortable and less concentrated on teaching. I lost my motivation to teach. (HUNG)

I know for sure that if I have much time I can teach better. I am so busy [with my kids and housework]. I know that for this topic, teaching that way will be more effective but I have no time to review. I know that way will be better but I have no time so I get into a teaching rut. (MY)

The teachers who made the comments above teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) at a university in Vietnam. They are complaining that students' learning attitudes and constraints either at university or at home make them feel ineffective in teaching the English language. In academic literature, teacher self-efficacy, defined as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233), has been considered to be closely related to a number of academic aspects, including student learning and teachers' teaching practice. For example, teachers with a high sense of efficacy will be more likely to form challenging teaching goals. They may devote more class time to academic activities and less time to discipline (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy work more willingly with students who are having difficulties, invest considerable effort in finding appropriate teaching materials and activities, perform better, and probably remain committed to their work (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

In contrast, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy often avoid challenging tasks, for example, teaching struggling students. They put lesser effort into or give up on tasks which they believe that they cannot achieve (Bandura, 1997). This is because these teachers often consider teaching challenges to be threats and see few opportunities for success in the environment. Teachers with a diminished sense of self-efficacy doubt their teaching ability and tend to blame unsuccessful experiences for things out of their control (Bandura, 1993). They are, therefore, more subject to stress and depression (Bandura, 1993, 1997). According to this body of literature, the Vietnamese teachers in the examples above are displaying a low sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL. Because of the value conferred by teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy, it is vital to understand which factors in the environment Vietnam EFL teachers take into account to construct their self-efficacy in order to find ways of fostering a heightened sense of self-efficacy among them.

In Vietnamese literature, the poor quality of teaching and learning English in the university language class setting was highlighted in a number of papers (Tran & Baldauf, 2007; Vu, 2007a). Studies have been done to suggest how to help Vietnamese students learn the English language better (Phan, 2009; Phan & Phan, 2010; Tran, 2007). However, none of them explored EFL teachers' beliefs in their capability to teach English and what should be done to help them to be more self-efficacious. Therefore, I set out to conduct a study exploring EFL teachers' self-efficacy and factors that foster it in the Vietnamese context. It was expected that the study might inform teacher development in Vietnam with a view to improving the quality of English teaching and learning.

### **1.1. Thesis aims and research questions**

The primary aim of my study was to understand factors that influence Vietnamese teachers' constructions of self-efficacy in teaching EFL. To achieve this aim, three research objectives were articulated:

- How Vietnamese teachers define effective EFL teaching instruction and whether there is a relationship between teachers' discourses of effective EFL teaching and their sense of self-efficacy.

- How Vietnamese culture and context influence teachers' sense of self-efficacy.
- Whether participating in the research affects the self-efficacy of both the participating teachers and myself as a researcher.

The following questions guided the present study:

1. What are the discourses of effective EFL teaching subscribed to by the study teachers?
2. What are the day-to-day experiences of teachers that influence their sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
3. What are the influences that appear to boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers? What are the influences that appear to undermine it?
4. What role do teachers' self-perceptions of their own English competence play in influencing their self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
5. What is the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the discourse(s) of effective EFL teaching they subscribe to?
6. What are the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants as a result of the self-reflection process engaged in in the course of the research?

The study involved eight EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam. It employed a qualitative approach with a case study design and multi-data gathering tools: individual interviews, focus group discussions, journaling and observation. It was hoped that findings from the study would have implications for teacher self-efficacy theory and research as discussed in the next section.

## **1.2. Significance of the study**

Teacher self-efficacy has been investigated widely in the literature and is considered to “stand on the verge of maturity” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 202). However, I consider that my study will contribute to the current self-efficacy literature for reasons explained below.

Klassen's (2004b) review of previous teacher self-efficacy studies which investigated self-efficacy from across-cultural perspective pointed out that very

little empirical research on the potential role of cultural factors on self-efficacy has been done. Findings from some cross-cultural research highlighted that people's psychological processes of self-efficacy beliefs are contingent on certain dimensions of culture, e.g. collectivism and individualism and power distance. People from collectivist cultures tend to rate their self-efficacy lower than people from individualist cultures but the lower self-efficacy beliefs do not impede their performance (Mau, 2000). Self-efficacy beliefs are more other-oriented than self-oriented for people in non-Western cultures (Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999; Kim & Park, 2006). Although some researchers are suggesting that the impact of culture on teacher beliefs might be overstated (OECD, 2009), I agree with Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), Pajares (2007), and Klassen (2004b) who argued that more research is needed to investigate the role of culture in shaping self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how EFL teachers' perceptions of the Vietnamese cultural environment influenced their self-efficacy beliefs.

There is a growing body of research on the impact of context on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Such research has established that a number of factors such as teaching resources, student factors, school types, leadership practice, and academic climate are influential in shaping teachers' sense of self-efficacy, i.e. leading to a lower or higher sense of self-efficacy, and the ways teachers do their work (Chong, Klassen, Huan, Wong, & Kates, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2010; Siwatu, 2011; Walker & Slear, 2011). However, researchers disagree on whether participating in a new setting can enhance teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Many researchers support the idea that an intervention or development program aimed at fostering teachers' professional knowledge or successful teaching experiences can lead to positive changes in teachers' sense of self-efficacy beliefs (Gunning & Mensah, 2011; Locke & Dix, 2011; Puchner & Taylor, 2006). Some researchers, e.g. Moseley, Reinke, and Bookout (2003), however, argue that teachers' sense of self-efficacy did not appear to be easily influenced by such programs.

More importantly, as Labone (2004) noted, context has often been investigated via teachers' self-reports on Likert-scale items. As a result, it is not easy to elicit or provide adequate explanations for teachers' cognitive processing of contextual factors in such studies. A number of researchers (e.g. Henson, 2002; Labone,

2004; Wheatley, 2005) call for a re-focusing on interpretive methods which they believe to be better at explaining how teachers construct their self-efficacy. Due to the mixed results concerning whether participating in a new setting causes changes in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the dominance of quantitative self-efficacy studies, it was anticipated that by employing a qualitative approach, the present study would provide greater insight into how context relates to teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

Sabokrouh and Barimani-Varandi (2013) and Klassen et al. (2011) opined that research on teacher self-efficacy in EFL contexts is still underrepresented within self-efficacy literature. Existing studies suggest that there is a strong relationship between teachers' attitudes towards the English language and their self-efficacy (Lee, 2009; Sabokrouh & Barimani-Varandi, 2013). However, researchers do not agree on how EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are related to their perceptions of their own English language skills (Lee, 2009) and how teachers' self-efficacy beliefs influence their tendency to use grammatically or communicatively oriented pedagogical approaches. Because the kinds of standards teachers subscribe to for what constitutes effective teaching matter in making judgements about self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) and because self-efficacy is context-specific, it is important to the development of self-efficacy literature to understand EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and how their beliefs affect their language teaching approaches. Therefore, my study aimed to fill this gap by exploring how Vietnamese teachers' sense of self-efficacy influenced their perceptions of effective teaching practice.

Bandura (1997) posited that self-efficacy is best enhanced by a combination of four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences (e.g. past experiences), vicarious experiences (e.g. observing other teachers), verbal persuasion (e.g. feedback), and physiological and emotional states (e.g. anxiety), and that self-efficacy is most directly influenced by mastery experiences. However, previous studies yield contradictory results regarding the strength of each source, the emergence of new sources, and the relationship among the sources. Studies of some researchers such as Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007), Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007), Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) have appeared to



confirm Bandura's (1997) point of view that mastery experiences are the most influential source. Meanwhile, other researchers have argued that a number of sources may co-exist in practice and each source may play different roles in different contexts (Cheung, 2008; Milner & Hoy, 2003; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). Inconsistent findings from previous studies suggest a need to conduct a study to revisit these four sources of self-efficacy information in the Vietnamese context.

### **1.3. Thesis outline**

The present thesis is organized into eight chapters. This introductory chapter sets the scene for my study by describing the development of my interest in teacher self-efficacy and identifying a research space within which my study is situated. The study's aims and research questions are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2 presents a detailed description of the Vietnamese EFL context and teacher education to highlight socio-cultural and educational factors that potentially affect Vietnamese teachers' perceptions and practice of teaching EFL, which, in my view, is closely related to the main aim of the present study – what factors affect their sense of self-efficacy.

Chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework for the study. It starts with a description of the development of teacher self-efficacy as a concept. It then discusses dominant teaching approaches in EFL contexts since my literature review indicates that teachers' beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching are central to how teachers judge their teaching strengths and deficits in relation to their perceptions of the requirements of various teaching demands. The chapter continues with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of key self-efficacy studies. Particular attention is paid to how sources of self-efficacy information have been investigated, how context and culture have been studied in relation to self-efficacy, and how self-efficacy in EFL settings has been examined. The chapter ends with a description of the study's conceptual framework.

Chapter 4 justifies the methodological design of the study. It explains the methods that have been used for conducting the study and analysing data. It also describes the research context, participants, and research procedures. A discussion of my own position and my impact on the study is also provided in this chapter.

Chapters 5 to 7 report the results of the data analysis in relation to each research question. Chapter 5 reports the study teachers' subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching. Chapter 6 reports teachers' perceptions of the impact of different factors on their sense of self-efficacy. Chapter 7 discusses a range of themes emerging from the data in relation to the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants.

Chapter 8 discusses findings to the research questions in relation to the conceptual framework and the literature reviewed as presented in Chapter 3. After a discussion of the implications of the findings, limitations of the study are identified and suggestions made for future self-efficacy research.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT**

An understanding of the context where teachers live in and work in respect of socio-cultural and educational factors are deemed useful for developing an understanding of how these factors moderate teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy. This chapter starts by describing important Vietnamese cultural and social factors that are regarded as influencing the ontology and worldview of Vietnamese people in general and of the teachers who participated in this study in particular. It next describes EFL teaching and learning conditions in the country, and teaching approaches and testing methods which have been employed in language classroom settings. The chapter concludes with an overview of EFL teacher training in Vietnam.

### **2.1. Vietnamese social and cultural contexts**

In this section, I will provide an overview of four features that are embedded in the Vietnamese socio-cultural context and relate to the present study. The core socio-cultural values under investigation are the Vietnamese sense of community spirit and harmonious relationships, appreciation of personal sacrifice and endurance, and the concept of face. How women are valued in Vietnamese society will also be discussed in the last part of this section.

#### **2.1.1. An awareness of belonging and harmonious relationships**

Many researchers (e.g. Chu, 2002; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Tran, 2006) agree that the Vietnamese put a high value on group interdependence and mutual relationships. A Vietnamese sense of belonging is believed to be originally shaped by a need to form groups of people to fight against foreign enemies and natural disasters and to produce water-based rice crops (Chu, 2002; Do, 2002; Nguyen, 2000; Nguyen, 1999; Tran, 2000; Tran, 2006). Year after year, strong, ancient neighbouring enemies invaded and ruled Vietnam, a small, weak country, and turned Vietnam into a colony. In order to survive and to regain freedom, ancient Vietnamese were aware of the need to group together to fight against enemies and maintain Vietnamese cultural identity.

In addition, the sole economic strength was agriculture of a very basic kind and always at risk of being destroyed by continuous floods and droughts. Harvesting, embanking against floods and watering crops all required a lot of manual work. Therefore, ancient Vietnamese had learnt that unity among families and clans could help them survive. These facts contributed to an emphasis on an interdependent self over an independent self, and on harmonious relationships in families and in the community (Tran, 2006). Many studies of Vietnamese culture have confirmed that living in a community which highlights harmonious interdependence results in Vietnamese people's need to consider the needs of other people before their own (Chu, 2002; D. V. Le, 2002; Le, 1993; Tran, 2000; Tran, 2006). Accordingly, Vietnamese often moderate their speech and behaviour to accommodate the needs of others. Individuals are expected to sacrifice personal benefits for the sake of the community and of the country (section 1.1.2). Preserving face also becomes an important concern in Vietnamese culture (section 1.1.3).

In modern Vietnam, communist ideologies have reinforced these core traditional cultural values (Phan, 2009). One main aim of Vietnamese contemporary education is to educate its people to be loyal to socialism, which emphasises a community spirit (Doan, 2005). Doan provided a summary of the main aspects of Vietnamese moral education at elementary, secondary and high-school levels. He stated that lessons at these levels focus strongly on the interdependent self, community and society, national identity and love for one's country (p. 454). Besides, the Vietnamese Government issued a number of laws and regulations, including its Constitution in 1992, Education Law in 2005, and Regulation No. 62/2006/QĐ-BVHTT in 2006, which prevent acts of destroying or damaging unity among civil servants and ordinary people. Since interdependence and mutual relationships are regarded as the most important features of Vietnamese culture (Chu, 2002; Do, 2002; Nguyen, 1999), the Vietnamese government has put much effort into reinforcing these values.

In the next two sub-sections, I will discuss other important features of Vietnamese culture that relate to the present study. Specifically, these relate to individuals' sacrifice of personal well-being and their endurance in serving their community, and the Vietnamese understanding of the concept of face.

### **2.1.2. The value of personal sacrifice and endurance**

It is generally agreed that Vietnamese culture values individual sacrifice and endurance for the sake of family, community and country (Chu, 2002; Nguyen, 1999; Tran, 2006). Le (1993) and Tran (2006) argued that Vietnamese endurance and self-sacrifice were formed by wars and natural disasters. As discussed earlier, Vietnamese history has proved that unity can enable its people to overcome such challenges; therefore, individuals are expected to give up personal benefits and well-being for the harmony of the community. In other words, personal sacrifice and endurance function to build group harmony and unity, which, in turn, constitute the nation's strength. Le (1993) argued that it is because Vietnamese have endured continuous wars and natural disasters that the will to survive and recover despite such catastrophes disposed ancient Vietnamese not to act directly against stronger enemies but to bear these challenges.

In addition, the emphasis on personal sacrifice and endurance is supported by the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism. Confucianism advises people to be obedient, respectful and faithful to kings, masters and parents (Tran & Le, n.d.; Vu, 1997). Buddhism focuses on a cause and effect theory, which educates people to give up personal benefits for the happiness of other people in the family and community. It also encourages people to forget and forgive others' mistakes. Confucianism continues to influence Vietnamese ideology because of its long and powerful history (Tran, 2006; Vu, 1997). Buddhism is the most popular religion in Vietnam today (Pham, 2013). Accordingly, it is not surprising that the tenets of Confucianism and Buddhism still affect the ontology and worldview of Vietnamese in modern time. Moreover, although there are no legal documents directly reinforcing individuals' sacrifice and endurance, through its powerful organization – the Vietnamese Communist Party – the Vietnamese government has encouraged ordinary people to place high value on the benefits of the community and the country. For example, The Vietnamese Civil Code issued by the National Assembly in 2008 required government officers to express piety towards the Communist Party, a representative of the Vietnamese Government. To be pious in this context means to secure the benefits of the Communist Party, the country and its people. In accordance with the Communist Party Charter

issued in 2011, Communist Party members are required to view benefits to the community and to the Communist Party as more important than personal wellbeing. It can be argued that embedded in these regulations is the government's indirect emphasis on individuals' sacrifice of personal well-being and a preparedness to endure for the sake of the community.

### **2.1.3. The Vietnamese concept of face**

Tran (2006) argued that it is because Vietnamese culture favours the interdependent self over the independent self and because Vietnamese place high value on harmonious relationships, that the concept of face plays a significant role in Vietnamese culture. Tran stated that living in a community leads Vietnamese to especially care for what they say and how they behave in order to live up to the community's rules and expectations. Vietnamese have an awareness of social judgment of their behaviour. They tend to form attitudes which they believe will help them minimise the risk of losing face (Khuc, 2006). For example, they will be likely to display good qualities and conceal things which potentially harm their dignity and attract social criticism. Khuc stated that losing face occurs when individuals feel they are not respected in accordance with their socially developed status and reputation in interactions with others in the community. Vu (2002) proposed that the Vietnamese concept of face is based on a combination of interdependent self (public face) and dependent self (private face). Individuals' public face deals with social values or factors such as age, sex, social status and social achievement, which they would like to have appreciated and supported by others. Private face is a wish to be socially respected for private thinking, independent behaviour, and freedom of choice, action and decision. Vu argued that in Vietnamese culture, as in other Asian cultures, a concept of face focuses more on public face rather than private face because of an emphasis on interdependence among members of the culture. N. T. H. Pham (2007; 2008) agreed with Vu (2002) that face in Vietnamese culture is both an individual and collective possession. Pham (2008) added that Vietnamese face refers to the positive image of a group with which an individual considers himself/herself to be a member (p. 113). Findings of N. T. H. Pham's (2007; 2008) studies support a

view of Tran (2006) and Khuc (2006) that the existence of face in the Vietnamese context depends on public evaluation.

#### **2.1.4. The position of women**

Historically, women were undervalued in Vietnamese society, especially during the colonial period (D. T. Truong, 2004). They were not given equal property and personal rights as men. Vietnamese women were tied to household work and childcare and were forbidden to get education. Men enjoyed authority over family income and decision-making. Since 1946, the Vietnamese government has made considerable effort to improve the position of women in society (V. H. Tran, 2012). One strategy has been to encourage women throughout the country to participate in social activities and to find employment in factories and offices.

However, the effort has unintentionally created more pressure on women. On the one hand, women in Vietnam today are still expected to display four feminine virtues: *công, dung, ngôn, hạnh* [performing family duties, having good appearance, having proper speech, displaying proper behavior], especially the first attribute: performing family duties (Ngo, 2004; Vu, 2008; Vu, 1998). One possible reason is that Vietnamese people identify themselves as members of extended families and they prefer to live near relatives or visit family members frequently (Vu, 1998). Different generations living together may lead to the persistence of traditional values. On the other hand, Vietnamese women are also encouraged to function as effective workers as a result of the government's efforts to achieve gender equity. Bourke-Martignoni (2001) argued that women in Vietnam tend to carry "a double or triple role" (p. 12). Women work inside and outside the home, take care of children, and consequently have no time or limited time for participating in other activities.

In the next sections, I will discuss the EFL context of Vietnam to provide a background understanding of factors which possibly mediate the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of eight study teachers.

## **2.2. Vietnamese EFL context**

These sections will discuss the position of the English language in the Vietnamese context, teaching and learning conditions and associated opportunities, and problems for language learners and teachers in the country.

### **2.2.1. The position of English**

In Vietnam, the English language has been given a special place, especially after the country decided to expand relations with many foreign countries in the 1980s. The significant importance of English in Vietnam is recognized in society and within every family (T. N. Dang, 2005; Wright, 2002). A quantitative study conducted by CEEA (2008) with 1,967 students in four large cities in Vietnam revealed that most of these students (91.6%) believed that learning English was necessary for their future (p. 6). Y. T. Dang (2005) argued that, because in Vietnam the English language is not necessary for everyday activities as it is in English as a Second Language (ESL) countries, Vietnamese students' main motivation in learning English appears to be different from learners in ESL countries. This argument is supported by Phan (2009), Phan, Phan, and Le (2009), and Phan and Phan (2010). For example, Phan et al. (2009) stated that one main motivation for seven Vietnamese technical English majors in their study to learn English was to get practical benefit. The students learned the language in the hope of meeting course requirements, passing university exams, getting a good job in the future, studying overseas, and communicating in the target language. The researchers also reported that the learners learnt English to please parents and meet their expectations.

In Vietnam, as in other areas of the world where English is not the mother tongue, the popular trend is that children are encouraged and supported to learn English at an early age (Do, 2006; Do, 2014; Nguyen, 2011). This trend is probably caused by a pragmatic realization that lack of command in English may mean marginalising children in a world that will use the language at an increasing degree. Many Vietnamese parents believe that their children would be deprived of opportunities for employment if they do not have the ability to communicate fluently in English, in having a certificate in English is proof of this. Therefore,



the need for the English language has become very acute for most Vietnamese learners (T. N. Dang, 2005; Xuan & Tai, 2007).

The Government of Vietnam has strongly supported and strengthened this societal need for English learning in Vietnam. In 1995, the Prime Minister issued Order No. 422/Ttg, according to which personnel working in Government agencies had to be able to communicate in English. The government has also mandated a number of important policies concerning teaching and learning English at elementary, secondary and higher education. For example, the Prime Minister signed Order No. 1400/QĐ-TTg to launch the National Foreign Language Project in the 2008-2020 period. According to this project, English became a compulsory school subject from grade 3 and all learners at every educational level in 2020 were expected to be capable of speaking English fluently. At present, university students are required to take English for their graduation exams. Anyone wanting to pursue further studies (e.g. postgraduate programmes) must obtain an English certificate.

The Government also supports many educational projects (e.g., No. 322 project) to send EFL teachers abroad so that exposure to new teaching methodologies might help change current English pedagogy on their return. It is well recognised that the traditional emphasis on accuracy in the written language rather than the acquisition of fluency in the spoken language is inappropriate for many Vietnamese today (Ha, 2007; Nguyen, 2007). Given the importance of English learning needs and the government's support, there is growing likelihood that changes in pedagogy will be forthcoming and that learners' competence will improve. However, student proficiency in English remains low (Y. T. Dang, 2005; T. X. Tran, 2012) and students' learning attitudes are not always positive (Tran & Baldauf, 2007; Vu, 2007a). Reasons for this may relate to teaching and learning resources, teaching methodology, testing methods, and teacher training and development. The next sections will offer a brief overview of English teaching and learning in Vietnam.

### **2.2.2. Teaching and learning resources**

In this section, I will discuss teaching and learning materials and opportunities to practise English in the Vietnamese context.

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) designs and develops English textbooks and curricula at primary, secondary and high school levels. Individual universities are responsible for their own teaching and learning materials. Textbooks at lower levels currently are supposed to support a communicative approach. A new curriculum which aims to develop the communicative skills of learners from grade 6 (secondary school level) to 12 (high school level) was nationalised in 2006 (MOET, 2006) and accompanied by locally written textbooks. However, Nguyen and Nguyen (2007) argued critically that locally written textbooks at primary level are not appropriate to children's aptitude in language acquisition (p. 168). The content of textbooks at primary and secondary levels introduced by MOET is not presented in an applied way, which undermines the improvement of English teaching and learning quality at these school levels. Bao (2008) argued that textbooks designed by the MOET have the same weaknesses as other textbooks designed locally in Southeast Asia countries. They are regarded as unattractive, linguistically inaccurate, and contain too much Vietnamese cultural content. Nguyen and Vo (2004) added that locally written textbooks do not contain separate phonetics and phonology for each unit, thereby discouraging students from learning these important aspects of communication skills.

At the tertiary level, current textbooks are mainly commercial products marketed by international publishers. Imported course books are welcomed by many EFL teachers because of their trust in the accuracy of English use in the books (Bao, 2008). However, Dang (2005), Le (2002) and Hoang (2008) argued that these imported books are designed for ESL, not EFL contexts, and thus are unsuitable for Vietnamese tertiary classrooms. In addition, Hoang (2008) stated that most EFL curricula at tertiary levels contain ill-defining teaching targets and goals which have created difficulties in selecting appropriate teaching materials, planning teaching sessions, setting specific goals for each session, and planning requirements for learners (p. 25). Inadequate textbooks and curricula consequently contribute to the limited language ability of Vietnamese learners at all educational levels (Hoang, 2008; Vu, 2007a).

There seems to be a shortage and an uneven distribution of teaching and learning facilities at Vietnamese schools at present, especially in rural areas. Although the

MOET issued a Circular No. 7110/BGDĐT-CSVCTBTH in 2012 which provides a list of facilities for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, the fact is that facilities for EFL teaching and learning in almost all schools in Vietnam never reach the expected standard. In Ho Chi Minh city, where living standards are high (GSO, 2011), it is expected that learners are able to access modern learning facilities. However, most schools and universities lack standard, sound-proof classrooms or multi-media rooms (Ha, 2007). The situation gets worse in poorer and mountainous areas. For example, learners in Thanh Hoa province learn English without any basic facilities such as cassette players or CD players (Sac, 2013). According to educational action plan No. 165/KH-UBND, issued by Tien Giang's People Committee in 2013, almost all primary, secondary and high schools report a lack of CD players, projectors, computers and reference books in this province. The lack of appropriate facilities has been shown to affect English learning quality (T. X. Tran, 2012).

Opportunities to learn English in Vietnam, especially English communication skills, are mainly confined to the school context since English is a foreign language. However, as discussed in section 2.2.3, the skills focused on behind closed classroom doors are not communication skills. The most common solution for practising these skills is to attend language centres or learn on-line. In big cities where the Internet is available and affordable, and there are abundant language centres, learners have many learning opportunities. However, those with rural backgrounds are disadvantaged, since learning the language at school is the only opportunity they have. This has created differences in learners' English proficiency levels when learners from rural areas enter universities. English proficiency levels of learners from rural areas are significantly lower than those of their classmates who live in urban areas (Hoang, 2008).

In addition, the number of in-class learning hours at school is not high enough to compensate for limited learning opportunities outside of school. Currently, according to the MOET's Decision No. 3321/QĐ- BGDDT issued in 2010, learners at primary schools are offered two weekly optional English learning sessions of 45 minutes per session. Learners from Grade 6 to Grade 12 attend a compulsory weekly allocation of three lessons of 45 minutes each. At higher education levels, for a four-year Bachelor degree, learners are engaged in

approximately 225 learning sessions with 45 minutes each depending on the university. However, this English learning program finishes within the first two years of student life (Ha, 2007), which leads to a situation of learners' re-learning English upon graduation for purposes of job-seeking. Hoang (2008) argued that this limited number and uneven distribution of learning lessons in formal settings precludes learners from attaining competence in English (p. 27).

In the next section, I will discuss how English is taught in Vietnamese classrooms at different education levels.

### **2.2.3. Teaching approaches**

Although English is recognized as a key subject in school curricula and has been given a special place in Vietnamese society, learners' English proficiency levels are not high and this is in part caused by current teaching approaches (Hoang, 2008; Tran, 2005). As mentioned above, the MOET has recently decided to adopt a communicative approach to teaching and has developed curricula based on this particular approach. EFL teachers are supported, trained and expected to use a learner-centered approach in the language classroom. In reality, teachers respond to the communicative approach differently. Phan's (2004) study featured two university teachers who reported success in using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their university classrooms. Another example of the successful adaptation of learner-centeredness happened at a teacher training college in Vietnam (Dang, 2006).

However, not many teachers achieve such successful implementation of CLT in the Vietnamese context. Three teachers in Pham's (2005c) study, trained abroad to teach EFL communicatively, strongly supported the communicative theory. The teachers made some changes in their teaching practices such as using pair work and group work in their classrooms. However, according to the researcher, these teachers' implementation of CLT in Vietnamese classrooms without adaptation was later found to be unsuccessful. In the study of Nguyen, Dekker, and Goedhart (2008), of three Vietnamese student teachers who participated in a course which focused on a student-centered method, two doubted the effectiveness of this approach in the local context. In Tomlison and Dat's (2004)

study, many teachers were unwilling to change their methods and some refused to attend professional development courses to support them to make such changes.

In reality, in most EFL classrooms in Vietnam, the teaching and learning of English still focuses on vocabulary, grammar, and reading and listening skills. EFL teachers continue to adhere to traditional teaching approaches, e.g. the Grammar Translation Method (the GTM) (T. N. Dang, 2005; Do & Cai, 2010). H. V. H. Truong (2004) claimed that new secondary English textbooks, which originally aimed to develop learners' communicative competence, have been used to help learners enrich vocabulary, reading and listening skills. This view is strongly supported by the result of Le and Barnard's (2009) study. Three female upper-secondary teachers in the study were reported to focus on delivering grammar knowledge and completing textbook tasks on time. Vietnamese was used extensively in their classrooms and limited opportunities were offered to learners' negotiation of meaning. Le and Barnard agreed with Tran and Baldauf (2007) and Phan (2011) that teachers' old-fashioned teaching methods result in learners becoming demotivated in relation to learning English.

Several factors contribute to teachers' reluctance to switch to or to commit to a communicative approach or a learner-centered one. Le (2007) argued that the persistence of traditional teaching methods is partly due to teachers' inadequacy in English proficiency and teaching skills. The lack of in-service professional development and inappropriate teacher education may make teachers reluctant to implement changes (C. V. Le, 2002). Teachers' beliefs that principles of teaching which advocate learning autonomy and active roles for students are inconsistent with Vietnamese cultural and educational values may also hinder their adoption of a communicative approach (Pham, 2005b). Another reason is the powerful influence of grammar-based testing methods, which have been practised at all educational levels (Khoi & Iwashita, 2012). This last reason will be discussed further in the next section.

#### **2.2.4. Testing methods**

Much effort has gone into improving teaching methods; however, little has been done in respect of changing the nature of testing (Khoi & Iwashita, 2012). The

purpose of language learning mentioned in the MOET's curricula is communicative competence (M. D. Le, 2012; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007) but language learners' communicative ability is not measured in English language tests at all levels. Le and Barnard (2009) noted that the secondary English curriculum provides teachers with a general description of language tests. It advises teachers to test learners' linguistic knowledge and four skills without providing them with any specific test methods. According to the researchers, the officially applied testing method in national standardised tests at all levels is multiple-choice tests, which exclude speaking and listening skills (pp. 23-24). Nguyen and Nguyen (2007) agreed with Le and Barnard (2009) that the curriculum is not specific enough regarding a clear and practical description of what is to be taught and tested owing to a lack of expertise in the field (see section 2.2.5). Accordingly, the development of learners' listening and speaking skills has not been stressed in the way originally intended. At primary, lower and upper secondary school levels in Vietnam, the testing of English is mainly confined to reading and writing skills, as the other two communication skills require more resources, i.e. more teachers and audio equipment, which most schools cannot provide (Tran, 2005; H. V. H. Truong, 2004). The lack of resources and ill-defining testing criteria in the curricula in part result in an emphasis on grammar and translation in current English testing practices in most schools in Vietnam. This neglect of testing communication skills in turn leads to a focus on teaching of translation and linguistic skills (T. X. Tran, 2012).

In Vietnam, a good English language learner is defined as one who passes exams with high marks and that is a strong extrinsic motivator (see section 2.2.1). A Vietnamese learner, throughout his/her student life, has to pass many exams. Teachers are anxious to help learners achieve high tests results because they are evaluated on these results. Because phonetics and phonology have not been tested in English language exams in many schools, or been tested only a little, learners believe that such knowledge is not important and have not paid attention to learning them (Nguyen & Vo, 2004). In addition, H. V. H. Truong (2004) noted that the current focus on testing grammar, translating exercises, writing and reading tasks, has made learners believe mistakenly that learning English means learning its linguistic features. EFL teachers prepare learners for exams, which

tend to test separate various language components. In other words, a habit of learning English by doing grammar exercises is partly reinforced by these testing methods.

The emphasis on linguistic skills in both teaching and testing practices has impacted negatively on Vietnamese learners' communicative competence. Learners in Vietnam cannot communicate in English fluently after learning English for nearly 7 years at school (T. N. Dang, 2005; Vu, 2007a, 2007b). Although proficient in reading comprehension skills, they have great difficulty in using appropriate intonation or pronunciation in basic communication in the target language (Nguyen & Vo, 2004). The English proficiency levels of Vietnamese learners at tertiary level are considered to be very low, at around a 3.5 IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score, which is just enough to understand simple information in familiar contexts (Vu & Nguyen, 2004). Vu (2007b) confirmed that EFL testing and assessment seem to be the weakest aspect of EFL education, which urgently needs improvement. The author also asserted that Vietnamese EFL teacher education and development play a key role in affecting the quality of EFL teaching and learning. This issue will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.2.5. Teacher training**

EFL teachers are clearly crucial in ensuring quality teaching and learning; however, language teachers in Asian countries generally display a lack of pedagogical knowledge and language proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007). Vietnamese EFL teacher education and development programs are viewed as problematic and as hindering the effectiveness of English education in the country (C. V. Le, 2002; M. D. Le, 2012; Nguyen, 2011; Pham, 2002; Tran, 2005).

Currently, there seem to be unacknowledged problems in EFL teacher-training programmes at teacher training institutions in terms of in-class English learning hours and course content. According to Tran (2005), a Bachelor degree in English Language Teaching at Vietnam universities where the qualification is offered takes four academic years. In Phase 1 (three semesters), student teachers are trained in English language skills and grammar in English, and common

knowledge courses, e.g. philosophy and the history of Communist Party, in Vietnamese. In Phase 2 (five semesters), courses in English language skills are omitted. Some subject matter knowledge courses such as English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology, British/American Culture and Society, Linguistics and Translation are simply added. As mentioned in section 2.2.2, the number of in-class learning hours in English is not high enough to compensate for limited learning opportunities outside formal learning contexts. A recent assessment of English proficiency levels of thousands of in-service teachers using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages conducted by the MOET revealed that just over 7% of the teachers meet the language requirement (Viet, 2013). It appears vital to provide opportunities for and encourage pre-service and in-service teachers to improve and update English language skills. Increasing and maintaining in-class English learning hours is one measure which might help teachers improve their English proficiency levels.

Some Vietnamese scholars (e.g. C. V. Le, 2002; Le, 2003; Nguyen, 2013; Pham, 2002, 2005a) call for a combination of teaching theories with practice, a need to increase the curriculum load on practicum, and a re-distribution of the practicum period in current teacher education programs. In teacher education programs currently offered at teacher training institutions, student teachers have only a six-week practicum to develop their understanding of teaching realities in schools. According to the above-mentioned researchers, this is not enough to prepare teachers for actual teaching practice after graduation. Nguyen (2013) agreed with Pham (2002) that language teacher education curriculums typically emphasise linguistics and literature, rather than teaching practice and pedagogical reasoning. She asserted that it is important to incorporate core courses focused on knowledge of local teaching contexts and knowledge of learners into current teacher education programs to help teachers envisage actual teaching realities. An increase in the curriculum load on teaching practice might enable pre-service teachers to teach confidently in the Vietnamese context. C. V. Le (2002) suggested that practicum should start at the beginning of a training program and be distributed throughout the whole program rather than being located at the end. The researcher emphasised that this distribution of the practicum period might help teachers become familiar with teaching realities and develop practical skills.



It appears that enabling EFL teachers in Vietnam to adapt a communicative approach is a matter of urgency. Many teachers, although performing very well in training workshops aiming to enable them to use a more learner-centered teaching approach, are unable or lack confidence to implement the approach in the long term (C. V. Le, 2002; Pham, 2005c). A lack of opportunities to practise the language outside classrooms also contributes to teachers' limited English proficiency, which partly leads to their resorting to traditional methods in the language classroom (C. V. Le, 2002). Pham (2005a) proposed a number of solutions for the sustainable implementation of a communicative approach in the Vietnamese EFL classrooms. Arguing that a rigid implementation of CLT will not be successful in the Vietnamese context, the author stated that rather than emphasising only pair work and small group work, using a whole-class format can be an alternative suited to this specific context. Pham also implied that teachers need to change their traditional ways of thinking about teaching and learning, e.g. traditional views of teachers' roles and learners' roles, if CLT is to be implemented in the language classrooms. C. V. Le (2002) suggested establishing distance education programs which aim to improve teachers' English proficiency levels and ability to deal with classroom methodology problems. The author insisted that these programs be accessible to teachers in every corner of Vietnam. It seems that in order to improve the quality of EFL teaching and learning, improvement the quality of English language teacher education and development programs has become urgent (Dang, Nguyen, & Le, 2013).

### **2.3. Conclusion**

Chapter 2 has provided some background on potential factors that might mediate self-efficacy in the teaching of EFL teachers in Vietnam in general and of participants in the study in particular. An overview of the Vietnamese social and cultural context has been presented, highlighting the Vietnamese sense of collectiveness, personal sacrifice and endurance, a concept of face, and the position of women in the society. The chapter has also discussed the EFL context of Vietnam to highlight opportunities and challenges which may affect teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL. Specifically, the chapter has discussed the status of English in Vietnamese society, the availability and condition of teaching and

learning resources, and some problems in current teaching methodology, testing methods and EFL teacher training.

In the next chapter, I will review relevant theories and studies in order to identify gaps in the self-efficacy literature and situate the present study.

## **CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Chapter 2 provided the socio-cultural and educational context of Vietnam in which teacher participants live and work. This chapter brings to the present study relevant theoretical perspectives and a review of research literature. In this chapter, I first examine the development of teacher self-efficacy theories and consider issues relating to the definition of teacher self-efficacy in the present study. I also review the literature from the discipline of EFL teaching relevant to the purpose of my research. Following this, I evaluate previous self-efficacy studies to situate the study, including gaps in this research. A theoretical framework, research approach, and research questions for the present study will be presented at the end of the chapter.

### **3.1. Conceptions of teacher self-efficacy**

In the following sections, I will review and evaluate the main conceptual strands of teacher self-efficacy. The main purpose of these sections is to demonstrate how EFL teacher self-efficacy in the Vietnamese context should be defined. According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), teacher self-efficacy was first researched by Rand (Research and Development) researchers on the basis of Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control construct. Therefore, I start the chapter with this theoretical base.

#### **3.1.1. Rotter's construct of Locus of Control, Rand studies and teacher self-efficacy**

Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control construct is the one that grounded early concepts of self-efficacy (Henson, 2002; Labone, 2004; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The concept refers to individuals' beliefs about the degree to which they can control events in their lives. Rotter (1966) proposed two types of control: internal locus of control and external locus of control (p. 1). The first type relates to people's belief that their actions are driven by their efforts and decisions. People who subscribe to this type of control believe in success which is rooted in their abilities and effort to control the environment. In other words, these people perceive that it is they who have power over their own lives. The second type refers to an individual's perception that factors beyond their influence, e.g. fate, chance, luck, guide their actions. People with an external control orientation

believe that the course of their lives is governed by these external factors. It is believed that successful people are those who possess a high internal locus of control (April, Dharani, & Peters, 2012; Schepers, 2005).

As Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) reported, teacher self-efficacy, first introduced by Rand researchers (Armor et al., 1976) in the mid-1970s, was grounded in Rotter's Locus of Control. In the Rand studies, teacher self-efficacy referred to "a construct that purported to reveal the extent to which a teacher believed that the consequences of teaching – student motivation and learning—were in the hands of the teacher, that is, internally controlled" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 205). Teacher self-efficacy in these studies consisted of two aspects: personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE). Tendencies to ascribe students' learning achievement to their own teaching abilities and responsibilities were termed PTE. Teachers' perceptions of the influence of environmental factors that are out of their control were named GTE (Lee, 2009; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The Rand researchers used two items to measure the two dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. Item 1 was related to teachers' perceptions of the powerful impact of external factors and item 2 measured their belief in their abilities to teach low-achieving students. The Rand researchers' construct of teacher self-efficacy and Rotter's perspective have influenced many studies for more than 25 years (Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, & Ellett, 2008, p. 752). The adoption of Rotter's strand led to significant conclusions that teacher self-efficacy could be connected with student achievement, teacher stress (or lack of), teacher retention in the profession, and teacher implementation of educational change (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 206).

However, the internal-external control in the Rand studies had a number of shortcomings. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998, p. 205) and Henson (2002, p. 139) argued that the Rand's simple measure consisting of only a two-item scale raised the question of reliability, which encouraged a lot of researchers to extend the scale. Labone (2004) asserted that teachers' tasks should include instructional issues both in and beyond the classroom, since researchers who examine the construct of teacher self-efficacy need to advocate "the role of teachers as instruments of social instruction" (p. 350). The focus of the 2 Rand items was simply student motivation and performance (p. 351). Therefore, the construct of

teacher self-efficacy grounded in Locus of Control theory did little to enhance this important role of teachers, which could be seen as limiting. Wyatt (2012, p. 5) and Dellinger et al. (2008, p. 755) also noted that the complexities of teaching tasks need to be reflected in definitions of teacher self-efficacy beliefs. In line with this argument, the simple construct of teacher self-efficacy by the Rand researcher appears not to consider sufficiently the nature and complexity of teachers' work.

In addition, Bandura (1997, as cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 211), argued that rooted in internal-external locus of control, this teacher self-efficacy construct basically reflected the relationship between a teacher's teaching behavior and outcomes (student performance). The behavior-outcome relationship implied that a teacher's teaching behavior was guided by the outcomes of his/her action. Bandura stressed that although this simple theory of teacher self-efficacy focused on the competence and control beliefs of teachers, it offered an inadequate sense of agency for teachers. Teachers, as defined by Borg (2003, as cited in Wyatt, 2012, p. 5), are "active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically oriented, personalized and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thought and beliefs". However, the limited sense of agency in the internal-external construct does not adequately reflect this reality.

In the next sections, I will review Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the second powerful strand of teacher self-efficacy research as identified by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998).

### **3.1.2. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and teacher self-efficacy**

As noted by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) establishes a conceptual basis for many recent studies which investigate teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory is a facet of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Therefore, the section begins with a review of SCT, followed by Bandura's definition of self-efficacy.

#### ***Social Cognitive Theory***

As McAlister, Perry, and Parcel (2008) noted, Bandura's (1986, 1997) SCT, first known as Social Learning Theory, reasons that people learn by observing others

(p. 170). The theory emphasizes that individuals have power to change the environments in which they live and at the same time their behaviors are mediated by environmental factors (Bandura, 1997, p. vii). People have the ability to change environments because they have “a self-system...[which] serves as a self-regulatory function” and this enables them to alter their thoughts, emotions and behaviors (Pajares, 1996, p. 543). For example, self-reflection, a form of self-referent, helps individuals judge their previous experiences, ability, available resources and adjust future actions.

SCT also rests on the idea that environmental factors, personal factors and behaviors are constantly influencing one another (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). For example, students may perceive that their learning (behavior) is negatively affected by a lack of school resources, and especially by teachers’ lack of teaching knowledge (environmental factors). Simultaneously, students’ perceptions of poor learning achievement (behavior) can result in a lack of confidence in their learning ability (personal factor) which, in turn, may lead to a worsening of their learning performance (behavior).

Bandura stated that the strength of each of the three factors – personal factors, environment and behaviour – is not equal but varies depending on individuals and situations. For example, when teaching the same group of struggling students, teachers who have a strong belief in their teaching ability have the potential to manage available resources to help those students learn, whereas other teachers who lack a belief in themselves may blame the students and quickly give up teaching. Bandura (1997), on the one hand, asserted that people are not “the sole determiners” of their lives (p. 3) in order to highlight the role of environment in determining behaviour. On the other hand, he claimed “it is people’s belief in their causative capabilities that is the main focus of inquiry” (p. 2) to stress the importance of individuals’ cognitive ability in interpreting and evaluating different sources of information, and generating behaviour. McAlister et al. (2008) argued that although SCT values the role of environment in mediating behavior, the theory places more emphasis on human agency or people’s ability to change the environment to reach their goals (p. 170). Agency, within the scope of SCT, refers to “acts done intentionally” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). There are four core

properties of human agency – intentionality, forethought, self-regulation and self-reflection – that make individuals active and powerful in altering and constructing the environment (Bandura, 2001).

*Intentionality* refers to the processes of setting up plans and strategies in order to act appropriately towards achieving intentions (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). A person's intention is "a proactive commitment" to perform the behavior, not "an expectation or prediction". An intention is different from an action since it is "a representation of a future course of action" (Bandura, 2001, p. 6).

Individuals' *forethought* refers to their visualization of the outcomes or consequences of their actions which foster or limit their efforts to perform the actions in order to realise certain outcomes (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). For example, an EFL teacher in the Vietnamese context teaching a group of unmotivated, struggling students may think about their laziness in the classroom if he/she attempts to use interactive activities. With such forethought, the teacher may feel discouraged in using CLT approach.

*Self-regulation* refers to an individual's construction and regulation of actions in order to act appropriately (Bandura, 2006, p. 165). The ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions and plans may help people exert control over the environment rather than being controlled by external factors. Self-regulation is related to goal-setting since self-regulatory processes aim at realizing goals (Bandura, 2001). In the example above, the teacher may adjust his/her negative thoughts of students and think about reasons underlying students' situations. The teacher may also think about developing step-by-step learning goals for the students or conducting a survey to understand more about their needs. The regulation of thoughts and creation of plans serve to help teachers change their behaviour and to support students to learn better.

*Self-reflectiveness* refers to people's reflections on their actions, thoughts, and capabilities in order to act appropriately. Like self-regulation, self-reflection is directed by goals and the challenges that people set for

themselves (Bandura, 2001). For example, forming a goal of helping a group of unmotivated, low-achieving students learn better, the teacher in the example above may want to reflect on his/her previous teaching in order to decide what aspects of teaching he/she can improve to help students learn more. The result of this self-reflection process may be a selection of activities tailored to a more CLT-oriented approach.

Bandura (1997) stated that beliefs around personal efficacy are the core aspect of SCT (p. 2). The next section is a review of this important mechanism of agency.

### ***Teacher self-efficacy***

Self-efficacy, the core concept of SCT, has been applied in many fields, including psychology, education, business administration, and health. One possible reason for its range of application is that self-efficacy can help to predict how much effort people exert, how well they persevere in coping with challenges, and how effectively they regulate their thoughts, actions, and plans (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Bandura (1997) defined teacher self-efficacy as “[belief] in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p.3). As Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) noted, this definition of self-efficacy was developed through a psychological lens, which focuses on “a cognitive process in which [teachers] construct their beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment” (p. 203).

In Bandura’s (1986, 1997) self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy beliefs influence outcome expectations of behavior but not vice versa. Bandura argued that self-efficacy beliefs, for example, “Can I use the CLT approach to teach speaking skills?” relates to an individual judgment of capability. The judgment of likely consequence of a specific action, e.g. “My students’ speaking skills will benefit much from that method”, relates to “causal beliefs about the relationship between actions and outcomes, not with personal efficacy” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 211). According to Bandura, beliefs about outcomes depend largely on self-efficacy judgments of how well teachers will be able to perform. However, he asserted that outcome expectancies are a weak predictor of the accomplishment of a specific task compared to perceived self-efficacy. For example, the teachers in the example above might believe that the CLT approach would be more useful in



helping their students learn speaking skills than the GTM. However, they may not believe that they can use the CLT approach because of their low English proficiency. Therefore, they continue to use the GTM. Bandura stated that beliefs in self-efficacy (I do not have the necessary skills to use the CLT approach) determine the behavior (I will not use the CLT approach to teach). Because people might not act on an outcome belief, Bandura concluded that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies are separate dimensions and have no or little relationship. Outcome expectations therefore do not play an important role in self-efficacy measurement.

However, outcome expectancies and self-efficacy beliefs are not always independent of each other and expected outcomes do play an important role in predicting teachers' teaching behavior. Firstly, it might be difficult to separate expected outcomes and self-efficacy beliefs. It is human nature to be concerned about both the outcome of behavior as well as the competency to perform a related task (Eastman & Marzillier, 1984). Secondly, self-efficacy beliefs influence expected outcomes (Bandura, 1997) but self-efficacy beliefs can, in turn, be influenced by outcome expectancies because different expected outcomes in various contexts might lead to changes in self-efficacy beliefs (Williams, 2010). For example, an EFL teacher's self-efficacy beliefs may vary according to the possibility of teaching competent learners, incompetent learners or young learners. Thirdly, teachers might act on their outcome beliefs and in many cases outcome expectancies might be the main predictor of teachers' behaviors, not their self-efficacy beliefs. For example, teachers decide to use the GTM maybe because of the perceived suitability of that method to the current teaching and learning situation rather than the perceived low level of their own English proficiency. The close relationship between expected outcomes and self-efficacy beliefs and the role of both outcome expectancies and self-efficacy beliefs in determining teacher behavior is incorporated in Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) teacher self-efficacy theory, which is discussed in section 3.1.3.

In the following section, I continue with a review of important properties of self-efficacy within SCT.

### *Properties of self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy possesses some specific features that make it distinguishable from other concepts. First, self-efficacy is one's self-perception of competence, not one's actual level of competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 211).

Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues argued that when evaluating capabilities, people can overestimate or underestimate their actual level of competence and, thus, the actions they pursue or the amount of effort they put into their performance is affected by this judgment. Teachers who underestimate this actual level of competence (having low levels of self-efficacy) might avoid or give up challenging tasks easily, while teachers with high levels of self-efficacy will be more likely to engage in or be persistent in performing these tasks.

Second, self-efficacy should be "a judgment of capability" (Bandura, 1997, p. 43) and a "forward-looking capability" (Klassen et al., 2011, p. 26), not an intention to carry out a task. Bandura stressed that items measuring self-efficacy beliefs should include *can* rather than *will*. For example, "How effectively *can* you use CLT in your language classroom?" Self-efficacy is not a perception of current abilities, for example, "I *don't* have the necessary English proficiency level to use CLT", nor a perception of current abilities based on a reflection of past performances, for example, "The students' communicative ability has improved because I *used* CLT in my classroom."

Third, self-efficacy is different from other self-conceptions (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). For example, self-concept beliefs refer to current ability while self-efficacy beliefs refer to future-oriented capability (Bandura, 1997). Self-esteem is a "global, *affective* reaction or evaluation" that people can have about themselves, for example, "I feel happy when teaching English." Self-perception of competence is a "*cognitive* judgment of personal skills and abilities" to accomplish certain tasks (Schunk et al., 2008, p. 58, italics in original), for example, "I can teach English". As Schunk et al. (2008) noted, like self-competence, self-efficacy differs from self-esteem in that it is a cognitive evaluation of capabilities and is domain specific. However, unlike self-competence, self-efficacy is task- and situation specific (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). It includes a judgment of having necessary behavioral actions or cognitive

skills to accomplish the tasks (Schunk et al., 2008). This perceived self-efficacy is one's belief about one's ability to coordinate skills to accomplish tasks in different conditions. It is more than "judgments of motor acts" (Bandura, 1997, p. 37) or "a summation of decontextualized perceived efficacy for subskills" (p. 38). For example, in measuring a teacher's self-efficacy to teach English speaking skills, he/she should be asked: "How much can you do to help learners practise English speaking skills outside the classroom?" or "How much can you do to help learners best benefit from authentic activities?" They should not only be asked to evaluate "How much can you help learners understand meanings of English new words?" or "How much can you help learners pronounce words accurately"?

Assessing self-efficacy at a micro-analytic level, that is, more task- and situation-specific (Pajares, 1996) is necessary to a comprehensive theory of self-efficacy. Schunk and colleagues (2008) also noted that under the influence of personal and environmental differences, an individual can judge his/her self-efficacy to perform similar tasks differently. They stated that:

One's self-efficacy for a specific task on a given day might fluctuate due to the individual's preparation, physical condition (sickness, fatigue), and affective mood, as well as external conditions such as the nature of the task (length, difficulty) and social milieu (general classroom conditions). (p. 142)

This idea is elaborated through a teacher's analysis of teaching tasks suggested by Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues, which is reviewed in the following section.

### **3.1.3. Tschannen-Moran and colleagues' teacher self-efficacy**

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) suggested that Bandura (1997) omitted to emphasise outcome expectancy because he considered that outcome expectancy was a weak predictor of motivation. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) argued that because teacher self-efficacy is context-specific, a context-related factor related to the requirements of the teaching task is an important factor in addition to personal efficacy (p. 210). The researchers expanded Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory by adding teaching context as a component of teacher self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues defined teacher self-efficacy as "the teacher's belief in

his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) stated that teacher self-efficacy is about “a judgment of teacher efficacy – a prediction of future capability” (p. 233). Located within SCT, the conception of teacher self-efficacy developed by Tschannen-Moran et al. consists of two aspects: personal teaching competence and task analysis. A teacher’s personal teaching competence is “the judgement a teacher makes about his or her capabilities and deficits”, and “the judgement concerning the resources and constraints in a particular teaching context” is the teachers’ analysis of teaching task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). Tschannen-Moran and colleagues argued that teachers’ judgements about their capabilities and deficits vary when they teach different subjects, different learners and perform different teaching tasks; therefore, teachers’ considerations of the requirement of tasks in a particular context matter (p. 228). In other words, outcome expectancies, in the form of judgments of teaching tasks and their contexts, are considered to be important in an explanation of teacher self-efficacy in addition to an individual judgment of his/her current competence. Outcome expectancies, in Tschannen-Moran and colleagues’ conceptualization of teacher self-efficacy, are more related to the implementation of teaching tasks and task context than to general environmental factors that are beyond teachers’ control.

The inclusion of outcomes, in the form of judgments about the requirements of teaching tasks, into teachers’ assessment of self-efficacy beliefs is supported by some researchers, for example, Wyatt (2012), Takahashi (2011), and Labone (2004). Wyatt (2012) argued that it is always a matter for teachers to care about the impact of their teaching practices on student learning (p. 6). Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate both perceptions of outcomes and teaching capability in the concept of teacher self-efficacy. Takahashi (2011) went one step further by stressing that teachers’ concerns for the influence of their teaching behavior are related to teachers’ responsibility for student learning which can affect their beliefs in their abilities to teach students. The researcher stated that separating two dimensions of the self-efficacy construct is “limiting in the context of teachers’ ground-level practice” (p. 733), since it appears to be implausible for each facet alone to motivate teachers to make their practices better. Labone (2004) stated that

the construct of teacher self-efficacy developed by Tschannen-Moran and colleagues “broaden[ed] conceptions of teacher efficacy” (p. 342), because it allows us to consider the importance of context more intensively, i.e. situating context beyond the classroom. It also explains more explicitly the origins of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, i.e. clarifying how teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs are formed.

The integrated model of teacher self-efficacy put forth by Tschannen-Moran and colleagues responds to perceived difficulties with the construction of GTE and PTE. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) and Henson (2002) argued that this conception of teacher self-efficacy with two dimensions, i.e. task analysis and personal teaching competence, is related to Rand’s conceptualisation of GTE and PTE (see section 3.1.1) but not the same. Task analysis is context specific and focuses less on general external factors as constraints/inhibitors and more on the challenges related to task implementation and task resources/constraints. GTE, rooted in internal-external control, deals with the abilities of teachers in general (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 231). GTE is about teachers’ influence over environmental constraints which excludes useful resources (Henson, 2002, p. 140; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 232). According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998, p. 232), PTE is assumed to be associated with self-efficacy in the teacher self-efficacy literature. However, PTE has been measured by items that include both present and future time, whereas self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997) is about future-oriented capability. Personal teaching competence and PTE are about a teacher’s judgement of his/her teaching capabilities. However, personal teaching competence is a perception of current abilities, which, together with task analysis, influence the judgment of future abilities, that is, teacher self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). Because a teacher’s self-perceptions of teaching competence include both deficits and competence, and his/her analysis of teaching tasks includes both constraints and resources, Tschannen-Moran et al., (1998) argued that their conceptualization of teacher self-efficacy brings a fuller understanding of how self-efficacy beliefs are shaped (p. 233).

However, the teacher self-efficacy concept developed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) is not without certain shortcomings. The authors acknowledged the importance of “the cultural meaning of efficacy in terms of the roles, expectations,

and social relations” (p. 203) in teachers’ constructions of self-efficacy beliefs. Nevertheless, this was not clarified in their construct of teacher self-efficacy. How other researchers argue for the role of cultural factors in influencing self-efficacy through the cognitive processing of self-efficacy information will be presented in sections 3.1.5 and 3.4.3.

In the next section, I review Bandura’s (1997) four hypothesised sources of self-efficacy as informing teachers’ self-efficacy judgments.

#### **3.1.4. Sources of self-efficacy information**

According to Bandura (1997), individuals construct their self-efficacy beliefs by processing information obtained from the following four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. In the integrated model of the teacher self-efficacy construct propounded by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), these four sources of self-efficacy information also play a key role by contributing information to task analysis and assessment of personal teaching competence (pp. 228-229).

*Mastery experiences* are the authentic performances, the perceptions of past experiences of a teacher, which can be successful or unsuccessful (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). Successful experiences may lead to increased self-efficacy and the other may result in decreased self-efficacy of that teacher. Past performance enables teachers to know more about their internal strengths and deficits as well as about task requirements (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers’ perceptions of unsuccessful experiences of teaching unmotivated students in the past may decrease their self-efficacy in teaching a group of struggling, unmotivated students since they may assume that they lack professional knowledge to teach these students. Bandura stated that mastery experiences are the most powerful source of self-efficacy information compared to other sources of self-efficacy information (see below). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) also stated that mastery experiences and emotional states associated with these experiences (see below) most directly influence a teacher’s self-perceptions of personal teaching competence (p. 229). However, as discussed in section 3.4.1, this is not always the case in all situations.

Bandura (1997) argued that because people cannot always have adequate measurements to evaluate their capabilities, they must compare their capabilities with others (p. 86). *Vicarious experiences*, the information gained from observing other teachers or self-modeling a particular task can enhance or weaken the development of self-efficacy beliefs of teachers who are the observers. The teachers may consider such factors as the similarity between the models and themselves (for example, age, gender), the competence of the models (incompetent versus competent models), multiplicity of modeling (observing different models or a single model) when they construct their personal efficacy beliefs. For example, if the teachers perceive that they have the same teaching abilities as the people who are successful in teaching, their self-efficacy may be heightened. In contrast, if they believe that they are not as good as those teachers, their own self-efficacy may be diminished. Accordingly, vicarious experiences can inform a teacher's perception of personal teaching competence. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) added that vicarious experiences can also provide information for the teacher's analysis of the teaching task (p. 230). Teachers may compare their own teaching conditions with the conditions which the models are in, that is, they may perceive these models to enjoy better or worse teaching facilities, when judging their own self-efficacy beliefs.

According to Bandura, *verbal persuasion* is the negative or positive verbal judgment of other people such as administrators, colleagues or students about a teacher's capability to carry out a particular task. Verbal persuasion provides information for both the analysis of the teaching task (e.g. suggested strategies) and self-perception of teaching competence of the teacher (e.g. specific feedback on the teacher's performance of a particular task) (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues gave the example of using professional development workshops and coursework to provide teachers with knowledge of both relevant teaching tasks and the skills required to improve teaching competence. Although not considered a powerful source of self-efficacy, verbal persuasion, when used with other sources of self-efficacy information, can increase or decrease self-efficacy beliefs of the teacher (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). A teacher's unsuccessful teaching task can lower

his/her sense of teaching self-efficacy but the supportive feedback given by the leader may help reduce his/her sense of failure.

*Physiological and emotional states* such as the anxiety and the mood of the teacher in performing a particular task may have an influence on the feeling of competence or incompetence of the teacher (Bandura, 1997). A fast heartbeat, shaking hands, and stress can lower a teacher's self-efficacy. Although regarded as the least powerful source of self-efficacy beliefs, affective states can increase or decrease the teacher's efficacy when combined with other sources of self-efficacy information (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). For example, affective states combined with mastery experiences might affect a teacher's self-perception of teaching competence. After a successful teaching lesson, the teacher feels happy and this can increase her teaching self-efficacy. However, the way affective states influence a teacher's self-perception of teaching competence depends on how much attention she has paid to her affective states (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). A teacher might no longer pay attention to her first feeling of anxiety as a result of focusing herself on making the teaching task understandable to the students.

As Wheatley (2002) noted, Bandura (1993, 1997) viewed teachers' negative feelings, e.g., anxiety, self-doubt, uncertainty and stress, as harmful to their self-efficacy. Bandura (1993) stated: "[T]hose who doubt their self-efficacy visualize failure scenarios and dwell on the many things that can go wrong. It is difficult to achieve much while fighting self-doubt" (p. 118). Bandura (1997) stressed that when people experience a negative mood, they often have a low sense of self-efficacy. They tend to choose less challenging tasks, have lowered motivation to engage in the tasks, make negative evaluations, and are more inclined to give up teaching (pp.111-113). Wheatley (2002) challenged Bandura's view by arguing that in contrast to positive feelings which may hinder teacher learning because there is little to improve or change, teacher doubt regarding teaching self-efficacy, a form of negative feeling, can potentially improve teacher self-efficacy. This is because doubting about ones' abilities can foster individuals to learn, change, reflect, and cooperate more productively with other people in the hope of improving teaching practices. How this argument is supported by the findings of self-efficacy studies will be presented in section 3.4.1.



### 3.1.5. Cognitive processing

Although information for self-efficacy judgments comes from four principal sources, Bandura (1997) asserted that the sources by themselves do not necessarily raise or lower self-efficacy beliefs. Only through cognitive processing do these four sources of self-efficacy information become active (p. 81). To make judgments of their self-efficacy beliefs, people first select the pieces of information they need to attend to, then they weigh and integrate these selected types of information to construct their self-efficacy (p. 79). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) also stated that:

Cognitive processing determines how the sources of information will be weighed and how they will influence the analysis of the teaching task and the assessment of personal teaching competence. The interaction of task analysis and competence, in turn, shapes teacher efficacy. (p. 230)

Many factors appear to influence this cognitive processing, including people's rules of weighting and interpreting self-efficacy information. Bandura (1997) listed four possible rules: additive processing (more available sources result in a more enhanced sense of efficacy), relative weighting (some factors are weighted more heavily than others), multiplicative processing (two or more sources interact with one another), and configural processing (the strength of a source is contingent on the availability of other sources) (p. 114). Bandura emphasised that these rules vary among individuals and largely depend on the availability of sources of self-efficacy information as well as socio-contextual factors. For example, some sources are weighted more heavily by some people but are given less weight by others. Performance in which failure is experienced may increase or decrease self-efficacy beliefs of different people. This is because teachers may adjust the way they weigh and interpret efficacy-relevant information to adapt to changes in the context. Nevertheless, Bandura asserted that once self-efficacy beliefs are established, that is, when teachers become more experienced, their sense of efficacy tends to be difficult to alter unless there are critical events that invalidate their previous thinking.

Bandura (1997) asserted the importance of context on cognitive processes. However, he did not address the potential role of culture in influencing self-

efficacy beliefs. Researchers such as Pajares (2007) and Klassen (2004b) have called for research which potentially enhances an understanding of how self-efficacy beliefs operate as a function of culture. Cross-cultural research has provided some evidence for the significant role of culture in influencing how sources of self-efficacy information are attended to, selected and weighted (Earley et al., 1999; Kim & Park, 2006; Oettinggen, 1995; Oettinggen & Zosuls, 2006). Specifically, cultural values may direct people to depend on either individual- or group- based feedback to construct their self-efficacy (Earley et al., 1999). In collectivist cultures, students' judgments of learning abilities largely depend on teachers' evaluations and feedback since they view teachers as persons with power and expertise (Oettinggen, 1995). A focus on the role of culture in affecting cognitive processing appears to add a clearer meaning to the construct of teacher self-efficacy which Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) acknowledged as required in their construct. Section 3.4.3 will present more detail on this issue.

In the present study, I adopt the construct of teacher self-efficacy propounded by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), which is mainly located within SCT developed by Bandura (1986, 1997) and inherits Bandura's self-efficacy properties. Vietnamese teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL can be defined as teachers' beliefs in their abilities to teach EFL effectively. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) used the term *task analysis* referring to one dimension of teacher self-efficacy. However, in my study, *task* has a specific meaning in ELT (see section 3.2.3), therefore, *teaching requirements* or *contextualised teaching demands* will be used instead of task analysis.

The Vietnamese teachers' self-efficacy in my study consist of two dimensions, teachers' self-perceptions of personal teaching competence and teachers' perceptions of teaching requirements. In judging their teaching competence, teachers may consider such factors as teaching skills and knowledge, and personal traits, which include both deficits and competence. The second dimension incorporates teachers' perceptions of environmental constraints (their GTE) and resources that influence teachers' sense of competence to fulfil teaching demands. Factors that influence teachers' perceptions of teaching requirements may include student factors (e.g. learning motivation and knowledge background), workplace resources and constraints, and available support in the environment. A teacher

with a high sense of self-efficacy is the one who believes that her knowledge, skills or personal qualities are adequate to teach the English language in the Vietnamese context. Due to a strong belief that her skills and strategies match the teaching demands at hand, she does not blame students or other factors for unsuccessful teaching experiences but puts more effort into improving her teaching practices. I agree with Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) argument that if teachers' considerations of what it would take for them to be successful in a particular context is central to their self-efficacy, the standards the teachers hold for what constitutes effective teaching matter in making judgements about self-efficacy. Besides, teacher self-efficacy is domain-, context-specific as noted earlier; therefore, it is vital to understand how effective EFL instruction is defined by the teachers in this particular context – the Vietnamese context. The next sections review some prominent EFL teaching approaches in Vietnam.

### **3.2. Discourses of effective EFL instruction**

Gee (1990) stated that “discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (p. 142). An individual can subscribe to more than one discourse at the same time. Gee argued that because discourses are historically and socially defined and because an individual's actions, values, beliefs, aptitudes are not always consistent, individuals may consciously or unconsciously subscribe to different discourse(s) at different times. Fairclough (1992) provided another useful definition of discourse:

Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels . . . [and] is socially constitutive. . . . Discourse contributes first of all to the construction of what are variously referred to as ‘social identities’ and ‘subject positions’ for social ‘subjects’ and types of ‘self’. . . . Secondly, discourse helps construct social relationships between people. And thirdly, discourse contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and beliefs. (p. 64)

In my study, discourses of effective EFL instruction are “sense-making stories” (Locke., 2004, p. 5) of effective EFL teaching approaches subscribed to or

enacted by the Vietnamese EFL teachers, which do not solely come from the teachers themselves but are socially and historically constructed. Put simply, teachers' discourses of effective EFL instruction are about which teaching approaches they subscribe to and apply in the language classroom and which they believe can help students learn. An individual teacher can subscribe to more than one approach at the same time and may subscribe to different approaches at different times. The most widespread EFL teaching approaches in EFL contexts in general and in Vietnam in particular are likely to be the Grammar-Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching (Brown, 2007; Fotos, 2005; Le, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The following sections review these approaches.

### **3.2.1. The Grammar-Translation Method**

Compared to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task- Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has the oldest history and was the main foreign language teaching approach from the 1840s to the 1940s (Fotos, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Still being used in EFL contexts in the present day, e.g. in Vietnam, the method aims to help learners to develop knowledge about English as a structural system (Fotos, 2005), to read the literature of a foreign language, and to “benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development” as a result of the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 5). The GTM is known to focus on rote memorizing of grammar rules, vocabulary, syntax, and morphology and on translating texts into and out of the target language. In a class where the GTM is being applied, the use of the mother tongue dominates that of the target language. Teachers typically use structural syllabuses in such a classroom. Teaching materials are often a textbook, a grammar book and a dictionary (Fotos, 2005). The unit of teaching and practice is the word or sentence. Much class time is devoted to explaining grammar rules and vocabulary items in isolation. Vocabulary and grammar learning are deductively and systematically drawn from reading texts. Pronunciation and communicative activities are largely ignored. Instead, reading and writing are prioritised. Teachers in GTM classes highlight accuracy (Brown, 2007; Fotos, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The GTM has received much criticism on a number of grounds. Brown (2001) stated that “[i]t does virtually nothing to enhance a student’s communicative ability in the language” (p. 19) which is considered to be critical in a global society (Fotos, 2005). Language learners are passive in the classroom and teachers are regarded as an authority (Liu & Shi, 2007), since much of class time is on practising and checking the accuracy in grammar exercises, vocabulary and translation activities. Besides, because a structural syllabus is typically used in a GTM classroom, other needs of learners are ignored. Teachers are not encouraged to design activities to cater for learners’ needs and learners may feel bored with discrete language points. In addition, because writing and reading skills are emphasised and accuracy is very important, there is little student-student interaction, and it is often teachers who initiate interactions.

On the other hand, there are many reasons for the widespread use of the GTM in EFL contexts. This approach appears to suit contexts where resources are scarce. Teachers are not required to have specialized skills when using the GTM (Brown, 2001, p. 19). Therefore, there is not much acknowledgement of the need for teacher training and development. The GTM does not focus on communicative skills, which are often weak in language teachers in EFL contexts and which often require a lot of funding for their improvement in English proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Besides, grammar tests are easier and more economical to conduct than communicative tests (Brown, 2001, p. 19), hence schools in poor areas will be more likely implement tests by themselves without asking for financial and pedagogical support from their educational bodies. Fotos (2005) also noted that since the GTM targets developing learners’ knowledge of grammar rules, vocabulary and translation skills, the language learning goal of the GTM especially matches one learning goal of centrally controlled education systems, which is to strengthen learners’ knowledge of discrete points of English to pass tests. Furthermore, Asian students tend to avoid ambiguous, uncertain learning situations (Liu & Shi, 2007). Since correct answers are always provided in GTM classrooms, students can obtain clear evidence of learning achievement. These probably help to explain why the GTM remains popular in many parts of the world, especially in Asian EFL contexts.

### **3.2.2. Communicative Language Teaching**

Since the GTM has long been criticised for its failure to help learners develop their communicative ability (see above), the adoption of the CLT approach in foreign language teaching contexts, especially in Asian EFL contexts, was expected to bring an improvement in learners' communicative ability. CLT is a language teaching approach that develops learners' communicative competence rather than linguistic competence (see Richards and Rodgers (2001) for an explanation). CLT is believed to provide learners with skills to communicate in contexts outside the classroom. For this reason, CLT tries to link classroom language learning with real-life activities, and emphasises learning through interaction and the use of authentic materials (Nunan, 1991). In a CLT classroom, fluency, not accuracy, is the focus of attention. Grammatical competence, discourse (cohesion and coherence), sociolinguistic (appropriateness), strategic competence (communication strategies), all make up learners' communicative competence (Canale, 1983), which is central to classroom language practice. Grammar teaching is neither excluded nor focused on in CLT classrooms. Learners are engaged in "the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes" (Brown, 2001, p. 43) through teachers' use of cooperative activities, pair work and group work, and real-life content materials which are relevant to learners' needs. Classroom activities are designed to include four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, but using the skills in ways which set up conditions for students' sharing and negotiation of meaning is the focus of CLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 165). Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983; 1996) – a key theory that underpins CLT, suggests that student interaction specifically can contribute to language acquisition since interaction creates opportunities for the negotiation of meaning. According to Long, when learners produce language (particularly in spoken form) in the context of interaction, they may need to modify their language to address a communication problem signalled by their interaction partner. Learners may receive feedback informally about the comprehensibility of their utterances which helps them to reformulate their utterances. For this reason, negotiated modification of conversation facilitates language acquisition.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) provided a list of roles for teachers and learners within the CLT approach that the GTM lacks (pp. 166-168). Teachers are no longer knowledge authorities. They do not control classroom activities but function as persons with multiple roles in the language learning process. Some of these new roles include facilitator, needs analyst, counsellor, group process manager, resource provider and learner. Besides, learners' active roles are highly valued in the CLT approach. They are encouraged to bring their unique knowledge background and learning styles into the negotiation of meaning. It is often learners, not teachers, who initiate interactions. CLT seeks to promote cooperation among learners and between teachers and learners. It appears that CLT aspires to provide more opportunities than the GTM for teachers and learners to generate language actively and creatively.

However, the uptake of CLT in EFL contexts has gained limited traction (Fotos, 2005) and not all principles of the approach are considered suitable to EFL cultural contexts (Chang, 2011; Khoi & Iwashita, 2012; Lewis & McCook, 2002; Pham, 2005a). The first reason for this may be related to the contrast between Western values and those of Asian countries. For example, CLT focuses on learners' responsibility for learning and the teacher is also a learner in his/her classroom. Making errors is regarded as an unavoidable part of the learning process. However, in Asian countries, teachers are seen as knowledge authorities who deserve learners' respect and who should be able to provide correct answers (Lewis & McCook, 2002). Perfection and accuracy have more value than fluency (Chang, 2011). The second reason relates to the need for teaching and learning resources particularly associated with the implementation of CLT (Fotos, 2005, p. 667). CLT requires authentic learning and practice opportunities for learners which are not easily accessible in EFL contexts, where English is not the mother tongue and the education budget is limited. Teachers' low English proficiency levels and lack of professional knowledge also hinder the effectiveness of CLT in Asian EFL contexts (Pham, 2005a). Examination pressures and a centralised syllabus are probably other constraining factors. In Asian countries, accuracy goes hand in hand with grammar-based examinations, and with grammar, vocabulary and translation tasks (Khoi & Iwashita, 2012, p. 27), which are clearly not tenets of CLT. Besides, teachers are required to cover all teaching items in the

curriculum to prepare learners for tests. Therefore, although EFL teachers may agree that CLT is valuable to learners' communication abilities, not many of them are in a position to fully employ CLT in their classrooms (Fotos, 2005; Tomlinson & Dat, 2004). In the Vietnamese context, how language teachers have reacted to CLT is discussed in section 2.2.3.

### **3.2.3. Task-based Language Teaching**

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), as Littlewood (2007) indicated, is "the latest methodological realisation of CLT". It too is within a communicative framework and targets learners' communication ability (p. 243). In the literature, it is generally agreed that TBLT and CLT share general assumptions about the nature of language and language learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005). For example, TBLT also focuses on real communication, meaningful tasks and meaningful language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). However, although TBLT is a family member of CLT, it has some distinctive features as discussed below.

Within the TBLT approach, a task serves as a major component, "a central unit of planning and teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 224), and this is where it mainly differs from CLT. Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) proposed a definition of a task as "an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis to meaning, to attain an objective" (p. 11). In addition, a classroom activity is a task when it has a primary focus on meaning, some concern for form, and a clearly defined communicative outcome (Ellis, 2003, pp. 9-10). Tasks can involve any or all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Willis, 2005, p. 3). Tasks can feature communicative practice; however, a task does not necessarily involve or lead to oral language use (Ellis, 2003). For example, students may be required to listen to some conversations and write in missing information on forms. This task should mirror as closely as possible an authentic context in which people fill in a form related to information gained from an interaction. Such a task focuses on meaning, i.e. students are expected to understand the conversations in order to write in the missing information, and has a clear outcome, i.e. students are required to complete forms.



A central tenet of a task-based approach is a need to focus on form. There is a distinction between focus on form and on forms. Focus on form is about attention to language structure/patterns in a meaningful context, while focus on forms is about attending to linguistic structures in isolation from the context of communication (Ellis, 2001). In TBLT, linguistic forms are focused on by students incidentally during the process of task completion (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis, 2005). To comply with TBLT principles, students tend not to be explicitly instructed about linguistic forms but, in order to complete tasks, they should have to make use of these forms. In case of a lack in appropriate linguistic resources, learners are encouraged to guess, paraphrase, or ask for clarification (Ellis, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Some researchers (e.g. Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996) have proposed incorporating form-focused activities into a task sequence, e.g. pre-task phase or post-task phase, which allows for scaffolding the learning of new language features.

A task is differentiated from other classroom activities. As discussed above, in a task-based approach, knowledge of form is developed through interaction and the negotiation of meaning. This makes for an important distinction between tasks in TBLT and grammatical exercises in the GTM. The intended primary focus of an exercise in the GTM is displaying grammatical competence, not using language in a communicatively and pragmatically appropriate and effective way, i.e. learners do not produce the target form in context. The outcome of an exercise that requires learners to practise a structure is simply the correct use of that structure. The intended primary focus of a communicative activity in CLT or a task in TBLT is on communicating meaning and accomplishing an outcome. An example of a communicative activity would be learners working in pairs to introduce one another. A definite outcome can be stipulated by requesting learners to complete an information card about their interview partner.

Because TBLT and CLT are under the same umbrella of communicative pedagogy, the general roles of teachers and learners in TBLT classrooms overlap with those in CLT classrooms. In addition, because TBLT focuses on task outcome, teachers and learners require some additional roles. Teachers need to select and sequence tasks, prepare learners for tasks, and raise learners'

consciousness of certain linguistic items through designing conditions for learners to notice language form. Learners may need to adapt to greater frequency of pair work and small group work, pay attention to both meaning and linguistic form, and make use of available language resources to complete tasks (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 235-236).

In the present study, as explained in section 3.1.5, Vietnamese teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching EFL is about their self-efficacy in teaching the language effectively. The standards the teachers hold for what constitutes effective teaching are important in making judgements about self-efficacy. Therefore, it is likely that teachers' subscribed-to dominant EFL teaching approaches in the classroom and their efficacy in using the approaches are related.

In the following sections, I review previous self-efficacy studies in order to further situate my study.

### **3.3. Review of previous teacher self-efficacy studies**

The previous review of self-efficacy theories has demonstrated that there exist many factors affecting Vietnamese teacher sense of self-efficacy. Teachers build their self-efficacy by assessing their perceptions of personal teaching competence and competence around fulfilling various teaching requirements. In order to assess these two dimensions of self-efficacy, they process information mainly from four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Contextual and cultural factors influence the cognitive processing and the availability of sources of self-efficacy information. In addition, because teacher self-efficacy is context- and task-specific, how EFL teachers define effective construction in the Vietnamese context is important to the concept of self-efficacy. Therefore, in order to situate the present study, it is necessary to review the findings of scholars who have explored sources of self-efficacy, the role of contextual and cultural factors on self-efficacy, and teacher self-efficacy and EFL instruction. The focus of the review is to continue to identify gaps in the literature to guide the articulation of research questions and the development of an appropriate methodology and design for the present study.

### **3.3.1. Studies on sources of teacher self-efficacy information**

Responding to a call for research investigating the different influences of sources of teacher self-efficacy in different contexts (Klassen & Usher, 2010; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), an increasing number of studies have investigated this issue. However, these studies have yielded inconsistent results regarding the strength of each source, the emergence of other sources which were not identified by Bandura (1997), and the relationship among sources.

Many researchers (e.g. Morris, 2010; Morris & Usher, 2011; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009) support Bandura's assertion that teacher self-efficacy is best enhanced by the combination of four sources of self-efficacy information but is most directly influenced by mastery experiences. For example, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found that the most powerful source of self-efficacy information of primary teachers in the U.S. was mastery experiences, which were in the form of perceived successful planning and practice in teaching strategies with colleagues (p. 240). Consistent with what Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found, Morris and Usher (2011) discovered that mastery experiences emerged as a primary source of self-efficacy information for university professors in the U.S. Morris and Usher (2011) considered perceived success in past instructional experiences as one of the most important factors in the formation of their self-efficacy beliefs. The contention that mastery experiences play a significant role in the formation of teacher self-efficacy was also confirmed in the study of Poulou (2007) with student teachers in Greece. Successful teaching experience in primary schools during teaching practice obtained a high rating in the study.

Another group of researchers argue that teachers' perceptions of knowing the materials and knowing how to teach (cognitive mastery of content and pedagogical skills) appear to influence significantly the self-efficacy of teachers. A study by Palmer (2006) revealed that Australian primary science student teachers' perceptions of success in understanding how to teach represented their main source of self-efficacy information. Palmer (2006) argued that this particular source of self-efficacy information is distinctive from enactive mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997), because it does not involve doing something but is

rather about understanding something (p. 339). The significant role of cognitive mastery experiences in mediating teachers' self-efficacy beliefs has been confirmed in the studies of Morris and Usher (2011), Morris (2010), Chacón (2005) and Lee (2009). Interestingly, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) did not use the term *cognitive mastery*, preferring to view professional development/learning as an example of vicarious experience.

Some researchers (e.g. Capa & Hoy, 2005; Milner & Hoy, 2003) disagree with Bandura (1997) that mastery experiences are the most powerful predictor. In these studies, it was social persuasion or the combination of social persuasion with other sources that influenced participants' self-efficacy. Zeldin and Pajares (2000) used a narrative approach to explore the sources of self-efficacy of women who worked in careers traditionally dominated by men. The study reported that the women relied most extensively on the encouragement and modelling provided by people around them. The researchers stated that verbal persuasion and vicarious experiences provided by the people who played critical roles in their lives strengthened the women's self-efficacy in selecting and continuing their careers. Similarly, Milner (2002) conducted a case study with an experienced English teacher in a high school in the U.S. to understand her self-efficacy and persistence. Feedback, both negative and positive, from the teacher's students, their parents and colleagues mattered most to her. The author stated that negative verbal feedback on her teaching style made the teacher less self-efficacious. However, her self-efficacy was built up by the positive verbal feedback of some colleagues and students and her perception of the success of new teaching tasks. According to Milner (2002), social persuasion and mastery experiences worked together to raise her self-efficacy and contributed to her persistence.

Researchers also disagree on whether each of the following sources – social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and affective states – independently contributes to teacher sense of self-efficacy. Regarding social persuasion, some researchers (see above) are of the view that social persuasion in the form of feedback, support systems or specific help predict the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers. Other researchers (e.g. Palmer, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007) maintain that this source of self-efficacy information has little or no role to play in self-efficacy. Some researchers (e.g. Johnson, 2010; Mills, 2011) report that vicarious

experiences, e.g. imagining, hearing or observing colleagues teach, predict the self-efficacy of teachers; others (e.g. Morris & Usher, 2011; Woolfolk Hoy & Burke-Spero, 2005) have found no such relationship. Likewise, while a negligible relationship between physiological states and self-efficacy was found in the studies of Ross and Bruce (2007), Poulou (2007) and Mulholland and Wallace (2001), but the relationship is rejected by other researchers (e.g. Britner & Pajares, 2006; Hampton, 1998).

As Morris (2010) explained, the relationship of physiological and affective states to teachers' sense of efficacy has been explicitly addressed by only a few researchers. Of the few that have, such feelings as stress, disappointment and anxiety are often believed to cause a diminished sense of self-efficacy beliefs and poor performance. A good mood, however, usually increases self-efficacy beliefs and subsequent achievement (see Bursal & Paznokas, 2006; Gresham, 2008; Klassen, 2002; Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006; Rechten & Dizinno, 1998). However, not all researches agree with Bandura's (1997) assertion that negative feelings are harmful for teachers' self-efficacy. Some researchers have demonstrated that negative emotions, in some cases, do not affect performance negatively and people with negative emotions do not necessarily adopt avoidance behaviours. Although some of these studies do not directly deal with self-efficacy, the results challenge the long-held belief in research that negative emotions impede achievement. Because of the scarcity of studies examining affective states and self-efficacy (Morris, 2010; Morris & Usher, 2011), a review of the particular studies on the relationship between affective states and performance can help to highlight that anxiety, tension or worry do not always have negative effects on achievement and are not necessarily harmful to self-efficacy.

Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009), for example, conducted a quantitative study with college students at an American university to examine the relationship between student language anxiety and course achievement. They found that the higher the proficiency levels of the students, the higher their anxiety levels. The study yielded results in agreement with those of Ewald (2007). In this qualitative study, advanced students of Spanish answered a questionnaire and follow-up

questions, which aimed to understand their language learning experiences in relation to anxiety. The researcher reported that, although the students were in upper-level courses, they still experienced high anxiety, which might or might not inhibit their language learning. Other researchers such as Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001), Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (2000), and Singh and Rajalingam (2012) also suggest that a certain level of anxiety can be good in the language learning process. The researchers noted that anxiety can lead to positive learning outcomes, because individuals may have a strong motivation to learn or they may become aware of shortcomings and work hard to address these. This special type of anxiety, that is, facilitating anxiety, which is identified by Alpert and Haber (1960) and which Young (1986) defined as “an increase in drive level which results in improved performance” (p. 440), is claimed to foster academic achievement among researchers and scholars. Overall, it is feasible that in certain circumstances and with certain people, negative emotions can enhance learning and achievement.

Among the very few studies which have investigated the relationship between affective states and teacher self-efficacy, only three suggest that it is not a given that negative emotions impede achievement, diminish self-efficacy over time and induce people to quit teaching. In two qualitative studies, Milner and colleagues (2002; 2003) described how the teachers in the studies persevered despite their physiological and emotional strain. In the 2002 study, the female teacher experienced anxiety, stress and pressure when she was in an unsupportive teaching environment, where she was isolated from colleagues. In the other study (Milner & Hoy, 2003), the author claimed that the teacher could have left the teaching profession when she was confronted with situations in which she doubted her teaching ability. Students and parents’ criticisms caused her doubt, unease, and stress, which one might have assumed would contribute to a low sense of self-efficacy. Nevertheless, the two teachers overcame their low sense of self-efficacy by relying largely on positive feedback and successful teaching achievements. Similarly, the teacher in Wyatt’s (2013) study exhibited constant worry, doubt about her teaching ability, anxiety, and sleep loss when teaching young learners, a completely different kind of student, as a result of curriculum change. However, the researcher claimed that the teacher was able to develop

strategies, e.g., reflection, that helped her to gain more successful mastery experiences later. These important studies highlight that experiencing negative emotions does not necessarily impede outcomes and not all teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy withdraw.

The literature above has demonstrated contradictory results regarding the relationship among the sources, the emergence of new sources as well as the strength of each source in relation to self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) and Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) emphasised the role of cognitive processing in activating self-efficacy source information and making available the sources in different context which potentially cause differences in findings (see section 3.1.5). Pajares et al. (2007) also explained that, because self-efficacy is context-specific, studies conducted in different contexts yield inconsistent findings (p. 108). In addition, Usher and Pajares (2008) drew attention to methodological problems that have possibly pointed to the critical role of mastery experiences and the less important role of other sources. According to the researchers, in many self-efficacy studies that are quantitative in approach, mastery experiences constitute the first variable in the multiple statistical models, followed by vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. Usher and Pajares also noted that in some studies, too few items are used to assess vicarious experiences and affective states, which may have led to their statistically less significant impact. Another possibility is that the most recent experiences may be the most relevant to participants at the time surveys and questionnaires are delivered to them (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000) which may skew the data.

The review of previous studies above leads to a conclusion that sources of self-efficacy information can take different forms depending on context (see Appendix 11). The review points out inconsistent findings in relation to the relationship among the sources, the emergence of new sources and the strength of each source. In addition, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) stated that four sources of self-efficacy contribute to both beliefs around personal teaching competence and teaching requirements but in a different way. However, previous studies provide little information on how each dimension is influenced by the sources. This is probably because most self-efficacy researchers adopt Bandura's construct of self-efficacy which omits to emphasise outcome expectancy – which equates with

beliefs around teaching requirements in my study. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a research investigating how the sources of efficacy operate in a particular context – the Vietnamese context in order to figure out how they relate to the two dimensions of self-efficacy.

The review of teacher self-efficacy theories and previous self-efficacy studies have demonstrated that contextual factors play a vital role in influencing teacher self-efficacy, because they may alter teachers' cognitive processing and determine the availability of sources of self-efficacy information. In the next section, I review how the mediating role of contextual factors has been examined in previous teacher self-efficacy studies.

### **3.3.2. Studies on the role of contextual factors**

The research into how context influences teacher self-efficacy beliefs is not entirely new. A large number of scholars have been investigating the impact of certain features of context such as school context (e.g. teaching resources, student factors), academic climate (e.g. emphasis on academic achievement) and/or school setting (e.g. types of schools) on teacher self-efficacy. What they have found confirms Bandura's (1997) assertion that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs vary according to context. For example, Siwatu (2011) conducted a quantitative study to understand teacher self-efficacy in teaching English for students in urban schools and suburban ones. The researcher found that teachers in suburban schools had a higher sense of self-efficacy than did their colleagues in urban schools, because they did not face such problems as big class sizes and a high percentage of students from low income areas with culturally and linguistic diversity and low English proficiency. Chong et al. (2010) reached the same conclusion when comparing the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in high-tracked middle schools and regular middle schools in Singapore. They found that a greater range of student ability groupings hindered the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in regular middle schools compared to their fellows in high-track schools. In addition, the availability of resources, the attitudes of colleagues and schools' goals were reported to affect the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in high-track schools. In Walker and Slear's (2011) quantitative study, a principal's communication about and modelling of instructional expectations increased



middle-school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, whereas the principal's providing contingent rewards decreased their self-efficacy beliefs. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found that the perceptions of middle-school teachers in Norway regarding time pressure (e.g. heavy workload and little time for rest or recovery) was negatively related to their self-efficacy. The teachers' positive relations with parents and their feelings of having choices of teaching methods and strategies boosted their self-efficacy. Kim and Kim (2010) explored South Korean early childhood teachers' perceptions of organisational health of schools. What they found supported the findings of Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) and Knoblauch and Woolfolk Hoy (2008) that a supportive school climate and a strong academic emphasis appear to be conducive to teachers' beliefs that they can teach different age-groups effectively in different teaching situations.

Another group of researchers examined whether participating in a new setting, i.e. in an intervention or development program or professional learning community, could lead to changes in teacher self-efficacy. The findings of these studies have yielded mixed results. Most researchers (e.g. Bruce & Ross, 2008; Chong & Kong, 2012; Gunning & Mensah, 2011; Locke & Dix, 2011; Puchner & Taylor, 2006) suggest that the new setting increases the self-efficacy beliefs of participants. For example, twelve mathematics teachers at grade 3 and 6 in Bruce and Ross's (2008) quantitative study participated in a six-month development program which offered effective teaching strategies and peer teaching opportunities. The researchers claimed that the teachers' self-efficacy in teaching mathematics was enhanced by the end of the programme. According to Bruce and Ross (2008), an increased sense of self-efficacy was due to an exposure to new and useful pedagogical knowledge, successful mastery experiences, opportunities to observe peers teach, positive feedback and positive emotional cues in the development programs, which encouraged the teachers to take risks and implement challenging strategies. Similarly, all teachers in the study of Locke and Dix (2011) experienced a high sense self-efficacy in writing and most of them had an increased sense of self-efficacy as teachers of writing after taking part in a professional development writing workshop. Most of the teachers interpreted the writing workshop experiences positively and reported useful changes in their teaching practices. The participants attributed this increase to several aspects of the workshop, including

opportunities to produce different types of writing, to view the efforts of colleagues, and to receive comments from peers.

However, influencing the availability of sources of self-efficacy information through an intervention or development programme does not always bring about positive changes in teacher self-efficacy, especially when the content of the program does not provide enough information for the development of self-efficacy. For example, Moseley et al. (2003) examined the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service elementary teachers before and after participating in a three-day education program. In their quantitative study, they found that the program did not produce a higher sense of self-efficacy beliefs among the teachers at the end of the program and the teachers' beliefs in their ability to teach dropped significantly after 7 weeks. The researchers explained that even though the teachers were exposed to a programme which aimed to facilitate their teaching practices, the program itself had several limitations which resulted in a lack of significant changes in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Moseley et al. (2003) stated that teacher self-efficacy does not appear to be easily influenced by a program offering simple materials (limited availability of cognitive mastery) and no opportunities to get feedback from students and mentors and to reinforce new knowledge, thus limiting the availability of enactive mastery and social persuasion. It appears that when development programs limit the availability of sources of self-efficacy information, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs may not enjoy significant enhancement.

Relatively little research has been directed at understanding how context shapes self-efficacy beliefs by mediating the availability of sources of self-efficacy information. Researchers who are interested in this issue (e.g. Milner, 2002; Milner & Hoy, 2003; Rushton, 2003; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000) suggest that the environment where the teachers are living and working can foster or impede the processing of certain types of sources of self-efficacy information. For example, the women in the qualitative study of Zeldin and Pajares (2000) were taught to believe that they would not function as well as their male colleagues in science-related careers which were dominated by men. They experienced negative social messages about their academic futures. They were found to lack opportunities and were discouraged from engaging in mastery experiences in mathematics-related careers. The women reported relying on supportive feedback (social persuasion)

and models (vicarious experiences) from important people, i.e. family members and teachers, to build their self-efficacy in pursuing their selected careers. There were limited mastery experiences for the participants in the social environment but, at the same time, the environment directed the women to pay attention to available feedback and models to overcome academic and career challenges and to persist in the profession.

Both Wheatley (2005, p. 749) and Labone (2004, p. 341) noted that self-efficacy quantitative studies heavily outnumber qualitative studies. Labone (2004) added that context has not been explored adequately in most self-efficacy research (p. 342), although it is considered a key factor in teachers' constructions of self-efficacy beliefs. This is because in quantitative research, which investigates the relationship between context and teacher self-efficacy, context is assessed by teachers' self-reports on Likert-scale items. From these studies, we have knowledge about the effects of context on teachers' self-efficacy, i.e. an increased or diminished sense of self-efficacy. However, we do not have in-depth understanding of the effects of context on teacher constructions of self-efficacy and/or teachers' processes of negotiation and internalization of meanings and shared values originating from their participation in interrelated on-going activities. Wheatley (2005) provided several examples from previous self-efficacy research to illustrate the fact that it is not easy to elicit explanations of teachers' cognitive processing of contextual factors and personal factors from numbers (p. 760). He stressed that because "teachers' efficacy beliefs *are themselves* complex, meaningful interpretations" (p. 559, italics in original), using only Likert-scaled instruments fails to capture such complex interpretations. As a result, a re-focusing on interpretive methods which are better at explaining meanings is necessary.

In summary, it is generally agreed that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs depend on the context in which the sources of self-efficacy are experienced. Researchers disagree on whether participating in a new setting can enhance teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. It is because of this disagreement and of the dominant position of quantitative self-efficacy studies that re-focusing self-efficacy research on

interpretation of sources of self-efficacy information is likely to provide valuable insight into understanding how context relates to teachers' self-efficacy beliefs.

In the next section, I review how self-efficacy research has been directed at understanding the role of cultural factors.

### **3.3.3. Studies on the role of cultural factors**

As presented briefly in section 3.1.5, the idea that self-efficacy beliefs operate differently in different cultures is not new in the literature. However, according to Klassen et al. (2011), research on the impact of culture on self-efficacy beliefs is extremely rare. Findings of some cross-cultural research presented below suggest that psychological processes are contingent on cultural factors. Because of the dearth of research in this area, my review includes studies in both academic and business or vocational settings.

One common finding of much cross-cultural research is that cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism appear to encourage participants from non-Western cultures (e.g. China, Taiwan, Hong Kong) to rate their self-efficacy lower than those who are not from these cultures (e.g. the U.S, Canada). For example, Mau (2000) found a difference in the career decision-making self-efficacy of Taiwanese and American students. The Taiwanese students scored significantly lower on the decision-making self-efficacy measure than did American friends. The finding that participants from collectivistic cultures display lower self-efficacy beliefs than their counterparts from non-Western cultures was also noted in the studies of Eaton and Dembo (1997), Lam, Chen, and Schaubroeck (2002), Leung (2001), Salili, Chiu, and Lai (2001), Ho and Hau (2004), and Schaubroeck, Lam, and Xie (2000). Researchers agree that cultural backgrounds possibly account for the difference. A collective-oriented culture which values group effort rather than individual abilities possibly led Taiwanese to rate their self-efficacy low (Mau, 2000). An emphasis on humility and academic achievement perhaps resulted in the lower self-efficacy but higher performance of non-Western cultural groups such as Canadian Chinese or Asian Americans compared to groups from more individualistic cultures (Eaton & Dembo, 1997; Salili et al., 2001). In a collectivistic society a predisposition toward modesty and pressure to assume

responsibilities and achieve highly were reflected in the lower self-efficacy of Chinese teachers (Ho & Hau, 2004). Mau (2000) concluded that unlike an individual-oriented culture, a collective-oriented culture seems not to encourage the development of self-efficacy. However, research indicates that collectivist cultures engender self-efficacy in different ways and with different premises.

In relation to the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism mentioned above, Earley and colleagues (Earley, 1993, 1994; Earley et al., 1999) conducted a number of studies investigating the effects of individual-based feedback/training or group-based feedback/training on self-efficacy beliefs and performance. They found that a focus on individual gain and rewards did not result in high levels of self-efficacy for managers coming from China and Israel but enhanced the self-efficacy beliefs of those from the U.S. Incentive schemes emphasizing individual performance did not increase the self-efficacy of collectivists, possibly because they “downplay[ed]the social ties that bind workers to their ingroups” (Earley, 1993, p. 343). Individual-focused training contributed to high self-efficacy beliefs of managers from the United States. These managers did not display any changes in self-efficacy beliefs when receiving group-focused training. Those from China obtained the highest and relatively high levels of self-efficacy beliefs with group-focused and individual-focused training respectively (Earley, 1994). Both personal and group-based feedback indicating success strongly increased the self-efficacy beliefs of workers from a Chinese cultural background. For workers from the US, personal-based feedback most strongly enhanced their self-efficacy judgments (Earley et al., 1999). The researchers suggest that “a collectivist’s sense of self is based on both personal and group-based information” (Earley et al., 1999, p. 614) and that self-efficacy beliefs change in accordance to cultural orientation, the nature of training, feedback and incentive schemes (Earley, 1993, 1994).

Examining factors that explain the high academic achievement of Korean students, Kim and Park (2006) found that certain factors in Korean culture increased the students’ self-efficacy and learning motivation. The self-efficacy beliefs and motivation in turn fostered their academic achievement, which was often better than that of their Western counterparts in international studies. Consistent with

previous research, social support and an emphasis on academic achievement were important in influencing students' self-efficacy. In addition, the hierarchical relationship among teachers, parents and children was another powerful factor. The author explained that in Korea, parents often hold high expectations of children's learning. Feelings of indebtedness towards parents and respect toward teachers partly encouraged the students to learn and strengthened their self-efficacy beliefs and learning performance. In this study, the dimension of power hierarchies appeared to influence the Korean students' self-efficacy beliefs.

It has been well established that self-efficacy beliefs in a Western context differs from those in a non-Western context as a function of culture. The discussion of previous research illuminates how certain dimensions of culture, e.g. collectivism and individualism, and power hierarchies affect psychological processes. Members of collectivist cultures tend to rate their self-efficacy lower than those of individualist cultures but the lower self-efficacy beliefs do not impede their performance. Self-efficacy beliefs are more other-oriented than self-oriented for people in non-Western cultures. However, most research investigating this issue resides in cross-cultural studies. No self-efficacy studies up to this point have explored in depth how a culture mediates teacher self-efficacy beliefs in an Asian context. In addition, participants in many studies (Klassen, 2004a; Leung, 2001; Mau, 2000; Salili et al., 2001) are immigrants. It may be reasonable to question whether the original characteristics of their cultures are retained when they move to new settings. Furthermore, Klassen (2004b) pointed out that most of the studies focusing on the relationship between cultural similarities and differences and self-efficacy are grounded on cultural assumptions and speculation, i.e. without including measurement of cultural dimensions. Besides, among non-Western cultures, the individualism/collectivism and power hierarchy dimensions vary significantly (p. 227). The limited research with promising evidence draws attention to the need to conduct a study to understand the potential role of culture in influencing how teachers in the Vietnamese context construct their self-efficacy beliefs.

In the next section, I review the literature on self-efficacy in EFL settings.

### **3.3.4. Studies on self-efficacy in EFL settings**

According to Sabokrouh and Barimani-Varandi (2013), Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013), and Karimi (2011), research on teacher self-efficacy beliefs in EFL contexts is extremely scarce. Among available research, three topics have been explored frequently: the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and English language proficiency; the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and language attitudes; and the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and pedagogical strategies (e.g. the GTM or CLT). All studies used teacher self-efficacy scales developed by either Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) or Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) which aim at measuring teachers' self-efficacy across subjects and contexts (Akbari & Tavassoli, 2014; Lee, 2009).

Researchers do not agree on how EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are related to their English language skills. Chacón (2005), Eslami and Fatahi (2008), Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013), Lee (2009), and Sabokrouh and Barimani-Varandi (2013) reported a positively strong relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their language proficiency levels. As the researchers noted, the higher the EFL teachers rated themselves in their English language mastery, the stronger their self-efficacy beliefs. In these studies, EFL teachers perceived that their reading and writing skills were better than speaking and listening skills. These latter deficiencies seemed to be a factor that lowered the teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL. The researchers explained that limited opportunities to practise the two skills in daily activities may have resulted in teachers' perceptions of less proficiency in these skills. On the basis of these findings, this group of researchers argued that teachers' EFL proficiency is a strong predictor of their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching the language. In contrast, in the study of Shim (2001, as cited in Lee, 2009, p. 35), there was an insignificant relationship between Korean teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their language skills. Teachers' perceptions of their reading and writing competence made no significant difference to their self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy teachers rated their speaking skills more highly than high self-efficacy teachers. High self-efficacy teachers rated their listening skills more highly than low self-efficacy teachers. Lee

(2009), by way of critique, argued that because Shim (2001, as cited in Lee, 2009, p. 35) used the global teaching self-efficacy scale developed by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) without any modification, the scale failed to capture the specificity of teaching tasks that EFL teachers were expected to perform in the Korean context.

Some researchers have found a strong relationship between teachers' attitudes towards the English language and their self-efficacy. In the mixed-method study of Lee (2009), data showed that Korean teachers whose teaching norms were in line with native speaker-reference, that is, they believed that American or British English is the best model for Koreans, appeared to display a low sense of self-efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement and oral communication in English. Those teachers who advocated the international use of English did not support the native speaker view, did not see the status of EFL teachers as a disadvantage, and had a high sense of self-efficacy in the teaching areas mentioned above. Similarly, Mirsanjari, Karbalaee, and Afraz (2013) reported that Iranian teachers' attitudes towards English as an International Language (IL) significantly predicted their self-efficacy beliefs. The researchers stated that the teachers highly supported a native speaker norm. At the same time, they agreed that English should be used as an IL in the Iranian context. According to the researchers, the teachers' low sense of self-efficacy in carrying out teaching tasks was probably due to a dominant, native speaker norm. Sabokrouh and Barimani-Varandi (2013) also found that Iranian teachers' attitudes were significantly related to their self-efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement and classroom use of oral English. The researchers stated that "the teachers who agreed more with the attitude believed they were more capable" (p. 123) to carry out all the tasks above. However, it is not clear from the study how the researchers defined teachers' attitudes toward the English language, because their instrument was not available. In addition, they used the scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) without any modification, which means that the domain and context-specific nature of self-efficacy was not reflected in their study instrumentation.



Eslami and Fatahi (2008) and Chacón (2005) examined how EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were related to their tendency to use grammatically or communicatively oriented pedagogical strategies. Their studies yielded inconsistent findings. In the study of Eslami and Fatahi (2008), Iranian teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement, classroom management and instructional strategies were strongly related to their pedagogical strategies. Findings suggested that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy were more likely to use communication-oriented strategies in the classroom. Those with a low sense of self-efficacy were more inclined to grammatically oriented strategies. In contrast, Chacón (2005) found that the self-efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers in Venezuela did not affect their use of pedagogical strategies. The higher the teacher self-efficacy, the more likely they were to subscribe to either communicatively-based or grammatically based strategies. However, the researcher noted that the teachers appeared to focus more on accuracy than meaning, which reflected the dominance of the GTM in the Venezuelan context. Both Chacón (2005) and Eslami and Fatahi (2008) used a Likert-type scale to assess participants' pedagogical strategies in teaching English. However, while Chacón (2005) included interview data to support her interpretation of teachers' approaches in the classroom, Eslami and Fatahi (2008) reached their conclusion without using any other research instruments.

The review demonstrates inconsistent findings related to the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and English language skills and the relationship between their self-efficacy beliefs and pedagogical strategies. Not all researchers modified existing teacher self-efficacy scales to reflect the specificity of EFL teaching settings. Besides, to my knowledge, only two studies (Chacón, 2005; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008) investigated links between teachers' self-efficacy and EFL instruction. The inconsistent findings, the use of global teacher self-efficacy scales without modification, and the lack of research suggest a need for further research on teachers' self-efficacy in EFL settings and on the relationship between self-efficacy and EFL instruction.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

The chapter has reviewed literature concerned with conceptions of teacher self-efficacy. The review of the theory indicates that there exist many factors which may affect teachers' sense of self-efficacy, including teachers' cognitive processing of four sources of information, cultural factors and contextual factors. Teachers' discourses of effective teaching instruction in the Vietnamese context may be hypothesized as affecting their construct of self-efficacy beliefs. A review of previous teacher self-efficacy studies has indicated that very little empirical research on the potential role of cultural factors on self-efficacy has been done. A few studies have investigated EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy beliefs, especially how their self-efficacy beliefs are potentially mediated by their uptake of particular teaching approaches. In addition, researchers disagree on the relationship among sources of self-efficacy information, the strength of each source, and the emergence of new sources. Previous studies have also yielded inconsistent findings related to whether moving to a new setting leads to changes in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and whether teachers' perceptions of English language proficiency and teaching approaches affect their self-efficacy beliefs. The review has also indicated the predominance of quantitative studies over qualitative ones, despite the fact that a number of researchers (e.g. Henson, 2002; Labone, 2004; Wheatley, 2005) call for the employment of qualitative inquiry in understanding teacher self-efficacy.

This present study is a step towards addressing these gaps by investigating what factors influence EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy beliefs in the Vietnamese context by means of a qualitative approach. The present study is grounded mainly on SCT and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) and had three research objectives. The first objective was to understand teachers' discourses of effective teaching practices and whether they were related to the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The second objective was to understand how Vietnamese culture and context influenced teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The third objective was to examine whether participating in the research led to change in the self-efficacy beliefs of the teacher participants and of myself as researcher. Based on the objectives of this study, the research questions were:

1. What are the discourses of effective EFL teaching subscribed to by the study teachers?
2. What are the day-to-day experiences of teachers that influence their sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
3. What are the influences that appear to boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers? What are the influences that appear to undermine it?
4. What role do teachers' self-perceptions of their own English competence play in influencing their self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
5. What is the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the discourse(s) of effective EFL teaching they subscribe to?
6. What are the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants as a result of the self-reflection process engaged in in the course of the research?

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

In Chapter 3, a review of relevant theories and studies identified gaps in self-efficacy research literature, that is, the relationship between teachers' discourses of effective teaching and self-efficacy, the impacts of culture and context on teacher self-efficacy, and changes in self-efficacy of teachers when moving to a new setting. This helped me articulate my research questions and research aims. Building on the conceptualisation of self-efficacy presented in Chapter 3, this chapter details how the study was planned and conducted. It presents a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings which informed different steps I undertook in my research. It provides a full description of how I decided on qualitative case study research, how I selected my research instruments, how I approached participants, and how I collected and analysed research data. The challenges I faced, how I overcame these challenges, and the lessons I learnt will also be discussed in this chapter.

### **4.1. Qualitative research approach**

In order to understand factors affecting the study teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL, I selected a qualitative research paradigm. I chose this approach because certain important characteristics of a qualitative research approach were suited to my study.

Qualitative studies support the view that knowledge is constructed (Creswell, 2007; Croker, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2010). A qualitative researcher believes that knowledge is constructed out of on-going human interactions and is developed within a social context. There are multiple constructions and multiple interpretations of the world because each person has his/her own ways of understanding the world. These constructions and interpretations might change depending on circumstances and time (Burr, 2003). A qualitative researcher acknowledges that doing research involves interactions between the researcher and the researched (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research assumes that information from participants is a shared product of social interaction which is constantly developing (Flick, 2007).

One distinguishable feature of qualitative studies is that the purpose of inquiry is understanding a particular person or situation in a particular context (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2012; Hood, 2009). Qualitative researchers want to comprehend the impact of context on participants' actions amongst other things. They look for understanding of human subjective experience, of participants' perspectives on their actions and on the contexts surrounding them (Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative studies are strongly oriented to everyday events and/or the everyday knowledge of participants (Flick, 2007). Qualitative researchers mostly focus on understanding the uniqueness and particularity of individuals and contexts (Stake, 2010). That is why they typically work with a small number of participants.

A qualitative study is an interpretive inquiry in which the researcher is the primary research instrument (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers plan the study, go to the site, and spend time with the participants in order to get information. They use their personal background to interpret what they see, hear and understand. The interpretation the researchers write is shaped by their experiences and worldview. Researchers' subjectivities function as the "lens" through which they look at their data and context (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 11).

A qualitative study uses an emergent or nonlinear design (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In qualitative research, the initial plan may change after the researcher enters the field and collects data. New methods may be employed if the existing ones are not suitable to a situation or purpose. New questions may be designed in order to suit the participants and better address the research problem. The scope of the site may also change depending on emerging data. However, dynamism in research design and methods is not applicable to all qualitative studies.

My study is situated firmly within a qualitative research approach. I was interested in understanding eight teachers' subjective experiences of self-efficacy in teaching EFL at a university in Vietnam. I wanted to comprehend teachers' experiences relating to their daily practices. These experiences were negotiated socially and historically through participants' interactions with their teachers at high school or college, with their family members, with students, colleagues and

university leaders, and with me as an ex-colleague and researcher. I wished to focus on the socio-cultural contexts in which the teachers lived and worked in order to understand how Vietnamese cultural and contextual factors impacted on the teachers' perceptions of their teaching abilities. I wanted to understand what factors the teachers considered affected their self-efficacy, that is, what factors constrained or facilitated their belief in their teaching abilities, and what factors impeded or supported their implementation of certain teaching practices or activities. The flexibility of qualitative studies allowed me to understand complex interactions among teachers in depth.

In my study, I assumed that each teacher might internalize self-efficacy information in order to shape his/her self-efficacy in teaching EFL in different ways. This is because each participating teacher had a different background, different personal qualities, and a different way of thinking. It was expected that the participating teachers' self-efficacy might change over a six-month data collection depending on context and on how they internalised self-efficacy information. I believed the qualitative approach might help me to capture the uniqueness of individual teacher perception and the changing nature of self-efficacy.

#### **4.2. Case study research design**

Case study research has been widely discussed and strongly supported by qualitative researchers. Case study is defined as either a studied object or a research method. For example, case study is considered a research method which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life contexts" (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Qualitative case studies are preferred when the researchers strongly emphasize meaning in context in their studies, that is, they would like to understand what is associated with a person. A qualitative case study is a research strategy (Merriam, 1998) which "is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena" (p.2). Merriam (1998) also added that qualitative case studies, using qualitative methods to collect data, focus on "discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied" (p.3). A qualitative case study is "an object to be studied" (Stake, 1995, p. 14) and "concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to

the influence of its social, political, and other contexts” (Stake, 2010, p. 444). Despite these different definitions, there is agreement that qualitative case studies allow researchers to understand a case in depth and within its context. Qualitative case studies take participants’ perspectives and experiences as central, explore the complex interactions of factors and report multiple perspectives (Stake, 1995, p. xi). My study investigated teachers’ perceptions of what personal factors and factors in their living and working environment influenced their self-efficacy in teaching EFL in the classroom. It was essential to understand thoroughly how each teacher’s participation in social practices in different situations and contexts shaped his/her self-efficacy in teaching. Therefore, I believed that conducting a qualitative case study might give me a comprehensive understanding of the participants’ views of particular contributing factors.

Stake (1995) stated that a case is “a specific, a complex, functioning thing”; and is “an object rather than a process” (p. 2). A case might be a child, a school or a teacher but not the school’s policies or the teacher’s teaching. In my study, I studied eight EFL teachers’ perceptions of factors influencing their self-efficacy in teaching, so the cases in my study are the teachers. Hood (2009), in contrast, defined a case as “a bounded system comprised of an individual, institution, or entity and the site and context in which social action takes place” (p. 69). He added that the scope of the site, the boundaries of the case, may be narrowed or expanded depending on a researcher’s interests. In understanding teachers’ perceptions of factors impacting on their teaching self-efficacy, if I was purely interested in classroom interaction, I would have focused on the classroom with its contextual factors such as students’ characteristics or textbooks. However, as I wanted to understand how family and institutional interactions affect the teachers’ self-efficacy, I expanded the site to include activities happening at home or at university. I invited the teachers to share their perceptions of what factors at these two contexts hindered or facilitated their teaching self-efficacy. I also went to teacher meeting rooms, classroom corridors or canteens to spend time with the teachers.

Stake (1995) identified three types of case study: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study and collective case study. In the first type, the researcher is interested

in a detailed understanding of the case itself. For example, a researcher might conduct an intrinsic case study to understand the lived experiences of first-year EFL students. In the second type, a particular case is used to study another thing rather than the case. An example of an instrumental case study would be when a researcher conducts a case study to understand first-year EFL students' perceptions of teachers' teaching effectiveness in order to improve teaching practices. In the last type, the researcher selects more than one case to study one issue. My present study is a collective case study. I studied eight EFL teachers' subjective experiences and compared their experiences in order to understand teachers' perceptions of what factors affected their self-efficacy in teaching EFL. Each teacher was a sub-case and the entire group of teachers was a collective case. My data collection and analysis were carried out in the Vietnamese context. Each teacher I studied and the contexts surrounding the teacher were parts of a bounded system.

The notion of generalization is important in case study. The concept of "statistic generalization" (Yin, 2003, p. 32) or "grand generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 7) which is commonly recognized in quantitative studies is not applicable in case studies. Stake stated that a case study emphasizes "petite generalizations," that is, general statements made within the study, of the results of the case. For example, when a particular teacher responds repeatedly in the same way to a particular situation, then through an interpretation of the research data, a petite generalization of case description can be made. Stake (1995) added that a case study can hint at "naturalistic generalization" (pp. 85-88). The readers make naturalistic generalizations when they find a link between what is described in the case study and their personal experiences. A qualitative case study with a small number of participants can report certain generalizations about a few cases through its findings to readers (Stake, 1995). Other self-efficacy researchers in other contexts may find similarities after comparing their contexts with my own study.

Overall, I believed that the multi-perspective nature and the possibility of comprehensive understanding afforded by a case study designed as discussed above suited my research interests.



### **4.3. The research context**

This section will describe how I approached and selected participants for the study. It also provides a brief description of the research site and the participating teachers' profiles.

#### **4.3.1. Gaining access and selection of participants**

In this study I explored what factors EFL teachers at a university perceived as affecting their teaching self-efficacy. The literature has mentioned a number of benefits relating to doing research in institutions where researchers are working or have worked (Garton & Copland, 2010; Hollander, 2004; Taylor, 2011). It seems that my process of approaching and selecting participants was facilitated by my established relationships with my colleagues and leaders at the home university and faculty. I had been employed to work at Faculty B as an EFL teacher since 2005 before I left the country to pursue my study, so I was quite familiar with the working style and I was known to staff of the university.

Unlike some other researchers who have had to do a lot of paper work in order to get permission to approach potential participants because of the social and political hierarchies operating in the Vietnamese context (C. V. Le, 2012), I was welcomed by the Dean of Faculty B when I sent him an email asking if I could conduct a research study in the faculty. Following this, I sent him an introductory letter and information sheet (see Appendix 1) and a copy of the consent form (see Appendix 2) via email. The Dean then officially agreed to my conducting the research.

I invited all my colleagues, 10 EFL teachers at the faculty, to a coffee shop and informally talked about my study. After that, I sent them an email with an attached introductory letter and information sheet (see Appendix 3) and a consent form (see Appendix 4). After two or three days, eight teachers indicated by email their agreement to participate. Other teachers were sent a reminder email and I received all their agreement via emails three days later. Some of the teachers emailed or called me to know more about the purpose of the study and their responsibilities before agreeing to participate.

Most of my interviews were organized in a coffee shop near the university but sometimes at my house or my participants' houses depending on their preference and convenience. My colleagues were very busy teaching and looking after their families so their most convenient time was at noon. Two male participants withdrew from the study after the first focus group discussion because of their busy teaching schedules but they let me use their data.

#### **4.3.2. The research site**

This section presents an overview of the university and the faculty where the study was conducted.

The technical university where the study was conducted is situated in the busiest city of Viet Nam, Ho Chi Minh City. The university provides both industrial and economics training services from university degrees, in-service degrees to vocational certificates. Approximately two thousand full-time and part-time teaching staff are employed in five campuses across the country to serve over 80 thousand students. Because of the lack of available classrooms, students study in three shifts in the main campus: morning, afternoon and evening. The students who are studying at the university are not the best students passing the National Entrance exam but enjoy better opportunities finding jobs because the university has maintained good relationships with local and national companies.

I conducted my research in January 2011 at Faculty B on the main campus of the university. This is where I was previously employed as a lecturer. It is a small but special faculty that was established in 2005. The first feature that makes it distinctive is the teaching staff. While most teachers at other faculties have Bachelor degrees, all teachers here have Masters degrees and are able to communicate in English. They range in age from late thirties to early forties. The second thing that distinguishes the faculty from others is the teaching and learning equipment provided by the university. All classrooms are installed with desktops, air-conditioners and projectors. The third and most important feature is the students. The students at the faculty are known to have failed the National Entrance exam for other universities and register to study at Faculty B for one of three specialised training programmes: Business Administration, Information

Technology, and Accounting and Auditing. These programs are run in conjunction with three international colleges: one technical college in Australia, one in Canada and one in Taiwan. Each college training program lasts for 3 year and the students pay approximately 10,000 USD plus other management fees for an academic year. The students are required to spend the first year learning General English, and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) in the second year, in order to pass internal IELTS tests at the end of the English training program. The faculty syllabus did not support an integrated-skills approach, therefore, the teachers taught each of the language skills separately, i.e. listening, speaking or writing, and each teacher specialised in one or two of these skills.

#### 4.3.3. The participating teachers

Table 1 shows the teachers' profiles. The teachers chose their own pseudonyms.

**Table 1: Profiles of 8 EFL teachers**

Teacher	Gender	Age	Approx. years of teaching	Qualification	Main skill(s) taught
<b>Thanh</b>	Female	30	7	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Reading
<b>Anh</b>	Female	34	11	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Writing/Listening
<b>My</b>	Female	36	13	BA in English, MA in TESOL	Speaking
<b>Nhung</b>	Female	35	12	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Listening
<b>Phuong</b>	Female	38	16	BA in English, MA in TESOL	Writing
<b>Hoa</b>	Female	33	10	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Writing
<b>Thu</b>	Female	36	13	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Writing
<b>Hung</b>	Male	42	17	BA in TEFL, MA in TESOL	Reading

As stated above, two participants withdrew from my study and at the end I had 8 participants, seven female and one male. Two out of eight teachers were new to me as they moved to the Faculty in late 2011 after I had already left Vietnam to study in New Zealand. Most teachers moved to Faculty B from Faculty F in 2005 but the teachers made no comments on why this move had occurred.

## **The participants**

- The first new teacher, also the youngest one, was named Thanh. Thanh was new to me but not new to most of her other colleagues because she has taught at Faculty F at the same university since 2005 before moving to faculty B.
- The second new teacher to me was Anh. Anh has taught at the faculty for over a year. Before that, she had been a part-time English lecturer for several universities. She was also a tutor for some secondary students who were about to take the entrance exams to universities, and a part-time lecturer for some English language centers.
- Before teaching at Faculty B, My had been an employee of Faculty F. My was also a part-time interpreter.
- Nhung was the participant that had the longest working experience out of the eight participants in my study because she has worked for the university since its early days. Like other colleagues, she had moved to this faculty from Faculty F.
- Phuong is Nhung's best friend and colleague. She had taught at a secondary school in a province in Southern Vietnam for about 4 years before moving to Ho Chi Minh City. After teaching at another secondary school in Ho Chi Minh City for several years, she moved to Faculty F in 2003 and later Faculty B in 2005.
- Hoa, the second youngest participant in my study, moved to Faculty B from Faculty F. Before that, Hoa had been a teaching assistant at an international secondary school in Ho Chi Minh City.
- Thu and I were both employed to teach EFL at Faculty B at the same time in 2005. Thu had taught students majoring in English at a university in Central Vietnam for 8 years before moving to Faculty B. She was also a part-time teacher at another university.
- Hung was the only male participant in my study. Before becoming a lecturer at this university he had taught English for about 8 years at a secondary school. He spent approximately 5 years teaching at Faculty F before moving to this Faculty at the same university. He was also a part-time lecturer for another university.

#### 4.4. Data collection methods and procedures

In the present study, I employed focus group discussion, individual interviews, journaling and non-participant observation. The preferred language to communicate between the researcher and the participants and within the participants was Vietnamese although the teachers had the option of using English. The next section will justify my reasons for choosing particular data instruments, the advantages in using them as well as the challenges I faced.

The previous chapter concluded with the research questions for guiding the study. They are presented again in the following table to show how the data collection methods and procedures are aligned with them.

**Table 2: Data gathering plan**

Research questions	Research tools
1. What are the discourses of effective EFL teaching subscribed to by the teachers?	Focus group discussion 1 Semi-structured interview 1 Journaling
2. What are the day-to-day experiences of teachers that influence their sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers?	Semi-structured interview 1 Journaling Observation
3. What role do teachers' self-perceptions of English competence play in influencing their self-efficacy as EFL teachers?	Semi-structured interview 1 Journaling
4. What are the influences that boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers? What are the influences that undermine?	Semi-structured interview 2 Journaling Observation
5. What is the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the discourse(s) of effective EFL teaching they subscribe to?	Semi-structured interview 2 Journaling
6. What are the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants as a result of the self-reflection process engaged in in the course of the research?	Focus group discussion 2 Journaling

##### 4.4.1. Guided focus group discussion

There were several reasons why focus group discussions were selected as one of the data tools to start and to end my data collection period. First, the literature has much to say about the role of group discussion as a resource for the construction of knowledge and meaning through social interactions between group members

and between the researcher and the participants. During focus group discussion, the researcher chairs the group and generates data in the context of participants' interaction (Kitzinger, 1994; Tuckett & Stewart, 2004). In the present study, I used discussion guides (see Appendix 5) to conduct two rounds of focus group discussions in order to understand: (a) teachers' perceptions of socio-cultural context in constructing effective practices and (b) teachers' self-reflection of their participation in the study in relation to self-efficacy.

This research instrument seemed to be a culturally sensitive research tool for my study. Focus group discussion is known to facilitate participation and interpersonal communication and to encourage a supportive environment (Thomas, 2008), which aligns broadly with certain Vietnamese cultural values. To the best of my knowledge, the teachers in my study had never participated in any research. The stressful feeling probably produced by their first-time participation in research might have been lessened by peers' presence (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 149). In my study, the teachers selected their preferred group members; therefore, it was hoped that in-group membership would provide a supportive environment in which the teachers felt comfortable to share their experiences. As a result, it was more likely that positive attitudes for the subsequent data collection steps were developed after the first round of focus-group discussion (Barbour, 2007, p. 81). Besides, I believed that attention to how the study teachers interacted in forming and modifying their own views in their group might help me become more responsive to the participants and able to talk more easily with them in subsequent individual interviews (Barbour, 2007, p. 34).

A focus group discussion consisting of people who already know each other as colleagues and friends is likely to facilitate the process of remembering shared values and norms in work or life experiences (Kitzinger, 1994). Because teachers' constructions of effective teaching instruction and teachers' self-reflection experiences might have cultural and historical aspects, I expected that as a result of talking with people who were in the same living and work place culture, the teachers' stories of how they negotiated the contexts to realize the essence of their preferred EFL teaching approaches would be uncovered more fully. For a similar

reason, teachers' self-reported changes in their self-efficacy over a six-month period might also be facilitated.

The literature also mentions some other advantages in using small groups, including more opportunities for the participants to voice their views and easier facilitation on the part of the moderator (Krueger & Casey, 2000, as cited in Munday, 2006, p. 96). In this case, I, also the moderator, had better opportunities to hear and understand the participants as individuals and as group members than in a larger group. I could "identify individual voices and seek clarification and further exploration of any differences in views" (Barbour, 2007, p. 60). In my small project with a maximum of 10 participants, I had expected the participants to be in 2 groups of between four and five members (Morgan, 1998, p. 13). Each focus group discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes and it was audio recorded. In reality, as the participants were given the right to choose their own group, and because it was difficult to arrange a suitable timetable for both the researcher and the participants, four groups were formed at the end with two or three members in each group. It required significant effort to organise meetings with all participants and transcribing data.

I was also confronted another challenge related to the relationship between my question schedule and group interaction, that is, little group interaction resulted. After the first focus group discussion, while listening to the recording and reading my notes, I realized that sometimes during the interview, there was little interaction among participants, that is, when a member talked, others just nodded their head or smiled or checked cell phone messages. The nature of the topics used during the focus group discussion may have limited the interaction (Tuckett & Stewart, 2004, p. 247), or it may have been the dynamics of that group. I decided to move more personal questions such as *Tell me about your favourite teacher* or *Tell me about your teaching experience* into the first individual interview question schedule. During the subsequent discussions of other groups, my main task was to keep participants focused on the topics and to encourage participants to share more instead of inviting every teacher to talk. At the end of the data collection period, one of the members of the first group explained that she felt bored when listening to another teacher boasting about her teaching or learning achievements. This information reflected a view that modesty, as a

politeness practice in Vietnamese culture, is necessary in maintaining social interactions (Pham, 2008).

On the other hand, using focus group interaction brought me advantages as indicated in the literature. I managed to obtain richer data from interpersonal interaction and be more flexible in approaching participants. Interaction with group members in discussing topics actually motivated and encouraged participants to share more of their feelings and experiences. This sharing happened during focus group discussion and in subsequent individual interviews as a result of relating and then comparing and contrasting their own experiences with that of their colleagues. After the first focus-group discussion, I knew more about their personalities and family backgrounds, so I actually became more sensitive in selecting interviewing times and places and in re-wording my interview questions. For example, I sometimes went to the participants' houses to interview them to save their effort as a way of expressing my care. I also disciplined myself not to be disappointed when they refused to answer some of my questions and tried to find another way to gather data rather than insisting on them answering those questions.

Another important advantage I gained from using focus group discussion as a data tool was that it helped me to relate interpersonal interaction to social contextual factors. In my present study, in most cases, participants agreed with or elaborated on the ideas of others. These were examples of "complementary" interaction (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 107) and there was clearly a lack of disagreement among participants. The literature often describes this as a limitation of focus group discussions (Kitzinger, 1995; Silverman, 2011). To my mind, it suggested that the larger social structure where the discussion took place appeared to affect the data that were generated (Hollander, 2004). The atmosphere and attitudes of group members during discussions appeared to be affected by Vietnamese cultural values: respect, agreement and harmony (Tran, 2006). This might also relate to the nature of the selected groups, that is, best friends often opted to be together. Besides, my participants shared a similar work culture. Therefore, it was expected they might share common experiences.



#### **4.4.2. Individual interviews**

Individual interviews are considered to be one of the main sources of data in qualitative case study research (Merriam, 1998). They are “the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 64) as they allow the participants to convey their own perspectives in their own words to the outer world. The knowledge in the interviews is constituted by the interaction between the researcher and each participant (Duff, 2008; Kvale, 2007).

I supposed that each teacher in my study might have a different way of internalizing self-efficacy information. Therefore, collecting personal interpretations of the participants’ experiences was also important to me. The interaction between two people, the researcher and one participant, would give me more opportunities to investigate the world of each teacher in-depth, to collect “individualized accounts” (Barbour, 2007, p. 42) or to obtain “unique information or interpretation” (Stake, 2010, p. 95) from each teacher. During an individual interview, each participant would have more time to talk in detail about his/her own views on a topic.

The main aim of the study was to explore teachers’ perceptions of factors which might influence their self-efficacy. Some of these factors were teachers’ perceptions of personal teaching competence, perceptions of relationships with colleagues, leaders and students which seemed to be a sensitive matter in Vietnamese culture (Pham, 2008; Tran, 2006). It was hoped that the use of individual interviews to understand these topics in my study would make each teacher feel comfortable in sharing their views since only the participant and the researcher were present. Besides, I believed the use of the self-disclosure technique in interviews suggested by some researchers (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; Rapley, 2004) might be useful in encouraging the teachers to share views on more personal and possibly sensitive topics. The technique might help to build and maintain a mutual sense of cooperative trust. I wanted my participants to be aware that I was genuinely interested in learning as much as possible about their experiences and feelings (Hollander, 2004). I believed that my sincere attention to participants’ talk might be successful in encouraging most of them to talk at length. I expected that my request to clarify

words or phrases after the talk might also bring them a feeling of being respected and valued which would motivate them to share more.

As in the focus group discussion, a semi-structured set of questions was employed in each one-to-one interview (see Appendix 6). I perceived that there would become advantages in using a semi-structured set of questions in a qualitative case study as mentioned in the literature. With this format, I had a list of general questions so that I had “something to use for guidance” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 141) and the focus of the study was maintained. I was more responsive to the situation at hand in that I reworded the questions or changed the order of the questions flexibly to suit each participant (Kvale, 2007; Merriam, 1998). There were also opportunities for each participant to express their views in their own way because the participant “frame[d] and structure[d] the responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 144) so that I would not be “trying to determine” their ideas (Lichtman, 2010, p. 140).

There were two rounds of one-to-one interviews in my study. The first round was after the first focus group discussion and the second round was before the last group discussion. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audio recorded. The data from one-to-one interviews were used to triangulate the data from focus group discussion, observation and journaling.

In my one-to-one interviews, not all participants felt comfortable in sharing their experiences. One of my participants during the first one-to-one interview might have felt under pressure when answering my questions related to her perceptions of her own English competence. She indirectly refused to rate her current English competence. Instead, she talked about how family responsibilities constrained her learning. To my mind, it appeared to be because our previous collegial relationship and my current status drove her to share this information in order to protect her dignity – a Vietnamese aspect of face (Pham, 2008). I experienced a conflict myself, between the desire to get my research done and the ethical responsibility to respect and protect participants’ privacy. I learnt that less direct questions worked in this context because they provided relevant information and made the interviewee more comfortable.

#### **4.4.3. Journaling**

In qualitative case study research, the use of participants' records of their own experiences and their interpretations of those experiences to gather data is very common. In my study, journaling helped me keep track of and understand each participant's perspective on significant events and experiences in their own words (Hood, 2009).

One important objective of my study was to explore whether participating in my project caused changes in teachers' self-efficacy. A weekly entry kept over three months might be considered as systematic data (Faizah, 2008), which I believed would help me trace possible changes in the teachers' perceptions of the impact of ongoing activities, although changes might not occur for all participants.

Journaling entries were written without my presence, thus allowing me "not to disrupt ongoing events" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 161). I also expected that some of the entries might reveal other aspects of teachers' inner worlds which I could not see through other data sources (Shepherd, 2006). I believed that the data gained from this step would help me to explore further what teachers revealed from previous data collection steps and to form ideas for subsequent steps. Journaling might also provide participants who were not very open during interviewing opportunities to make their personal experiences visible to the researcher (Shepherd, 2006).

In my study, the participants had an option to keep their entries in a folder I provided or they could send their entries via emails as word documents. They were invited to keep entries after joining in the first focus group discussion. To encourage their commitment to keeping journal entries, guidelines in the form of prompts (see Appendix 7) were pre-printed in the folders and sent via email. Purposefully, the journal entry format was to help participants feel motivated to write over the course of three months. However, for some participants, the format itself was a challenge. An informal discussion with one of the teachers revealed that the questions in the format seemed like a frame which confined what she could write down. The discussion urged me to write an email to every participant explaining that if they felt the guidelines did not help, they could jot down anything they wanted into the journal on condition that this was relevant to their

teaching and sense of self-efficacy. This strategy seemed to be successful in encouraging my participants to keep entries in the first two months. Near the end, some teachers emailed me, saying that they had decided to stop journaling because of time constraints. At the end of the 3 month-journaling period, I had received 74 entries from eight participants. The most entries I received from a participant were twelve and the least was seven.

In this study, my own journal was used to understand my own self-efficacy in doing the research. The journal was used for tracing the progress of my study, improving the quality of my data-gathering tools (Friedemann, Mayorga, & Jimenez, 2011), and developing my critical thinking and analytical abilities (Borg, 2001; Jasper, 2005). By journaling, I could link sets of isolated information to record my sense of emerging themes, reflect on what I had done and construct new ideas I had not thought of before. Keeping my research journal facilitated my thesis writing since a record of noticing events was carefully kept in the journal, and retrieving information came easily after a period of time. Journaling also had an additional therapeutic value for me. I found myself having a few moments of light relief after I noted down my thoughts into the journal. In other words, on re-reading different parts of my journal reflecting different steps of doing this research, I could see changes in my own emotions, decisions, knowledge growth and self-efficacy under the influence of the context I was working in and my experiences as a researcher.

#### **4.4.4. Observation**

Observation is common in case study research and is a useful tool to gather data because it helps researchers describe participants' behavior in "a naturalistic setting" (Cowie, 2009, p. 178). This research tool has much value in capturing social action and interaction as it occurs (Casey, 2006). Observation is often used together with other tools such as interviews in order to strengthen data and find out new information (Simpson & Tuson, 2003; Stake, 2010).

In my study, observation was a tool added as a result of emerging data from previous data collection steps. In some journal entries and one-to-one interviews, teachers often described their lack of motivation to teach in classes of weak students. They said they were not sure if their instruction was effective in these

classes. The teachers also described how lonely they felt making classroom decisions and how disappointed they were when they were not expected to get involved in decision-making at the university. Therefore, I applied for additional ethical approval to include observations. It was hoped that observations of what was happening in the classroom, in teacher meetings and informal discussions, would help to provide visible examples of how the milieu fostered or constrained teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL.

Observation in the present study also served as a foundation for interviews and contextualized findings from interviews and reflective entries. Using observation, I could make sure that the information I gained through other tools was reliable for answering my research questions. I used initial observations as a basis for formulating new questions to be asked in my subsequent data collection steps. In other words, it was hoped that observation would help to support, enrich, justify and obtain new information.

In this study, I chose non-participant observation because I did not plan to interfere with people or activities under observation (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). In this way, I believed I might reduce the risk of skewing the data I gained. Besides, I also believed that my participants felt more comfortable when I sat in silence, noted things on paper and used a voice recorder rather than if I joined in class/meeting activities and/or used a video recorder to record things. The focus of observation included human activities, that is, spoken words and behaviors, and physical settings where the activities took place. I conducted classroom observations and observations of both formal meetings and informal meetings with observation guidelines (see Appendix 8). Each observation session lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and only formal meetings were audio-recorded. I also arranged follow-up interviews in order to have participants validate the accuracy of my observations.

There was a challenge I faced when conducting classroom observations: only two female participants agreed to let me sit in their classrooms twice over the data collection period. This required that I consider the relevance of the local context (Hollander, 2004) and cultural values such as face saving strategies (Pham, 2008) in explaining my participants' behaviours. Threat to job security contingent on an

outsider's judgment of teaching competence might have caused my participants' to refuse classroom observations. Our prior and future collegial relationship might also have driven my participants to protect their dignity. It was possibly because they had had negative experiences of classroom observations before. I could not gain information from classroom observations from all participants; however, this negative reaction of my participants served as a basis for forming questions to understand what led to their refusal of classroom observations in subsequent interviews. This contributed to my understanding of institutional factors that affected their self-efficacy.

Another challenge related to my role conflict during teachers' informal meetings. It was impossible to keep silent during meetings when I was familiar with my participants. My technique was to make a checklist of general topics and key topics related to my study. When my participants talked about their perceptions of collegial relationships or teaching strategies, I tried to act as an outsider in order to get information from my participants' perspectives. I expected that my flexible contribution to these topics would make the interaction flow naturally. However, it was not always easy to do this. For example, I invited my participants to talk about how the teaching conditions affected their teaching self-efficacy. My participants shared their ideas first but, motivated by the content of the talk, I also gave my own reflection at the end.

#### **4.5. Methods of analysis**

This section will describe how I prepared data for analysis and how I presented the findings from my study. It also provides a detailed description of my coding process and data categorization.

##### **4.5.2. Data preparation and presentation**

Following Creswell (2012) and Gibbs (2007), I transcribed the recording right after an interview or an observation session. The transcripts were sent back to participants to add or change information. When I finished my data collection period and started to analyse data formally six months later, I read the transcripts and listened to the recordings again to "[correct] misheard words" or "alter punctuation to better reflect meaning" (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006, p. 8).

Checking transcriptions helped to re-familiarize myself with the content and to make a connection between participants' stories. I did not translate data when I was coding because I wanted to stay with the original ideas of the participants taking into consideration the possible distortion in meanings created during the Vietnamese-English translation process. When I wrote my findings chapters, I translated parts of these transcripts into English to illustrate how codes and categories were developed. Although my translations were cross-checked, to my mind, my translated expressions of participants' transcripts were not completely equivalent to the original meanings in some cases. In presenting extracts of participants' spoken words in my findings chapters, I share the view that in order to illustrate, understand and explain how participants make sense of their experiences, careful selection of participants' words or phrases can be more useful than using many long excerpts as evidence of subjective findings (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Because of time constraints, interactional features in transcripts were not presented at a very detailed level. Table 3 illustrates transcription conventions which are used in the present study.

**Table 3: Transcription conventions in the study**

R	The researcher
. . .	Parts of quotation omitted within a sentence
. . . .	Parts of quotation omitted between sentences
...	Unfinished speech
<i>Italics</i>	Emphasis made by the speaker
[...]	Overlapping speech
<i>a b c</i>	Original Vietnamese words/phrases
[a b c]	Researcher's interpretive/narrative comments
/, //, ///	Pauses (in seconds)
(Hahaha)	Laughter

#### **4.5.3. Data coding and analysis**

In analysing the data, I followed the inductive coding process suggested by Creswell (2012) and Gibbs (2007). I also adapted the thematic analysis method suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Codes are "words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting" (Miles

&Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The object of the coding process is to “make sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes” (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). Each interview transcript/reflective journal entry/observation session was coded using conventions presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Data reference conventions**

IT	Individual interview	CO	Classroom observation
FG	Focus group discussion	FI	Follow-up interview
FMO	Formal meeting observation	RJ	Reflective journal entry
IMO	Informal meeting observation	GR	Group

Data categorization was not a linear but an iterative process in my study. My analysis began with taking notes as they were fresh in my mind – during or immediately after focus group discussions, individual interviews and observation and through the entire research process. During interviews or after doing the transcribing, I noted in my journal what words or phrases I needed to clarify, what probing questions I needed to ask or what questions I needed to adjust for further data collection. For example, while listening to Anh talking about her students’ comments on her teaching practice during the first individual interview, I noticed she reported that her students said: “This teacher is very famous.” Afterwards I asked her what she meant by the adjective “famous” and how she felt when receiving that comment.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 84), my data analysis method was theoretical thematic, that is, I coded for specific research questions (RQs). For example, one of my RQ concerned teachers’ subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL teaching, and their preferred teaching approaches. I needed to identify a range of teaching practices that the teachers believed foster effective instruction first and then deduce their preferred teaching approaches from these constructions of effective instruction. Each teacher in my study was a case (see section 4.2) so I started analysing data from individual teachers and then compared and contrasted the codes, themes and categories across the eight teachers. Codes relevant to this specific purpose are located mainly in teachers’ first focus group discussions and



first individual interviews and in teachers' journal entries (see Table 2). I followed a five-step procedure as follows.

First, I read through each transcript of an individual teacher's interviews or each journal entry several times until I got familiar with its content. I read the document line-by-line and looked for words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs that related to my specific concern, that is, teaching practices that the individual teacher believed to bring about effective instruction classroom. Second, I searched, cut and pasted chunks of data related to this concern within a data source, for example, an interview, and then repeated the process with another data source. When I got all chunks of data related to this specific concern throughout all my data sources, I started my third step, coding. Initially, my codes were participants' actual words, phrases or my summary of their ideas. I listed all the codes in the margin. I did not code every sentence because I was unable to process too many codes (Creswell, 2012) (see Appendix 9 for a full illustration of these first steps). Fourth, I grouped similar codes together, reduced overlapping or redundant codes and ended up with a manageable number of codes. Each major category now consisted of several sub-categories. Table 5 provides one example of how emerging codes were grouped into sub-categories and categories at the fourth step.

**Table 5: Example of coding hierarchy**

<b>My's construction of effective instruction</b>				
<b>Effective teaching is motivating students to learn</b>				
<b>Creating a fun/enjoyment learning environment</b>			<b>Providing learning challenge/curiosity</b>	<b>Providing a sense of learning achievement</b>
<b>Materials</b>	<b>Teaching techniques</b>	<b>Interactional styles</b>		
Teachers-designed	Real-life situations Games	Smile Talk/advice	Unknown learning materials New learning materials	Praise: give away sweets

Fifth, after I had the categories and sub-categories for each teacher, I reviewed and collated individual teachers' sub-categories and categories with those of other teachers. I used tables to look for similar or different patterns among teachers. Table 6 provides one example of how individual teachers' emerging sub-categories and categories were compared among teachers.

**Table 6: Example of cross-case comparison**

<b>Effective teaching is motivating learners to learn</b>						
<b>Fun/enjoyment learning environment</b>						
Teachers	Materials		Techniques			Interactional styles
	Teachers-designed	Learners-designed	Real-life situations	Telling jokes	Auxiliary activities	
<b>My</b>	√		√		√	√
<b>Anh</b>	√			√		√
<b>Thanh</b>				√	√	
<b>Thu</b>	√					√
<b>Hoa</b>		√	√		√	
<b>Phuong</b>			√			
<b>Nhung</b>				√		√
<b>Hung</b>	√					

A cross-case comparison of the final sub-categories and categories was used to help answer the research question concerning with teachers' subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL teaching (see Appendix 10).

As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge that my position in the study would have impacted on the participating teachers and the information I got from them at different stages of the research (Duff, 2008; Merriam, 1998). The next section will discuss this issue in detail.

#### **4.6. Positioning of the researcher and participants**

A qualitative researcher is a central figure who determines the collection, selection, and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2012; Duff, 2008). The researcher's background, including personal experiences and beliefs, will impact on the setting and participants, the questions addressed to the participants and the interpretation generated from the data. In this section, I will discuss my own position and its impact on the study. I will also discuss how I viewed the participants and the information I got from them.

My collection, analysis and interpretation of data were influenced by my experiences as a teacher of English and by my cultural background as a Vietnamese. I was not a teacher at the time I was collecting data. However, I had worked closely with most of the participants as a teacher of English before I left Vietnam, so I was familiar with the context. As stated earlier in this chapter,

researching the familiar brought me certain benefits. For example, my access to the participants was facilitated because I was their colleague. The participants seemed to be more willing to share their experiences with me, whom they might have perceived as sharing the same background. My cultural intuition seemed to be useful to link data with underlying social complexities. However, the nature of the collegial relationship and my knowledge of the context also affected my data collection and interpretation procedures in a negative way. For example, most teachers refused to let me conduct classroom observations. They often left the sentences unfinished or began their talk with the comment, “You know this clearly.” This happened when they talked about teaching conditions at the university or about support received from other colleagues or leaders. Besides, I found myself being challenged as both a researcher and friend. A sense of loyalty to our friendship made me hesitate to present data critically which, in my view, might harm the friendship. My identity as a teacher was also challenged. My conversations with the participants prompted my reflections of my own teaching practices. This also impacted on the ways I engaged in interpretation as a researcher because I took into consideration issues such as teaching approaches used by the teachers in their classrooms.

A qualitative study is a joint product of researcher and researched within a particular context (Stake, 2010). I acknowledge that I determined the research project and addressed the topics to the teachers. However, the participants chose when and where to conduct the interviews. They could shift the focus of the conversation and they determined the level of cooperation in the discussion. It was up to the teachers to decide how much information they revealed to me during the conversations or when they received their transcripts to validate. My line of questioning was based on the information the teachers had already provided and I invited them to clarify what I was not clear of.

In my study, the information I obtained from the teachers, the transcripts and my interpretation of the data are not viewed as exact representations of the participants’ perspectives. The data are viewed as versions or accounts of participants’ real experiences or perceptions (Rapley, 2001) and the transcripts are an interpretive process which never entirely captures actual communicative events

(Jenks, 2011). This is because data were collected during interactions among group members (focus group interviews) and interaction between me and each teacher (individual interviews) in a particular context. During these social interactions, the participants might “construct themselves as certain types-of-people in relation to the topic of the interview” (Rapley, 2001, p. 303). Another reason is that transcripts are “temporally and contextually displaced from the moment-by-moment unfolding of [real-life] communication” (Jenks, 2011, p. 4). I often broke up transcripts into manageable parts in order to analyse and present data depending on my particular aim. It is also important to note that my interpretation of data, as stated earlier, was influenced by my personal experiences and background, so it can only be considered as a version of truth, not the truth itself.

In this study, in interpreting data, I took into account my position and the position of the participants and data. I believed it was important for me to understand how the participants positioned themselves in relation to particular contexts and what the underlying assumptions for that particular position were. In order to do so, I looked at the content of participants’ talk, their use of words, and how they signalled their roles with such tell-tale phrases as “wearing an employer’s hat” when they were sharing their experience. At the same time, I evaluated the relevance of these things to aspects of contexts such as the relationship between me, the researcher, and the participants, the relationship between participants, any pressures they were under and which Vietnamese cultural values they were influenced by.

#### **4.7. Establishing validity and reliability in the study**

Validity and reliability are two factors that any researchers should take into consideration when designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2002). Both qualitative and quantitative researchers should demonstrate that their studies are credible (Burns, 2000; Silverman, 2011). As discussed in section 4.1, qualitative research focuses on human interactions and values multiple realities and understanding. Therefore, the ways in which validity and reliability in qualitative studies are established are different from quantitative research. Generally, the voices of participants are closely represented when

researchers make transparent how ethically and mindfully their data were collected, analysed, interpreted and reported.

#### **4.7.1. Reliability**

In a quantitative study, reliability refers to whether the results of the study can be replicated. It deals with the extent to which the impact of external factors is minimized and the degree to which another researcher could repeat the same study and achieve the same results and interpretations over time (Burns, 2000; Silverman, 2011). Reliability is assured by the use of testing instruments in quantitative research (Merriam, 1998). In a qualitative study, reliability is viewed “as a fit between what [the researchers] record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study” (Burns, 2000, p. 417). It is because what is being studied

is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, . . . information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and . . . the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes a priori controls. (Merriam, 1998, p. 206)

Burns (2000, p. 418) suggested several ways in which the researcher might enhance reliability in qualitative research:

- The researcher makes explicit research aims and research questions.
- The researcher explains the assumptions and theory behind the study.
- The researcher accounts for his/her position as well as the position of those being investigated.
- The researcher makes the research process transparent by providing detailed descriptions of data collection methods and procedures, and of data analysis methods.

In the present study, the first three chapters have provided contextual and theoretical background for my study. Chapter 1 described briefly my motivation for doing the study and the research aims. Chapter 2 provided a description of socio-cultural contexts of Vietnam where the participants worked and lived in. The theoretical framework of my study was presented in chapter 3. This chapter critically discussed theories and studies relevant to the study, that is, Social

Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy theories, and studies of teacher self-efficacy which helped identify gaps in self-efficacy literature and form the research questions. The present chapter discusses associated theoretical underpinnings of the research process. In this chapter, I have outlined reasons for selecting a qualitative approach, case study design and multiple data tools. I have also described in detail the advantages and challenges I confronted and what changes I made after entering the field. The methods of analysing data are justified and illustrated in this chapter. A discussion of the impact of the relationship between me and the participants on different stages of conducting the research is also presented. In this way I have addressed the action points proposed by Burns (2000) discussed above relating to reliability.

#### **4.7.2. Validity**

In quantitative research, validity determines whether the research truly measures what it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are (Flick, 2007; Silverman, 2011). In qualitative research, validity refers to “how far the researchers’ constructions are grounded in the constructions of whom they studied . . . and how far this grounding is transparent to others” (Flick, 2009, p. 388). Validity relates to whether findings represent participants’ opinions of the issue accurately or whether findings are backed by evidence (Carlson, 2010; Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to increase confidence in their study’s credibility, quality researchers employ a number of strategies such as triangulation, member-checking, thick description, peer reviews, and prolonged engagement in the field (see Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp. 124-129 for definitions and a detailed discussion). The following is a discussion of how I used these strategies to warrant the claim of validity for my study.

Triangulation is understood as the use of more than two data sources (time, place, person), or investigators (multiple interviewers, coders, observers, analysts), methodological approaches (multiple methods or research designs), theoretical perspectives (multiple theories) in doing research (Denzin, 1989). In this study of factors affecting teachers’ construction of self-efficacy in teaching EFL at a university in Vietnam, triangulation was expected to increase the richness and completeness of data (Wray, Markovic, & Manderson, 2007), to establish

“credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 190), and to heighten the researcher’s ability to interpret data (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation helped me to overcome methodological limitations and understand teachers’ perceptions of factors affecting their self-efficacy from more than one angle (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 141). Triangulation in the study was not used to achieve objective reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 15) or consistency across all data sources (Patton, 2002) but assist my attempt to explore a representation of participants’ opinions or views (Silverman, 2011). In this study, triangulation adheres to the perspective of multiple realities in constructionist/constructivist epistemology.

The present study employed ‘within-method’ triangulation. It used four different types of research instrument: individual interview combined with focus group discussion, journaling and observation. The multi-method triangulation helped to increase the amount and nature of data gained from participants. As discussed earlier, focus group discussions were conducted with the expectation of obtaining data on preferred EFL teaching approaches and on self-reported effects on self-efficacy in the context of participants’ interactions. Individual interviews were arranged with the aim of understanding how teachers’ reported experiences of interactions with contexts affected their own self-efficacy. Journaling furthered my understanding of teachers’ experiences from their own perspectives without my presence. Observation helped illuminate observable practices of the teachers. It helped me witness some of these experiences, what actually happened around the teachers in their daily lives and how they dealt with those experiences. I also conducted follow-up discussions and exchanged emails with participants to confirm my understanding of observation data.

The study was also person and time triangulated. The data collection period was over 6 months and the responses from eight participants were gathered at different points in time. Collecting data from different participants enhanced validating data across participants. The six-month data collection period enabled me to compare teachers’ self-efficacy at different steps of my data collection period. This added to my understanding of teachers’ perceptions of how their self-efficacy was influenced by context.

Regarding space triangulation, data we recollected mainly at a coffee shop near the university campus but also at the researcher's or participants' houses.

Different locations where the data were collected increased the saturation of my data since participants' feeling were likely to be affected by different physical locations, e.g. in my house or their house. Thus a difference in how and what data they revealed might be recorded. At the same time, the change in location might have had negative effects in unsettling participants or distracting them. However, it was important for me to go with the participants' preference.

Other techniques to increase validity included member checking, thick description, peer reviews, and prolonged engagement. In the present study, participants were invited to clarify matters I was not clear on. They were sent transcripts of their interviewing sections to add or change content. This enhanced my interpretation and representation of their ideas or meanings. Besides, through thick description, I sought to describe as much as possible my research setting and the participants and to provide a detailed account of my research procedure. It was expected that with this "rich and thick" description (Merriam, 1998), readers would be able to feel a connection with my study and find similarities between their contexts and mine. In addition, I discussed my emergent findings with supervisors to ensure that my analyses were grounded in the data and shared my themes with other doctoral students at Faculty of Education, the University of Waikato (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Moreover, I was a lecturer at the university where my study was conducted. I spent almost six months at the research site with the participants. The study teachers seemed to be open to answering most of my questions or providing explanations whenever I sought clarification. This might have been the result of our mutual trust and understanding coming from our shared cultural background and length of time working together. However, some participants were reluctant to share or let me observe their classrooms partly because they felt they needed to work with me as a colleague in the future. Another issue related to familiarity was that it was not always easy to position myself as a researcher and a friend at the same time (see section 4.6).



#### **4.7.3. Ethical considerations**

Conducting researching an ethical manner also helped to ensure reliability and validity (Flick, 2007; Merriam, 1998). In undertaking this research project, I at all times respected the rights of my participating teachers to privacy and confidentiality (see Appendix 3). In addition, the data received from teachers were confidential, anonymised and shared between me and my supervisors only. No real names were used in my research report, and efforts were made to keep participants, the Faculty and the university anonymous. All comments made within focus group discussions remained confidential. The study was reviewed and given permission to proceed by the Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato (see Appendix 5).

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a justification for my selection of a qualitative approach, a case study research design and multi-methods in order to understand how EFL teachers in the Vietnamese context perceived and internalized different factors that impacted on their self-efficacy in teaching. The chapter has also described in detail the research context, participants and provided a justification for the selection of data gathering tools. How I collected, analysed, interpreted and presented data in relation to how I positioned myself, the participants and the information I obtained from the participants has also been discussed. A discussion of how validity and reliability are established in the present study has also been given.

The next three chapters, Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 will provide findings resulting from the process of analysis and interpretation. Chapter 5 describes teachers' constructions of effective EFL teaching instruction which help to identify which EFL teaching approaches that the teachers subscribed to. Chapter 6 seeks to understand factors impacting on teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL and the extent to which individual teachers' self-efficacy related to their subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL instruction under the influence of contributing factors. Chapter 7 describes the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants as a result of the self-reflection process.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCOURSES OF EFFECTIVE EFL TEACHING IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM.**

Chapter 4 justified the research design and methods that were selected to answer six research questions. This chapter presents findings for the first research question: What are the discourses of effective teaching subscribed to by the study teachers?

The chapter first describes teachers' constructions of effective EFL teaching instruction in Vietnamese language classrooms. Discussion of teachers' constructions of effective EFL instruction will then turn to identifying each teacher's preferred teaching practices, which, in turn, will inform how each individual teacher defined student role, teacher role, the role of textbooks and how each of them demonstrated types of activities and instruction in the language classroom. To explain further, teachers' constructions of EFL instruction will help to identify which EFL teaching approaches, that is, the Grammar Translation Method (the GTM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), that the teachers subscribed to (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Data used in this chapter were drawn mainly from interviews, which include the first round of focus group discussions and two rounds of individual interviews. Reflective journal entries, observations, follow-up interviews with the teachers also provided evidence to support these findings.

Findings arising from data suggest that participants in the study constructed effective EFL instruction in a complex way in relation to three aspects: fostering student motivation, facilitating student proficiency and teacher knowledge. Firstly, the teachers believed that while motivation or engagement is an indicator of effective EFL instruction, the instruction itself is in part constructed in the form of practices which engender engagement. Secondly, while students' proficiency is an indicator of effective EFL instruction, the instruction is in part constructed as practices which clearly facilitate this proficiency. The teachers identified teaching practices which they believed engendered student motivation and engagement and fostered student proficiency. Thirdly, in order to teach EFL effectively, it was

seen as necessary that teachers manifest certain types of knowledge: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of teaching contexts. The next sections will discuss how study teachers constructed effective instruction. It then presents the deduction of EFL teaching approaches from these constructions.

### **5.1. Motivating students as a measure of effective EFL teaching**

This section starts with a discussion of the link between motivation and engagement in the literature. It then continues with findings relating to teachers' perceptions of: (a) student motivation as a key element in effective EFL language classrooms in the Vietnamese context, (b) student responsibility in motivational processes, and (c) teacher roles in designing practices which they believed to bring about motivation or engagement in classrooms. The deduction of EFL teaching approaches from teachers' constructions of practices which engender motivation/engagement is presented in section 5.1.4.

#### **5.1.1. Linking motivation to engagement**

Although motivation researchers have not reached agreement on the definition of motivation, they generally agree that motivation refers to “the *choice* of a particular action”, “the *persistence* with it”, “and the *effort* expended on it” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 8, original emphasis). Motivation is regarded as an internal drive that “energizes and directs behavior” (Reeve, 2009, as cited in Reeve, 2012, p. 150) or as an “underlying psychological process” (Ainley, 2012, p. 285) and is hence “unobservable” (Reeve, 2012, p. 151). Engagement is identified as “the extent of a student’s active involvement in a learning activity” (Reeve, 2012, p. 150). The engagement construct is considered by a number of researchers to consist of three aspects: emotion, observable behavior and cognition (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Schunk & Mullen, 2012). Many researchers acknowledge the link between motivation and engagement. For example, Ushioda (2003) implied that engagement indicates motivation: “It [motivation] develops as a function of the child’s (or student’s) engagement in a particular activity with motivated and motivationally supportive others (pp. 91-92). Reeve (2012) also pointed out the internal-external relationship between motivation and engagement in that, while motivation acts as a source of engagement, engagement acts as an

outcome of motivational processes (p. 151). Similarly, Russel, Ainley and Frydenberg (as cited in Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 14) stated that motivation and engagement are intention and action respectively.

The literature suggests that although motivation itself is unobservable, since it underpins engagement which has one directly observable type (behavioural engagement), motivation can be deduced from engagement. How a student engages with a learning activity indicates his/her motivation for that learning activity. Regarding the present study, by interpreting student involvement in learning tasks and adherence to classroom norms (e.g. concentrating on teacher instruction, asking questions and following classroom rules), and interpreting students' emotional reactions (e.g. sadness, boredom or happiness), the teachers in my study deduced whether their students were motivated to learn in classrooms generally and in their language classrooms particularly. The teachers then linked these behaviours and reactions to teaching practices which they believed engendered motivation. How study teachers interpreted student motivation as a key element in effective EFL language classrooms is presented below.

### **5.1.2. Motivation indicates effective instruction**

According to three teachers, Nhung, Anh, and Hung, student attention to teacher instruction and class silence during classroom time implied a high level of engagement and motivation. Nhung, in describing one of her admired teacher's lessons, believed that the silence of "one hundred students" during the teacher's lesson indicated his effective lesson. She emphasized: "I think effective EFL teaching *must be* such thing like this" (IT1NHUNG). Anh also described student silence while doing classroom tasks, students' nodding while she was lecturing, and students' listening to her explanations as highly motivated learning behaviour (RJ5ANH). For Hung, student attention, which included both attention to the content of his talk and attention to his actions, brought him a great sense of teaching effectiveness:

Whenever I talked, they looked at me very attentively. Even when I turned round, I knew they were still attentive. I felt very effective at these particular moments. (IT1HUNG)

In addition, students' participation in classroom activities was also viewed as an indicator of their high level of engagement and motivation by all study teachers. Student participation ranged from behaviours such as asking for help to complete given tasks to more active involvement such as group discussion or participating in games. For example, Anh mentioned her students' raising hands to ask for vocabulary support, and their quick response to her questioning whether they understood the lesson as a signal of her lesson effectiveness (RJ5ANH). For Thu, students' group discussion in English in completing her teaching tasks indicated that her teaching strategies were effective (IT1THU). Hung and Hoa both discussed students' competitive behaviour. Hung said: "I felt my teaching was effective when my students . . . were competing to raise hands to get the right to answer my questions" (IT1HUNG). Hoa described her effective lessons this way: "All students were eager to find group members and tried to outdo one another in registering for project topics" (RJ4HOA).

Moreover, when misbehaviour or off-task behaviour occurred in the classroom, the study teachers immediately interpreted this as signalling low level of engagement and motivation. This type of behaviour made them feel that their EFL instruction was not effective. For example, My described such behaviour while she was teaching in one classroom in the following way: "Play[ing] games", "discuss[ing] something else", "teas[ing] one another" (MYIT1). Similarly, in one of her reflective entries, Thanh wrote that because her students "did something else rather than doing textbook tasks", she thought that her learners were "not very motivated to learn", and concluded that her lesson "was not effective at all" (RJ1THANH).

All the teachers also drew on expressions of emotion during and after the lesson to infer their level of engagement and motivation. Positive emotional reactions such as happiness and eagerness indicated high levels, and negative reactions such as boredom or tiredness implied low levels of engagement and motivation. For example, Hung, Thu and Nhung said that students' excitement when participating in classroom tasks indicated their high level of motivation and engagement (IT1HUNG, IT1THU, IT1NHUNG). Both My and Thanh agreed that students' expressions of happiness or unhappiness helped them know if their lessons were effective or not. My mentioned students' saying goodbye to her happily (IT1MY)

and Thanh talked about students' smiling faces when leaving the classroom (IT2THANH) after successful lessons. Thanh also wrote in a reflective entry that because her students "looked very tired" during one of her lesson, she thought that they were not motivated to learn (RJ1THANH).

### **5.1.3. Motivation is mainly the student's responsibility**

While all teachers believed that motivation indicates effective EFL teaching instruction, four teachers, My, Anh, Hung and Nhung thought that motivation should be mainly the student's responsibility with teachers playing a supporting role in this motivational process. For example, My talked about teacher and student responsibility in the motivational process when discussing the motivation of problem students.

- R:** Please tell me about one of your unsuccessful sessions.
- My:** Hm. Last year I taught a class . . . they were so misbehaved. . . . They went to class because of being forced to learn. . . . When they did not want to learn, it is like we try to start a fire but iron is too cold. We start a fire, but it is useless. It would be easier if they already had a certain level of motivation. . . . I felt dissatisfied [with my lessons] because students had no motivation. (IT1MY)

In My's account above, she stated three ideas. First, teachers' support was "useless" when students had no learning motivation. Her sentence, "we try to start a fire but iron is too cold", emphasised this idea. Second, students themselves should develop "a certain level of motivation" and should not go to class without learning motivation. Third, it was "easier" for My to teach when the students "already had a certain level of motivation". My blamed the students for her dissatisfaction with the lesson. This suggests that My believed that motivation for learning is the students' main responsibility, not hers.

That both teachers and students should be involved in the motivation process but that the main role in that process belongs to the students was also asserted by two other participating teachers, Anh and Hung. Anh asserted:

When students are not willing to learn, although we try a number of ways to teach them, we get nothing back. . . . Whether teaching instruction is effective also depends on students. (IT2ANH)

Hung thought that “in order to teach effectively, students must have learning needs and learning motivation” (FG1GR4HUNG).

What can be inferred from Anh and Hung’s comments is teachers’ perceived powerlessness in teaching unmotivated students. The teachers’ perceptions of their powerlessness seemed to be strengthened by Anh’s silence between her utterance and Hung’s repetition of the phrase “they did not”, when both of them described students’ misbehavior. In this sense, the student responsibility in motivation was emphasized by both teachers.

Nhung also emphasised student responsibility in the motivational process. She said:

Most students who failed exams were the ones who were very lazy. . . .  
I don’t think that their exam failure was caused by my teaching style.  
I think that it was certainly because they did not want to learn. . . . If  
they themselves did not want to learn, we could not do much to  
increase their motivation level in this teaching context. (IT2NHUNG)

The last statement in the data above reveals that Nhung, like other teachers, agreed that motivation for learning should rest with students. It seemed that Nhung played down the teacher’s role and emphasized the motivational responsibility of the students.

One noteworthy aspect of teachers’ comments above is that the four teachers defined motivational responsibilities in relation to problem students. The teachers all complained about, and overwhelmingly attributed failure to, students’ low levels of learning motivation. Clearly, there was a tendency among these four teachers to blame the students for motivational levels and hold students accountable when the teachers were unable to motivate them to learn.

#### **5.1.4. Teachers have a role in fostering engagement/motivation**

Although My, Anh, Nhung and Hung agreed that the main responsibility in the motivation process should rest with students, all of them agreed that teachers do have a role in fostering it since they believed motivation and engagement went hand in hand with effective EFL instruction. All participating teachers agreed that the design and selection of teaching activities had the potential to foster student engagement and motivation in the language classroom. The teachers claimed that when classroom activities were relevant, connected to real-life, challenging, and fun and relaxing, students engaged more in those activities.

##### ***Relevant activities***

Six teachers, Anh, My, Phuong, Hung, Thu and Hoa confirmed the positive effects on engagement and motivation of learning activities which were relevant to students' background knowledge, interests and levels of proficiency. All stated that relevant activities encouraged positive learning behaviors and positive emotional reactions from students. While Anh, My, Hung, Thu and Phuong stressed teacher roles in designing and selecting activities, Hoa put an emphasis on student contribution to activity design and selection. The six teachers who altered textbook activities by adding their own activities or inviting students to participate in the process of designing learning activities considered students' own experiences and background as important factors in this process.

Anh discussed the design and selection of relevant activities as one useful way of encouraging students to learn English in the classroom. She talked about students' concentration in "re-organis[ing] the order of a model essay or underlin[ing] key grammar structures or expressions" because "they know that something from the model would ease their subsequent writing" (IT1ANH). This was confirmed by data from my classroom observation. It was clear that Anh did offer such tasks and students seemed to be involved in doing them. Several students looked attentive and quiet while others discussed the activities with their peers (CO1ANH1, CO1ANH2). Anh mentioned the minor role of the current textbook, "there is nothing special", and highlighted the role of the teachers in selecting



relevant textbook activities, designing new ones, and considering students' current knowledge in the design and selection process (IT1ANH).

Like Anh, My and Phuong both talked about the need to select and redesign textbook activities to get more student involvement in classroom learning activities. They also highlighted the role of teachers in designing and selecting learning activities. According to My, the enjoyment of learning in her own classroom came from her decision not "to cover all textbook activities" and to select the ones which were not "too difficult" or "unsuitable to Vietnamese culture". My said she would invite students to initiate discussion after watching popular movies or video clips with English subtitles rather than teaching them "rigid textbook activities" (IT1MY). Meanwhile, claiming that the textbooks contained only practice tests which did not help her students at all, Phuong decided to put current writing textbooks aside and used her own designed teaching exercises. She provided students with exercises containing basic and necessary grammar structures and expressions which she believed would support students in writing their upcoming IELTS essay (IT1PHUONG). Both My and Phuong stated that current English textbooks were not designed by local EFL teachers; therefore, their needs and context were ignored (IT2MY; IT1PHUONG). My compared a teacher's activity design to a chef's cooking of sauces in order to emphasize the creativity of teachers in creating types of activity that make students like learning more (IT1MY).

Similarly, Hung discussed how teachers can improve students' positive learning behaviours and encourage them to invest effort in learning by introducing activities that students find enjoyable. Hung remembered an ex-teacher at university who changed Hung's learning behaviour in relation to literature. As Hung said, he got bored with reading exercises at university because they were "all about soldiers". The teacher gave him and his friends "children stories" and "adult stories". Hung said: "I have to accept that literature is interesting." He used short, emphatic statements to describe his high degree of engagement and motivation: "I read passionately. I saw myself finding my childhood. I found something really interesting" (IT1HUNG).

In a similar vein, Thu thought her way of selecting learning activities that matched students' levels of proficiency and background knowledge helped them connect with the learning. Thu mentioned the combination of speaking and listening to teach writing skills in saying that her "selecting of pictures that are relevant to their daily lives" made students "discuss more in English" before writing (IT1THU). She also commented:

If I force my students to do some activities, but if my activities are too boring, these students will not bother doing them. Or if the activities of that teacher are too complicated, we will not know how to do. Or if the activities are too easy, we will finish them all in a few minutes. If the activities have some uninteresting or irrelevant contents to our learning needs, we won't want to do them. Therefore, if learning activities are effective, the students will have good learning behaviours during the lessons. (IT2THU)

Thu started with her role as a teacher who designed learning materials. Then she changed to a collective "we" to put herself in her students' shoes to judge her teaching effectiveness. Thu used a series of adjectives indicating qualities that materials should not have: "boring", "too complicated", "too easy", "uninteresting", "irrelevant", which led to negative learning experiences when students were forced to do these activities. Like other teachers, Thu concluded that positive learning behaviours would result from teachers' selection of learning activities that match students' proficiency levels and interests.

Hoa was different from other teachers in describing her way of using learning activities to motivate students to learn grammar knowledge. In her view, when students were given the autonomy to design activities related to their world, they became more engaged in learning, and teaching was then effective. Hoa described her effective lessons as students' presentation days of "grammar knowledge", which she and her students anticipated eagerly. She said her students "were on time on these [presentation] days". Hoa talked a lot about what the students did to prepare for their presentations and how effective their presentations were:

I think my activities, the knowledge I would like to teach them and the way I delivered the lessons might not be very close to them. With

the presentations, these students created their own activities. They decided what activities they included in their presentations, they selected the activities they felt most confident, and together decided how to deliver the activities. The language they used quite simple. Their friends listened to them very attentively and eager to answered their question. We laughed a lot.” (IT1HOA)

Unlike other teachers who highlighted the role of the teachers, Hoa, in this teaching context, positioned herself as someone who valued students’ contributions and invited them to participate in designing and selecting activities. Her students were reported to be active in designing and selecting learning activities that were related to themselves. Few “I’s” but a lot of “they’s” were used in her comments.

Although the six teachers, Anh, My, Phuong, Hung, Thu and Hoa, highlighted the importance of matching their teaching practices and student proficiency levels and background, there were two identifiable trends in the types of activities which they offered to students. My, Thu and Hoa appeared to provide students with opportunities to communicate in the target language. Hoa also promoted students’ active roles. The teaching approach of this group of teachers was most likely CLT-oriented. Anh and Phuong’s exercises encouraged students’ consolidation of knowledge of linguistic items which appeared to be in line with the GTM. It is not clear which teaching approaches (the GTM or CLT) Hung’s teaching practices were consistent with.

### ***Real-life learning situations***

Three teachers, Hoa, Phuong and My, agreed that learning situations that were connected to real life could also improve students’ motivation and engagement. When this was the case, students were reported to put more effort into learning and their emotional reactions were perceived to be positive by these three teachers.

Hoa, Phuong and My all mentioned previous learning experiences with admired teachers who, by using real-life learning situations, motivated them to learn English. Hoa talked about her ex-teachers at university who taught her ‘practical’ things. For example, she and her friends were given an activity that required them

to go to the beach and talk to foreigners and record the talk. Hoa discussed her own interest and effort in doing the activity given by her teacher: “I found that was really motivating because I could use my English to speak to foreigners. I did try my best to communicate with them” (IT1HOA). Phuong also talked about how one teacher at high school changed her learning behaviour toward English learning by encouraging her to practise vocabulary from English textbooks by communicating with friends or foreigners in English. She no longer thought that English was boring since she knew how to use English in daily life (IT1PHUONG). My was advised by one teacher at high school to link “textbook vocabularies and real-life vocabularies”. My mentioned her eagerness when she could use English words to name things around her at home (IT1MY). My reported that she used her ex-teacher’s strategy to teach her students. My said: “I teach them how to speak real-life English, how to pronounce English words, how to say life situations in English like native speakers” (IT2MY).

Findings suggest that real-life learning situations were defined by Hoa, Phuong and My as opportunities in which students practise the target language outside the classroom. Real-life situations were also regarded as situations that students often had in real life but were difficult to find in textbooks. In this sense, the role of textbooks was questioned by these three teachers. It seemed that in performing these activities, students were totally in charge of their learning without immediate teacher support. They interacted with the target language rather than with the teachers. Talking about the use of real-life situations, Hoa, Phuong and My emphasized the need to encourage students to take risks and take responsibility for their learning. The way the three teachers used real-life teaching situations in the classroom suggests that their strategy was probably CLT-oriented.

### ***Challenging activities***

Four teachers in the study, Hung, Thu, Anh and My, stated that using challenging activities could motivate students to learn English. The four teachers, either using or just commenting on the use of challenging activities in the language classroom, shared an underlying thought regarding textbook activities, that is, textbooks cannot always satisfy all student needs and interests. According to the four teachers, activities needed to be tailored to students’ current levels of proficiency

by adding more detailed questions into existing textbook activities. Introducing new knowledge that students had never encountered before also made the activities more challenging.

Hung, Anh and Thu all mentioned their own positive behaviours when their ex-teachers introduced challenging activities, which textbooks did not offer. Hung claimed that his admired teachers' strategies, unlike those of other teachers or from textbooks, were "often special". Hung used the word "*cao siêu*" [unattainable] to describe the highly challenging level of the reading exercises which made him "read the task very carefully" and "try hard" to understand and accomplish the reading exercises (IT1HUNG). In his classroom, Hung often added his own questions to make activities more challenging. He said:

When my students couldn't find the answers even though they 'googled' for them, the students showed more interest in learning, they paid more attention to my talk. They didn't know the answers; they had to listen to me. They were very surprised. Hahaha! (IT1HUNG).

Hung laughed and seemed to be proud when saying that his students rarely solved his challenging activities. By doing this, he created his own image as a knowledge-provider and students as knowledge-receivers.

Anh also talked about her great effort and learning achievement which she had learned from her admired teachers. Anh said that it was the "new knowledge" introduced by this teacher, the knowledge which she had never heard of or which was not taught by other teachers, that encouraged her to try to learn the language (FG1GR1ANH). Similarly, Thu described the way her admired teacher made her like learning English:

The teacher did use the textbook. When teaching levels 6-8, she needed to use that textbook. She had to ensure the curriculum. However, she often told stories about England and other stories. Along with following textbook requirement, she taught knowledge outside textbook. I and my classmates often listened to these stories very attentively and passionately (IT1THU).

The role of the textbook was revealed clearly through Thu's discussion. Thu stated that the teacher "did use the textbook", "needed to use that textbook", "had to ensure the curriculum", "following textbook requirement", or in other words, Thu supported the view that the textbook plays an important role in learning. However, Thu, by describing the teacher telling stories that were "outside textbook" and her own attention to the stories, implied that if the teacher had used only the textbook, she might not have been as engaged in the learning.

Anh and My were the two teachers who reported using challenging activities in their classrooms. Claiming that some activities in the current listening textbooks were "too easy", based on existing textbook activities, Anh designed more listening questions which required her students to focus on detailed information and insert the answers in the blanks (IT1ANH). Anh said that this strategy helped students "stay on learning and be eager" and "not doing something else" (FI1ANH). Although Anh did not introduce new knowledge in her lessons, she mentioned how new knowledge introduced by her teacher encouraged her in learning English in the focus group discussion. While Anh added more detailed questions into existing activities, My provided her students with activities containing new knowledge. This idea came from her own belief about learning: "Learning is learning for new things. . . . To tell the truth, if I attend a workshop or a seminar which discusses what I already know, I do not like that" (IT2MY). Reflecting on a time when she taught students to link consonant-vowels which she believed to be totally new to them, My stated that students' happiness and concentration during and after learning to pronounce those sounds resulted from their curiosity about the new knowledge (IT1MY). My talked about students' listening to a native speaker's pronunciation from a CD and students' practising with provided dialogues. She reinforced the importance of teaching new knowledge to students when commenting on one of Anh's lessons, which all colleagues, including me, were invited to observe. She used short sentences, including a forceful modality, to express her strong belief that teaching new knowledge is a must for an effective teacher:

Just review old lessons. Nothing is new. After a lesson, students should absorb new knowledge. That is an effective lesson. Anh does

not have that concept. She thinks learning old things is OK. If I were her, I would not choose that lesson to teach. (IT2MY)

Hung, Thu, Anh and My all agreed that activities beyond students' current knowledge did help teachers engage students in learning them. Examining the nature of the challenging activities the study teachers used or described as being used by their ex-teachers, it seemed that these activities focused students on mechanical repetition, that is, students were expected to copy correct sounds from a model and reproduce the sounds in pre-provided dialogues (My's lesson of consonant-vowel linking). The activities provided by the teachers developed students' passive skills, i.e. reading or listening to stories and then answering teachers' questions or listening to detailed information and filling in blanks (Hung, Thu and Anh's lessons). The teachers knew answers for all these activities and totally managed classroom activities in the direction they planned. In other words, the teachers implicitly expressed their wish to put classroom activities completely under their control and therefore, the amount of autonomy given to the students in these learning activities was very small. Outcomes were predetermined and there was almost no room for dynamic learning. Such findings indicate that these four teachers tended to follow the GTM regarding the use of challenging activities.

### ***Auxiliary activities***

Games, video, images or music, hereafter referred to auxiliary activities, were used by five study teachers, My, Thanh, Hoa, Hung and Nhung in their classrooms. According to these teachers, the purpose of using auxiliary activities was to arouse students' curiosity and/or help them relax, thereby encouraging them to participate in the activities and other subsequent activities. Although auxiliary activities were not used as main learning activities but *bridging* activities, they did lead to positive learning behaviour and emotional reactions as reported by these five participating teachers.

Of the five teachers who used auxiliary activities, My was the one who used these activities as warm-up activities. Saying that "young people like relaxing activities", My, in her reported effective sessions, "start[ed] with . . . a short video, a question, a picture, a song, anything that could arouse their curiosity" (IT1MY). In another interview, My used a metaphor "*mở bài đã biết văn hay*" [reading the

introduction will tell people whether your writing is good] (IT2MY) to emphasise that whether teachers encourage students in learning activities depends on their warm-up activities. My mentioned her students' eagerness to discuss in groups and in pairs when they participated in the auxiliary activities and in subsequent activities (IT1MY).

Thanh also reported using auxiliary activities in her classroom, for both introducing new topics and for relaxing purposes. She also mentioned positive results that she expected these activities could bring about: students felt learning was fun and participated in subsequent learning activities. My observations of her classroom showed that Thanh did offer songs for students' listening activities. She also provided them with pictures or video clips before reading lessons as warm-up activities. Students were curious looking at pictures or video clips while attentively listening to Thanh's description of the picture or the video. They were also silent listening to the song and later answered questions relating to the content of the song (CO1THANH, CO2THANH).

The usefulness of auxiliary activities was also mentioned by Hoa, Nhung and Hung. They all said that they used crosswords, grammar-review quizzes or vocabulary review quizzes to relax students, and to encourage them to think that learning is fun. They affirmed the 'positive' learning atmosphere that games brought about. They described their students as "highly concentrated" and "in silence". The students also "shouted" or "competed to raise hands to seize rights to answer", "moved around tables", "clapped their hands loudly" (IT1HOA; IT2NHUNG; IT1HUNG).

How teachers used auxiliary activities in the classrooms to engage students indicated their preferred approaches. My used a range of activities which seemed to encourage communication among students. It was evident that her students discussed in pairs and groups in the target language to solve learning activities. The way My used auxiliary activities was probably related to CLT. Thanh used auxiliary activities but the activities did not offer interactional opportunities and opportunities to practise the target language. Her students passively listened to and/or followed her instructions. Hoa, Nhung and Hung, by using crosswords, grammar-review quizzes or vocabulary review quizzes, helped their students to



review their knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. The approach used by Thanh, Hoa, Nhung and Hung appeared to be in line with the GTM.

In summary, the teachers in the study viewed the encouragement of student motivation as a key element in effective EFL instruction. While some of them believed that the major part of motivational responsibility should lie with the students, all of them agreed that teachers had a role in fostering motivation. The teachers believed that in order to encourage student engagement and motivation, teachers should employ activities that were related to student backgrounds and needs, challenging, connected to real-life, and fun. Table 7 below provides an overview of teachers' descriptions of how they delivered activities in their classrooms and indicates their preferred teaching approaches. Findings suggest that Anh, Thanh, Nhung, and Hung preferred the GTM while My, Thu, Hoa and Phuong used both the GTM and CLT to encourage students' engagement in their classrooms.

**Table 7: Teachers' constructions of practices in relation to fostering student engagement/motivation**

Teachers	Teachers have a role in fostering student engagement/motivation			
	<i>Relevant activities</i>	<i>Real-life situations</i>	<i>Challenging activities</i>	<i>Auxiliary activities</i>
<b>My</b>	CLT	CLT	The GTM	CLT
<b>Anh</b>	The GTM	0	The GTM	0
<b>Thanh</b>	0	0	0	The GTM
<b>Thu</b>	CLT	0	The GTM	0
<b>Hoa</b>	CLT	CLT	0	The GTM
<b>Phuong</b>	The GTM	CLT	0	0
<b>Nhung</b>	0	0	0	The GTM
<b>Hung</b>	1	0	The GTM	The GTM

(0 = The strategy was not mentioned; 1 = It is not clear whether CLT or the GTM was used)

## 5.2. Facilitating student English proficiency as a measure of effective EFL teaching

Llurda (2000) defined proficiency as “the skills needed to put that knowledge into practice, that is, to transform knowledge into language use” (p. 91), or “the ability

to use a language” (p. 92). The term *proficiency* is applicable to the present study since the teachers discussed students’ ability to use the English language inside and outside the classrooms and teachers’ IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scores.

My description of the second aspect of effective EFL teaching consists of two main sections. In the first section, the study teachers believed that their effective teaching practices were reflected in increased student proficiency. The second section presents teachers’ discussions of teaching techniques that they believed helped students better their English skills. The deduction of EFL teaching approaches from teachers’ constructions of practices which facilitate student English proficiency is presented in this section.

### **5.2.1. Students’ English proficiency indicates effective EFL instruction**

The study teachers perceived the effectiveness of their instruction by considering students’ ability to use English inside and outside the classroom. The teachers constructed this measure by reflecting on classroom teaching experiences and from their understanding of current Vietnamese societal needs of the English language.

#### ***Students’ English proficiency inside the classroom***

All study teachers except My believed that students’ proficiency in English learning inside the classroom was indicated by students’ completion of classroom activities or success in tests. Some teachers linked students’ activity completion and test success to a syllabus requirement. The teachers were quite different in terms of defining roles in this activity/test-completion process.

The first group of teachers (Anh, Thanh, Nhung, Phuong, and Hung) focused on the crucial role of the teachers in designing and delivering instructions and activities. According to these teachers, students’ compliance with teachers’ instructions was the key thing assisting students to succeed in doing activities and tests. For example, in an interview with me sharing her idea of an effective lesson, Anh stated that when students, especially weak students, “could finish learning activities once they understood the instructions”, or when “their [students’]

writing pieces . . . had organization or suitable ideas as provided in the writing model or their writings included some taught structures and expressions” (IT1ANH), she believed that her teaching instruction was effective. In reflecting on one teaching session, Anh wrote that while marking her students’ papers, the fact that the students made too many grammatical and spelling mistakes, though she had already drawn students’ attention to these mistakes, made her conclude that her teaching strategies “seemed to be not effective at all!” (RJ3ANH). Like Anh, Thanh also believed that her teaching was effective when students wrote complete sentences with subjects, objects and verbs as she had deliberately taught them previously or when they managed to write their own paragraph in accordance with her detailed instructions (IT2THANH; FI1THANH). Her successful teaching sessions were reported as being the ones in which students could “finish some activities” or “feel that they write something successfully” based on what she taught them previously (IT1THANH). Nhung, Phuong and Hung stated that they did not think their teaching instruction was effective because some of their students could not accomplish the activities despite the detail of their instructions. All of them judged their teaching effectiveness by the number of students who passed final test exams (FG1GR2; FG1GR4; IT1HUNG).

The second group of teachers, Thu and Hoa, linked student completion of classroom activities and tests with syllabus requirements and teaching goals.

**R:** What does effective EFL teaching mean to you?

**Thu:** I think effective teaching is when students can apply, students can apply something I teach them into their own work. When teaching writing, I need to teach them in one way or another so that my students can do writing activities, can write beautifully. For example, our writing syllabus says that at the end of the semester, students have to write 300 words in 30 minutes. I have to teach like that, [I] help my students have ideas to write correct structures. . . . I need to teach them in some ways so that at least they can write an essay within given time. . . . [They] can apply what I teach them into writing so that they can write well, matching the requirement of a TOEIC test or [they can do] more than that. I think that is the most important aspect of effective teaching.

**Hoa:** I also share the same thought with Thu. In fact, effective EFL teaching is, when students achieve teaching goals I set at the beginning of the semester, I think that is effective teaching.

(FG1GR3)

These goals were later defined by Hoa:

At the beginning of a semester, I always set teaching goals for me and my students. The teaching goals depend on the syllabus. For example, at the end of this semester, students should know how to develop a paragraph by themselves, how to form ideas by themselves because our students have a problem, that is, they do not know how to develop ideas and how to present these ideas in writing. (IT1HOA)

My ultimate teaching goal is what they can do at the end, for example, comparing between what I taught and what they could do. If they can do the activities, it is effective. . . . In fact, my teaching goal is quite far, I would like to help some students, some students who really want to take formal IELTS tests". (IT2HOA)

Hoa and Thu suggested that helping students complete classroom activities and preparing them for upcoming tests reflected syllabus requirements. Thu used phrases such as: "I need to teach", "I have to teach" and "our teaching syllabus says" to emphasise the need to follow the syllabus requirement. These two teachers set goals for themselves in order to teach effectively, that is, to enable students accomplish learning activities and pass tests. These goals originated in the syllabus as is evident in the above comments. At the same time, in helping students complete activities and prepare for tests, unlike the teachers in the first group, Thu and Hoa went further than just expecting students to follow their instructions. Thu considered her instructions as a foundation which helped her students do more than satisfy test requirements. Hoa hoped her students would develop different writing skills.

In summary, those teachers who believed effective teaching instruction led to student completion of learning activities and tests to some extent viewed themselves as knowledge-transmitters and students as knowledge-receivers.

Whenever the teachers assessed students' performance in order to evaluate their teaching instruction, they sought evidence of the pre-taught knowledge in students' learning outputs. This construction of teaching instruction reflected the teachers' desire to control what should be taught and learnt in the classroom, although there was a difference between two groups of teachers regarding degrees of control. Teachers' views of themselves as knowledge-transmitters and their desire to control learning processes was likely to be consistent with tenets of the GTM.

### ***Students' English proficiency outside the classroom.***

All the study teachers except Thanh, Hoa and Thu stated that whether students could use English outside the classroom, that is, whether they were able to communicate with foreigners and/or use English at work, indicated the effectiveness of their teaching instruction. This construction of how effective EFL instruction is to be measured was formed out of teachers' perception and understanding of local contexts: the culture of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam and the Vietnamese societal requirement regarding the English language.

My held a firm belief in students' English proficiency outside classroom as a required measure of effective teaching instruction:

I think teaching and preparing students *just for tests, or helping them pass every test*, is not worthwhile. . . . I teach English so that my students can communicate in English outside classroom and can communicate with foreigners. [I] teach English so that they can meet normal communication needs and employment needs. . . . We've heard a lot about our students' inability to use English outside classroom. Our students are taught too many grammar tenses, passive voice, parts of speech. They know everything about grammar but are dumb when going outside the classroom. That is not effective teaching. (IT1MY)

My clearly set a goal for herself in order to teach effectively. Using the phrases "just for tests", "pass every test" and "not worthwhile" plus her emphatic tone in delivering these phrases, My frankly rejected the goal of teaching for test success. My's ironic comparison of students who were grammar experts in the classroom

but “dumb” outside highlights her awareness of one weakness in the English language education system in Vietnam: school leavers are unable to orally communicate in English after many years studying the language at school. The blunt rejection of teaching for tests highlighted the importance of her supported ‘teaching goal’, students’ proficiency to use English outside the classroom – English for communication and English at work. Before I conducted this individual interview with My, there was a very long discussion in My’s first focus group in relation to the low English proficiency of Vietnamese students outside the classroom. In this discussion, My and her group members discussed possible reasons for this low proficiency, including teachers’ preparing students for tests. My talked about student motivation while one of her group members mentioned students’ English proficiency as a result of effective teaching instruction. My’s belief in students’ English proficiency outside the classroom as another indicator of effective instruction reflected this focus group discussion.

Anh was the teacher who discussed students’ English proficiency in the first focus group discussion with Thanh and My which I mentioned above: “In the current context I think effective EFL teaching is enabling students to use English, *just simple like this* (FG1GR1). Anh’s short discussion about improving students’ English proficiency plus her strong tone in delivering the phrase “just simple like this” prompted me to conduct a follow-up interview with her to understand more.

**R:** Please tell me why in the last focus group discussion when talking about enabling students to use English in relation to effective EFL instruction, you used phrases “in the current context” and “just simple like this”?

**Anh:** Because the *common* goal of English teaching, the *minimum* goal we should gain is to enable students to use English outside classroom but now *how many* of us can do so? Many English students in Vietnam, especially non-English majors, *cannot* communicate in English. That is why I think effective teaching should be. . . . My’s idea [motivating students to learn] was in fact very interesting but was too ambitious for our present students, is that right? Her idea is very interesting but it is for English majors only because these students at least have a certain level of English background, for most of current students [who

are English non-majors], effective teaching is enabling them to use English. (FI1ANH)

After reading the above account, the phrases “just simple like this” and “in the current context” can be understood as Anh’s belief in students’ using English proficiently outside the classroom as a measure of effective instruction, taking their English levels into consideration. Anh considered the goal of facilitating students’ English proficiency as a basic one that all Vietnamese language teachers should aim for as she stressed it was “the common goal”, “the minimum goal”. However, the phrase “how many of us [teachers of English] can do so [enabling students to communicate in English outside classroom]?” reveals that this teaching goal was very challenging for her. In the following statements, Anh clarified that a measure of students’ communication in English was their ability to use English at work and to communicate outside the classroom: “I always wear students’ shoes [trying to understand students’ needs] that learning English is for using it at work. I always want my students to use what I taught outside the classroom or at work” (IT1ANH).

The following discussion between Phuong and Nhung revealed their view that students’ English proficiency outside the classroom should be a required outcome of effective teaching instruction.

- Phuong:** I think English teaching, in fact, is helping students to communicate, to use it in society, but...
- Nhung:** [cut in] I think that effective EFL teaching is, like Phuong says, after being taught by teachers, students *must be able to* use English *in real-life*.
- R:** What do you mean “in real-life”?
- Nhung:** For example, if they learn speaking, they *must be able to* speak, speak so that native speakers can understand them or the person who is communicating with them in English can understand what they mean.
- Phuong:** Yeah
- Nhung:** Yeah. That is their ability to speak and listen. In communication, they *must be able to* speak and listen in English. At work, when a reading material or any work

materials given to them, they must understand those materials, and they *must be able to* write, that is, they *must be able to* write a report or anything in English. . . . They *must be able to* use English in the way that other people understand. Effective teaching is not helping students learn English to have a certificate, [students] have a certificate and put the certificate somewhere, that is not effective teaching. Effective teaching is, after being taught by teachers, students *must be able to* use English in real-life.

(FG1GR2)

In this discussion, Phuong and Nhung developed their views based on another current situation of English teaching and learning in Vietnam – learning English for a certificate. In the discussion above, Nhung used the phrase “must be able to” seven times to stress that effective teaching should help students improve their ability to use English in normal life and at work, not just to get certificates. Later in the focus group discussion, Phuong blamed high-school teachers’ teaching practices for students’ inability to use English outside the classroom, because those teachers focused primarily on tests. Like My, she stated that Vietnamese students were very good at English grammar but very bad at oral communication, especially communication with foreigners (FG1GR2PHUONG).

Hung also believed that students’ ability to use English outside the classroom went hand in hand with effective teaching instruction, stating that “Effective teaching means students must be able to use English” (FG1GR4HUNG).

Hung explained further:

More and more foreigners have come to Vietnam for different purposes. Our teaching instruction should help students be competent in using English, in communicating with these people and in performing their jobs. Only if we can do this, our instruction is effective. (IT1HUNG)

Like other teachers in this section, Hung also related this belief to local contextual factors:



Some employers // now have very high requirements for university graduates that / you obtain an English certificate but I will check, I will communicate in English with you to see if you have real English proficiency. (FG1GR4HUNG)

Hung was taking an employer's position in this conversation to emphasize the social need for real English proficiency, not for a certificate. He repeated this idea when judging his teaching effectiveness based on his students' ability to seek employment on the basis of their English proficiency:

Some of my students who have not graduated but still can find employment just because they are good at English. Employers do not need certificates. They do not need certificates. Because the students can communicate in English in the working environment, they get jobs. Reflecting on that, I think my instruction is effective. (FG1GR4HUNG)

In summary, the four teachers who held the view that students' English proficiency was a required measure of effective instruction all developed this view out of their understanding of the Vietnamese context. The teachers believed that there was an urgent societal need to have a labour force and a young generation competent in English, and Vietnamese students were unable to communicate orally in English to meet that need due to current teaching practices. As discussed earlier, these four teachers, except My, subscribed to a further construction of effective teaching, that is, effective teaching is to facilitate students' ability to complete tasks and tests. They saw preparing students for tasks and tests as contributing to students' inability to communicate in English beyond the classroom. This contradiction in the three teachers' thinking and the practices they described in the next section demonstrates that the teachers were at times unconsciously following teaching traditions which they consciously disagreed with.

### **5.2.2. Teachers have a role in helping student improve English proficiency**

The previous section discussed teachers' beliefs in relation to how successful EFL about teaching practices which help improve students' English proficiency.

Generally, the study teachers believed that the feedback they provided students, the activities or exercises they required or encouraged the students to complete, and the use of English and/or Vietnamese in the classroom as a medium of instruction and communication contributed to students' developing English proficiency.

### ***Feedback***

Five teachers in the study stated that verbal and written feedback, that is, teachers' responses to students' errors during and after an activity, played a key role in helping their students improve English proficiency. There were two identifiable trends in relation to providing feedback. The first group of teachers relied on explicit, immediate feedback in the hope of drawing students' attention to mistakes in order to avoid the mistakes in the future. The second group of teachers often delayed feedback till the end of a student's contribution in order to give students more opportunities to be risk-takers and innovators. Their feedback was also less explicit than that of the first group of teachers.

Three teachers in the first group: Phuong, Thu and Thanh, expressed their concern for controlling accuracy at every step of learning by interrupting their students to provide corrective feedback. They then provided answer keys at the end of every learning activity and were conscious of giving detailed explanations. They also highlighted on-the-spot checking. For example, Phuong critiqued a colleague's teaching strategy of underlining students' writing mistakes and letting them self-correct. She considered this to be insufficient to help students improve their English writing skills because they did not understand how they made mistakes in order to avoid them in the future. Phuong related this to her own personal learning experience: "I was upset many times because my teacher at high school did not tell me why that is right or wrong" (IT1PHUONG). She described how she provided feedback:

I check every learner's mistake: grammatical mistakes, pronunciation mistakes or organizational mistakes. If most students have the same mistake, I will correct that mistake in front of the whole class. I show them why it is wrong. I give a lot of examples. I call several students

to practice this particular mistake in different contexts until they can write correctly. I also re-write students' sentences. (IT2PHUONG)

Thu said:

I check their writing very carefully. I correct essay structures, thesis statement, and grammatical mistakes. I also help students to change sentence structures to sound more English. . . . If I see a mistake in a student's writing, I will provide him or her with immediate feedback. I think students' English writing will be better if they are aware of the mistakes and avoid them in future writing. (IT2THU)

Thanh said:

The proficiency levels of these students are very low. They need to know clearly what is right and what is wrong in order to speak in English better. I need to tell the students why they make mistakes. (IT1THANH)

My observation of Thanh's speaking lessons confirmed that Thanh paid special attention to students' linguistic mistakes. She tended to interrupt her students to provide corrective feedback on every pronunciation or grammar mistake (CO1THANH1, CO1THANH2) but she gave no comments on the content or organization. In explaining her immediate feedback, Thanh said:

If I delayed correcting mistakes till the end of the lesson, my students would forget what mistakes they made so the feedback was not effective. My students would be unable to learn the correct forms. You see their mistakes were often very simple, I need to draw their attention to the mistakes on the spot so they can remember the mistakes. (FI2THANH)

These teachers even arranged one-to-one meetings with students in order to explain mistakes. For example, Phuong said:

If the learner makes the mistake the second time, I will call them to meet me, call them to meet me privately so that I can explain the mistake to them more clearly. (IT2PHUONG)

The above accounts indicate that the four teachers tended to concentrate on both major and minor mistakes. While Phuong and Thu stressed both accuracy and fluency, e.g. grammatical mistakes and organizational mistakes, Thanh focused largely on discrete points of grammar knowledge, e.g. pronunciation or grammar mistakes. They also did their utmost to draw students' attention to mistakes in order to reinforce memory. They organized one-to-one meetings with students, provided on-the-spot feedback to them and their feedback was detailed and repetitive. This group of teachers helped their students improve their English proficiency by a controlling focus on error correction. The data suggest that the technique used by Phuong, Thu and Thanh in this context was in line with the GTM.

Two teachers in the second group, My and Hoa, also highlighted the role of feedback in helping students to better their English skills, but their feedback was quite different from that of the teachers in group 1. My explained that by not interrupting students' talk and waiting until they finished talking, she gave them opportunities to speak more. Sustained talk was encouraged, which in turn informed her about students' weaknesses and strengths in order to provide more effective feedback. My said that for her, students' English speaking fluency was more important than accuracy, but students' grammar knowledge should be at an acceptable level so that people could understand their meaning. My said that after taking notes of students' mistakes, in providing feedback she would recast students' talk using their ideas but "spoke slowly, used strong tones" whenever she chose to correct the mistakes. My also talked about the need to differentiate feedback based on students' proficiency levels, using "simple sentences and simple vocabulary with classes with low-achieving students" and providing "challenging vocabulary and word choice with high-achieving students" (IT1MY). Hoa talked about how she changed her feedback techniques over time and her desire to provide effective feedback: "I still think how to provide students with more effective feedback" (IT2HOA). Hoa mentioned at least two techniques she previously used. The first was making a list of students' common mistakes at home, putting this list on slideshows and providing detailed explanations. The second was scanning students' actual writing pieces and then together correcting

mistakes with the whole class without revealing students' names (IT2HOA). In talking about her latest feedback technique, Hoa said:

I would spend more time with weak students, telling them why this is right or wrong, but not on every mistake because it will be too many for them and these students must also know how to learn by themselves. With strong students, I would only provide general comments and guidance and they themselves must find out their own mistakes. I think that once the students can discover their mistakes and their classmates' mistakes, they can remember the mistakes longer and of course their English will be better gradually. (IT1HOA)

Hoa invited students' contribution to the feedback process by asking them to comment on the mistakes made by them or their peers. In providing feedback, Hoa provided opportunity for students to use their own learning experience since she emphasized that her students should "know how to learn by themselves" or "find out their own mistakes". My and Hoa seemed to regulate their feedback process in order to match their students' proficiency, since they provided differentiated feedback in different classrooms. Both of them selected students' mistakes for feedback purposes and tended to focus on major errors. Students appeared to have more active roles in the two teachers' feedback process. The data suggest that My and Hoa's technique was to a certain degree CLT-oriented.

### ***Controlled-to-free practice***

Anh was the only teacher in the study who claimed that her technique of providing controlled-to-free learning activities was effective in helping her students know "how to develop ideas within a paragraph and strengthen their English grammar" (IT1ANH). In describing this technique, Anh expressed her desire to control students' language accuracy which she believed helped her students improve their writing skills. She reported using "re-organizing exercises" which focused on practising grammar knowledge. In her writing lessons, Anh asked her students to "underly[ing] all grammatical structures in a writing model". She then provided generalized linguistic forms of these structures, for example, S + have/has + V-ed regular + O, (CO1ANH), which she explained was to facilitate remembering grammatical rules (FI-CO1ANH). She also provided her students

with translation exercises. The linguistic forms she supplied her students via model essays or model paragraphs were not necessarily from writing textbooks. This “controlled practice” will be further discussed in the next section. Although she claimed that she provided her students with “free practice”, her students were given only one opportunity at the end of the lesson to do their own writing. The so-called “free practice” did not seem to be free at all as previously-learnt-structures were expected to appear in students’ own writing as evidence of their understanding of the instruction. She said: “The students then wrote their own paragraphs or essays in which they could include the structures they learnt [previously]” (IT1ANH). It appears that Anh developed her students’ writing proficiency via her systematic exercises. Very limited participatory roles for her students could be seen in her controlled-to-free teaching practice. Data suggested this practice was consistent with the GTM.

### ***Preparation strategies***

All teachers stated that preparation strategies played a key role in helping students to complete subsequent activities. Three types of preparation strategies were reported by the eight study teachers: clear instructions, mind-mapping and language preparation.

Nhung highlighted the necessity of clear instructions to enable students, especially weak students, to understand and meet activity requirements. Nhung reported that before a listening activity, she intentionally drew students’ attention to the requirement of the activity, for example, to key words in the textbook so that the students could link them to the information in the recording. She said:

I must instruct them how to do the activity. I do not give general instructions. I must tell them, repeatedly and slowly, what key words are in the question, telling them what information in the record they should focus on so that they can complete the activity. (IT1NHUNG)

In order to make sure that the students could listen to the recording and do the activity, she stressed her role: “I must instruct them,” “I must tell them,” “I must initiate instructions” (IT1NHUNG).

Later, when reflecting on her experience of providing instructions, Nhung emphasized the important role of clear instructions, especially with weak students, even though Nhung said this instruction was like “spoon-feeding.” Using the word “spoon-feeding,” Nhung appeared to know that she did little or nothing to encourage students’ participatory roles in learning but she seemed to accept that: “I think without this clear instruction, weak students cannot understand anything from the recording and therefore they cannot do the activity” (IT2NHUNG). In order to ensure activity completion, Nhung sacrificed participatory opportunities.

In the second interview, Nhung also said:

**Nhung:** I think I know how to help both strong and weak students to learn listening skills. Sometimes, it is said that some teachers just know how to teach strong students. I know how to help weak students to complete tasks and strong students to better their skills.

**R:** Can you give me an example?

**Nhung:** I can control the classroom with my instructions. With the same recording, I deliver different task requirements to different kinds of students. Strong students will have more demanding questions and weak students have basic ones. I always deliver instructions right at the beginning.  
(IT2NHUNG)

In this account, it is clear that Nhung expressed her concern to manage classroom activities by using instructions. Although she provided different instructions to different students, it seemed that her students were not given opportunities to bring their own voices into the learning process. They were expected to follow the teacher’s instructions. They were not offered opportunities to interact with the teacher or with their peers to negotiate the requirements of activities. The teacher initiated and managed everything in her classroom. Her instructions appeared to be consistent with the GTM.

Mind-mapping was used in the language classroom as an effective technique to help students develop ideas for a subsequent writing activity by one teacher in my

study, Hoa. She said that mind-mapping really helped her students improve their writing as the following account shows:

I divided students into groups and asked them to develop a vocabulary map together. They [students] would help each other to build up necessary vocabulary for the subsequent writing activity. I guided them to build a map with their own ideas not mine. If they could not develop ideas, I would ask them some open questions so that they know how to do it gradually. . . . This semester . . . I have let them develop their own map without my help because during tests, they have to do it in their own. Watching my students do the mid-term test, I saw many of them trying to draw a mind-map before writing. The marks of that test proved that their writings were better. I think this technique really helped my students in building ideas. (IT2HOA)

Hoa aimed to help her students build up their roles in learning by gradually enriching their experience of developing their own mind-maps. Her teaching strategy appeared learner-centered since she invited her students to activate their learning experiences by asking them open-ended questions and inviting them to work in groups so that they could help one another. Group work also provided her students with opportunities to interact with one other rather than with the teacher. It might be imagined that her students worked with their own and others' ideas based on these maps, instead of sticking with Hoa's ideas in their writing. In sum, using mind-mapping, Hoa acted as a facilitator rather than knowledge-provider to equip her students for a subsequent learning task. Hoa's mind-mapping technique came across as CLT-oriented.

Language preparation was reported to be an important practice that seven teachers, Hung, Anh, Nhung, Phuong, Thanh, Thu and My, used in their classroom in order to help students complete learning activities. These teachers reported pre-teaching linguistic items. For example, in teaching writing, Anh, Thu and Phuong always taught grammar structures before introducing a writing activity. They both told me that they gave students writing models and asked the students to specify grammatical structures. They expected students to use these structures in their writing in order to complete these activities. Anh, Thu and Phuong all claimed that these structures were necessary for students in doing subsequent activities



because they enriched students' knowledge of English grammar and helped them develop ideas for their writing (IT1ANH; CO1ANH; IT1THU; IT1PHUONG). Thu said: "I am sure that my students would have nothing to write or their writing would full of mistakes if I did not provide them with models and pre-teach them some grammatical structures" (IT1THU).

All seven teachers said that in these preparation steps, students could ask them new words or phrases that they saw themselves as needing to complete the subsequent activities. Hung asked his students to write a list of new words at home and write the Vietnamese translation next to the words. Before he taught a new lesson, he would review this list with the students by providing the Vietnamese meanings of the words (IT1HUNG). Nhung and Thanh provided a list of key words that they knew for sure would appear in subsequent activities and explained their meaning to students in both English and Vietnamese. Both of them read the words aloud and asked their students to repeat the words (CO1THANH; IT1NHUNG). Nhung commented:

I think that after listening to my reading of words and after they repeated the words several times, my students can remember and recognize these words when I turn the recording on. This can help them listen better. (IT1NHUNG)

Thanh explained:

This will facilitate students' listening. They will remember key words. They will get familiar with the words if I explain the meanings and ask them to repeat the words and then they can recognize the words if they hear them again from the recording. (FI1THANH)

My's strategies were different from other teachers. She described how she helped her students develop linguistic knowledge and ideas for the subsequent activity, a speaking activity, in the following account:

**My:** I often let my students brainstorm in groups or in pairs. I let them speak out their own ideas when I go around the classroom with a pen on my hand, noting down as much as I could.

**R:** Do you think that some students might have nothing to discuss?

**My:** My students work in pairs and in groups, they brainstorm ideas together. They help each other in terms of ideas, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. At this stage, weak students can listen to strong students. I walk around and note down things they are saying because later I will help them develop necessary language to carry out the speaking task. My note is full of my students' key ideas and vocabulary. Looking at the note, I will know where my students are. Based on the note, I will help them to build up a repertoire of language so that all of them can confidently speak in English with their peers. Weak and strong students will choose the vocabulary they find comfortable with. (IT1MY)

In this discussion, My acted exclusively as a facilitator in helping her learners prepare for the speaking activity. It was evident that her instruction was learner-centered, since she invited the students to work in groups or pairs to use their own learning experience and background knowledge. She did not care about language accuracy at the earlier stage of the lesson. She cared about encouraging students' interaction and negotiation in the target language and about developing their own confidence in speaking English by letting them develop their own voices in their groups. My also encouraged both weak and strong students to contribute to learning since she expected these students to take on different roles at different stages of her lesson. This technique was developed out of My's understanding of the textbook she was using, as she said at the beginning of the conversation: "It [the textbook] does not provide vocabulary for speaking activities. There is usually a list of questions for students in these activities". The strategy was also formulated out of her understanding of the pedagogical weaknesses of some language teachers in Vietnam:

I think language teaching should be a two-way process. Our students are incompetent in English, especially in English communication because their teachers never give them opportunities to tell the teachers what they know or don't know. The language teachers go to class every day, trying to finish the syllabus. That's all. (IT1MY)

This confirms My's belief that in order to help students become competent in English, language teachers should give them opportunities to use their learning

experience and background knowledge. Language teachers should stand back and support students rather than be the leader in every classroom task. Findings suggest that My's preparation activities were CLT-oriented while the activities of other teachers were in line with the GTM.

### ***Medium of instruction and communication***

This section discusses how teachers used English and/or Vietnamese language as a medium of instruction and communication in their language classrooms to foster students' English proficiency. Generally, all teachers agreed that teacher talk in English in the classroom is good for students' English proficiency. Some teachers reported using more English while others said they used more Vietnamese. No teacher reported using only Vietnamese or only English in the language classroom.

First, participating teachers mentioned a range of benefits that teacher talk in English can bring in relation to developing students' English proficiency. They stated that teacher talk in English can create an English learning environment for students to improve their English proficiency, especially communicative proficiency. Teacher talk in English also encouraged students to develop an English-speaking habit both inside and outside the classroom. For example, Thanh said:

I encouraged them to listen to me in English so that they could form a habit of using English in my classroom and maybe at home. That is good for improving their English proficiency, right? (IT1THANH)

Nhung said:

Teachers should talk more in English in the classroom which creates an English learning environment for them. If the teachers talk in English, students have a reason for discussing, explaining and communicating in English. Their English surely gets better.  
(IT1NHUNG)

Hoa argued that teacher talk in English was a necessity in language classrooms:

Teacher talk delivered more in English than in Vietnamese is a good thing for students. In Vietnam, English is not a mother tongue or a

second language, every teacher knows that. It [teacher talk in English] creates an English learning environment and communication opportunities for students. (IT1HOA)

The teachers' belief that more teacher talk in English improved students' English proficiency is common in EFL in Vietnam. All of them talked about establishing "a habit of using English", "an English learning environment" for students. All of them highlighted the role of teachers in creating this habit or environment with students.

Although all teachers expressed their belief in the benefits that teacher instruction in English could bring, their practice of English talk in the classroom varied considerably. My and Thanh reported on their attempts to use more English than Vietnamese to deliver instructions, regardless of students' proficiency levels.

I always use more English than Vietnamese in my speaking classrooms. . . . I would slow down and stress key words, or write key words on board if I think that what I am talking is too difficult for my students. I would use Vietnamese as the last resort when my attempt to use English fails to help the students. (IT1MY)

I use as much English as I can. In my classrooms, Vietnamese is used only when I cannot use English to explain things or clarify tasks instructions. I would repeat the instruction or explanation many times, if my students can't still understand, I will talk in Vietnamese. (IT1THANH)

The two teachers used the words "always", "as much . . . as I can" and the words "the last resort" or "only" to describe their attempt to use of English and Vietnamese in the classroom respectively. These intensifiers reflect their emphasis on the importance of teacher talk in English in encouraging students' communication in the target language. Their commitment to using English instead of Vietnamese to deliver instructions and to communicate with students was expressed through repetition or tonal emphasis.

Two other teachers in the study, Hoa and Nhung, also talked about their attempts to use English as medium of instruction and communication in the classroom.

They also reported paraphrasing new words or using body language to make sure that their students understood what they were talking about. They said that they talked more in English in classrooms consisting of strong students and more in Vietnamese in classrooms consisting of weak students, but generally they emphasised their attempt to use English to deliver lessons. They saw the classroom use of English as related to students' proficiency levels.

The other participating teachers, Anh, Hung, Phuong and Thu, said that they mainly used Vietnamese and not much English in their classrooms in order to ensure student comprehension and activity completion. For example, Phuong said:

They will swim in an ocean of English words and knowledge. They cannot understand teacher talk, how can they do classroom exercises? I only use English to deliver simple instructions. (IT1PHUONG)

Anh said:

I don't talk in English much in my classrooms. If I use more English, they cannot understand my lesson clearly so I think it is not effective at all. Our students have very low English proficiency levels. If we would like to explain grammatical structures in English, our students must have high levels of proficiency but I would like to make sure that they can write correct sentences so I rarely talk in English. I almost always use Vietnamese in my classroom. I only use English to deliver simple instructions or guidelines or when I would like my students to pick up some of my English phrases to use in their own writing. (IT1 ANH)

Hung said:

I think that our students' proficiency levels are too low so that teachers cannot deliver lessons in English. In the past when I was a student, if there were some English words I did not understand in my teacher's talk, I would be distracted from the rest of his talk. That's terrible. I would rather talk in Vietnamese because I always want my students to complete as many exercises as possible and pass exams. I would rather talk in Vietnamese so that they understand me. (IT1HUNG)

The teachers in this group were so worried about students' low levels of proficiency that they preferred talking in Vietnamese in their language classrooms. They all emphasized students' comprehension difficulties if teachers used more English in the classroom. Phuong used the metaphor, "they [students] will swim in an ocean of English words and knowledge" to describe the challenge students might face. Hung mentioned his own bad learning experience to highlight the need not to deliver the lesson mainly in English. All of these teachers, however, used the English language to deliver simple instructions, when they could ensure that their students understood their instructions completely.

In short, all participating teachers viewed supporting students' English proficiency as a measure of effective instruction. The way teachers described how they designed activities and delivered instruction helped identify their subscribed-to approaches. As summarised in Table 8 belows, Anh, Thu, Phuong, and Hung generally used the GTM while My and Hoa used CLT to help students improve English proficiency. Thanh and Nhung applied both CLT and GTM but their approaches complied more with the tenets of the GTM.

**Table 8: Teachers' constructions of teaching practices in relation to improving student English proficiency**

Teachers	Teachers have a role in helping students improve their English					
	Feedback	Controlled-to-free practice	Preparation strategies			Medium of instruction
			Clear instruction	Mind-mapping	Language preparation	
<b>My</b>	CLT	0	0	0	CLT	CLT
<b>Anh</b>	0	The GTM	0	0	The GTM	The GTM
<b>Thanh</b>	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	CLT
<b>Thu</b>	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM
<b>Hoa</b>	CLT	0	0	CLT	0	CLT
<b>Phuong</b>	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM
<b>Nhung</b>	0	0	The GTM	0	The GTM	CLT
<b>Hung</b>	0	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM

(0 = The strategy was not mentioned)

### **5.3. Teacher knowledge as contributing to effective EFL teaching**

In investigating teachers' beliefs about what knowledge and skills are necessary for effective EFL instruction, I invited them to share their views on the university's English language requirement for EFL teachers. I expected that the teachers would reveal to me directly and indirectly whether teachers' English proficiency, as well as other knowledge and skills, was important to teach EFL effectively. The three types of knowledge – English proficiency, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of the teaching context – were three themes on the basis of which the study teachers differentiated effective teachers from other teachers. The last aspect of effective instruction was in fact the requirement for teachers to enact their roles as knowledge experts as set by Vietnamese social norms of teacher values. This specific requirement supports one tenet of the GTM which is to consider teachers as knowledge authorities.

#### **5.3.1. English proficiency**

All teachers bar Hoa, Phuong and Hung saw a certain score of IELTS as evidence of teachers' English language proficiency and a necessary component of effective EFL teaching. Nevertheless, the perception of required proficiency levels varied among these teachers.

My strongly believed that in order to teach English effectively, the proficiency of EFL teachers should be at an excellent level. She stressed that teachers' English proficiency was "the priority requirement" which played "a vital role" for EFL teachers. To reinforce her point, she compared the language proficiency of EFL teachers to the walking ability of human beings. My's comment on her colleagues' attitudes toward the home university's English language requirement supported her argument:

I would like to tell you that I was very surprised. We are teachers of English, a 5.5 IELTS score is not high at all but they [colleagues] screamed. Some of them asked for an exception [that they did not have to obtain an IELTS certificate]. . . . I was very surprised because a good anvil does not fear the hammer. . . . I think that for jobs requiring communication skills, including English teaching jobs, a 7.5

IELTS score or above is appropriate. We are teachers of English, if our English language is not excellent, how can we teach other people? (IT1MY)

My repeated the phrase “I was very surprised” twice. She also made a switch from a collective “we” to “they” and then to a “we” again. My’s highlighted surprise and the difference between “we” and “they” in terms of attitudes to the requirement of English language show My’s strong conviction re the requirement of teachers’ English proficiency and a high competency level.

Thanh, Thu, Anh and Nhung also believed that English proficiency contributed to teachers’ effectiveness and should be above average (a 6.5 IELTS score). Thanh said, “If the English skills of teachers are bad, they cannot teach effectively because if they themselves are not good, how can they teach their students to be good at English?” (IT1THANH). There was a long pause before Thu expressed her thought. She also said, “How can we teach students when we are not competent in English skills?” Thu stressed that a 6.5 IELTS score, the average level, was “the most important requirement” for local EFL teachers. Like My, she thought that English proficiency was the most important quality of EFL teachers and called it their “essential asset”. She believed anyone who valued “wide pedagogical knowledge” over English proficiency “just glossed over their weaknesses” and could not be effective teachers (IT1THU). One of the reasons Anh gave for the 6.5 IELTS score of Vietnamese EFL teachers was that “good teachers produce good students.” She continued to discuss the current situation of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam and concluded that there should be a requirement re teachers’ English proficiency levels. Nhung also agreed that teachers’ English proficiency should be a 6.5 IELTS score or above in order to teach effectively. She stressed the words “very important” several times when discussing this issue.

In contrast, Hoa, Phuong and Hung believed that teachers’ English proficiency was not important in order to teach Vietnamese students the English language effectively. All of them argued that the English proficiency levels of students in Vietnam were quite low. Therefore, it was unnecessary for teachers to obtain high proficiency levels. While Hung and Phuong refused to mention the competency



level that EFL teachers needed to obtain to teach effectively, Hoa gave a low score of 5.5. She said, “About a 5.5 IELTS score is OK, no need to be higher” (IT1HOA). Hung said, “The four skills are a secondary factor, just a secondary factor in order to teach EFL effectively” (IT1HUNG). Nevertheless, all of them stressed that in order to teach effectively, teachers should possess better knowledge than their students. Hung said, “I remember once one of my teacher said: You must be 20 times better than students in order to be their teachers” (IT1HUNG). Hoa and Phuong also stated that teachers’ ability to answer students’ questions indicated their teaching effectiveness. In helping me to clarify the word “knowledge”, they said that this word meant a range of knowledge, including English proficiency level (IT1HUNG; IT1HOA; IT1PHUONG).

In sum, most of the study teachers considered teachers’ English proficiency levels as an important aspect contributing to effective EFL teaching. The teachers advocated proficiency levels from excellent to average. Two teachers in the study thought that English proficiency was the most important qualification of effective teachers. Three teachers did not think that English proficiency was important for EFL teachers to teach effectively, especially considering students’ low levels of proficiency. However, all teachers in the study thought that teachers’ English proficiency needed to be higher than that of their students. Since teachers believed that they needed to be more proficient in the English language in order to answer students’ questions, the teachers collectively subscribed to a view of themselves as students’ intellectual authorities which supports tenets of the GTM with its focus on grammar mastery.

### **5.3.2. Pedagogical content knowledge**

All study teachers believed that teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, that is, teachers’ teaching strategies and their interpretation of teaching content to students, was the key to effective instruction. For example, My said:

Besides excellent English skills, I think teachers need, their pedagogical strategies must be good. That means they know how to apply, apply which strategies to which teaching situations and to which lesson plans. Effective EFL teachers cannot lack this kind of knowledge. (IT1MY)

Thanh gave an example of a professor who was famous for his wide subject knowledge, but students felt sleepy in his class since they did not understand his lessons. This example illustrated her view that classroom strategies were more important than subject knowledge in facilitating learning in the classroom (IT1THANH).

Anh, Phuong and Hoa agreed that pedagogical knowledge helped teachers “sequence and deliver teaching activities” in the classroom (IT1ANH), “select suitable teaching strategies” appropriate to students’ knowledge levels and cultural background and enable understanding (IT1PHUONG), “transmit subject knowledge to students” and “to teach different kinds of students” (IT1HOA).

Four teachers in the study thought that pedagogical knowledge was the most important requirements for effective EFL teaching. For Anh, pedagogical knowledge was “a basic requirement for any teacher, including EFL teachers” (IT1ANH). Hoa, Hung and Phuong stressed the essential role of pedagogical knowledge in the life of EFL teachers by sharing the conviction that pedagogical knowledge differentiated EFL teachers from other people who were excellent in English skills but could not be teachers. Hoa said, “Pedagogical skills and teaching strategies are the most important criteria to teach EFL effectively. Not everyone can become a teacher” (IT1HOA), while Hung said, “English proficiency cannot help you be an effective teacher. If not, why aren’t people obtaining high IELTS scores asked to be teachers?” (IT1HUNG). Phuong also said, “Some people are very good at English skills but they cannot teach” (IT1PHUONG). Listening to their talk, I could sense their pride in being EFL teachers.

To sum up, for all study teachers, pedagogical content knowledge was an important requirement. The study teachers’ perception of the importance of pedagogical knowledge in effective instruction was another example adding to my understanding of their definitions of teacher roles in the classroom: EFL teachers are people who not only have knowledge but also are able to make such knowledge accessible to students. Effective EFL teachers are teachers who are selectors, sequencers and facilitators of learning activities. It is their English proficiency levels and pedagogical knowledge that make EFL teachers admirable

models in the eyes of their students and those who are not teachers or EFL teachers.

### **5.3.3. Knowledge of teaching contexts**

Three teachers in my study, Hung, Phuong and Hoa, explicitly commented that knowledge of teaching contexts, that is, knowledge of students' needs and characteristics and knowledge of local teaching conditions, also added to the effectiveness of teacher instruction. The three teachers emphasized that knowledge of teaching contexts enabled teachers to solve different classroom situations or select suitable teaching strategies in the classroom. In other words, knowledge of teaching contexts supported teachers' pedagogical knowledge. However, the teachers differed in terms of how they used knowledge of teaching contexts to assist them in teaching.

Hung noted how teachers' knowledge of students' behaviour in the home faculty could help them solve classroom problems such as skipping class or students' copying during exams and tests. In these discussions, Hung perceived current students at the home faculty and local teaching conditions as intolerable. He often used the word "*đối phó*" [to cope with] to express his reluctance and irritability in describing these problems and often talked about "rules" and "punishment." The following account is an extract from his advice to a young colleague who often found her students skipping class:

I told her, 'You must know that if you give them an inch and they will take a mile. These students are always very lazy and don't respect teachers. You should punish them hard. You shouldn't let them take part in mid-term test for example. I'm telling you that next time no students dare to skip your class.' In my class, this rarely happens. I know that they [students] will play truant sometimes but I enforce rules right at the beginning of the semester. Some of my students learnt that breaking rules would bring them very bad consequences. I rarely let the same problem as such happen in my classroom.  
(IT1HUNG)

In Hung's mind, knowledge of students' traits can help teachers manage and prevent classroom problems by establishing rules or punishments. Knowledge of teaching contexts can help teachers know how to establish expectations with students.

Phuong and Hoa talked about teacher understanding students' proficiency levels as helping them select suitable teaching methods and strategies. Phuong said:

**Phuong:** Teaching methods for our current students cannot be taken out of available methodology books or out of what we learnt from university. In our Vietnamese context, at our faculty, we can only use parts of these books. Understanding local teaching contexts will help us select suitable teaching methods.

**R:** Can you give me one example?

**Phuong:** For example, teaching methods for mixed-ability classes must be different from those for classes of strong students. Teaching methods for students who have very low language input but are required to have high language output are also very different from other methods. If you apply the same method, hah, you cannot teach my students. (IT1PHUONG)

Hoa said:

I think knowledge of teaching conditions is very helpful for teachers in order to teach effectively. At our faculty, people [student administrators] put students in class regardless of their proficiency levels. I often arrange them in groups so that strong students can help weak ones. Weak students often sit at the back of the class and do private things so I often walk around the class observing them doing learning activities. I would like to encourage those students to participate in learning and offer help to them. Weak students are often very shy. (IT1HOA)

Phuong and Hoa described how knowledge of students' proficiency levels and teaching conditions enabled them to select suitable teaching strategies.

The above account indicates two identifiable trends in the study teachers' use of knowledge of teaching contexts. Hung tended to view knowledge of teaching contexts as a helpful tool to help prevent unexpected occurrences in the classroom, indicating a concern to keep classroom activities under control and strengthen his authoritative position. Hung's view of himself as a knowledge authority appeared to be in line with tenets of the GTM. Phuong and Hoa perceived knowledge of teaching contexts as helping them and other teachers to adjust and adapt their teaching instruction to cater for students' needs. How these two teachers took students' proficiency levels or background into consideration in designing tasks and delivering instruction is consistent with findings reported previously. Such findings suggest that knowledge of teaching contexts reflected Phuong and Hoa's preference for the GTM and CLT respectively.

In summary, in this last aspect of effective teaching, most study teachers viewed effective EFL teachers as intellectual models. In their view, effective teachers needed to be experts, to be better than students in terms of English proficiency and to be competent in pedagogical content knowledge. Some teachers believed that knowledge of various teaching contexts helped teachers to establish classroom rules and punishments or to cater for various needs of students. How study teachers saw themselves regarding different types of knowledge supports a GTM tenet constructing teachers as knowledgeable authorities (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Teachers' constructions of teacher knowledge in relation to effective instruction**

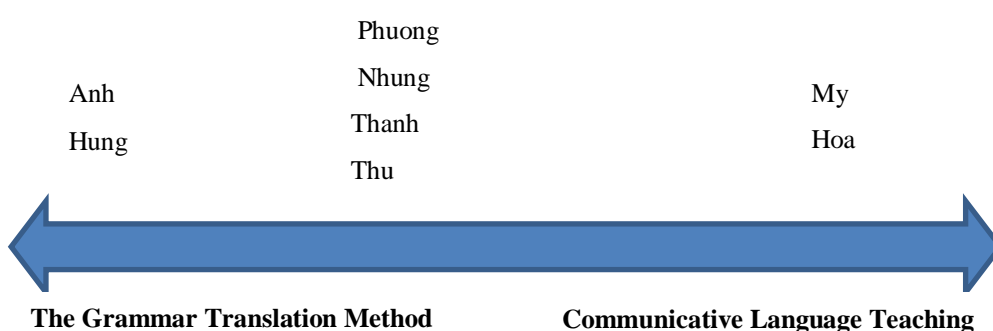
Teachers	Knowledge competence		
	English proficiency	Pedagogical knowledge	Knowledge of teaching contexts
<b>My</b>	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Anh</b>	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Thanh</b>	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Thu</b>	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Hoa</b>	The GTM	The GTM	CLT
<b>Phuong</b>	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM
<b>Nhung</b>	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Hung</b>	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM

(0 = The type of knowledge was not mentioned)

## 5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, each teacher in the study had their own construction of effective instruction emerging from both their learning and teaching experiences and education background. In their view, effective instruction was to engender student engagement or motivation in the classroom and to improve student English proficiency inside and outside the classroom. In addition, it was seen as necessary that teachers manifest certain types of knowledge in order to teach effectively.

Based on these constructions, I have interpreted the discourses of EFL instruction that in my view these teachers can be seen to subscribe to (see Appendix 10 for the detailed overview). Anh and Hung's subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching were the GTM. The discourses of Phuong, Nhung, Thanh and Thu tended to be an amalgam of the GTM and CLT with a stronger orientation to the GTM. My and Hoa's favoured discourses of effective EFL teaching appeared to combine both CLT and the GTM but were more CLT-oriented. The EFL teaching approaches of the eight participating teachers were seen to be on a continuum ranging from the GTM to a communicative approach (see Figure 1 below). It appeared that TBLT was generally not an approach deliberately subscribed to by the study teachers.



**Figure 1: Continuum of teachers' teaching approaches**

The next chapter, Chapter 6, will discuss daily experiences that affected the study teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL in relation to discourses of EFL instruction.

## **CHAPTER 6: FACTORS INFLUENCING VIETNAMESE EFL TEACHERS' SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY**

In Chapter 5, the subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL teaching of eight participating teachers were described. The present chapter provides findings related to factors contributing to these teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL. It also seeks to understand the extent to which each individual teacher's self-efficacy in teaching EFL related to their subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL instruction under the influence of these contributing factors. To achieve this aim, answers to the four following research questions were sought:

- What are the day-to-day experiences of teachers that influence their sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
- What role does teachers' self-perception of English proficiency play in influencing their self-efficacy as EFL teachers?
- What are the influences that boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy as EFL teachers? What are the influences that undermine?
- What is the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the discourses of effective EFL teaching they subscribed to?

This chapter describes those factors affecting the study teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL which were identified through a process of thematic analysis (see Chapter 4). These factors are organised based on two categories: factors affecting the first dimension of teacher self-efficacy construct: self-perceptions of personal teaching competence, and factors influencing the second dimension: teachers' perceptions of teaching requirements. Findings in this chapter are supported by data from non-participant observation, reflective journal entries, two rounds of one-to-one interviews, the first round of focus group discussions and follow-up interviews.

### **6.1. Factors affecting teachers' self-perceptions of personal teaching competence**

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), teachers establish their self-efficacy through evaluating their capabilities in relation to envisaged requirements for

engaging in particular teaching practices related to particular subject domains in particular contexts. They may consider such factors as personal knowledge and skills or personality traits. In this section, I report on how Vietnamese teachers' perceptions of English proficiency and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and perceptions of their personal qualities impacted on their perceptions of current competence regarding teaching EFL effectively.

### **6.1.1. Perceptions of English proficiency and pedagogical knowledge**

#### ***English proficiency***

To understand teachers' perceptions of their English proficiency and how the perception affected their EFL teaching self-efficacy, during the first individual interviews, I invited all teachers to comment on their present English proficiency levels. Findings suggest that teachers' perceptions of their own English proficiency levels as better than those of students strengthened their perceptions of current competence.

All study teachers expressed a concern that they were less proficient at English than when they were studying at university doing their degrees. They used many negative words and phrases to express what they thought about their present levels. For example, Hoa described her English proficiency before and now "as different as heaven and earth". She said her present English proficiency was "lucky not to be drop to zero level" and "rusty" (IT1HOA). Hung said it "dropped dramatically" (IT1HUNG) while Anh and My both said that their levels "deteriorated gradually" (IT1ANH; IT1MY). Some teachers said that the deterioration was an "unavoidable consequence" (IT1HUNG) and not surprising (IT1HOA).

The teachers cited two main reasons leading to their perceived present English proficiency levels: students' low levels of English proficiency and no English learning environment outside classroom context. For example, Hung said that in the classroom, there was "no need to use advanced English" or it was "impossible to use advanced English" when most learners could "not figure out what their teachers were talking about". Anh agreed that most students could not complete classroom activities if these activities were "not at low levels of English". She explained that since simple English was used inside the classroom while



Vietnamese was used in all other contexts, it would be “strange” if the teachers “could maintain high English proficiency levels” (IT1ANH). Anh and Nhung indicated that there was no need for the teachers to upgrade their English proficiency since the same textbooks had been used from the day the Faculty was established (IT1ANH; IT1NHUNG). However, this concern for English proficiency levels did not appear to negatively influence the teachers’ perceptions of teaching competence as discussed below.

All teachers strongly believed that in terms of their own English proficiency levels, they were qualified to teach current students at the Faculty. The teachers believed that the requirement of English proficiency levels for effective EFL teachers at the university context should be a 6.0 IELTS score or above. Some believed it could be as low as a 5.0 IELTS score (see section 5.1.3). Meanwhile, they rated their current levels highest at 7.0 and lowest at 6.0. Two teachers, Hung and Phuong, refused to rate themselves (IT1HUNG, IT1PHUONG) but like other teachers, they stated that although they thought they were less proficient, they believed their present English proficiency to be superior to that of their students. All teachers said their English proficiency would be problematic if they were assigned to teach English majors and, if that were the case, they would spend time strengthening their English proficiency. All reported that their selected teaching skill at the faculty was their strongest skill (see Table 1). For example, Anh said that since she was always praised by ex-lecturers and friends for her excellent writing skills (social persuasion) and she knew “every grammar points”, she was very confident in teaching writing skills for current students (IT1ANH). Phuong said that English grammar was like “part of her body”, since she learnt it from high school and teaching grammar and writing was not a challenge to her (IT1PHUONG) (mastery experiences).

In conclusion, the study teachers seemed to believe strongly that they were qualified to teach students in terms of English proficiency, which suggests that teachers’ perceptions of their own English proficiency levels supported their positive perception of current competence. This was backed up by the perceived success derived from previous learning/teaching experience (mastery experiences) and positive feedback (social persuasion).

### ***Pedagogical knowledge and skills***

The teachers also revealed in their reflective entries and during two rounds of one-to-one interviews that their perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge and skills enhanced their perceptions of current competence. In answering my question in the first individual interviews, “In teaching students at the Faculty, what is your strong point regarding different kinds of knowledge and skills?” all the teachers displayed a strong belief that their pedagogical knowledge and skills enabled them to teach students effectively. Their perceived success re knowledge and skills emerged from their previous teaching/learning experiences (mastery experiences). For example, Anh seemed to possess a strong belief in her ability to design learning activities and instruct students. She said:

I see I know how to design activities to suit my learners’ proficiency levels. . . . I can implement these activities. . . . I happily see my students can do these activities in accordance with my plan. (IT1ANH)

Anh used “I” frequently and talked at length about what she could do and achieve in the classroom. Her mention of “happily” suggests her positive sense of competence. Anh’s perception of her competence in pedagogical skills appeared to heighten her belief in her teaching ability.

My also rated her teaching ability positively owing to a perception of adequate pedagogical knowledge and skills. She wrote in her reflective entry that the pedagogical knowledge she learnt at university and from years of teaching experience enabled her to “plan good lessons which encourage students’ learning” (IT1MY). My’s belief in her ability to teach students at the home university produced by her perception of pedagogical knowledge was also confirmed by another sentence written in her reflective journal: “I am not confident teaching my students if I don’t know clearly how I am going to present my lessons” (MYRJ7).

During the first individual interview, Nhung also seemed to view herself as efficacious in motivating students to participate in classroom activities. Her repetition of the phrase “I have strategies” and her comfortable feeling indicate her belief in her pedagogical ability:

I think I'm better at pedagogical skills. I gained many useful teaching tips through my teaching life. I think that I have many strategies to make my students like my lessons. I have many strategies to help them better their skills. . . . I have strategies to encourage both weak and high achieving students to participate in my lessons. The comfortable feeling in my classrooms gives me confidence that I'm qualified. (IT1NHUNG)

Towards the end of my data collection period, the teachers' strong sense of personal teaching competence fluctuated, owing, I believe, to a growth in professional knowledge emerging from interactions with other teacher participants. The reflections on teaching practices and other teaching issues challenged their previous thinking. In relation to specific teaching aspects, they perceived themselves to have adequate or inadequate knowledge and skills; accordingly, the teachers experienced a strengthened or diminished sense of personal teaching competence (see 7.1.2). Findings suggest that in judging whether they possessed enough professional knowledge and skills to teach students at the university, the teachers relied on students' feedback (social persuasion), teaching experiences (mastery experiences) and feelings associated with these experiences (physiological states).

#### **6.1.2. Personal qualities**

Thu, Phuong and Anh all stated that their personal qualities, that is, their temperament and work ethic, affected their perceptions of teaching competence. The teachers' interpretations of their own personal qualities had the potential to increase or decrease their perceptions of teaching ability in relation to their discourses of effective teaching. For example, Thu thought that her quiet temperament was an obstacle to her implementing what she called "active classroom activities". She claimed that these activities were more suitable to teachers who were "active", "open" and "talkative" in the classroom. This suggests Thu's awareness of certain weaknesses in using CLT. At the same time, Thu thought that being "dedicated to teaching" and "hard-working" were her strong points in teaching writing skills (her strength). According to her, teaching writing skills required teachers to provide detailed verbal and written feedback and to mark students' papers constantly (IT1THU). Thu's perception of her

strength in providing feedback and marking students (which is in line with the GTM) depended on her understanding of her own temperament and work ethic. Findings suggested that Thu constructed her perception of teaching competence on the basis of previous teaching experiences.

Similarly, Phuong's perception of her own temperament appeared to both weaken and enhance her self-confidence in her teaching ability. Phuong said that since she was "quiet from birth", she felt "comfortable to teach writing skills" because writing did not require her to talk much. Besides, saying "students did not dare to ask me for clarification", Phuong believed that her quietness "created a gap" between her and her students. This made it difficult for her to enable students to understand the lessons and to provide corrective feedback as per a GTM focus (IT1PHUONG).

Unlike Thu and Phuong, Anh's sense of her ability to design classroom activities was possibly facilitated by her perception of her own work ethic. Anh thought that her diligence and dedication to teaching were an advantage to her in teaching writing skills. She felt her work ethics enabled her to "continuously research different activities" at home and to "present as many teaching activities as possible" (IT1ANH).

How the three teachers judged their teaching competence in relation to their subscribed-to discourses appeared to depend on how they perceived their own personal qualities as advantages or disadvantages to their instruction. Findings suggest that the teachers perceived certain aspects of temperament as a hindrance to adopting a communicative approach. The teachers' perceptions of personal qualities were possibly influenced by the kinds of teachers they would like to be. Findings also indicate that in understanding their own personal qualities, the teachers relied on their perceptions of previous teaching experiences (mastery experiences).

### **6.1.3. Teaching recognition**

In the second interviews, I invited the teachers to answer the question: "Have you ever been complimented or rewarded for what you have done as an EFL teacher at the Faculty?" It appears that how the study teachers' teaching ability was

recognized by leaders, colleagues and students also influenced their self-perception of teaching competence. Findings suggest that teachers relied on others' feedback (social persuasion) and their own emotions (affective states) to register teaching performance as successful or not (mastery experiences).

### ***Recognition from students and colleagues***

All the study teachers acknowledged different forms of appreciation (social persuasion) from students for their teaching abilities which implied that they had enough knowledge and skills to teach. Anh mentioned her students asking her to become their private tutor and her own happiness after receiving that request. Anh used the words “insisted”, “entreated” to emphasize how sincere her students were in requesting her to teach them privately. She also stated that these students were “high-achieving students”, “top students”, which implied that her abilities were recognized by students who knew what was good and bad teaching practice. She said:

I think it is because of my teaching performance in the classroom. They learn with me and think that “she must know a lot”. . . . I think it is because I am qualified in terms of both English proficiency, methodology and other things. . . . If I am not, they surely didn't do that. (IT1ANH)

It seemed that Anh strongly believed in her teaching ability since she repeatedly said “because of my teaching performance”, “because I am qualified”. Students' behaviour sent Anh messages which strengthened her belief that she possessed enough knowledge and skills to teach. In line with Vietnamese culture which values modesty (Tran, 2006), one would have expected Anh to talk down her own competence in front of other people. However, it was possibly because of my position as her previous colleague that created a need for Anh to protect her public face, which consequently moderated her modesty in this specific context.

Phuong talked about her happiness after receiving students' emails asking for learning advice and thanking her for “teaching [them] that way”. Before talking about this, Phuong mentioned her concern about whether she was too strict in requesting students to write essays at home weekly or to forbid a lot of students taking part in final exams. Phuong said that reference to these practices, thanking

her for being strict and asking her for learning advice, made her realize that her strictness was a strength (IT1PHUONG). Like Phuong, Nhung also mentioned students asking her for help inside and outside the classroom as recognition of her teaching ability, “Miss, help me with this!” “Miss, what does it mean?” “Miss, how can we distinguish between this?” Nhung said that the students asked teachers a lot of questions only when they believed that the teacher was able to help them (IT2NHUNG). Findings suggest that such student behaviour increased her belief in her professional knowledge and skills.

My discussed how student recognition for her teaching ability contributed to her positive assessment of teaching competence by telling me lots of stories. In one story, she was described by her students as “very strict, very hard” but “enthusiastic”, and the students said “she taught many things, new things” about herself. In another story, some of her students decided not to skip her class despite feeling unwell. In other stories, her students asked her to be their teacher again in the next semester and asked her how to swap with a teacher they did not like. This is how My described her feeling after hearing these stories:

When I heard that I felt, I felt, my students really like me, respect me.

They think that I am useful for them, my lessons are interesting (Hahaha).  
(IT1MY)

I felt very happy, very proud of myself. I’m a qualified teacher in my students’ eyes. They believe me. (IT2MY)

The way the students commented on her was interpreted by My as recognition of her teaching ability. Student behaviour cemented My’s perception that she possessed enough knowledge and skills to teach and her positive feelings reinforced her sense of competence.

Nhung was the only teacher in the study who stated that her perception of teaching competence increased as a result of colleagues’ feedback. She said that there were two colleagues who often “discussed teaching issues” with her, “asked for advice” on how to implement an activity, and “listened to [her] advice attentively”. Nhung said that:

These colleagues' behaviour made me believe that I am respected for what I have, for my teaching results, my teaching ability. They respect me. I think they think I am a qualified teacher. (IT2NHUNG)

In the account above, colleagues' behaviour increased Nhung's belief in the adequacy of her professional knowledge and skills. Her colleagues' respect, another form of recognition (social persuasion) clearly added to Nhung's belief in her teaching capability.

In sum, the teachers reflected on their successful teaching experiences (mastery experiences) in which positive feedback from students and colleagues (social persuasion) stood out as important sources which evoked positive feelings (affective states).

### ***Recognition from leaders***

While the study teachers' perception of their teaching competence appeared to be increased by students and colleagues' verbal and non-verbal behaviours, the feedback coming from leaders generally decreased teachers' beliefs in their teaching ability. In essence, all teachers complained that there was either a lack of recognition or face-value recognition of their teaching ability and effort at the university. This state of no or minimal recognition (a negative form of social persuasion) led to a feeling of disappointment (negative emotion) where teaching was not valued, or a feeling of confusion and self-doubt about how competent they were in teaching EFL. In this section, the usual pseudonyms will not be used in instances where teachers made comments critical of management practices.

All teachers used negative words and phrases to describe how certain leaders acknowledged their teaching ability: "no one says anything", "never hear anything", "that never happens, "never". In the second interview, one teacher said that most teachers were never acknowledged for what they "contributed to the development of the Faculty and university". Two teacher participants used rhetorical questions to answer my question: "Leaders compliment us on our teaching ability?", "Recognition for our teaching ability and effort?" I reminded the teachers of the title 'Teaching Excellence' given to them at the end of every teaching year and asked them if it was a sign of recognition from the university.

The teachers commented on the title and most of them sounded ironic. They said that it was “like a trick”, “not worthy and noticeable”, because the amount of money that went with it was “too little”, which implied that “leaders didn’t really value [their] teaching ability”. They complained that the title was like “whose turn” or “who taught the most”. One participant emphasised that it was “an empty formality”, “a paper” which “[was] no longer put in a frame”. All of these seemed to indicate that receiving leaders’ genuine recognition for teaching ability and effort was not something they really experienced (negative forms of social persuasion). Their uses of words and phrases summed up their disappointment (negative emotions) when their teaching ability and effort were not recognized by responsible leaders.

All teachers reported being confused or self-doubting when there was a lack of top-down recognition or reward for their teaching ability and effort. The teachers said that they did not know whether their teaching ability “[was] good enough” (IT2NHUNG) or whether they “contribute[d] enough” (IT2MY) or “what should be changed” (IT2HOA). The lack of recognition seemed to produce in teachers a sense that they were inadequate in their knowledge or that their teaching strategies were not effective. Anh listed many things she did last semester:

I attended every teacher meeting. I wasn’t absent from work for a single day last semester. I didn’t make any fault at work. I fulfilled every requirement. (IT2ANH)

This list indicates that Anh strongly believed she did a lot of things an effective teacher often does. However, as mentioned above, the fact that she never heard anything from leaders left her with uncertainty about her teaching ability:

“Sometimes I think they haven’t done anything maybe it’s because I have problems with my teaching ability or because I’m new here. I don’t know...” (IT2ANH). Such findings suggest teachers’ perceptions of teaching competence were lowered by a perceived lack of leaders’ recognition.

As reported in this section, teachers appeared to have fluctuating self-efficacy due to the types of feedback they received from students, colleagues and leaders. The positive feedback they received from students and colleagues seemed to boost



their beliefs in their teaching competence while lack of feedback from leaders undermined these beliefs. Findings in this section suggest that the teachers strengthened their perceptions of teaching competence on the basis of others' feedback (social persuasion) which impacted on their feelings (emotional states) and their perceptions of teaching performance (mastery experiences).

#### **6.1.4. Summary**

I have presented findings illustrating factors influencing Vietnamese teachers' perceptions of personal teaching competence in teaching EFL. What emerges from the findings is that teachers' perceptions of their own English proficiency seemed to enhance their beliefs in their teaching ability. Teachers' interpretations of their personal qualities as advantages or disadvantages also appeared to enhance or diminish these beliefs for some study teachers. The teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge and skills seemed to either strengthen or weaken their self-perceptions of teaching competence depending on context. Students' and colleagues' recognition of teachers' pedagogical ability appeared to have a strong impact on their sense of efficacy. The lack of recognition from leaders seemed to contribute to teachers' sense of knowledge inadequacy.

Teachers' understanding of their own temperament and work ethic seemed to predispose them to adopt the GTM in the language classrooms.

The teachers' sense of personal teaching competence appeared to be grounded in their perceptions of (un)successful teaching/learning experiences, feedback from other teachers, their comparison of their own teaching practices with those of others', and the impact of these on their emotional/physiological states.

#### **6.2. Factors affecting teachers' perceptions of contextualised teaching demands**

Along with an assessment of personal teaching competence in judging their self-efficacy, teachers also assess what will be required of them to be successful in particular teaching contexts (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers may consider factors in the environment that impede or facilitate teaching. In my study, it appears that Vietnamese teacher' perceptions of various external factors, e.g.,

collegiality, working constraints, had the potential to enhance or diminish the ways they assessed teaching requirements in relation to their own competence. Findings also suggest a relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their subscribed-to teaching approaches in the light of these environmental factors.

### **6.2.1. Managing roles**

How the teachers in the study managed their role as parents and teachers influenced how they analysed teaching demands. Six married female teachers bar Thanh reported a struggle to be both good parents and effective teachers in individual interviews and in their journal entries. The single male teacher emphasised that he was given support by his wife regarding parenting roles. Findings suggest that during the initial stages of my data collection period, most female teachers strongly believed in their capabilities to teach; however, perceived parenting roles seemed to inhibit them from adopting their subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching.

In responding to my question, "What challenges do you have as an EFL teacher?" in the first individual interviews, and "How do you feel after a teaching week?" in the second one-to-one interview, six teachers repeatedly stated that balancing family duties and teacher duties was a problem hindering their teaching performance and made them exhausted. The first group of teachers, My, Hoa and Nhung complained that parenting roles prevented them from teaching EFL more communicatively. For example, My stated that she would "do much better", her teaching activities would be "more flexible and suitable to students" if she was not "constrained" by "household chores" and if "[her] thoughts were not interrupted" by her children (IT1MY). My mentioned her tiredness as her most noticeable physiological states after a teaching week, which was because she "[had] to do two duties at the same time". My also explained that she "[got] into a teaching rut", that is, "not to be creative in designing teaching activities and not to go outside textbook tasks", which suggests that her teaching approach was less communicative than she imagined. The data suggest that she believed in her ability to teach communicatively. However, her perception of the challenge of out-of-work roles negatively impacted on this belief. It seems that out-of-work

pressures induced My to adopt the GTM although this was not how she preferred to teach.

The perception of out-of-work roles also affected beliefs about the ability to fulfil certain task requirements of teaching for other teachers in the second group, Anh, Phuong and Thu, but in a different way. These teachers' discussions suggested that they believed parenting duties prevented them from functioning well as teachers who adopt a GTM approach to teach EFL. For example, Phuong thought that checking students' writing work was an important part of her teaching practice, her "main task", in order to help students write better. However, according to her, this practice was hindered by another important task: taking care of her new-born baby and doing housework. Phuong talked about her effort to perform this teaching duty while the baby was sleeping and mentioned her exhaustion afterwards. She repeatedly said that she did not have enough time and health to provide feedback to different students (IT1PHUONG). She indicated that her feedback became "less detailed". She "spent less time checking students' papers" (IT2PHUONG). Phuong perceived family duties as a hindrance to her functioning as an effective teacher in the sense that she could not provide students with a lot of detailed written feedback. It seemed that although she had a sense of personal competence, her self-efficacy in teaching writing skills in a way that was consistent with the GTM was affected negatively by her struggle to manage the two duties.

Findings suggest that married female teachers in the study perceived out-of-work roles as a constraint on their teaching. It appears that the complaints the teachers made about out-of-work roles related to the kinds of teachers they wanted to be. Teachers' beliefs about how managing different roles impeded their teaching were constructed on the basis of their perceptions of unsuccessful mastery experiences (managing roles ineffectively).

The next sections will discuss the study teachers' perceptions of the impact of the workplace environment on their beliefs about the capacity to meet the various requirements of teaching in their particular context.

### **6.2.2. Teaching support**

How the study teachers perceived support from colleagues and leaders at the university and the Faculty regarding improving their professional knowledge and skills appeared to negatively influence their analysis of teaching demands in relation to their competence. Findings suggest that a lack of genuine support was perceived as a constraint on teachers being effective classroom practitioners since they did not feel supported to incorporate new strategies in the classroom.

#### ***Collegiality***

The study teachers all agreed that collegiality existed but was found only in small groups of teachers who were close friends and was considered not to fully satisfy teachers' needs. For example, in her second interview, Anh talked about a teacher who lent her own writing lesson plans. The teacher's lesson plans helped her "save a lot of time preparing" and "better" her own lesson plans, and "know in advance what people [leaders and students] expect from" (IT2ANH). This indicates that Anh's belief about her ability to fulfil certain teaching requirements was somewhat supported by such support. In answering my follow-up question, "What other kind of support do you receive from your colleagues?" Anh had a long pause before talking. She directly told me she was not sure if reaching an agreement on what to select from textbooks was really support. Anh's pause and talk suggest that she was not satisfied with this kind of collegiality. Like Anh, Thu appeared to expect a more convincing and specific kind of support from her colleague, "but I am not sure if her way of teaching is successful in my class. I wish she let me observe how she does that in her class" (IT2THU). In responding to my follow-up question, "Is it possible to seek the same help from every colleague?" she immediately stated that her previous friendship and trust with that colleague led to open, constructive discussions and she could not seek the same help from anyone else in the Faculty.

Data from observation sessions also indicated that a culture of sharing seemed to exist in groups of teachers, but the teachers seemed not to be entirely satisfied with such support. At teacher meetings, the teachers always sat and whispered in their own groups, and rarely talked to colleagues in other groups. There were

physical gaps between groups in the meeting room (FMO1; FMO2; FMO3). While hanging out with one another, teachers sometimes discussed and shared ideas about how to improve their teaching instruction or how to deal with a classroom situation but those discussions were often short (limited collegiality). For example, Thu, Hoa and Nhung spent only 7 out of 60 minutes in exchanging ideas about motivating a lazy student in a class in which each of them taught a different subject (IMO4).

During the follow-up discussions after observation sessions, the teachers commented that they would feel more confident in incorporating elements of the teaching strategies which were shared by colleagues into their teaching instruction, if they had a chance to witness their colleagues teach in their classroom or to discuss the teaching strategies further with other teachers at the Faculty to confirm its applicability (FI-IMO4HOA; FI-IMO4THU). Findings suggest that teachers' perceived a lack of collegiality as a constraint on teaching, since they did not feel supported to implement new teaching strategies as they would have liked. A perceived lack of social persuasion (opportunities to discuss professional knowledge) and vicarious experience (opportunities to watch others teach) resulted in the teachers believing that a lack of collegiality impeded their teaching practice.

However, according to the study teachers, a lack of feedback and professional discussion around their teaching did not mean they lacked pedagogical knowledge and skills. The teachers continued to display a strong belief in their teaching competence. For example, My told me in her second individual interview:

If any colleagues or leaders gave me some advice on how I should teach, I would feel like having 'wings'. But if not, I can still do well, like what I'm doing now (IT2MY).

The reasons for their strong sense of personal teaching competence during the first steps of my data-collection period may well be related to a specific Vietnamese cultural factor – the concept of face, which is discussed further in section 8.1.2.

### ***Professional development opportunities***

Findings suggest that the study teachers' perceptions of the lack of institutional support in terms of providing professional development opportunities had a negative impact on their beliefs about their competence to fulfil teaching requirements. A perceived lack of social persuasion and vicarious experiences (formal opportunities to receive feedback and watch colleagues teach) resulted in teachers' negative emotions and a feeling of not being supported to widen their knowledge of teaching requirements. In this section, where study teachers made negative comments on leadership practices, the usual pseudonyms will not be used.

Firstly, the study teachers reported that there was no formal opportunity to critically review and improve their classroom instruction among colleagues. In the second interview, five teachers said that the content of monthly teacher meetings disappointed them. The teachers used a number of negative words and phrases to describe meeting topics and the attitudes of attendees: "irrelevant topics", "no important contents with vague words last in only 15 minutes", "no contribution to professional knowledge", "useless", "general topics", "no one shares teaching strategies or new ideas". Data from four observation sessions of formal teacher meetings indicated that topics typically presented at these meetings were new announcements, university development and new regulations. Technical and managerial problems in classrooms such as computer breakdowns, student discipline or late provision of textbooks were also raised (FMO1; FMO2; FMO3). In these observation sessions, I noticed that all study teachers listened to Faculty leaders talk and rarely contributed to the discussion. A follow-up question, "Why do you often keep silent during teacher meetings?" helped to reveal that it was because the teachers felt uninterested and bored with what was happening. The teachers wanted the Faculty leader to focus more on inviting them to discuss professional topics such as instructional goals or improving teaching performance but the content of the meetings did not encourage such expectations (FI-FMO3).

Secondly, three teachers, My, Hoa and Nhung also noted that there was a serious lack of professional development courses or conferences for EFL teachers in the Faculty. These three teachers emphasized the importance of new knowledge and

experiences gained from attending such courses or conferences in helping them improve their teaching strategies. For example, My said that such knowledge could “change” the way she looked at students and her teaching methodology and that she felt “interested in implementing these ideas”. My used a proverb “*đi một ngày đàng, học một sàng khôn*” [travel broadens the mind] to emphasize the need to go outside the university context to learn from other experts (IT2MY).

Findings indicate that teachers’ beliefs about their competence to meet various teaching requirements were undermined by a perceived lack of social persuasion and vicarious experiences (opportunities to receive feedback and watch others’ teach), which was often accompanied by negative emotions.

The next sections will add more to the picture of how teachers’ perceptions of external factors influenced their analysis of teaching demands.

### **6.2.3. Physical working constraints**

All study teachers stated that teaching resources (lack of or availability), the syllabus and classroom arrangements significantly affected their sense of capability to meet various teaching demands as they perceived these physical working conditions fostered or constrained their daily practice. In addition, there seemed to be a relationship between the teaching approaches the individual teachers implemented and what they perceived as constraints at the institution and the Faculty.

#### ***Teaching resources***

Some study teachers made complaints about Faculty teaching resources. However, these study teachers differed in their perceptions of how aspects of teaching resources (or lack of) impacted on their ability to fulfil different teaching requirements.

Nhung and Phuong complained that the lack of (up-to-date) textbooks hindered their teaching self-efficacy. For example, Nhung complained about the out-of-date speaking textbook. She considered that teaching listening skills required her to provide updated English vocabulary to learners; however, the textbook remained the same for several years. Saying that “at least” an updated textbook could give

students “timely and standard English vocabulary and topics” which, she, as “a non-native teacher”, could not do (IT2NHUNG). Phuong also stated that the typical replacement of textbooks by photocopied materials at the beginning of every semester “lessened the effectiveness” of her lesson. She reported that students “did not like the materials” or “became lazy” when learning with these “temporary” materials. She found herself very “anxious” whenever the new semester started because she had to put up with “students’ complaints about textbooks” (IT2PHUONG). Both these teachers saw a perceived lack of adequate teaching resources as a constraint on effective teaching. Their reliance on textbooks also suggests their commitment to the GTM and a low sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL communicatively. Truly self-efficacious teachers might not consider the lack of textbooks as a hindrance but a positive challenge to adapt their teaching approach.

My and Hoa discussed how the inadequate technical support provided by the Faculty hampered their efforts to teach better. For example, they stated that they never got timely support when informing the Faculty about the sudden breakdown of computers in the classroom. Computers were considered “an essential tool”, “a key tool” enhancing their teaching practice, “making the slides more attractive and creative” but their lessons were “interrupted” (IT2MY, IT2HOA) because of faulty equipment which was exacerbated by slow technical support. The two teachers emphasized that this slow support was “quite usual” and significantly made them feel “dissatisfied” and “unhappy” because “it was not [their] fault” that the lesson “became lengthy and boring”. The usage of computers as described by the two teachers indicates their commitment to a communicative approach. Their complaints suggest their competence in using CLT was compromised by a perceived lack of technical support.

Findings indicate that teachers’ perceived lack of support regarding teaching resources from the institution produced negative feelings (affective states) and led to unsuccessful teaching experiences (mastery experiences) among the teachers.



## *Syllabus*

The study teachers held different views toward the syllabus guidelines. The first group of teachers, Hung, Thanh, Thu and Phuong, complained that the syllabus was “too general”, “not detailed and clear enough”. They were not sure that their teaching approaches and results matched syllabus requirements. Besides, Thanh and Hung felt constrained by the syllabus time-frame, saying that they did not have enough time to “cover all important points” specified in the syllabus (IT2THU; IT2PHUONG), to “check whether students understood” the lessons or to “check students’ work carefully” (IT2THANH; IT2HUNG). Therefore, they felt that their teaching effectiveness was affected negatively by syllabus demands. The second group, Anh, My and Hoa did not consider the general goals of the syllabus as an obstacle to their teaching ability. In contrast, they believed this was an opportunity for “competent and effective” teachers to show their “real” abilities. They suggested that the general goals of the syllabus gave them freedom to decide “what and how to teach”. These three teachers talked at length about how they enjoyed being able to select teaching content and teaching styles suitable to different classes (IT2ANH; IT2MY; IT2HOA). Findings suggest that the syllabus was a constraint on task implementation for Hung, Thanh, Thu and Phuong but an opportunity for Anh, My and Hoa. Findings also indicate that teachers who considered the syllabus a constraint tended to follow the GTM. Others who believed that the syllabus supported their task implementation were more oriented to CLT.

## *Classroom arrangements*

Classroom arrangements also affected the sense of capability to meet teaching requirements for some study teachers. Once again, the complaints the teachers made about classroom arrangements seem to relate to the teaching approaches they followed. My, Hoa and Nhung reported that the lack of sound proofing of classroom walls prevented them from implementing communicative activities in the classroom. For example, My talked and wrote about her “irritated” feeling when a next-door teacher requested her to restrain the students from talking too loud. She explained, “How can I teach a speaking lesson without encouraging my students to discuss?” My said she felt discouraged from implementing interactive

activities in the classroom (IT1MY). Hoa's implementation of communicative activities was reported as affected by classroom arrangements. A large number of tables and chairs in rows was seen as creating a "physical gap" between the teacher and her students, making it difficult for students to "work in groups or pairs" and for the teacher and students to "move around the classroom" (IT2HOA). Hung complained about the working capacity of air-conditioners and the location of toilets in the building where his classroom was located. He claimed that because of the poor operation of the air-conditioners, the heat in the classroom made his students less able to concentrate in his lessons. Besides, the students often came to class late because it took too long for them to go to toilets located in other buildings. He felt "it [was] difficult to encourage students' motivation while they [were] tired" (IT1HUNG). Anh and Thu complained about the quality of speakers, projectors and blackboards at the Faculty. Anh wrote in her entries that the quality of these facilities "played a key role in contributing to the success of the lesson". She wrote that many times she and her students "lost interest in teaching and learning" because they had to "move up and down" the building to find a vacant room with a good projector (RJ1ANH; RJ3ANH). Such findings suggest that My and Hoa were committed to a communicative approach, Anh, Thu and Hung to the GTM and Nhung, in this specific context, to a communicative approach. However, the working environment overall appeared to induce the teachers to follow the GTM. Findings suggest that classroom arrangements impeded teachers' implementation of certain tasks. Teachers' complaints (a negative form of social persuasion) were associated with negative emotions and perceived unsuccessful teaching experiences (mastery experiences).

Class size and student groupings in the language classroom also inhibited teachers' sense of ability in relation to meeting teaching demands. Some of the teachers claimed that over thirty students in a classroom were "too much to teach effectively". Thanh and Anh said that they did not have enough time to check the work of all students (IT1THANH; IT1ANH). Hung complained that it was difficult for him to "keep all students in order and be attentive to [his] talk" (IT1HUNG). My and Nhung wrote that they "[could] not provide help to every student" when the number of students was over twenty (RJ5MY; RJ4NHUNG). Besides, where teaching classes consisted of students with different levels of

proficiency, teachers reported negative feelings: feeling “uncomfortable”, “unhappy”, “stressed” and “tired”. Findings indicate that teachers perceived class size and grouping as a constraint on their teaching. Teachers’ complaints about class size and grouping were accompanied by negative emotions and perceived unsuccessful teaching experiences (mastery experiences).

In sum, there appears to be a relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of working constraints and the teaching approaches they followed. The teachers who committed to a communicative approach and those who followed the GTM tended to be affected by their perceptions of working conditions differently. Generally, the working environment appeared less inhibiting of teachers’ implementation of the GTM. The teachers’ perceptions of negative factors impeding their task implementation were grounded on their perceptions of working constraints (social persuasion), negative feelings and past teaching experiences.

#### **6.2.4. Supervision and decision-making processes**

The study teachers’ sense of capability to meet teaching requirements appeared to be influenced by how they perceived they were being supervised and invited into decision-making processes at the Faculty and institution. Teachers perceived that their teaching requirements became more difficult owing to supervisors’ intrusion into their instructional time and a lack of trust from leaders. Data for this section mostly came from my follow-up interviews after observing teacher meetings. I invited the teachers to share their views on what they liked and did not like while working at the institution and the Faculty. For ethical reasons, the usual pseudonyms will not be used where teachers made critical comments on supervision practice.

First, the teachers reported negative feelings when experiencing teaching supervision practice at the institution. For example, one participant felt “irritated” and “uncomfortable” when a supervisor sometimes “stood behind classroom window” and “stared” into the classroom. This made the participant “less concentrated on teaching” and consequently “lost motivation to teach”. Three participants said their lessons were often interrupted by a supervisor’s visit to announce the institution’s new regulations. One participant used a rhetorical

question: “I was instructing my students and all were very attentive. Suddenly, a person stopped all of us to do something very irrelevant. Would you do so?”

Another participant also wrote about her unpleasant feeling when a supervisor went straight into her classroom to wake a student up:

I was surprised at first. What’s this man doing here? Then I realized that he criticized a student because that student put his head on the table. I got angry but didn’t say anything to that supervisor.

The participant wrote that it was her “responsibility and right” to let her students do what she thought to be good for them in her classroom (a high sense of personal competence). Saying that students have rights in her classrooms, this teacher thought they could have a quick rest if they felt they were unable to study. The teacher used the word “non-educational” to describe the supervising practice at the institution. It appears that the study teachers’ sense of professional autonomy was limited by supervisors’ disruptions of class time (a lack of trust, a negative form of social persuasion), leading to negative feelings about their teaching rights (emotions/physiological states). Findings also support teachers’ high sense of teaching competence, since the teachers indicated that they knew what they were doing in their classrooms. However, intrusion into their teaching appeared to impede their teaching effectiveness.

Secondly, all teachers reported that they were not genuinely encouraged to get involved in institutional decision-making, which was another version of a lack of trust (social persuasion) coming from leaders. They all mentioned the institution’s new decision to reduce the number of English learning periods without asking teachers’ opinions as one example of leaders’ disregard of teachers’ contributions. One participant used the word “contradictory” to describe the institution’s requirement of ensuring teaching quality and its decision to reduce teaching periods. In one follow-up interview, the participant said that it was “impossible” for teachers at the Faculty to “maintain”, let alone to “improve” teaching quality, when they did not have enough time to teach in the classroom. Another participant said in her second interview: “They [leaders] did not listen to us. They did not care about our voice”. All the teachers emphasized that this decision created “teaching pressure”, “teaching anxiety” for the teachers because it forced them to

do something that they believed they could not do. Since teachers perceived that teaching demands became more difficult owing to institutional decisions (a lack of trust – social persuasion), they viewed their ability to meet teaching demands as constrained by these decisions.

The second example of the institution's ignoring of the teachers' voice mentioned by the participating teachers was its promulgation of yearly internal regulations. The teachers, in their follow-up interviews, used a number of negative words and phrases to describe this: "another example of empty formalism", "same as ever", "whether the regulations were sent to the teachers is not important, nothing will be changed", "the regulations are already fixed without our contribution", "we have no voice", "we can't change anything". It is evident that the teachers had no voice in decision-making, even decisions directly related to their work and their benefits. The disappointment and perceived powerlessness because of a lack of trust contributed to teacher pessimism, which undermined their beliefs in their ability to do their job.

In short, the way the study teachers were supervised and treated as outsiders regarding decision-making processes induced negative feelings and teaching anxiety which consequently lowered their beliefs in their capacity to meet task requirements. In other words, a lack of trust from people in power, a negative version of social persuasion, had the potential to influence the teachers' emotions/physiological states negatively and constrain their ability to do their jobs.

#### **6.2.5. Job insecurity pressure**

In responding to a question in the follow-up interview where I asked them what they liked and disliked when teaching EFL at the Faculty, and in some journal entries, teachers mentioned the threat of job insecurity as a major factor which negatively impacted on their perceptions of professional autonomy. The teachers discussed two main events contributing to this threat: the rumour that the Faculty would be merged with another Faculty and another new policy that allowed colleagues and leaders to observe teachers in the classroom. The perceived ability to fulfil teaching demands of all teachers bar My was affected negatively in the

way that they became uncertain about their teaching futures and their teaching practice.

Four study teachers, Nhung, Hoa, Thu and Phuong, stated that they were uncertain and worried about whether their teaching performance and practices would satisfy attendees (colleagues and leaders) of their lessons. The worry and uncertainty was rooted in their belief that the purpose of classroom observations was to point out teachers' weaknesses, "*vạch lá tìm sâu*" [fault finding]" (FI2NHUNG) rather than giving constructive feedback. According to these teachers, classroom observations aimed to find reasons to fire teachers. The four teachers talked about the stress caused by the threat of evaluation and confusion in relation to the choice of suitable teaching practices to cope with evaluations. For example, Phuong mentioned being "sleepless" when she was sure "how she would be negatively evaluated" (FI2PHUONG). Hoa said that she would "cudgel [her] brain" in order to figure out which practices might escape negative comments (FI2HOA). Thu said she was "worried" and "couldn't concentrate on teaching" because it was "impossible" for her to please every attendee (FI2THU). Findings suggest that issues of job insecurity negatively influenced how teachers taught and caused an increased sense of inhibiting work constraints among the teachers.

Hung, Thu, Nhung and Hoa discussed how job instability influenced their emotions and teaching practices. The teachers tended to adopt the GTM under the influence of job security pressure. Nhung said that she was "very disappointed", "very worried" and "sleepless" because she was "puzzled" over where she would go if the Faculty no longer existed (IT2NHUNG). She also wrote that she felt "really tired" and "just want[ed] to finish lessons quickly and [went] home" because she felt that her job was so "unstable". She "no longer want[ed] to stay awake to search for different activities on the Internet" (RJ2NHUNG). Thu said that she was "worried about losing the job" and she might "spend more time looking for a part-time job rather than thinking about using interactive activities" in her classroom (FI2THU). Similarly, Hung and Hoa both described how job instability limited their efforts in teaching. They discussed the possibility of reducing the amount of time preparing lesson plans and the possibility of selecting practices which did not require much effort, implying that they would teach less

effectively (FI2HUNG; RJ7HOA). The teachers' tendencies to reframe teaching strategies as a response to job insecurity pressures (a version of social persuasion) suggest how a negative perception of environmental factors can impact on an analysis of the requirements of certain teaching tasks. Findings also indicate a tendency in teachers to commit to the GTM under the influence of job insecurity pressures.

Three teachers, Thanh, Hung and Nhung expressed a concern that they would monitor their teaching practices carefully and try not to do anything that was out-of-keeping with the prevailing teaching culture at the Faculty and the university in order to secure working positions. These teachers believed that what was expected by students, colleagues and leaders was a minimum number of failing students every semester. The teachers differed in terms of what they would do to conform to this teaching culture. Hung and Thanh said that they would either "adjust students' marks" or "deliver easy tests with simple grammar exercises" although both of them disagreed with these solutions, claiming them to be "ineffective" (FI2THANH) or "not good for the education system" (FI2HUNG). Nhung said that she would "examine [her] own teaching practices and teaching strategies" and her "testing styles" in order to make sure that "[her] tests were not too easy or too challenging" compared to standardized tests at the Faculty. Nhung also talked about her recent decision to train students testing strategies, thereby enabling many of them pass Faculty exams (FI2NHUNG). Findings suggested an inclination to adopt the GTM under the influence of a surveillance regime. Teachers' reported negative feelings suggest a lowered sense of capability to fulfil teaching requirements.

In summary, findings suggest that the pressure of job insecurity and an overpowering surveillance regime (negative versions of social persuasion) undermined teachers' beliefs about their capacity to meet the specific requirements of their work. The reduced feeling of professional autonomy resulted in doubt about their ability to enact certain strategies and practices, which was accompanied by a number of negative feelings. Some participants also expressed a preference for *safe* teaching practices and were inclined to follow the GTM on this basis.

### **6.2.6. Learner characteristics**

This section will discuss teachers' understanding of certain types of students in relation to the challenge of fulfilling certain teaching requirements. Findings suggest that the study teachers' perceptions of students' background knowledge, behaviour and learning progress affected their beliefs about their capacity to meet job requirements.

#### ***Highly motivated, high-achieving students***

Findings suggest that teaching highly motivated, high-achieving students made a significant contribution to teachers' beliefs about their capability in relation to the demands of the job.

The study teachers reported a preference for teaching students who had strong background knowledge. It seems that in classes of strong, highly motivated students, the teachers felt comfortable to deliver a range of more demanding activities. For example, Nhung said that in a class of advanced students she used "more games" or "more speaking activities" after text-book listening tasks so that her students could "interact with one another" (IT2NHUNG). Hung also said that he "adjusted" some text-book tasks into "competitive games" to use in classrooms of high achieving students (IT2HUNG). Anh said that she felt it was "easy to teach", "easy to implement activities" with a class of such students. She could "teach more in according with her lesson plan" and used "more brainstorming activities" because the students finished her activities "quickly" (IT2ANH). Findings suggest that the teachers were more inclined to CLT in this context.

Students' positive learning behaviour and progress encouraged teachers to believe that their teaching instruction was effective or the activities manageable. This, in turn, encouraged them to exert greater effort to improve their instruction. For example, Anh wrote in one of her reflective entries:

I recognized that this time their writing were free of most previous mistakes. . . . I showed a writing sample and analysed this sample [to the students]. I was aware that my learners were very attentive to the talk. . . . In replying to my question of whether they understood thoroughly how to



write this particular type of essay, they altogether shouted ‘yeah’. I felt very happy. I was successful. My lesson was effective. This will be a very big motive for my next teaching sessions. I think I go on the right track and I will stick to the same teaching techniques (RJ5ANH).

In this account, Anh perceived that her students were making learning progress. She also described their attentiveness to her talk as well as a positive response at the end of her lesson. Anh used five sentences at the end of the entry to describe her positive feelings and decision to maintain the techniques, which suggests that students’ positive behaviour and learning progress facilitated her sense of competence to implement certain tasks. These examples indicate that Anh’s perceptions of positive feedback from students (social persuasion) strengthened her perception of her teaching (mastery experiences) and emotions (affective states), and these together contributed to a positive analysis of teaching demands.

The belief that students possessed enough background knowledge to understand their instruction, were motivated to learn and displayed learning progress brought these teachers positive feelings. For example, Nhung said that she felt “eager” when she knew that she “[would] teach [her] preferred students tomorrow” and “[would] have a wonderful time” (IT2NHUNG). Hung said when he “enter[ed] a class of preferred students”, he felt “relaxed” and he was more “enthusiastic”, “more motivated” to teach (IT2HUNG). Thu said she experienced a “high spirit” when teaching students who were “active” to discuss classroom activities (IT2THU). Such positive emotions can be interpreted as reflecting an increased sense of the manageability of various teaching tasks.

Findings suggest that teachers constructed their confidence in meeting teaching demands on their perceptions of students’ feedback (social persuasion), their past teaching experiences (mastery experiences) which resulted in positive feelings (affective states) in teaching highly motivated, high achieving students. It appears that teachers were more inclined to use CLT in teaching such students.

### ***Unmotivated, low-achieving students***

In contrast, teaching unmotivated, less able students seemed to cause a sense of the unmanageability of various teaching requirements among the study teachers.

The teachers stated that students with little motivation and low ability hindered their implementation of learning activities and instruction in the classroom. All of them described their instruction in classes of low-achieving students to be “short”, “concise” and “simple”. The teachers reported that they provided fewer interactive activities in classes of struggling students and more “boring” and “repetitive” activities. Nhung said that her instruction to low-achieving students was “like spoon fed” (IT2NHUNG). Anh said that she could not implement pair work or group work in classrooms of low-achieving students. It was “a waste of time” so she tried to follow syllabus guidelines and “finish[ed] as many exercises as possible” (IT2ANH). Hung said that he had to “translate instructions into Vietnamese” so that low-achieving students could do textbook activities. Hoa said that her students in weak classes had fewer opportunities to participate in some activities such as “interviewing” in order to “increase communication ability” because she “spent more time explaining” (IT2HOA). Findings suggest classrooms of unmotivated and struggling students induced teachers to adopt the GTM approach.

When students responded to instructional efforts with inattention and disinterest in learning (social persuasion) and did not make learning progress (mastery experiences), the teachers sounded helpless. For example, Anh, Nhung and Thu wrote that they “gave up” teaching these students and “let them do anything in the classroom” (RJ5ANH; RJ7NHUNG; RJ2THU). Hoa felt such students were “difficult to teach” and acted as if she “[did] not hear, [did] not see” those students who behaved badly in the classroom (IT2HOA). Nhung said, “My God”, smiled sadly and then said:

I have one strategy. I ignore these students or I forbid them from attending exams. I’m sure I can do nothing to them. I think that I can’t teach them. I’m not a saint to do impossible things. (IT2NHUNG)

Nhung had a growing sense of job difficulty which undermined her teaching effort when teaching less able students. She accepted the fact that she could not help them. Her comparison of herself to “a saint” strongly suggests that she believed no one could help these students, thereby freeing herself from responsibility for student learning. Like other teachers in my study, Nhung blamed the students

rather than her own instructional practices, an area in which she probably needed to be trained or re-trained. Nhung said:

Most students who failed exams were the ones who were very lazy. . . . I don't think that their exam failure was caused by my teaching style. I think that it was certainly because they did not want to learn. . . . If they themselves did not want to learn, we could not do much to increase their motivation level in this teaching context. (IT2NHUNG)

Hung asserted that there was "nothing wrong about me or my teaching ability, it's the students who do not want to learn or it is institutional support" (IT2HUNG). Phuong and Thanh also agreed that students were the main factor that influenced their sense of teaching effectiveness. If the students did not want to learn, they could not teach (IT2PHUONG; IT2THANH). Findings suggest that the teachers strongly believed in their personal teaching competence and perceived students' low levels of motivation and learning progress as constraints on their ability to meet teaching demands and their willingness to put an effort into their teaching.

The study teachers displayed negative feelings when talking about how they taught unmotivated, less able students. All of them answered frankly that they did not like teaching such students. For example, Anh said that some students "did not know a word in English", and that teaching struggling students made her feel "tired" or "disappointed" because the students "did not have enough vocabulary to understand text-book instructions" or "[couldn't] learn by heart some English expressions" (IT2ANH). She wrote "my hands were tired and eyes were sore because of checking too many grammar mistakes" in students' papers (RJ3ANH). She emphasized that students should "obtain certain background knowledge" in order to understand her instruction (RJ4ANH; IT2ANH). She repeatedly said that she "could not comprehend their ideas" (RJ1ANH; IT2ANH). Similarly, My used the word "*gào thét* [shriek]" to describe how she sounded in classes with low-achieving students. She said she would like to "prostrate" the students because their English was "horrible" and because they could not "pronounce the verb 'to be' properly" (IT2MY). Such expressions of emotion suggest that teachers tended to believe that teaching unmotivated, low-achieving students was a formidable challenge. The belief was shaped by their perceptions of students' learning

behaviours (social persuasion), unsuccessful teaching experiences (mastery experiences) and negative feelings (affective states).

In short, teachers' positive beliefs in their ability to meet teaching demands were strengthened substantially when they perceived that students were engaged in the classroom (social persuasion) and made learning progress (mastery experiences). They obtained positive feelings and reported providing more interactive activities in classes of high-achieving and highly motivated students. In contrast, teachers experienced a growing sense of the difficulty of the job in teaching low-achieving and badly behaved students. They experienced negative feelings and claimed that they could not teach such students. Findings in this section also suggest that teachers tended to adopt a more communicative approach when teaching highly motivated, high-achieving students, and a GTM when teaching unmotivated, low-achieving students. It seems that the teachers' analysis of teaching demands was shaped by their interpretation of information based on instances of social persuasion, mastery experiences, and affective states.

#### **6.2.7. Social and educational values and norms**

This section will discuss how beliefs about the competence to meet teaching requirements in teaching EFL of some study teachers was affected by the status of the English language in Vietnam. Traditional educational practices were also reported to affect their analysis of the demands of the job.

##### ***Status of the target language***

The status of English as a foreign language (FL) affected the sense of capability to fulfil teaching requirements of three study teachers: Anh, Nhung and Hung. These teachers perceived the status of English in Vietnam as a factor that hindered their ability to realize two teaching goals: motivate students to learn, and enable students to better their English proficiency levels. Through discussions with other members in their groups during the first focus group discussion, these three teachers expressed a concern that most students had "no genuine reasons for learning English for communicative purposes" as opportunities to obtain a good job "mainly depend on degrees". In addition, according to these teachers, communicative opportunities for teaching and learning the target language were

limited by the fact that Vietnamese is widely used outside foreign language classrooms. Anh considered the status of the target language as “the most difficulty” in her teaching practice since the students did not feel “the usefulness of the language” or “the need to communicate fluently in English” (FGR2GR1ANH). Hung said that “it is necessary to upgrade EFL to ESL in order to ease English teaching and learning process”. He emphasized that he “felt [his] teaching efforts didn’t bring much” since the students learnt English in the classroom but obtained few opportunities to practise in real life. He also doubted students’ ability to use English to communicate after leaving university, because there were not many reasons to use English in Vietnam (FGR2GR4HUNG). Findings suggest that the teachers felt conflicted between their teaching goals and the status of the target language that made it difficult or impossible for them to accomplish what they expected. Findings in this section also suggest that the status of the target language in Vietnam encouraged teachers’ uptake of the GTM rather than CLT. The teachers reflected on their past teaching experiences to judge their abilities to teach EFL.

### ***Traditional educational values and norms***

Two study teachers, Nhung and My, mentioned the challenge of implementing communicative tasks in the classroom. The challenge emerged from these two teachers’ perceptions of a difference between their teaching practices and educational trends: communicative versus non-communicative. Long-standing education norms made these teachers uncertain about any significant effect of their practice on students’ knowledge and skills. Findings suggest that the perceived capacity for meeting teaching requirements of these two teachers was undermined by their perceptions of these educational values and norms.

First, the two teachers agreed that old teaching methods still dominated English language classrooms, especially those at high schools. Societal preference for old methods of learning languages and an achievement-oriented culture contributed to the prevalence of these methods. For example, both teachers agreed that “students cannot speak in English despite learning the language for six years or more at school” and that this was a result of a focus on “grammar rules, memorizing and repetition” and “teaching-to-the test practice” (FGR2G2NHUNG; FGR2G1MY).

In her individual interview, My described the old teaching methods as “one-way teaching practices”. The classrooms using old methods were “as silent as pagodas” because the teachers focused on “sole lecturing” and “students’ note-taking”. She described those teachers as “knowledge transmitters” who “never let students speak out what they thought”. Grammar-focused tests at high schools and the lack of speaking tests at tertiary level supported these old-fashioned teaching practices (IT1MY). According to Nhung, parental expectations of their children passing tests with good marks were a factor that encouraged both teachers and students to work very industriously on tests. She added that teachers were evaluated based on the number of students passing tests, and this created a pressure for EFL teachers to teach test-taking skills rather than helping students to better their communication skills (IT1NHUNG). Findings suggest that these two teachers did not believe in the effectiveness of the GTM in teaching EFL.

Both teachers claimed that the old teaching methods were still in place and that many teachers and students were familiar with those teaching practices, which made it hard for them to implement their teaching practices in the classroom. They mentioned their helplessness in enabling students in the classroom better their communication skills. Both believed that it would be easier to implement communicative activities in the classroom if other teachers had the same commitment to do so. For example, Nhung felt it was “difficult” and “impossible” to change students’ “sluggish” participation in her speaking activities, which was partly caused by “seven years of schooling prior to college” (FG2GR2NHUNG). My said she had “innumerable difficulties” in selecting communicative activities to teach first-year students, because most of them were “very good at grammar and reading skills” but “unable” or “very weak” to speak and listen in English. Both stressed that they could not do much to change the situation, and that they could not help students to better their communication skills unless there was “encouragement” and “top-down change” in teaching and assessment towards a communicative approach. My added that her success depended in part on the collaboration of colleagues in implementing a communicative approach in the Faculty (IT2MY). The two teachers seem to believe that the tradition of teaching and learning in general and in foreign languages in particular constrained their efforts in implementing communicative activities in their classroom. The two

teachers' perceptions of past teaching experiences (mastery experiences) and comparison of their teaching practices with those of others (vicarious experiences) shaped their beliefs about task requirements. It seems that the teachers perceived certain social and educational values as compelling them to adopt the GTM rather than CLT, even though they did not believe in the effectiveness of the GTM.

#### **6.2.8. Summary**

Findings suggest that the study teachers' analysis of teaching requirements was undermined by many environmental factors. Although married female teachers expressed a high sense of personal teaching competence in the initial stages of my data collection period, their perceptions of family concerns as a hindering factor to their functioning as effective teachers lowered their sense of efficacy in teaching EFL. In addition, a perceived lack of opportunities to discuss professional knowledge and to watch others teach, negatively influenced teachers' analysis of their work demands. The teachers also identified a number of factors in their working environment, such as (inadequate) teaching resources, institutional decisions and supervisors' intrusion into their instructional time, which, according to the teachers, created obstacles to effective teaching. In addition, the threat of job insecurity negatively affected most teachers' views of the demands of their jobs so that they became uncertain about their teaching future and practice. The job of teaching was interpreted as difficult and sometimes unmanageable when it came to teach low-achieving and badly behaved students. Some teachers also perceived their implementation of tasks to be more challenging owing to the status of English as a FL and the value of GTM embedded in current teaching practices at the university and the Faculty.

In contrast, in classes of strong, highly motivated students, the teachers felt supported to deliver different kinds of or more demanding activities. Students' positive learning behaviours and progress made teachers believe that their teaching instruction was effective. A few study teachers considered the syllabus as a positive factor in task implementation because they had the freedom to design tasks in accordance to their wishes.

Findings indicate that the teachers' analyses of the contextualised demands of their jobs were mainly grounded in their interpretations of feedback and support from students, colleagues and leaders (social persuasion), and perceptions of (un)successful teaching experiences (mastery experiences). Lacking opportunities to watch peers teach (vicarious experiences) partly contributed to the way they approached task analysis. These experiences impacted on the teachers' emotions/physiological states which together also affected their task analysis. Teachers' interpretations of contextual factors, e.g. working constraints, also appeared to influence their beliefs about the requirements of teaching in their context.

Findings suggest a relationship between teachers' analyses of teaching demands and their teaching approaches. The teachers' complaints about their roles outside work were closely related to the kinds of teachers they would like to be, that is, which approaches they followed: a communicative approach or the GTM. A number of environment and workplace factors appear to impel some teachers towards adopting a GTM approach when they would otherwise have preferred a more communicative approach. This had the potential to reduce self-efficacy, since they would not be teaching in the way they preferred.

### **6.3. Conclusion**

Table 10 below presents a summary of perceived factors that influenced participating teachers' practices and their self-efficacy in teaching EFL in the language classroom.



**Table 10: Factors affecting Vietnamese teachers' sense of self-efficacy**

Vietnamese EFL teachers' self-efficacy	Factors		Sources of self-efficacy	Discourses of effective teaching
Perceptions of personal teaching competence	Strengths	Perceptions of English proficiency levels and pedagogical knowledge	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	
		Personal qualities	Mastery experiences	The GTM
		Teaching recognition from students and colleagues	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	
	Deficits	Personal qualities	Mastery experiences	The GTM
		Teaching recognition from leaders	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	
Contextualised teaching demands	Constraints	Managing roles	Mastery experiences	The GTM
		Collegiality	Social persuasion Vicarious experiences	
		Professional development opportunities	Social persuasion Vicarious experiences	
		Working constraints	Social persuasion	The GTM
			Mastery experiences	
			Physiological and emotional cues	
		Unmotivated, less-able learners	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	The GTM
		Job security pressure	Social persuasion Physiological and emotional cues	The GTM
		Supervision and decision-making process	Social persuasion Physiological and emotional cues	
		Status of the target language	Mastery experiences	The GTM
	Resources	Traditional educational values and norms	Mastery experiences Vicarious experiences	The GTM
		Highly motivated, high-achieving learners	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	CLT
		Syllabus	Social persuasion Mastery experiences Physiological and emotional cues	CLT

It appears that teachers possessed a strong sense of personal competence due to their perceptions of their own English proficiency levels and students' and colleagues' recognition of their teaching capability. Teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge and skills and personal qualities had the potential to enhance or diminish their personal teaching competence depending on context. On the other hand, however, the teachers tended to perceive a large number of constraints in the environment which hindered their effectiveness as teachers and undermined their efforts.

Findings indicate that the teachers mainly relied on a combination of different sources of self-efficacy information: social persuasion, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and emotions/physiological states to construct their self-efficacy. However, not all four sources of self-efficacy information were available in every context.

It would seem that the perceived personal qualities of some study teachers induced them to use the GTM in teaching EFL. All teachers perceived that the GTM approach rather than the communicative approach was fostered under the influences of environmental factors.

The next chapter, Chapter 7, will present findings related to the study teachers and the researcher's perceptions of effects in self-efficacy resulting from their participation in the project.

## **CHAPTER 7: REPORTED EFFECTS IN SELF-EFFICACY**

In Chapter 6, factors affecting eight study teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL were provided. This chapter will present findings related to the following research question:

- What are the reported effects in self-efficacy in both the researcher and the participants as a result of the self-reflection process engaged in in the course of the research?

This chapter consist of two parts. The first part will present findings related to the self-reported effects in self-efficacy in relation to the teaching of EFL of the teacher participants and the researcher. The second part will relate to the growth in my own self-efficacy in doing the study. Findings are supported by data from the second round of focus group discussions and my reflective journal. Teachers' reported experiences at different data steps also contribute to findings in this chapter.

### **7.1. Self-reported effects in self-efficacy in relation to the teaching of EFL**

This section starts with findings related to teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL during initial stages of the study. It then continues with a presentation of themes regarding changes in self-efficacy of the study teachers as a result of the self-reflection process.

#### **7.1.1. Self-efficacy in teaching EFL at early stages of the study**

In the second focus group discussions conducted at the end of my data collection period, I invited the teachers in three focus groups to reflect on their feelings and teaching practices over the course of the data collection period (6 months). All the study teachers reported a strong belief in their teaching ability when they joined the study. This strong sense of personal teaching competence was maintained during the first focus group discussions and individual interviews, but was

combined with a negative sense of competence to meet teaching requirements. Like the teacher participants, I too had a high level of teaching competence when I began the study.

In responding to my question raised during the last focus group discussions conducted at the end of my data collection period, “How has your experience of participating in this research made you feel so far?” all teachers indicated their satisfaction and a strong sense of competence in their teaching practices before the commencement of the study. It may be that this feeling of satisfaction was constructed on the basis of a lack of self-reflection on their daily teaching practices. They either felt “satisfied” or “happy” with their teaching lessons, teaching strategies and students. Thanh reported that she had always previously believed she “was not a very bad teacher” (FGR2GR1THANH). The teachers described themselves as “capable teachers” (FGR2GR3HUNG), “devoted teachers”, (FGR2GR3PHUONG) or as “adequate in terms of their teaching abilities (FGR2GR3NHUNG). They said they disregarded classroom issues such as “differences in students’ needs and background knowledge” (FGR2GR3NHUNG), “struggling students” or a “mismatch between teaching and learning styles” (FGR2GR2HOA), because “no teacher talked about it” (FGR2GR2THU), or “I got no student complaint” (FGR2GR3PHUONG). My used a proverb “*Cứ cắm đầu cắm cổ mà đi* [teaching without reflecting years after years]” to describe her past practices (FGR2GR1MY). The teachers shared that they “rarely reflected on”, or “never thought much about” their teaching practices or “nothing seemed to be wrong” about them or their teaching instruction (FG2GR1). Watching their colleagues’ use of similar teaching practices also strengthened teachers’ beliefs in their teaching abilities: “Sometimes there were bad students but I thought that was normal, just like other colleagues. No one said anything so I didn’t care” (FGR2GR1THANH).

At these early stages of the study, as summarised in section 6.3, the study teachers continued to maintain a strong belief in their teaching ability. They blamed the students and other environmental factors for unsuccessful teaching experiences. The teachers rejected the idea that a lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills contributed to unsuccessful performance. The teachers maintained a high sense of

personal teaching competence and a diminished sense of capability around fulfilling various teaching requirements until just before the final focus group discussions, when all teachers reported changes in their perceptions of what is involved in effective EFL instruction. These changes will be presented in section 7.1.2.

Like my colleagues, I myself also had a strong sense of personal teaching competence in teaching EFL at the Faculty and a negative interpretation of student factors (e.g. their motivation and learning background/progress). As I recalled, my self-efficacy was backed up by a quick review of teaching tasks at the end of my teaching days. Perceived positive feedback from some students strengthened my belief that the strategies I used in the language classroom were effective. I did not realize that I totally relied on the most capable students' feedback. Like the teacher participants, I believed learning responsibility mainly belonged with students. Thus, ignoring low-achieving students in the classroom was part of my teaching practice. Besides, I rarely shared teaching experiences with colleagues, except with my older sister who was also an EFL teacher at the Faculty. She and I were in charge of classes of mostly high-achieving students and we frequently collaborated on the teaching tasks we used with these classes.

The study teachers and I brought to the study a strong belief in our personal abilities and a belief that our capacity to fulfil teaching requirements was diminished by a number of environmental factors. It seems that the teachers and I enacted our relatively non-reflective teaching practices in isolated contexts, where only we ourselves knew and understood what we were doing. We constructed our self-efficacy by processing information from our interpretations of what colleagues were doing (vicarious experiences), a lack of critical feedback and collaboration in relation to our teaching practices (a lack of social persuasion), our perceptions of past teaching experiences (which we perhaps viewed as mastery experiences) and emotions (affective states).

In the next sections, findings relating changes in self-efficacy in teaching EFL as a result of the self-reflection process will be reported.

### **7.1.2. Shifts in self-efficacy in teaching EFL at later stages of the study**

After taking part in the study, the self-efficacy of both the teachers and myself fluctuated depending on teaching practices in relation to which we perceived we were competent or not. Factors that seemed to cause changes in the sense of self-efficacy included reflections on themes from the study and new teaching experiences that challenged previous thinking. The changes in self-efficacy levels arose from our reflections on our feelings and teaching practices during the last focus group discussions conducted at the end of the data collection period. Teachers reported that experiences at different steps of my data collection period were also helpful in gauging changes in self-efficacy.

#### ***Reinforcement of personal teaching competence***

During the last focus group discussions conducted at the end of my data collection period, four teachers in the study, Anh, My, Hoa, and Hung, indicated that they felt reinforced in their high sense of personal teaching competence in some teaching aspects as a result of reflecting on their teaching experiences. The teachers indicated that the themes of the study, especially those emerging from specific questions such as: “What is your strong point in teaching EFL?” or “What contributed to your successful/unsuccessful sessions?” helped them reflect on which teaching aspects they were competent in. For these teachers, the adjustments of their teaching practices and perceived success of these adjustments strengthened their already strong sense of personal competence. The teachers differed, however, in terms of those teaching practices they maintained a positive belief around.

Anh reinforced her strong sense of teaching competence in using her “control-to-free teaching strategy”. By this she meant she pre-taught students with linguistic items as warm-up activities and then, at the end of the lesson, students were given opportunities to do their own writing (see 5.1.2). Anh said that she became “more determined to re-apply the technique in subsequent lessons and semesters”, which was a result of her “rethinking students’ reactions and their learning results after a lesson” as she noted down thoughts in her reflective journal (FGR2GR1ANH). Anh’s confirmed her belief in her ability to implement this specific teaching

technique also came from comparing her teaching techniques with those of a colleague. Anh said:

**Anh:** After a discussion with you about effective teachers, I thought about a teacher. This teacher, I don't know how he can survive [at the university]. He doesn't know how to teach. . . . He doesn't have any scaffolding strategies.

**R:** How can you know this?

**Anh:** I heard from students or I could hear this teacher's instructions if our classrooms were next to each other. . . . The way he delivered a lesson made me think that I am much better than him.

(FGR2GR1ANH)

Writing journal entries and discussions with the researcher provided Anh with opportunities to reflect on her teaching strategies and compare her strategies with those of colleagues. Findings suggest that Anh's belief in her ability to implement the teaching technique was enhanced by these reflections on her past teaching experiences and vicarious experiences.

Like Anh, My also had her sense of competence in using interactive activities in the classroom strengthened through her reflection on and comparison of her teaching experiences with those of her colleagues. As she said in the second group discussion, she believed that "using interactive activities is necessary for encouraging students to use English beyond the classroom", and (in her words) "I am doing it quite well". However, as she "opened up" her eyes and "realized that not many teachers are doing so", it became "more urgent" for her to "think hard enough in order to have the best teaching strategies" (FGR2GR1MY). Findings suggest My's determination to discover new techniques, or her strong sense of self-efficacy, was consolidated by her vicarious experiences.

Hoa said that participation in the study helped her to think more carefully about her teaching practices. She reported that she "often used games" because "they benefit students' learning". She also said, "I think I'm good at using games in my classroom." However, she "never thought carefully about the needs to adjust different kinds of games to students' competence levels in different classes." She

also reflected on the themes of the discussions and compared her teaching practices with those of her colleagues. She said, “I realize that not all colleagues use games in their classroom to encourage learning.” This, in turn, helped her become aware that using games in teaching EFL was a strength: “I actually make changes in the ways I use games in my classroom. I get more confident in using games and more, more games. (Hahaha).” (FGR2GR2HOA). The laughter during the second focus group discussion and her words “I get more confident” might indicate her reinforced sense of teaching competence that arose from her using games in the classroom.

Hung also reported gaining a stronger belief in using challenging tasks in the classroom during the second focus group discussion with Nhung and Phuong conducted at the end of my data collection period. This belief emerged from his successful adjustment of the tasks he set. As he said: “I know that challenging questions encourage student learning but I need to be more flexible.” To clarify, Hung said he “learnt that . . . too challenging questions can de-motivate students. Students do not dare to stand up and give answers.” He reported an adjustment in practising the technique. He selected questions in accordance with “different kinds of students” and attempted to make them “not too challenging”. Hung said that he could feel “a different atmosphere in the classroom” as more students responded to his questions and he considered the task as “more effective” (FGR2GR3HUNG).

My belief in my own ability to scaffold a language lesson and to use pair work and group work in the language classroom was enhanced after I reflected on the teacher participants’ practices. Watching some teachers teach and hearing all teachers demonstrate a lesson convinced me that the way I scaffolded my lessons was more communicative in approach and my tasks were more student-oriented. In addition, my belief that a purely communicative approach was not suitable to Vietnamese EFL students at the Faculty was strengthened by reviewing the teacher participants’ descriptions of their teaching approaches. Besides, reading articles to prepare for one of my presentations (see Phan, 2013), and receiving feedback from other researchers, reinforced my belief that a consideration of local



teaching contexts will help language teachers select the most appropriate teaching approaches.

Findings suggest that participating in the study provided the study teachers and me with opportunities to reflect on our current and previous teaching practices, to compare our practices with colleagues, to learn more about our strengths and become more determined to implement or improve certain practices in our future teaching. Findings also indicate some growth in professional knowledge and skills for both myself and the study teachers, which contributed to the consolidation of certain teaching practices. A stronger sense of competence in some specific aspects of teaching was constructed on the basis of reflections on past successful teaching experiences, comparison with the teaching practices of colleagues, or perceived positive feedback from other people.

### ***Discovery of teaching competence or responsibility***

Two teachers in the study, My and Anh, had a higher sense of self-efficacy in certain aspects of teaching which they had not engaged in before. My and Hung reported a change in assuming responsibility for struggling students, which coincided with a positive change in their interpretation of student factors as contributing to their sense of efficacy. The new-found teaching competence/responsibility emerged both from their focus group discussions and informal discussions with colleagues.

My was a teacher who reported an enhanced sense of self-efficacy in teaching writing skills as a result of participating in the study. She said that she “had previously avoided to teach writing skills” because she had perceived it as “very challenging” or it “requires the teacher to have in-depth knowledge of English language”. However, she felt a need to “wake up” or get out of her “comfort zone” as she said:

I often heard you, Anh, talked about colleagues’ writing teaching strategies and your own ways. I also talked to my husband about how to teach writing. I looked at teaching methodology books. . . . I felt that I need to have an understanding of how to teach writing so that if people ask me. . . . I know more about how to teach writing, how to teach grammar. I

know more than before. I think maybe I can teach a writing class next semester. (FGR2GR1MY)

My's frequent discussions with Anh and her husband, also an EFL teacher, suggest that she collaborated more with other teachers. Such collaboration perhaps reflects her increased confidence in these teachers' abilities and insight. My's self-efficacy in teaching writing skills also changed from a low to a high level. One reason for My's decision to teach a writing class in the future was that she believed she possessed enough knowledge of teaching writing, which was the result of her determination to enlarge her professional knowledge. Her determination, in turn, was influenced by several factors. First, My's care for how other people thought about her teaching practices as she said "so that if people ask me", probably encouraged her to learn more. Second, there was the collegial relationship between her and Anh, which might well have involved a need to do as well as the latter (a face-protecting strategy). In other words, social persuasion (how colleagues/other people thought about her teaching practices) contributed to My's higher sense of self-efficacy. My's perception of growth in professional knowledge and skills (mastery experiences) also improved her sense of self-efficacy.

Anh reported a different attitude towards using games, pair work and group work in teaching writing and her new-found competence in using these techniques in her classroom. Like other teachers, she said that the discussions with other teachers, with the researcher during focus group discussions and subsequent informal discussions made her "realize that these techniques can bring certain benefits to teaching writing". Anh said that she "actually used pair work and group work in recent lessons" and saw "positive students' learning behaviour". She concluded that "using pair work and group work in teaching could benefit student learning, which I had not thought of before. After participating in this study, it is clear that I need to make some improvement" (FGR2GR1ANH). The comments indicate that instead of rejecting their benefits as she had done previously, Anh had a higher sense of self-efficacy in using interactive activities in the classroom as a result of her reflections on the discussions. Her perceived success of using games in her own classroom also contributed to this higher sense

of self-efficacy. This suggests that Anh's higher sense of self-efficacy was shaped by her perceptions of a successful modification of her teaching strategies (mastery experiences). Anh's discussions with other teachers also indicated her increased confidence in colleagues' abilities and insight.

My and Hung stated that their perception of responsibility for student learning changed as a result of participating in the study. According to My, the discussions with the researcher enabled her to reflect on her role as a teacher. In her words, she subsequently had "a different attitude towards students". As My said:

If the students were too weak to study, I shouldn't ignore them. I should shout at them so that they pay more attention to learning. Just like that. I shouldn't ignore them, shouldn't look down on them or laugh at them. They themselves do not want to be like that. They are products of our educational system. . . . [T]hey are weak [students] and I shouldn't be so strict but pleasant to them, [I] should find ways to help them (FGR2GR1MY).

Although it is not clear how and what My might do to help struggling students, a higher sense of self-efficacy in teaching those students can be inferred from the above account through My's decision to be "pleasant" to the students or her determination to "find ways" to help these students learn instead of ignoring them, which would indicate a low sense of self-efficacy. In the above account, My was talking about her own responsibility, not that of students. Neither was she talking about other factors hindering her teaching practice. My's awareness of her responsibility after the data collection period contrasted with her attitude at the beginning of the study (see section 5.1.1). Findings suggest that My positively interpreted one specific environmental factor – learner characteristics – as a result of her self-reflection process.

Hung also reported a change in his perception of responsibility for student learning. This change was reflected through his adjustment of teaching strategies and teaching tasks. He stated that my questions about different teaching situations in the classroom made him aware that "too challenging questions can de-motivate students. Students do not dare to stand up and give answers". Hung said that he needed to "give struggling students more opportunities to learn". Instead of "focusing on high-achieving students", he now "group[ed] struggling students

with high-achieving students” and “assign[ed] tasks among students in a group in accordance with their competence” so that struggling students could benefit from learning alongside high-achieving students (FGR2GR3HUNG). Like My, Hung’s perception of his responsibility for struggling students changed. He appeared to take more responsibility for helping them learn. In the discussion, Hung did not blame students’ low motivation or organizational factors for their low learning achievement. He mostly talked about how he tried to help struggling students. Put differently, Hung developed a more positive view of struggling students. He enjoyed an increased sense of efficacy which was the result of his reflections on the successful adjustment of teaching strategies and a comparison of his past and present teaching practices.

### *Awareness of weaknesses in practising as EFL teachers*

As a result of the self-reflection process, the study teachers appeared to have changes in their perceptions of what is involved in effective EFL instruction. Generally, all teachers except My appeared to have a lower sense of self-efficacy in teaching struggling students, using interactive activities, and balancing the maintenance of good discipline with building a good relationship with students. Four teachers in the study reported having a weakened sense of self-efficacy owing to an awareness of a lack of personal teaching competence in relation to CLT although their subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching seemed to be more CLT-oriented. Some teachers reported having developed a diminished sense of self-efficacy in more aspects of teaching. I myself had a lower sense of self-efficacy in teaching mixed-ability classes because of a negative interpretation of environmental influences.

Six teachers, Nhung, Phuong, Thu, Anh, Hoa and Thanh, were no longer comfortable with ignoring struggling students in their classrooms. However, these teachers appeared to be unwilling to make changes to their practices owing to feelings of having inadequate knowledge. For example, Nhung and Phuong were aware that they should cater for the needs of struggling students alongside high-achieving students. Hoa stated that she “*giật mình* [took a knock]” when hearing my follow-up question: “What about struggling students? What do you do with them?” She said: “I thought, ‘Oh, I just taught high-achieving students!’”

(FGR2GR2HOA). Nhung and Phuong felt that they were “incompetent” and needed to “upgrade knowledge and skills”. They felt “unable” because they “were not trained” to do so (FGR3GR3). Hoa also said she was unsure about the effect of her new scaffolding strategies, because “not many students responded well to them” (FGR2GR2HOA). The teachers’ awareness of their lack of professional knowledge and skills to teach unmotivated, low-achieving students was inconsistent with their self-perceptions in this regard during previous data collection steps (see 6.1.1). Although this awareness contributed to their diminished sense of self-efficacy, it is positive in the sense that the teachers acknowledged that their practices were not as good as they previously believed and that accordingly improvement was required.

Similarly, it appears that Phuong, Thu, Nhung and Thanh had a decreased sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL using the communicative approach because they realised that there were gaps in their knowledge and because such an approach did not suit them personally. Although participating in different group discussions, they shared the same idea that it was necessary to use “more interactional activities” in the classrooms. Phuong said that after discussions with me and other colleagues, she felt her teaching style was “too traditional”, “too out-of-date” but “not sure where to start”. Thu talked about the need to “encourage students to interact” before asking them to do grammar exercises. Thu used the phrase, “I need to”, in her discussion three times to stress the importance of using interactive activities in her classroom. Thanh said she no longer assumed that effective teaching practice was “to finish the lesson”. However, both Phuong and Thu mentioned that they thought they were “unable” to change their teaching approach. Thu repeated what she said in the first individual interview, that her “inactive temperament” was “not suitable to active tasks” (FGR2GR3THU). Thanh said that she developed a feeling that teaching writing skills was “too challenging” for her because this was the first year she taught them. Since she said that she “[didn’t] know what to do now”, she seemed to exhibit diminished self-efficacy in teaching such skills (FGR2GR1THANH). The teachers’ reluctance to implement changes suggests their lower sense of self-efficacy.

Thanh and Hung both had a low sense of self-efficacy around maintaining classroom discipline and building a good relationship with students. Both of them linked this issue to classroom experiences and personal traits. Thanh said that after reflecting on the study's themes, especially questions relating to effective teaching practice, she believed that classroom management contributed to effective instruction. However, she experienced a conflict between whether she should be "stricter" to get students more focused on learning and whether she should be "easy" to create a "comfortable learning environment". Thanh reported that she tried to be stricter by establishing some rules in the classroom but she felt "uncomfortable", because she did not practise this previously. She also perceived an "invisible gap" between her and the students when she practised strictness (FGR2GR1THANH). In contrast, Hung said he learnt that good relationships with students could encourage teaching and learning. He said he "had not cared" about students' relationships previously in order to "reinforce classroom discipline" and it "was a big mistake". Hung noted that now he "actually paid attention to how to establish a good relationship with students". However, he found it "challenging" to soften his practice of classroom management, because he was "quick-tempered" when students were out of control. He said he was not sure whether he could do it.

For my own part, I perceived in myself a lower sense of self-efficacy in teaching mixed-ability classes. The idea that effective teaching should not exclude struggling students began to emerge from my reading of articles relevant to the study, which resulted in my design of follow-up questions concerning the teaching of these students during the data collection period. Reflecting on the participants' reported challenges in engaging both high- and low-level students in their language classrooms, it soon became apparent to me that I was one of the teachers who provided all students with one-size-fits-all instruction. The literature supports differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classes in the sense that it benefits less able students (see Gregory, 2008; O'Meara, 2010). However, I was unsure if differentiated instruction could work in the Vietnamese language classrooms in the context of tests/exams, large-size classes and curriculum, which suggests I had a lower sense of self-efficacy in teaching mixed-ability classes.

In summary, in this section, the teachers and the researcher reported having changes in perceptions re what is involved in effective EFL instruction as a result of the self-reflection process. The teachers' preferred discourses of effective teaching tended to be more CLT-oriented than they had previously been. However, perceived unsuccessful attempts to implement changes in the classroom (mastery experiences), a perceived lack of teaching knowledge and skills necessary to implement changes (cognitive mastery experiences), and negative feelings associated with these experiences (affective states) contributed to a diminished sense of self-efficacy.

### **7.1.3. Summary**

After participating in the study, the study teachers and I became more specific in relation to teaching aspects we perceived ourselves to be competent or incompetent in. It is possible that changes in perceptions re what is required for effective EFL teaching instruction led to changes in self-efficacy. Some teachers appeared to be efficacious in some aspects but not in others. Perceived successful attempts to implement changes in the classroom or a flattering comparison of one's own teaching practices with those of colleagues resulted in an enhanced sense of self-efficacy. Perceptions of an unsuccessful adjustment of teaching practices and a perceived lack of professional knowledge and skills together with negative feelings led to a weakened sense of self-efficacy.

Findings suggest that most of the changes happened in relation to one dimension of the self-efficacy construct: personal teaching competence. At the end of my data collection period, the teachers' strong belief in their teaching competence fluctuated and they were aware of a need to improve their professional knowledge and teaching practices. Some teachers reframed their attitude towards struggling students in a more positive way. The teachers' subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching seemed to be more CLT-oriented although many of them were characterised by a low sense of self-efficacy in adapting this approach in the Vietnamese classrooms. These changes in teachers' self-efficacy suggest a number of implications for teacher education (see section 8.4.3).

## **7.2. The researcher's self-reported self-efficacy effects in doing the research**

I experienced a very low sense of self-efficacy when developing my PhD proposal. After that, however, through engagement in shared activities with other PhD students and experts in the social context of a New Zealand university, I developed an enhanced sense of self-efficacy which was the result of my self-reflection process. I grew professionally and personally and had a gradual decrease in feelings of frustration and isolation.

### **7.2.1. Feeling inadequate as a researcher**

At the early stages of my study, I experienced constant anxiety and was uncertain about my ability to meet the demands of different aspects of a research proposal. I felt it was too hard to enact my researcher role in the new context. Factors that contributed to this low sense of self-efficacy included a perceived lack of research experience and a self-perception of low English proficiency.

The low sense of self-efficacy in developing different parts of my PhD proposal, which went hand in hand with feelings of self-doubt and anxiety, was reflected in a negative interpretation of feedback and environmental factors. For example, I wrote in my journal:

What is a literature review? My supervisor told me that my writing is at a Master Degree level. How can I be more critical? I'm not educated to be critical . . . I feel very worried about how to be critical. I can't do this! (RJ, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2011)

They [supervisors] talked something about observation, questionnaires and bla bla. They advised me to read more to understand their talk but I would mis-interpret the intentions of the book authors. . . . If I were a native /ESL speaker, I could save efforts doing this thing. . . . I am very worried! (RJ, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2011)

'You'll be fine. Every researcher has the same starting point'. Is this true? Maybe I am not as good as them. (RJ, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2011)



In the above accounts, upon receiving my supervisors' feedback, I thought I was critically incompetent as a researcher. I also received verbal support from other people, especially from my older sister, that critical ability is a product of knowledge growth. However, I paid special attention to the comments that pointed out what adjustment or changes I should make in matching the requirements of the proposal rather than the ones that recognized my effort. Instead of considering these comments as constructive feedback which helped me with my struggle, I blamed my own culture and the Vietnamese educational system for not training me to be critical at school, "I'm not educated to be critical." I believed that Vietnamese culture values harmony, thus does not encourage criticism in any forms. I also had difficulties in understanding the requirements of parts of the proposal, especially the literature review and research methods. I doubted my reading ability, "I would mis-interpret the intentions of the book authors."

The self-doubt, "How can I be more critical?", "Is this true?" and the continuous anxiety, "I'm very worried" in the above accounts were typical examples of negative experiences I had during the first phases of the study. I believed that, being an EFL learner and speaker, I was disadvantaged compared to other researchers in the new context. The perceived lack of research abilities and negative feelings drove me to take up an inferior position in doing research: I wished to be "a native/ESL speaker" and I believed that "I am not as good as them." Consequently, I kept myself apart from research activities, e.g. attending and presenting at conferences and workshops (see 7.2.2). I had a diminished sense of personal competence (I doubted my research abilities and my English competency). I perceived a number of constraints, e.g. my socio-cultural background, that hindered me from doing a PhD thesis. It seemed that my low sense of efficacy was grounded in my negative interpretation of supervisors' feedback (social persuasion) which was coupled with my unhappy feelings (affective states) as a result of perceptions of unsuccessful work (mastery experiences) and my comparison of English ability to that of native speakers (vicarious experiences).

### **7.2.2. Avoiding research challenges**

The low sense of self-efficacy was in part reflected in my non-participation in organized research workshops at the university where I was studying. I more or less separated myself from other PhD students and felt that I did not belong to the local research community. I was reluctant to attend workshops and conferences. I thought that it was a waste of time. I was convinced of my inability to understand the discourse: “What is the point of going there? I will get headache. They all will talk about irrelevant things (RJ, 22<sup>th</sup> July, 2011)”.

When I did attend these workshops and conferences, I often chose a seat far from the presenter. I sat in silence. The physical gap symbolised the perceived gap in knowledge between me and the other researchers. Sitting far from the researcher made me comfortable since I believed the presenter could not possibly know that I was being puzzled by the talk. My silence did not indicate my disinterest in the talk but its challenge. Here is an example of my reflection after attending one workshop:

I was impressed with one presenter’s slides. It was very easy to follow. The presenter also sounded very professional and persuasive but I didn’t understand much, especially when she talked about how she analysed data. I didn’t dare to ask her to clarify it. (RJ, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2011)

The perceived knowledge gap mentioned above appeared to prevent me from requesting the presenter to clarify her analysis procedures. The need to preserve my dignity in front of other researchers also contributed to my silence.

I also tended to refuse to take risks in selecting research methods which were suggested by my supervisors. I wanted to be in my comfort zone. For example, I told one of my supervisors on the first meeting that I was “really bad at maths”, so I decided not to add questionnaires to my data tools. I also refused to include observations to the existing data tools in subsequent meetings with the supervisors because I had no ideas of what they were (RJ, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2011). My main concern during the earlier stages of my study was what research tools I could manage, not with the appropriateness of data tools to the nature of my study. However, during the data-collection period, observation was added as a

supplementary data instrument, which possibly indicated a higher sense of self-efficacy (see 7.2.3).

My low self-efficacy belief regarding my research ability which seems to have been caused by feelings of inadequacy in terms of research knowledge and English proficiency and my negative interpretation of environmental influences in the early stages of doing research might have resulted in my giving up the research. However, I persevered in developing the proposal and gained a greater sense of self-efficacy towards the end of the research journey. The next section will describe in detail changes in my self-efficacy as a researcher as effects of the self-reflection process and engagement in a learning community.

### **7.2.3. Strengthening a positive sense of self-efficacy**

After receiving confirmation of my PhD enrolment, my self-efficacy seemed to develop positively as the research progressed. I developed strategies to enrich my research knowledge (strengthening my personal competence) and I interpreted the influence of environmental factors more positively.

At the university where I hoped to complete my degree, I was a member of a learning community which consisted of other PhD students (who were at different stages of their study), supervisors, and visiting researchers/scholars. Through the process of writing my own journal, I was aware that only my active participation in this learning community enabled me to access available support, so that I could adjust my learning style to the new context, enrich research knowledge, and improve English proficiency, which, in turn, made me feel more self-efficacious in doing the research (RJ, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2011). This increased self-efficacy was reflected in positive feelings which were accompanied by my willingness to face research challenges and become actively involved in research activities.

The first event which possibly marked my growth in self-efficacy was my decision to add observation into existing data instruments. During the data-collection period, I decided to increase the amount of reading related to factors affecting teachers' self-efficacy (RJ, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2012). The literature (see 4.4.4) supported the inclusion of observation as a data tool in order to understand the participating teachers' stories in depth. Since I received positive feedback from

my supervisors, I submitted a supplementary ethical application. Although the application was done under time pressure, I was determined to complete it because I believed that observation enabled me to understand teachers' perceptions of factors affecting their self-efficacy from a different angle (RJ, 18<sup>th</sup>, April, 2012). By the end of the data-collection period, I was quite happy with the data obtained from the teacher participants (RJ, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2012).

I took advantage of available support, e.g. discussions with my supervisors and PhD colleagues, to address my own research needs. I became determined to participate in workshop sessions which helped to solve my own research challenges. My reflections on these learning opportunities contributed to a growth in my self-efficacy. It was through the support receiving from a local research community, i.e. from my supervisors, PhD colleagues, and the faculty where I was doing my thesis, that I gained further knowledge and developed strategies that led to perceived successful learning outcomes. For example, attending workshops on Academic Writing enabled me to organize and present my ideas more effectively in writing the thesis. I learnt that "I am unable to write in English as beautifully as a native language learner but my writing can be clear" (RJ, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013). Discussing themes with my supervisors and other PhD students helped me to name my themes or interpret participants' ideas more accurately. I came to be aware that "data analysis requires patience and creativity" (RJ, 22<sup>th</sup> September, 2012; RJ, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2013). I was enlightened by the notion of "conducting research with people rather than on people" after attending workshops on Research Methodologies (RJ, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2011), which helped me adjust the perceived relationship between me and the participants, which consequently led to a change in my data interpretation methods.

As the study progressed, I went to workshops and conferences, sometimes as a presenter. In order to solve any research challenges, instead of working apart from other researchers, I learnt to work cooperatively, which I had rarely done previously. For example, I sometimes raised questions if I found it difficult to understand the presenters' ideas or their ideas were different from mine (RJ, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2013). Sharing my research challenges with other researchers gave me an opportunity to develop a more critical view towards certain issues as I received

feedback. Reflections on the feedback improved my research ability. I also developed the confidence to critique the work of other presenters and article writers. The reflections on their work sometimes helped me question my own assumptions, which I had rarely done before. For example, after hearing one PhD student presenting her themes, I, together with other PhD students, suggested ways to re-organize the themes. I also suggested to her that it might be useful to include the local context in interpreting the ideas of participants (RJ, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2013). My involvement in research activities indicates an increased sense of self-efficacy in doing research.

My self-reflection on research outcomes and research activities also helped to build my positive feelings towards feedback, which indicated my growing sense of self-efficacy. The sense of self-doubt and anxiety I had experienced at early stages of the study relating to my perceived lack of competence upon receiving feedback disappeared gradually as the study progressed. I learnt to confront the feedback rather than avoid it. I viewed the purpose of feedback as analysing my work to address particular problems and issues. I was open to receiving feedback in order to maintain my personal dignity. I wrote in my journal that “I no longer felt hurt when getting tough feedback” (RJ, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012) or “the feedback was very tough but useful” (RJ, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2012). I did not feel as embarrassed as I had previously, when I unconsciously made a lot of pronunciation or vocabulary mistakes when presenting my ideas in front of other researchers (RJ, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2013). I felt more comfortable moving out of my comfort zone. I believe it was the support system in the local research community, which included research workshop sessions, monthly meetings with supervisors and research group meetings that made me feel safe to maintain my personal dignity and risk my individuality to be co-dependent and then independent again in doing my own research.

Findings suggest that my enhanced sense of self-efficacy derived from my reflections on people’s feedback and support (social persuasion), the understanding of reading materials (cognitive mastery experiences), my feelings associated with the process of internalization (affective states), my perception of successful or unsuccessful work in accordance with the internalization of

feedback (mastery experiences), and comparison of my work to that of other PhD students (vicarious experiences). To sum up, a song sung by my six-year-old daughter will illustrate my sense of self-efficacy towards the end of my PhD journey:

In the whole of the world  
There is only one of me  
There are things that I am good at  
So let my star shine bright  
I have a place here  
With my friends and helpers  
In this amazing world where I belong  
I know that is enough  
To do the best I can  
Walking tall and confident  
I remember who I am, yes I am

## **CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The primary aim of the study was to understand factors that affect self-efficacy in the teaching of EFL in a group of university language teachers. In order to achieve this aim, I wanted to establish whether teachers' subscribed-to discourses of effective teaching were related to their sense of self-efficacy. I also wanted to find out whether Vietnamese culture and other contextual factors were significant in the formation and interpretation of self-efficacy-building information of these eight study teachers. In addition, I was also interested in whether participating in my study influenced the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL.

In Chapter 5, 6, and 7, I presented an analysis of how the teachers constructed their discourses of EFL teaching effectiveness and the relationship between teachers' subscribed-to discourses and self-efficacy in teaching EFL. An analysis of factors affecting the teachers' self-efficacy and factors causing shifts in self-efficacy as a result of participating in the research has also been given. The findings of my research indicated that the teachers built up their self-efficacy in teaching EFL by interpreting sources of self-efficacy information emerging from the environment around them and from their own ways of thinking.

In this chapter, I discuss the above findings in relation to the aims of the study and in light of the literature, especially Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy and his socio-cognitive theory. This is followed by a discussion of the contribution and limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research. In the following sections, I argue that there are many interrelated factors that influence these teachers' self-efficacy, including Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy, Vietnamese cultural and contextual factors, and personal factors such as self-reflection, self-doubt, and self-regulation skills. The study suggests that these personal factors, under the influence of culture and context, had a direct bearing on how the teachers engaged with sources of self-efficacy information.

### **8.1. Sources of self-efficacy information**

Bandura (1997) and Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998, p. 230) stated that sources of self-efficacy information per se do not affect the self-efficacy of individuals,

rather it is the way individuals cognitively process these sources that influence their self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, the first two sections of this chapter will discuss the cognitive processes through which self-efficacy information was weighted and integrated by study teachers. First, relationships among the sources are discussed, followed by a discussion of the strength of these sources with possible explanations.

### **8.1.1. The interactive effects of sources of self-efficacy information**

Findings from the study demonstrated that the four sources of self-efficacy postulated by Bandura (1997) closely worked together to inform the study teachers' self-efficacy. The manner in which the study teachers described the sources of their teaching confidence was rarely in terms of only one type of efficacy-relevant information (see Table 10), which is consistent with Bandura's claim of the often complex interplay among sources of self-efficacy. The four sources of self-efficacy information in my study reinforced one another and contributed to a fluctuation of self-efficacy beliefs, i.e. a lower or higher sense depending on context.

In the present study, one interactive effect was found among social persuasion, mastery experiences and physiological/affective states in affecting the teachers' sense of self-efficacy. The teachers reported relying on others' feedback to mediate their self-perceptions of personal teaching competence. For example, students' words of appreciation and colleagues' requests for advice as different forms of social persuasion informed the teachers that they possessed enough professional skills and knowledge to teach (mastery experiences). The positive feedback from these people induced positive feelings (physiological states) which was a signal of a strong sense of competence (section 6.1.1). In contrast, a perceived lack of leaders' recognition of teaching effort and supervisors' intrusion into teaching time (negative forms of social persuasion) led to doubt and anxiety about teaching competence (physiological states) (section 6.1.3). In addition, teachers' interpretations of student factors, e.g. their behaviour, learning progress (social persuasion), accompanied by their emotions also influenced teachers' beliefs in their ability to meet various teaching demands (section 6.2.6). These examples illustrate that the three sources of self-efficacy – social persuasion,



mastery experiences and affective states – often worked together to boost or diminish the study teachers’ sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL.

In some contexts, social persuasion worked with vicarious experiences or with affective states to create a negative sense of competence to meet teaching requirements. For example, a perceived lack of opportunities to discuss professional knowledge perhaps through a lack of trust (negative social persuasion) and opportunities to watch others teach (vicarious experience) diminished all study teachers beliefs in their ability in relation to fulfilling job requirements (section 6.2.2). Supervisors’ disruptions of class time (social persuasion), led to negative feelings about their rights as employees and doubt about their teaching effectiveness (affective states) (section 6.2.4). Teachers in these examples drew on two different sources of self-efficacy information to build up or diminish their self-efficacy.

The study teachers also described how their beliefs about their ability to fulfil teaching requirements wavered after watching colleagues teach, which suggests a close relationship between vicarious experiences and mastery experiences. For example, colleagues’ implementation of traditional methods, e.g. the GTM, in teaching EFL at the university and the faculty undermined efforts in implementing communicative activities in the classrooms of My and Hung (section 6.2.7). Anh’s self-efficacy in applying different teaching techniques in the language classroom increased after hearing students describe how one of her colleagues scaffolded his lessons (section 7.1.2). This is in line with Bandura’s (1997) assertion that seeing others perform (both successfully and unsuccessfully) can provide teachers with clear information on how a task can be carried out (vicarious experiences), which helps the observer to quickly accept their own subsequent failures or success as a result of the observation (mastery experiences). The interpretations of success/failure in past teaching performances were influenced by the skills of other teachers whose practices offered a basis for comparison. This illustrates the interactive nexus between mastery experiences and vicarious experiences in informing teachers’ sense of competence.

The finding that different sources of self-efficacy information co-existed in different situations to affect the study teachers’ self-efficacy is supported by the

results of many qualitative and quantitative studies. In self-efficacy quantitative studies, the relationship between the sources are revealed through significant correlations (Usher & Pajares, 2008). In some quantitative studies, mastery experiences significantly correlate with vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological states. For example, in the study of Usher and Pajares (2006), mastery experiences were found to positively correlate with vicarious experiences. The same inter-relationship was found between vicarious experiences and physiological states in this study. In terms of qualitative studies, the teacher in Milner's (2002) case study experienced a low level of self-efficacy at the beginning of the study owing to negative feedback from students. Later, she was able to evaluate the effectiveness of her new teaching strategy, that is, using challenging tasks in the classroom (a successful enactive mastery experience), through the feedback she received from colleagues and students. This suggests a nexus between social persuasion and mastery experiences. Similarly, award-winning research professors in Morris and Usher's (2011) qualitative study relied on all four sources of self-efficacy information to frame their self-efficacy. The interpretations of successful teaching performance were informed by positive comments received from significant others. After having observed model teachers (vicarious experiences), the professors developed certain pedagogical skills (cognitive mastery experiences), which boosted their self-efficacy. They also described how their affective arousal conveyed important information about their teaching performance (enactive mastery experiences). As Morris and Usher (2011) noted, the strength of qualitative studies in understanding the synergy among the sources is that they can provide clear examples of how the participants internalize efficacy-relevant information in a complex way. This suggests one aspect of how the present study can contribute to the self-efficacy literature, which will be presented in detail in section 8.4.2.

The discussion above suggests that the nexus of sources changes in accordance with context. This is in line with Bandura's (1986, 1997) contention that self-efficacy beliefs are moderated by contextual factors. In later sections of this chapter, I argue that changes in the relationship among the sources may in part be caused by changes in teachers' interpretations of self-efficacy information, which are prompted by changes in context.

### **8.1.2. The importance of the sources**

In the present study, mastery experiences were not the most influential source of self-efficacy information. Rather, social persuasion was. The study teachers also discussed few examples of vicarious experiences. Rather, vicarious experiences and physiological/affective states appeared to be supplementary sources of self-efficacy. In this section, I first discuss the degree of influence the sources had on self-efficacy. I next turn to possible explanations for differences in the relative contribution of the sources.

#### ***Mastery experiences***

Bandura's (1997) contention that mastery experiences are the most powerful source of self-efficacy information is not supported by the present study. Findings indicate that the study teachers did not often discuss examples of enactive mastery as a main source that increased their self-efficacy in teaching EFL. In some cases when they did, the study teachers' interpretation of past teaching performance was often informed by important others' feedback, for example, students' learning behavior and comments (section 6.1.3). This suggests that past performance added to teachers' interpretations of efficacy-building information but certainly was not the most important source of self-efficacy information. This finding seems in contrast with those of researchers such as Atay (2007), Morris (2010), Morris and Usher (2011), Mulholland and Wallace (2001), Pajares (1997), Pajares et al. (2007), Poulou (2007), Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007), Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009), and Usher and Pajares (2006), who have suggested that enactive mastery experiences were the strongest influence. However, the finding that mastery experiences are not the most critical source is consistent with findings of Milner (2002), Milner and Hoy (2003), and Zeldin and Pajares (2000) as discussed earlier in the literature review chapter. Explanations as to why mastery experiences did not serve as the most influential source of self-efficacy information in the present study, I contend, relate to cultural and contextual factors which will be discussed below.

In the current study, cognitive mastery experiences, that is, the mastery of content and skills related to instruction, were stronger than enactive mastery experiences.

The teachers' self-perceptions of their English proficiency levels and pedagogical content knowledge played a key role in influencing their self-efficacy. At initial states of the study, all teachers had a strong sense of teaching competence. They displayed a strong belief that their pedagogical knowledge and skills enabled them to teach students effectively. Teachers' perceptions of their own English proficiency levels as better than those of students strengthened their perceptions of current competence. They blamed the students and other environmental factors for unsuccessful teaching experiences. However, at later stages of the study, self-perceptions of knowledge and skills tended to diminish the sense of self-efficacy of some study teachers owing to their identification of gaps in their knowledge and skills. For example, Nhung and Phuong felt that they were "incompetent" and needed to "upgrade knowledge and skills" in order to engage struggling students in classroom activities. They felt "unable" because they "were not trained" to do so.

The finding that cognitive mastery experiences impacted on teachers' self-efficacy is similar to what Chacón (2005), Palmer (2006, 2011), Morris (2010), and Morris and Usher (2011) found in their studies. In Morris and Usher's study, the professors' perceptions of whether they were knowledge experts or not had the potential to increase or decrease their self-efficacy. The teacher education students in Palmer's (2006) study gained confidence directly from success in understanding content and pedagogy. In Palmer's (2011) study, increases in self-efficacy of 12 practising elementary teachers were mainly due to cognitive mastery. The student teachers in Palmer's studies (2006, 2011) were participating in a professional development program which provided a more central role to cognitive mastery experiences. In the present study, the more influential role of cognitive mastery experiences compared to enactive mastery experiences may well relate to certain aspects of culture and contexts, which will be discussed below.

### ***Social persuasion***

It appeared from the study that different forms of social persuasion provided the most useful point of reference for interpreting self-efficacy information for the participating teachers. Findings showed that certain kinds of feedback *confirmed* a

sense of mastery among the teachers. Students' verbal and non-verbal behavior provided information for study teachers' interpretations of their personal teaching competence (section 6.1.3) and capacity to meet teaching requirements (section 6.2.6). In addition, throughout the study, the eight participating teachers commonly provided examples of different forms of social persuasion that undermined their self-efficacy in teaching. Some of these included leaders' recognition (or not) of their teaching performance and effort (section 6.1.3), a lack of opportunities for professional development, limited collegiality, and lack of trust (section 6.2.3).

The finding highlighting the influential role of social persuasion is in contrast to findings of Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2007) study, which suggested that verbal persuasion did not affect the self-efficacy of career teachers who had been teaching for over 4 years. Palmer (2006) also found that social persuasion was not important in affecting the self-efficacy of student teachers. Similarly, Poulou (2007) reported that colleagues' feedback did not influence student teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. However, the finding that social persuasion plays the most critical role supports findings of Milner (2002) and Milner and Hoy (2003) in their studies. Verbal persuasion operated as a critical source of self-efficacy, since high-school teachers in these studies confirmed their success through the availability of verbal persuasion. In Milner & Hoy's (2003) study, the female teacher confronted with stereotyping behaviour, a form of negative social persuasion against African Americans in the US, saw herself as on the receiving end of avoidance, isolation and negative evaluations from colleagues. The teacher in Milner's (2002) study was criticised by some students and parents for not being challenging enough in teaching and grading. Eventually, it was the positive comments from other students, teachers and colleagues that enabled these teachers to accept and master the challenge. Unlike these teachers in the US context, the eight teachers in my study enjoy a high status in Vietnamese society, where respecting teachers is known to be part of the culture (Nguyen, 2010; Tran, 2006). However, the teachers reported having often received forms of negative social persuasion day in and day out at university, which mostly came from university leaders. The negative social persuasion resulted in doubt about their own teaching performance and created anxiety among them (section 6.2). Perceived negative

social persuasion appeared to temper the significant role of mastery experiences. Reasons for teachers' special attention to verbal persuasion from important others may well link with cultural and contextual factors which will be discussed in section 8.2.

### ***Vicarious experiences***

In the study, vicarious experiences added self-efficacy information for the formation of self-efficacy of the study teachers but were not a major source. Findings indicate that few teachers in the study mentioned vicarious experiences as a source of self-efficacy information. In referencing this source, teachers reported never having had formal experiences of seeing colleagues teach. In making comparisons with colleagues, they relied on second-hand information from students, such as random comments and descriptions of how classes were taught, or from hearing colleagues teach through classroom walls. For example, after hearing students' comments, Anh perceived that one of her colleagues did not know how to scaffold a lesson, which consequently contributed to her higher sense of self-efficacy (section 7.1.2).

Other researchers have also found that vicarious experiences are not the most crucial source of self-efficacy information. For example, professors in the study of Morris and Usher (2011) also saw few opportunities to watch other teachers teach. They also relied on second-hand information to build their self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences did not receive high ratings as potential sources of teaching self-efficacy from student-teachers in the studies of Anderson and Betz (2001) and Poulou (2007). Vicarious experiences did not predict self-efficacy in the studies of Pajares et al. (2007), Capa and Hoy (2005), and Woolfolk Hoy and Burke-Spero (2005). Other studies have provided conflicting findings, however. For example, Mills in her qualitative study (2011) found that for 10 teaching assistants in the study, observations of current and former professors teaching French literature were their primary source of self-efficacy information in teaching this subject. In a study of prospective teachers in the US, Johnson (2010) discovered that self-efficacy in literacy instruction of 25 pre-service teachers was influenced by vicarious experiences in the form of modelling by a teacher educator and master teachers. In another qualitative study conducted by Zeldin and Pajares (2000),

together with social persuasion, exposure to competent models in the family and at school or at various points throughout their career paths fostered women's beliefs in their own abilities to pursue careers in the areas of mathematics, science and technology, which are traditionally dominated by men. As discussed in the literature review, the different role of vicarious experiences in different contexts may be because of methodological problems (see section 3.3.1). I contend that the non-significant role of vicarious experiences in the present study is probably due to the influence of context as will be discussed below.

### ***Physiological/affective states***

In this study, negative and positive emotions as a direct result of the interpretations of self-efficacy information from other sources contributed to teachers' negative or positive sense of self-efficacy. For example, students' engagement in classroom activities and their learning progress led to teachers' positive feelings and together these sources of information strengthened their belief in their ability to meet task requirements. A lack of trust from those in authority, a negative version of social persuasion, created self-doubt and anxiety and contributed to teachers' lower sense of self-efficacy in teaching EFL (section 6.2). Unsuccessful experiences of teaching struggling students together with negative feelings left teachers with less confidence and impaired functioning, that is, they gave up teaching these students (section 6.2.6). The link between negative interpretation of self-efficacy information and negative emotions is in line with Bandura's (1997) observation: "By conjuring up aversive thoughts about their ineptitude and stress reactions, people can arouse themselves to elevated levels of distress that produce the very dysfunctions they fear" (p. 106).

The present study resonates with the assertions of Bandura and other researchers (Morris & Usher, 2011; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001; Palmer, 2006; Poulou, 2007) that physiological and affective states are a supplementary source of teaching self-efficacy. For example, Morris and Usher (2011) in their qualitative study also discovered that few professors discussed physiological and affective states as the most influential source of their teaching self-efficacy. Some other researchers, however, reached a contrasting conclusion that emotions did not influence self-efficacy. For example, Mills (2011) and Palmer (2006) stated that

physiological and affective states did not appear to influence teachers' self-efficacy in their studies.

Possible reasons leading to differing relationships among the four sources in different situations and differing roles of the sources in the Vietnamese context compared to those in other contexts may include methodological reasons (see section 3.3.1). Morris and Usher (2011) suggested that follow-up questions might be helpful in making the relationship among sources of self-efficacy information clear (p. 12). In the current study, I discovered that appraisals of past performance were often informed by social persuasion by asking the teachers follow-up questions, for example, "How did you know that? [you had done well]", which suggests that follow-up interviews can lead to a different interpretation of the source strength and relationship. Thus, the powerful impact of social persuasion compared to other sources of self-efficacy information in the Vietnamese context was probably ascertained by the employment of follow-up questions. Another possible reason is the relative weighting rules employed by the study teachers which depend on available sources of self-efficacy information, as asserted by Bandura (1997, p. 114). The weighting rules and the availability of the source are in part subject to factors such as culture and context (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The next sections will discuss the possible roles of culture and context in shaping sources of self-efficacy information and the way the teachers interpreted these sources.

## **8.2. The role of cultural and contextual factors in shaping self-efficacy**

These sections will continue to argue that the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of participating teachers is mediated by certain features of Vietnamese culture and context, teachers' beliefs and values in relation to effective teaching practices, and the type of teacher they aspire to be.

### **8.2.1. Cultural factors**

The following sections will discuss how several aspects of Vietnamese culture, that is, interdependent self, concept of face, women's roles in the family, and certain educational norms, are likely to have influenced the way the study teachers selected, weighted and interpreted efficacy-building information.



### *Vietnamese interdependent self and self-efficacy*

In the present study, social persuasion appeared to be the most crucial source of self-efficacy information. Eight participating teachers paid special attention to different forms of social persuasion coming from students and colleagues, especially from the leaders of the Faculty and the university (see chapter 6). The teachers seemed to select and give more weight to other-oriented (social persuasion) than self-oriented evaluation (mastery experiences) when judging their teaching ability. I would content that cultural background played an influential role in the way the teachers selected and weighted self-efficacy information.

As discussed in the context chapter (section 2.1.1), Vietnamese culture is generally regarded as *collective* in the sense that people favor and honor the needs of their in-group more than their personal needs (Tran, 2000; Tran, 2006). The village culture emphasizes the importance of harmonious interdependence among members of the culture and people are expected to adjust their behavior to meet the norm of the group (Phan, 2005; Tran, 2006). Collectiveness may have contributed to the dominant role of social persuasion in affecting the self-efficacy of study teachers and the less significant role of enactive mastery.

The finding that Vietnamese teachers' self-perceptions of ability are powerfully influenced by social persuasion coming from significant in-group members, that is, people directly interacting with teachers in their daily life (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), is supported by results of several cross-cultural studies. As discussed in the literature review, these important studies concluded that members of collective cultures tend to rely more on efficacy-building information from significant others such as family members, classmates or members of work-groups rather than from themselves. Indo-Canadian immigrant students at Grade 7 in Klassen's (2004a) study placed more weight on information from vicarious experiences and social persuasion than did their Anglo-Canadian friends. These two sources of self-efficacy information were found to predict the self-efficacy in learning mathematics of the former group of students. Klassen suggested that the Indo-Canadian students might experience a more other-oriented than self-oriented formation of academic confidence. In my study, the teachers relied most on social

persuasion. Vicarious experiences did not play an important role in how they constructed their self-efficacy. The minor role of vicarious experiences in relation to contextual factors will be discussed in more detail below (section 8.2.2).

Findings from the present study suggest that the teachers appeared to often have negative emotions and a low sense of self-efficacy as a result of their interpretation of self-efficacy information coming from those in authority. They reported being disappointed, confused or self-doubting when their teaching ability and efforts were not truly recognized by their responsible leaders (section 6.1.3). The teachers experienced teaching pressure, teaching anxiety and perceived powerlessness because they did not feel genuinely encouraged to get involved in institutional decisions and to act and make decisions in their own classrooms (section 6.2.4). As mentioned in the context chapter (section 2.1.2), Vietnamese culture values personal sacrifice and endurance. Obedience and respect for authority are strongly highlighted and people in this culture generally accept social power inequality. Stewart et al. (2004) claimed that members of collective cultures are vulnerable to depressed moods because the strong value placed on obedience and respect for authority may decrease opportunities for agency. The lack of opportunities to exercise initiative due to this particular cultural factor may explain the large number of negative emotions reported by the participating teachers in this study.

The next section will discuss the likelihood that Vietnamese conceptions of face partly influenced the self-efficacy of the eight teachers in the study.

### ***Vietnamese concept of face and self-efficacy***

As mentioned in the context chapter (section 2.1.3), it is individuals' desire for harmony with other people that results in Vietnamese awareness of possible social criticism and concern for loss of face (Tran, 2004). The Vietnamese concept of face is closely connected with social norms regarding roles, qualities and relationships with people whom individuals are interacting with (Vu, 2002). Vietnamese teachers, including language teachers, are socially respected and honored, which is reflected in Vietnamese tradition, *tôn sư trọng đạo* [respecting teachers, respecting morality] and the tradition of respecting teachers still operates in contemporary Vietnam. At the same time, in order to deserve social respect,

teachers are expected to be role models in terms of knowledge, morality and performance.

Findings suggest that concerns for public evaluation and public image had a role to play in the self-efficacy of eight study teachers. Such concerns explain the salient role of pedagogical content knowledge (cognitive mastery experiences) in the study. It is likely that a concern for loss of face encouraged some teachers to discover ways to improve their teaching practices, thereby increasing their sense of self-efficacy while inducing other teachers to blame factors out of their control for unsuccessful experiences in order to maintain their sense of personal teaching competence. My was a teacher whose self-efficacy was mediated positively by her concern for loss of face. In the second focus group discussion conducted at the end of my data collection period, My talked about how her self-efficacy in using interactive activities increased since she “opened up” her eyes and “realized that not many teachers are doing so [using interactive activities in the classroom]”. She emphasised that “it became urgent” for her to “think hard enough in order to have the best teaching strategies” (FGR2GR1MY), which meant she became determined to discover new teaching strategies. In this second focus group discussion, My also mentioned her higher sense of self-efficacy in teaching writing skills, where her care for how other people thought about her teaching practices contributed to her determination to enrich her pedagogical knowledge, “I felt that I need to have an understanding of how to teach writing so that if people ask me...” (FGR2GR1MY) (section 7.1.2). My’s increased sense of self-efficacy in teaching certain aspects of EFL after participating in the study may be explained partly by her concern for public evaluation and public image (Tran, 2004).

In contrast, the concept of face may have contributed to a higher sense of personal teaching competence and negative interpretations of environmental factors for several teachers in the study. For example, at the end of the data collection period, Phuong, Thu, Nhung and Thanh experienced a diminished sense of self-efficacy in using a CLT-oriented approach in the language classroom. They listed several reasons leading to their unsuccessful performance, including personal traits and a lack of institutional support regarding professional development opportunities (section 7.1.2). This strategy, that is, blaming things out of their control or other

people for a lack of success, possibly helped these teachers maintain their high sense of personal teaching competence (i.e. I have the ability to teach. However, the poor performances of my students are either their fault or due to the awful working environment). The strategy is one possible way for teachers to avoid criticism and protect their respected roles and images.

The following section will discuss how another aspect of Vietnamese culture, women's roles in the family, influenced the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of the married female teachers in the study.

### ***The position of Vietnamese women and self-efficacy***

In the present study, how women are valued in Vietnamese society may have contributed to the low sense of self-efficacy in teaching of all married women in my study. For example, the perceived challenge of family duties negatively impacted on the self-efficacy in teaching of three teachers: My, Hoa and Nhung, and led them to teach EFL less communicatively, that is, to adopt the GTM (section 6.2.1). Since such teaching practices were not what the teachers believed to be effective but rather what they followed, the teachers experienced negative emotions and a diminished sense of self-efficacy. Sacrificing the freedom to select appropriate teaching approaches for the sake of the family can be explained by the conflicting expectations of women in Vietnamese society.

As discussed in the context chapter (section 2.1.4), the traditional duties of Vietnamese women were tied to housework and this specific cultural aspect persists in modern Vietnam. In an effort to provide women with more gender equality, the Vietnamese government has encouraged them to participate in social activities and find employment outside the home. However, the examples of the women in my study, who experienced a diminished sense of self-efficacy, show that the expectations on women to perform well both at work and at home seem to create a pressure on women, because it is not always easy to do two tasks well at the same time. Like the female teachers in the present study, other Vietnamese women in studies conducted by Schuler et al. (2006), Nguyen (2008), Lai (2008), and Nguyen (2009) believed that family duties restricted their personal freedom and career advancement and required a great deal of self-sacrifice on their part. For example, Nguyen (2008) found that women in her study spent more time on

household tasks and childcare than men did. This was considered by the women in the study as one main reason for their limited contribution to other roles outside the family. The woman in Ngo's (2004) study found herself caught among conflicting expectations of both society and family: self-sacrificing and obedience in performing family duties, and freedom and equality to perform her role at work. It would appear that the women in the present study experienced the same situation, when they decided not to disregard the first factor of the four traditional attributes – they took a good care of family. At the same time, they felt they did not function as effective teachers, which contravenes a more recent social value: performing well at work. The teachers believed that they had the ability to teach effectively (a high sense of personal teaching competence); however, the burden of domestic duties diminished their self-efficacy in relation to teaching.

In the following section, I discuss how the interaction between Vietnamese and Western educational norms affected the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of the participating teachers.

### *Educational values and self-efficacy*

A conflict between Vietnamese educational values and Western educational values may explain shifts in teachers' self-efficacy in relation to using a communicative approach in the classroom after they participated in the study. As a result of the reflection process and other contextual factors (see section 7.1.2), the eight participating teachers displayed certain changes in their actual teaching practice or their perceptions of teaching practice. Their practice appeared to be more communicative in approach than previously. However, except for My, who did not have a lower sense of self-efficacy, the rest of the study teachers experienced both higher and lower levels of self-efficacy in different aspects of teaching related to a communicative approach. For example, during the second focus group discussion conducted at the end of the data collection period, Phuong, Thu and Thanh felt that it was necessary to implement more interactive activities or to encourage struggling students in the classrooms. However, they seemed to be reluctant to attempt changes in practice. Hung had an increased sense of self-efficacy in implementing challenging tasks in the classroom but found it challenging to soften his strict practice of classroom management. Hoa had a

reinforced sense of self-efficacy in using games but was not sure how to get struggling students involved in her activities (section 7.1.2). It can be argued that lower and higher levels of teachers' self-efficacy relate to how teachers coped with conflicts between Western values and traditional Vietnamese values embedded in a communicative approach and the GTM respectively as discussed below.

Findings indicate that the subscribed-to discourses of effective EFL teaching of eight participating teachers were on a continuum ranging from the GTM to a communicative approach (see section 5.4). The study teachers by and large considered themselves as intellectual and moral models, and most of their teaching practices, except for those of My and Hoa, were in line with the GTM. As discussed in the context chapter (section 2.2), the study teachers, like other EFL teachers in Vietnam of their age, had been exposed to traditional methodologies, largely the GTM, for many years of schooling. Some of them might have experienced a communicative approach during undergraduate training in the English language. As the communicative approach, especially CLT, became popular in EFL teaching after the year 2000 (H. H. Pham, 2007), the teachers had opportunities to understand the communicative approach only as prescribed by textbooks because of a lack of professional development opportunities. Some of the study teachers' previous teaching practices, though not many, as findings suggest, were in line with the communicative approach. Findings also indicate that the participating teachers were open to the pedagogical values of the communicative approach after they joined the study. However, a long period of time exposed to traditional teaching methods, the prevalent use of these methods at the university (see section 6.2.7), and a lack of professional development opportunities (see section 6.2.2) seemed not to support the take-up of new teaching values and practices and might account for a low sense of self-efficacy in adapting the communicative approach in the Vietnamese classrooms among most teachers as a result of their participation in this study.

### **8.2.2. Contextual factors**

In the present study, contextual factors appeared to influence the self-efficacy of the study teachers and the researcher to a great extent. Findings suggest that there

were certain features of context that affected what constituted sources of self-efficacy information and how they operated. In addition, it is plausible that changes in context led to changes in the way the teachers and the researcher weighed and selected self-efficacy information.

### ***Contextual factors shaping sources of self-efficacy information***

In my study, findings indicate the significant role of context in mediating the availability and the operation of sources of self-efficacy information. This in part accounts for differences in the strength of the sources (section 8.1.2).

First, leadership practice and collegiality at the faculty and the university seemed to limit the availability of mastery experiences and vicarious experiences, thus highlighting the role of social persuasion. Limited collegiality, lack of professional development opportunities (section 6.2.2), and job insecurity pressure (section 6.2.5) seemed to deprive study teachers of formal opportunities to watch others teach and share experiences, thus constraining access to cognitive mastery experiences and vicarious experiences. Enactive mastery was elusive, since teachers' perceptions of successful teaching relied on others' feedback but teachers were never given formal feedback from leaders and rarely from colleagues (section 6.1.3).

Second, findings also suggest that leadership practices at the Faculty and university conditioned the forms of social persuasion and emotional states. For example, the teachers in the study perceived supervisors' intrusion into their teaching time and the implementation of new educational policies at the workplace as indicators of a lack of trust in their teaching competence (section 6.2.4). Teachers reported a feeling of disappointment, self-doubt and anxiety resulting from a lack of support from leaders. The availability and state of teaching resources, the nature of the syllabus and classroom arrangements all created teaching pressures, anxiety, unhappiness and dissatisfaction among the teachers (section 6.2.3). The way the study teachers were supervised and treated as outsiders regarding the decision-making process induced negative feelings and teaching anxiety (section 6.2.4).

Bandura (1997) stated that the self-affirming beliefs of others can promote or diminish the development of skills and a sense of self-efficacy in individuals (p.

101). The faculty and the university where the study teachers worked sent messages, which the teachers interpreted as suggesting that they were not valued or competent staff or that they were not supported to teach in the way they believed they should be. Findings suggest that exposure to an unsupportive environment can lead to teachers' diminished sense of self-efficacy.

Other researchers also highlight the importance of context in mediating the influence of sources of self-efficacy information on self-efficacy. For example, Zeldin and Pajares (2000) found that vicarious experiences and social persuasion were critical sources for the development and maintenance of women's self-efficacy beliefs in their study. The researchers argued that contextual factors and the environment where the women in the study were brought up in part mediated the influence of vicarious experience on self-efficacy. The Black woman in Milner's (2002) study experienced isolation and avoidance at work since the day she entered the school. It is possible that these contextual factors contributed to the critical role of social persuasion on self-efficacy. In other studies conducted with beginning teachers or student teachers, researchers such as Atay (2007) and Palmer (2006, 2011) agreed with Bandura's postulation that mastery experiences are the most important source of self-efficacy information. This may have been because past performance accomplishments were the most relevant sources of self-efficacy information for participants at the time surveys and questionnaires were delivered to them (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). In Palmer's (2011) study, cognitive mastery played a significant role in influencing the self-efficacy of teachers study and social persuasion did not influence their self-efficacy. This might be because these teachers were participating in a professional development program, which provided them with a lot of content knowledge. It is plausible that the considerable availability of cognitive mastery experiences mediated the influence of verbal persuasion.

In the next section, I will continue to discuss changes in the self-efficacy of the study teachers and of myself under the influence of contextual factors.

### *Contextual factors mediating self-efficacy*

In the present study, the self-efficacy of eight study teachers and the researcher was subject to change as a result of the context in which the appraisals were made.



For example, all teachers experienced a high sense of self-efficacy and tended to adopt a more communicative approach when teaching highly motivated, high achieving students. In contrast, the teachers experienced a low sense of self-efficacy and used a more GTM-oriented approach when teaching low-achieving and/or badly behaved students (section 6.2.6). Besides, the teachers appeared to have fluctuating self-efficacy due to the types of feedback they received from students, colleagues and leaders. The positive feedback they received from students and colleagues seemed to boost their self-efficacy while lack of feedback from leaders, which was perceived as a lack of trust, diminished their self-efficacy (section 6.1.3). The finding that teachers' self-efficacy fluctuated in different contexts is consistent with Bandura's (1997) assertion that self-efficacy is context specific. This finding also lends support to previous studies (Capa & Hoy, 2005; Chong et al., 2010; Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011; Hansen, 2005; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Kim & Kim, 2010) suggesting that the setting of the school influences perceptions of teaching self-efficacy as discussed in the literature review chapter.

On the other hand, the finding that the self-efficacy of experienced teachers fluctuated under the influence of context appears to contrast with another view which has generally been adopted by other researchers, that is, as teachers become more experienced, changes in self-efficacy are less likely (Siwatu, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Bandura (1997) suggested that changes in an experienced teacher's self-efficacy beliefs are only likely to occur in the event of strong experiences that disrupt the pre-existing belief in their capabilities. It is plausible that in the current study, a new type of experience brought about a fluctuation in self-efficacy in relation to teaching EFL as discussed below.

The study teachers and the researcher reported having a strong belief in personal teaching competence and negative interpretations of environmental factors at initial states of the study. Findings indicate that the teachers and the researcher operated in a work culture which was characterised by individualism and isolation. In this work culture, the teachers experienced many negative forms of social persuasion, and a lack of vicarious and mastery experiences. They seemed to be vulnerable to negative emotions. The teachers reported a need to conform to the

prevailing norms and to avoid questioning those norms, which is in line with what Short (1992, as cited in Puchner and Taylor, 2006, p. 924) suggested. In part owing to an aspect of Vietnamese culture, that is, a particular concept of face (see 8.2.1), this culture of working preserved both a positive sense of personal teaching competence and negative interpretations of environmental factors (i.e. I have the ability to teach, it is because of either students or the working environment that this teaching is not successful). On the other hand, findings suggest that participating in the study may have led teachers and the researcher to cooperate in ways that they had not done before. In terms of self-efficacy in teaching EFL, interactions with the researcher and other teachers during interviews in part led the teachers and the researcher to engage in a new type of talking and thinking about teaching and learning. At the end of the data collection period, the teachers and the researcher seemed to have experienced some changes in their perceptions and practices of effective EFL instruction, that is, their practices had a stronger orientation to a communicative approach. Most teachers had a diminished sense of current competence in using a CLT-oriented approach. Some of them developed positive interpretations of student factors.

Regarding my own self-efficacy in doing research, interacting with other researchers and participating in a learning community contributed to a growth in my self-efficacy. I came to interpret social persuasion and vicarious experiences differently (see 7.2). It seems that new experiences provided by the study project encouraged the teachers and me to collaborate to a greater extent with other people, which perhaps contributed to increased confidence in our own abilities and insight as well as confidence in others' abilities. This finding suggests a growing sense of us as a group engaged in a common enterprise with a growing sense of solidarity. This development in self-efficacy at individual level might provide a basis for a sense of collective efficacy which Bandura (1997) defined as a group of people's shared beliefs in the power to produce effects by collective action. It seems reasonable to argue that the context of learning and cooperation contributed to changes in the self-efficacy of participating teachers and of myself. Participating in social practices helped the participants and me to acquire new knowledge of effective EFL instruction, which is consistent with a social view of learning suggested by Wenger (1998). The newly acquired knowledge probably

led the study teachers and me to a different way of interpreting sources of self-efficacy information.

In the present study, findings also suggest that new interactions in the study context prompted teachers' self-reflection, self-doubts, and self-regulation skills. The next sections will continue to discuss the role of these factors in causing changes in self-efficacy of the study teachers and of myself.

### **8.3. Self-efficacy and other mechanisms of personal agency**

Findings indicate that together with cultural and contextual factors, self-reflection, self-doubt and self-regulation were other factors causing changes in the study teachers' and the researcher's self-efficacy, because they influenced teachers' interpretation of sources of self-efficacy information. Although there is undoubtedly an interrelationship among doubt, reflection, regulation of thoughts, learning and knowledge growth as suggested by Whitney (2002, 2005) and Wyatt (2010a, 2013), for the purpose of this study, discussion of self-reflection, self-doubt and self-regulation in relation to self-efficacy are separated.

#### **8.3.1. Self-reflection and self-efficacy**

In the current study, it seems that self-reflection, prompted by contextual influences, was one of the key factors that led to changes in perceptions and practices, which consequently resulted in changes in self-efficacy beliefs of participating teachers and of myself.

Findings indicate that after participation in the study, the participating teachers and the researcher reported certain changes in perceptions of what counts as effective EFL teaching instruction, that is, the practices we subscribed to had a stronger orientation to a communicative approach. Findings (see section 7.1.2) indicate that participating in the study encouraged a reflectiveness which the researcher and teachers had not employed prior to the study. The reflection process provided us with opportunities to review past teaching practices, to review students' feedback, to compare our own practices to those of colleagues or to compare our former and more recent practices in order to re-evaluate our teaching abilities. There are examples in the study which show that such reflections prompted the teachers and the researcher to consider implementing changes in the

classroom. For example, Hoa reported spending time learning how to make use of more games in her classroom. My said she knew more about how to teach writing skills and grammar after reading methodology books and discussions with other people. I perceived that I learnt more about differentiated learning as a result of reflecting on participants and my own teaching practices. It is probable that knowledge growth and perceived successful attempts to implement changes in the classroom resulted in an enhanced or reinforced sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, perceptions of an unsuccessful adjustment of teaching experiences and a perceived lack of professional knowledge and skills led to a weakened sense of self-efficacy. It seems reasonable to argue that self-reflection may lead to knowledge growth, changes in practices, and changes in self-efficacy. However, self-reflection alone does not guarantee a positive sense of self-efficacy as discussed in section 8.3.2 and 8.3.3.

It is surprising to discover that there is a dearth of research exploring the relationship between self-reflection and self-efficacy, although the literature has focused a good deal on how reflection empowers teacher transformation and change or on how teacher participation in research improves self-efficacy significantly (Henson, 2001; Locke, Whitehead, & Dix, 2013; Locke, Whitehead, Dix, & Cawkwell, 2011; Whitney, 2008; Wyatt, 2010b). Locke et al. (2013), drawing on data from a two-year project conducted with five high-school teachers in New Zealand, found that reflection brought about changes in knowledge, practice and self-efficacy. In this project, the teachers took part in writing workshops conducted at three different times during the course of the project. They reported that changes in writing practices, originating in reflections on their own writing and on the writing process, went hand in hand with their growth of self-efficacy in teaching writing. Similarly, Wyatt (2010a, 2013), studying the self-efficacy in teaching of teachers who participated in an in-service BA TESOL program in the Middle East, indicated that self-efficacy growth of the teachers was a result of their development in practical knowledge throughout the program. The researcher also emphasised that through teacher education activities that encouraged reflection, teacher self-efficacy could be positively impacted. Unlike the teachers in the studies of Locke et al. (2013) and Wyatt (2010a, 2013), the eight teachers in my study did not participate in any writing development courses

or any intervention conducted by me. Because of the development programmes, the teachers in these projects perhaps had more opportunities to collaborate and probably their collaboration was more focused in nature, which consequently led to a positive development in both knowledge and self-efficacy. In my study, as discussed above, reflection prompted an important change in participating teachers' perceptions of what constitutes effective EFL instruction. However, some teachers, e.g. Phuong, Thu, Nhung and Thanh (see 7.1.2) struggled to fill perceived gaps in their knowledge, which possibly contributed to a diminished sense of self-efficacy. This suggests that introducing professional development workshops is one way to effectively heighten teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL (see 8.4.3).

The next section is a discussion of the relationship between self-doubt and self-efficacy of the participants and the researcher.

### **8.3.2. Self-doubt and self-efficacy**

In the present study, it seems that self-doubt was closely related to the self-efficacy of eight study teachers and of myself. Findings suggest that this relationship is mediated by context in at least two ways. As a result of working conditions, collegiality and leadership practice, participating teachers in the study often doubted their teaching abilities and experienced teaching anxiety and pressure. Some of them reported conforming to available teaching norms at the university, that is, the teachers were induced to adopt the GTM rather than a communicative approach in teaching EFL (see 6.2). These examples support the view of Bandura (1997) and other researchers such as Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) that a positive sense of teacher self-efficacy will lead to greater effort and persistence in adopting changes in teaching practices, and that teachers' self-doubt, a specific type of negative teacher self-efficacy, may consequently lead to negative emotions and lesser effort.

On the other hand, the study lends support to Wheatley's (2000, 2002, 2005) and Wyatt's (2012) argument that experiencing self-doubt can benefit self-development and self-efficacy. This is inconsistent with Bandura's (1997) and Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) view as described above. For example, after experiencing a low sense of self-efficacy in doing my PhD thesis in the initial

stages, towards the end of the study, I experienced a growth in self-efficacy. It seems that learning to cope with initial doubts about the effectiveness of my research knowledge and ability partly prompted me to learn more, to collaborate with other researchers and to participate more in research activities. This, I believe, led to improvements in my research abilities, research knowledge and consequently positive changes in self-efficacy (see 7.2.3). It is important to note that context, in this study, mediated the relationship between doubt and self-efficacy. The participating teachers, working in an unsupportive culture, experienced doubts about teaching abilities and a negative sense of self-efficacy. The supportive context in which I did my PhD thesis fostered my success in coping with doubt, thus contributing to a positive sense of self-efficacy. It is plausible to conclude that under the influence of specific contextual factors, self-doubt might set the stage for either self-efficacy growth or diminution.

The finding of potential benefits of self-doubt to self-efficacy appears to be rare in self-efficacy studies. In three of the very few studies available, Wyatt (2010a, 2010b, 2013) argued that self-doubt benefits knowledge growth and positive self-efficacy changes in a challenging context. For example, in his 2013 study, Wyatt provided evidence of how Sarah, a teacher of English to young learners in a Middle Eastern context, overcame her low sense of self-efficacy when asked to teach a very different age group. After initial uncertainties surrounding her ability to teach young learners and continual anxiety, Sarah developed a stronger self-efficacy belief. Wyatt (2013) argued that self-doubts fostered her self-efficacy growth. Driven by doubts, she reflected, collaborated with colleagues and tried to make adjustments or change her practices. Together with a growth in practical knowledge, the teacher developed a more positive sense of self-efficacy belief.

Self-doubt can be categorised as a type of negative emotion. The finding that self-doubt can benefit self-efficacy growth is supported by findings of studies which highlighted how negative emotions can lead to positive learning outcomes and/or a stronger sense of self-efficacy, as discussed in the literature review chapter. However, this is not to say that self-doubt, anxiety, or other type of negative emotions always lead to positive outcomes. Not everyone who experiences negative emotions has a strong sense of self-efficacy. Findings in this study showed that by the end of the study, most participating teachers had a lower sense

of self-efficacy while My's self-efficacy and my own self-efficacy were enhanced, although all of us displayed negative emotions at some stage. Within the scope of this study, I would like to emphasise that in an unsupportive environment, self-doubt or other types of negative emotions will most likely give rise to a diminished sense of self-efficacy and persuade people to quit unless they possess important attributes, i.e. self-reflection and self-regulation skills.

In the next section, I discuss how I managed to regulate my negative emotions and thoughts and developed learning strategies to overcome my low sense of self-efficacy in doing this research.

### **8.3.3. Self-regulation and self-efficacy**

Zimmerman (2000) referred to self-regulation as self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of individuals that orient them to achieving goals. Zimmerman (2000) argued that self-regulated learners are aware of their strengths and limitations, are guided by personally set goals and task-related strategies, and develop adaptive learning methods. Bandura (1991) and Schunk (1982) stated that self-regulation and self-efficacy are related constructs, and people who are able to regulate their thoughts systematically are more confident as a result. In the present study, my management of thoughts, behaviours and emotions in part enabled me to internalize sources of self-efficacy information differently from what I had done previously, which helped me to overcome a low sense of self-efficacy and gain a positive sense of self-efficacy towards the end of the study. For example, I adjusted my learning styles to the new context and developed strategies to achieve my main goal, which was finishing my PhD thesis. I decided to participate in workshop sessions, and I learnt to work cooperatively with other PhD students instead of working alone. I learnt to confront feedback rather than avoid it. I viewed the purpose of feedback as analysing my work as a way of addressing particular problems and issues. I built positive feelings towards feedback and tried to block any negative emotions that could stress and distract me from achieving my goal (see section 7.2.3). Together with self-doubt and self-reflection (see 8.3.1 and 8.3.2), the self-monitoring of thoughts, emotions and behaviours boosted my confidence in doing the research. The inter-relationship among self-doubt, self-reflection and self-regulation in my study supports Schunk's (1994) views that

“effective self-regulation does not require that self-efficacy be extremely high” (p. 81) and that some doubt about ability “may mobilize effort and effective use of strategies” (p. 82).

There are some studies supporting the view that self-regulation benefits self-efficacy (e.g. Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009; Usher, 2009; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Wyatt, 2013). In Morris and Usher’s (2011) study, the ability to regulate their own feelings made professors more self-efficacious in teaching. The professors also monitored their thoughts in a manner that increased their confidence. For example, they did not interpret information in a way that lowered their self-efficacy. Instead, they reported balancing their emotions before entering the class, analysing teaching challenges diagnostically, and adopting more effective strategies. Similarly, the female teacher in Milner and Hoy’s (2003) study also modified her thoughts in a way that bolstered her self-efficacy, which enabled her to carry on in a challenging teaching context. Confronted with a stereotype-based threat against Black people at school and being isolated by some colleagues, she altered her thoughts to focus on previous learning and teaching achievements, that is, she finished her PhD degree in two years and was given many positive comments from parents and students for her teaching ability and effort. She set a task for herself, i.e. invalidating the stereotype. The teacher was determined to rely on positive experiences, and left negative ones behind to achieve to her goal. Successful self-reflective experiences prompted by self-regulation of thought helped her to approach the task systematically and build up her self-efficacy despite an unsupportive environment. How teachers in these studies and I framed experiences in a favorable way to increase self-efficacy can be examples for other teachers who would like to overcome a low sense of self-efficacy (see 8.4.3).

#### **8.3.4. Summary**

The self-efficacy in teaching EFL of teachers in the study appeared to be affected by cultural, contextual and personal factors.

Certain aspects of Vietnamese culture shaped the way the study teachers selected and weighted self-efficacy information. The social importance of harmonious interdependence among people led teachers to pay special attention to social



persuasion. The teachers were vulnerable to feeling depressed because of the strong cultural value on obedience and respect for authority. The awareness of possible social criticism and concern for loss of face were likely to have led to a strong sense of personal teaching competence and negative interpretations of environmental factors at early phases of the study. The concern for loss of face was plausibly resulted in the salient role of pedagogical content knowledge. Some teachers believed that they had the ability to use CLT but the burden of family duties negatively impacted on their self-efficacy and encouraged them to adopt the GTM. Some study teachers experienced both high and low levels of self-efficacy in different aspects of teaching related to a communicative approach due to the conflict between Western traditional Vietnamese values embedded in the communicative approach and the GTM respectively.

Certain features of context also mediated the self-efficacy beliefs of participating teachers in the study. The state of leadership practice and collegiality appeared to limit the availability of mastery experiences and vicarious experiences and foster the emphasis on negative forms of social persuasion and negative emotions among the teachers. It would seem that interactions with other people over the course of the research led to eight study teachers' and the researcher's reflections of different kinds.

Findings in the present study demonstrate that factors of personal agency, i.e. self-doubt, self-reflection and self-regulation, were interrelated, and appeared in part to lead to knowledge growth, changes in practices, and changes in self-efficacy. In an unsupportive environment, self-doubt can lead to a diminished sense of self-efficacy if teachers function without self-reflection and self-regulation.

The following section discusses the contribution of the present study and a number of implications for self-efficacy literature and EFL teacher development.

#### **8.4. Contribution and implications of the present study**

Based on the above discussion of how different factors influenced the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of eight participating teachers and of myself, and my self-efficacy in doing research, I now discuss several contributions and

implications of the study regarding self-efficacy theory, research methodology, and pedagogy.

#### **8.4.1. Theoretical contribution**

By demonstrating that culture matters in the way participating teachers developed their self-efficacy, my study has responded to the need to explore cultural factors in understanding how teacher self-efficacy beliefs operate outside Western settings as Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) and Pajares (2007) suggested. More importantly, my study contributes to a widened understanding of how different aspects of culture can impact on self-efficacy.

In the present study, two aspects of Vietnamese collectivist culture, harmonious interdependence and the awareness of possible social criticism and concern for loss of face, made social persuasion the dominant source of self-efficacy information and cognitive mastery experiences more significant than enactive mastery experiences. The Vietnamese concept of face partly induced all teachers to display a strong sense of personal teaching competence and to have negative interpretations of environmental factors at early stages of my study. Another feature of Vietnamese culture, the value of personal sacrifice and endurance, exposed these Vietnamese teachers to negative emotions and negative forms of social persuasion. In addition, conflicting expectations towards women in Vietnamese society tended to encourage some married female teachers to adopt the GTM in their classrooms and negatively impacted on their self-efficacy in using a communicative approach. Low and high levels of the self-efficacy in using a communicative approach of several teachers related to how they coped with the conflict between Western and traditional Vietnamese values embedded in a communicative approach and the GTM respectively. By emphasising the significant impact of cultural factors on teachers' cognitive process, my study contributes an original and unique contribution to existing self-efficacy literature.

My study fills the gap in the research on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical strategies. It shows that EFL teachers' perceptions of effective teaching approaches, their subscribed-to-discourses of effective teaching, were related to their self-efficacy in teaching English as a foreign language. As a result of participating in the study, all teachers believed that adapting different

aspects of the communicative approach in the Vietnamese classroom is good for students. However, the teachers perceived family duties, conflicts between Western and Vietnamese cultures, working constraints at the university, and a lack of professional knowledge and skills as barriers to their adapting a communicative approach in the language classroom. As a result, their self-efficacy in using different aspects of the approach fluctuated. In my study, individual teachers experienced both a higher and a lower sense of self-efficacy in accordance with which particular aspect of the communicative approach they perceived they could teach well or not. This again reflects the context-specific nature of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

The present study offers insight on how the two dimensions of self-efficacy were influenced by different sources of efficacy-building information. Social persuasion, mastery experiences and physiological/affective states interacted with one another influencing either teachers' self-perceptions of personal teaching competence or teachers' beliefs in their ability to meet various teaching demands. In addition, social persuasion worked with vicarious experiences or with affective states to affect teachers' sense of competence to meet teaching requirements. Also, vicarious and mastery experiences combined to mediate teachers' self-perceptions of their capacity to fulfil work requirements (see section 8.1.1).

My study also draws attention to the role of context in altering self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). It demonstrates that several features of local context shaped sources of self-efficacy information. Specifically, context determines forms of social persuasion and affective states, and limits (or not) the availability of mastery and vicarious experiences. Another important contribution of the study is that it provides examples that challenge the claim that the self-efficacy of experienced teachers is stable (e.g. Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In relation to this, the study supports Bandura's (1997) claim that new experiences that are totally different from what experienced teachers have previously had can engender changes in their self-efficacy.

My study also challenges the view supported by a number of self-efficacy researchers (e.g. Bandura, 1997) that negative emotions, which are associated with a low sense of self-efficacy, induce individuals to give up and make less effort.

The study lends support to the work of Wyatt (2010a, 2012, 2013) and Wheatley (2000, 2002, 2005), who argued that self-doubt can benefit self-efficacy and professional learning. The present study emphasises that important attributes, i.e. self-reflection and self-regulation skills, are necessary for self-efficacy growth, especially in an unsupportive environment. The study also underlines the point made by Chacón (2005), Morris (2010), Morris and Usher (2011), and Palmer (2006, 2011) that cognitive mastery experiences play an important role in influencing the self-efficacy of teachers. Overall, the study contributes to a growth in understanding of how context influences teachers' cognitive processing of self-efficacy information.

#### **8.4.2. Methodological contribution**

As Morris and Usher (2011) noted, the strength of qualitative studies in illuminating the synergy among the sources in comparison with quantitative studies is that they can provide clear examples of how participants internalize efficacy-relevant information in a complex way. The present study adds to the contribution of qualitative inquiry in investigating this topic. Unlike self-report surveys which do not allow for elaboration of instances in which different factors work independently or together, semi-structured interviews in the present study allowed for participants to elaborate on those experiences, which shed light on the complex interplay among the sources of self-efficacy information. The use of semi-structured interviews and follow-up interviews helped me to highlight the significant role of social persuasion and the interactive effects of sources of self-efficacy information. Interviews with teachers, journaling, and observations provided a unique glimpse into the complex environments in which self-efficacy beliefs emerge. The combination of different data tools enabled me to understand that factors accounting for the way the teachers selected, weighted, and interpreted sources of self-efficacy information did not work separately but interactively. Overall, my study paints a holistic picture of how personal, cultural, and contextual factors worked together to influence the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of eight Vietnamese university teachers.

### **8.4.3. Pedagogical implications**

The study gives rise to several pedagogical implications in relation to enhancing the self-efficacy in teaching of EFL teachers not only in Vietnam but also in similar settings.

#### ***Improving leadership practice***

First, the study points to the need to improve leadership practice in faculties and universities. My study's findings demonstrate that the eight participating teachers paid special attention to different forms of social persuasion coming from leaders. The perceived lack of trust embedded in leadership practices created negative emotions among the teachers and inhibited teachers' perceptions of successful teaching performance. Leaders should become more aware of the explicit and implicit messages they send to teachers, as teachers frame their interpretations of competence and future effort on these messages. In addition, the teachers in the study reported feeling insecure about their jobs owing to unclear policies and implementation and this contributed to their low sense of competence in relation to task implementation. Therefore, it is critical for university managers and leaders to exhibit more trust in teachers' abilities and efforts by giving them more freedom in the classroom and more opportunities to get involved in the decision-making process. Leadership practices which increase the amount of trust put in teachers' abilities are likely to enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

People may argue that a distributed leadership model (Copland, 2003; Timperley, 2005) which emphasises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers grounded on task responsibility and situation is unrealistic in the Vietnamese context because of the latter's hierarchical social structure. However, moving towards this leadership model deserves consideration owing to its potential to increase teachers' feelings of pedagogical effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002), which in turn can improve teachers' self-efficacy. A simple example of distributed leadership is the one that I experienced with my supervisors. The supervisors shared supervising roles among the three of us at different steps of the study based on the requirement of each task and the strength of each member. We worked and learnt together toward the common goal,

enabling me to complete my PhD study. The way the supervisors distributed leadership made me feel I was trusted and I actually had a lot of freedom in doing the thesis. This way of supervision boosted my self-efficacy.

In my study, unsupportive working conditions were reported as inclining the teachers to apply the GTM, even though many of them did not believe this method alone was good for students. It would be helpful to improve teaching conditions at the university and the faculty, including updating textbooks regularly, reducing class size and improving sound-proofing of classrooms. Overall, the university may want to reflect upon university structures which boost the teachers' self-efficacy and may also want to address those which hinder their self-efficacy. More efficient leadership practice will be likely to engender a positive sense of self-efficacy among staff and empower them to overcome a low sense of self-efficacy.

### ***Overcoming a low sense of self-efficacy***

Findings indicate that a low sense of self-efficacy can be problematic for professional learning. As discussed in section 8.3.2, it can lead to teaching anxiety and resistance to changes in practices. At the same time, participating teachers' and the researcher's experiences also demonstrate that low self-efficacy does not necessarily impede performance in the long run. Self-doubt, a specific type of negative state, can work with self-reflection and self-regulation to inspire teachers and researchers to learn. As a result of the inter-relationship among self-doubt, self-reflection and self-regulation, changes in perceptions can stimulate knowledge growth and changes in teaching practices. The findings suggest that doubt is very common in teaching, especially when teachers perceive the environment as unsupportive. Self-doubt benefits professional learning when contexts are favourable to learning, that is, where opportunities for learning are accessible to teachers.

Therefore, firstly, improving leadership practice as discussed above can partly decrease the amount of self-doubt and other types of negative emotions experienced by teachers. In addition, it would be helpful to coach teachers and educators to view self-doubt as beneficial for personal and professional growth

and help teachers learn self-regulation strategies (Wheatley, 2002). Learning self-regulation skills might empower teachers to take advantage of doubt to get through difficult periods. The study has shown that self-regulation skills helped the researcher to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. I managed to internalize sources of self-efficacy information in a manner that was beneficial to my self-efficacy. Coaching teachers to develop strategies to re-tune their thoughts in a favourable manner and to set up plans to approach goals analytically can increase their self-efficacy. Findings in my study suggest that teachers' willingness to overcome a low sense of self-efficacy in the Vietnamese context is closely related to leadership practice and the availability professional development programmes. The support of a learning community may also support this process of enhancing self-efficacy.

### ***Building a learning community***

The study suggests that encouraging teachers to work collectively can be a way to address self-doubt and have a positive impact on individual teacher self-efficacy. Before participating in the study, the eight teachers reported working in a culture characterised by individualism and isolation. The teachers reported a serious lack of social persuasion and vicarious experiences regarding professional knowledge. The teachers in their discussions expressed a wish for a constructive environment where all teachers, through shared discussion and exchange, would be able to access opportunities to critically examine their classroom instruction and learn from others. Although after participation in the study, some of them felt not to be well prepared for teaching certain aspects of EFL in accordance with new perceptions, there was some indication that the teachers collaborated to a greater extent than previously with other teachers both within the group and in the faculty at large. They started discussions on teaching-related topics with colleagues, which they had not often done before. Some teachers benefitted from such discussions, in that learning from other people in part changed their perceptions of what constituted effective instruction. The perceived success of changes in practice improved or strengthened their self-efficacy. The effect of teacher collaboration on individual self-efficacy points to the potential of a teachers' learning community suited to the university context (Kohlbacher & Mukai, 2007;

Wenger, 1998), where teachers learn from and negotiate the meaning of their teaching with one another.

Franzak's (2002) protocols of Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) can be applied in the Vietnamese context to encourage teacher collaboration. Franzak (2002) defined CFGs as "practitioner-driven study groups that reflect the growing trend for site-based professional development" (p. 120). The researcher identified three types of CFG protocols: exploring teaching strategies, conducting peer observations, and analysing evidence of students' growth. The implementation of the second protocol is confirmed as effective in the Vietnamese context (Vo & Nguyen, 2010). This could become a catalyst to set up teacher collaboration and learning communities at the home university which, in the long term, may reduce teachers' feelings of isolation and strengthen their collaboration with colleagues (Vo & Nguyen, 2010, p. 207). The role of university and faculty leaders in nurturing and creating these social networks and a positive culture of ongoing professional development is critical (Owen, 2005). If institutions are organized in a way that encourages teachers to cooperate with one another and to receive constructive and formative feedback, it is likely that stronger collegiality, higher staff self-efficacy, and stronger institutions will ensue.

### ***Offering professional development programs***

The study underlines participating teachers' need for pedagogical support. The mastery of content knowledge and skills appeared to influence the self-efficacy in teaching EFL of the study teachers (see 8.1.2). Findings indicate that an initially high sense of personal efficacy was later shaken when the teachers perceived that their current levels of professional skills and knowledge were not enough to adapt a communicative approach in the language classroom successfully. This was because a major part of the study teachers' teaching experiences and practices, except for those of My and Hoa, were in line with the GTM after many years of schooling and the prevalent use of the method in Vietnam. A smaller part of their practice was consistent with a communicative approach because of the recent increase in popularity of CLT (see section 2.2). The finding that a perceived lack of professional knowledge and skills impeded teachers' self-efficacy in adapting a more communicative approach in the classroom calls for the development of



professional programs or courses that meet their knowledge needs in order to strengthen self-efficacy. In addition, the participating teachers' discourses of effective teaching moved between the GTM and a communicative approach (see Figure 1), although after the course of the research these moved toward the communicative approach. The combination of the GTM and a communicative approach in teaching English is considered to be appropriate to Asian countries where English is not a mother tongue (Phan, 2013; Wang & Hill, 2011). It is critical that the content of professional development programs focus not only on the knowledge base that the teachers need but also on a culturally appropriate pedagogy that is suitable to Vietnamese EFL classrooms (Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006).

As discussed in section 2.2.5, re teacher preparation, a model which combines teaching theories with practice, has an increased curriculum load on practicum, and is distributed throughout the practicum period has been suggested by some Vietnamese scholars (e.g. C. V. Le, 2002; Le, 2003; Nguyen, 2013; Pham, 2002, 2005a). In the Vietnamese context, it is likely that this type of training will be superior to current teacher education programs in terms of developing English language teachers who have a high sense of efficacy, because it will prepare teachers for both teaching practice and pedagogical reasoning. It is likely that such a model will provide teachers with opportunities to strengthen their self-perceptions of teaching competence and make more appropriate judgements concerning teaching resources and constraints in the Vietnamese teaching context.

In the present study, teachers' EFL proficiency did not influence their self-efficacy in teaching the English language. However, it is a strong predictor of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching the language in other EFL contexts (see 3.3.4). In addition, as mentioned in section 2.2.5, the level of English proficiency of EFL teachers in Vietnam is quite low and teachers' limited English proficiency partly leads to their resorting to traditional methods in the language classroom. Therefore, it may be necessary to help EFL teachers in Vietnam to improve their English language proficiency to do their jobs well. Distance education programs which aim to improve teachers' English proficiency levels and ability to deal with

classroom methodology problems as suggested by C. V. Le (2002) could be made accessible to teachers at different teaching levels and in every corner of Vietnam.

In summary, the literature has suggested a number of key strategies for bolstering teachers' self-efficacy (see Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998 for a review of these). This study suggests that teachers with stronger self-efficacy will take more responsibility for student learning, be more persistent when confronting a range of teaching challenges, set up learning goals to improve their own professional knowledge, and be more committed to selecting a teaching approach that is appropriate to the Vietnamese context. Therefore, supporting a positive sense of self-efficacy among teachers is vital to a strong academic body and more effective education.

The next section will identify limitations of the present study and suggest directions for future self-efficacy studies.

### **8.5. Limitations and Directions for future research**

Several limitations of this study deserve consideration. My suggestions for future self-efficacy studies are based on these limitations.

My study has highlighted the impact of culture on teachers' cognitive processing of sources of self-efficacy information in constructing their self-efficacy beliefs. However, I did not include any measurement of the cultural dimension. My analysis and findings were grounded on cultural assumptions. Because there is scant empirical research on the relationship between culture and self-efficacy, more research into the influence of culture on teacher self-efficacy with an inclusion of scales to measure different cultural factors are needed.

In my study, not many classroom observation sessions were conducted because I perceived that most of the study teachers felt uncomfortable and unfamiliar with having the researcher in the classroom and observing them (see section 4.4.4). This limited my opportunities to understand how the teachers constructed effective EFL instructions and the relationship between subscribed-to discourses and self-efficacy. I mostly deduced the teachers' preferred teaching approaches from their descriptions of classroom practices in interviews and journal entries. It

would be useful if future research could focus more on classroom observations to avoid the reliance on self-report data. Because there is not much research on the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their perceptions of effective teaching instruction, and because teachers in other parts of the world may define effective teaching practices differently, the need to conduct research on this issue is urgent.

I conducted observation sessions of informal meetings with the teachers and followed them several times to the canteen, classroom corridors or their private houses. Valuable information emerging from observing informal group discussions led to my fuller understanding of the role of organizational factors and family duties in altering teachers' self-efficacy in teaching EFL. Additionally interesting findings would have been discovered had I been with a teacher for a month and shadowed that teacher on a daily basis. I had been discouraged by my perceptions of contextual factors (e.g. job insecurity pressure), cultural factors (e.g. concern for loss of face) and time pressure (i.e. thesis submission deadline) from using such an ethnographic evidence-producing method. Because data from shadowing are grounded in actual events, shadowing allows us to understand the complex and inter-related aspects of lives and to provide answers for what, how and why questions (Gilliat-Ray, 2011; Quinlan, 2008). Shadowing deserves consideration by future self-efficacy researchers.

I did not use questionnaires (self-efficacy scales) to gauge the changes in self-efficacy at the beginning and at the end of the research. I identified the changes in teachers' self-efficacy on the basis of comments they made on their performance at two different points in time. I also gauged the changes by their comments during the last focus group discussion conducted at the end of the data collection period when they looked back over the duration of the study. The use of "questerviews" (Adamson, Gooberman-Hill, Woolhead, & Donovan, 2004) might be applied in future studies in a way that allows participants to rate their levels of self-efficacy and at the same time be interviewed on areas where they felt competent or incompetent. As using a questionnaire before an interview provides a safe environment to approach sensitive topics (e.g. rating your self-efficacy in teaching), especially in the Vietnamese context where participants have a concern

for loss of face loss and public image, other researchers should consider this data tool when investigating sources of self-efficacy information or changes in self-efficacy in similar contexts.

In the present study, there was only one male participant. This sampling limitation might have impacted on my data and interpretation of women's perceived conflicting family roles. Further researchers may want to include more male teachers in order to verify the finding. I collected data from eight teachers to understand factors affecting their self-efficacy. Other researchers may want to interview leaders and students to compare these two sets of views. They may also want to conduct multiple case studies in which teachers, leaders and students in different universities are involved as participants in order to get a fuller picture of factors influencing the self-efficacy of EFL teachers in Vietnam.

The study investigated the self-efficacy of a group of teachers over a period of six months. There was a transition of leadership at the university by the time the study was conducted. It would have been useful if the data collection period had been extended in order to see if there were changes in teachers' self-efficacy once this new leadership had become established. Longitudinal studies are desirable in understanding changes in teacher self-efficacy under the influence of context.

Finally, it is possible that participants overestimated or underestimated the role of efficacy-relevant information. It is also likely that they were unable to remember past events or uncomfortable to disclose certain personal information. Thus this study suffers from the shortcomings of self-report studies.

## **8.6. Closing thoughts**

In essence, the current study supports one tenet of socio-cognitive theory that environmental factors, personal factors and behaviors are "reciprocal" influences (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). However, culture and contextual factors played a more important role in shaping the self-efficacy of these eight EFL teachers in the Vietnamese context than the theory suggests. My conclusion is that applying a theory which has been developed and investigated mainly in Western settings, without expanding it to be responsive to non-Western contexts may not provide a holistic or even valid picture of how teachers construct their self-efficacy in all

contexts. The study also suggests that learning what shapes teachers' self-efficacy beliefs can help educators and researchers gain insights into ways to strengthen those beliefs. To arrive at a stronger education and research institution with teachers who have high self-efficacy, I argue that the involvement of both leaders and teachers is critical. Central to strengthening teacher self-efficacy is leaders' reflection upon and addressing of university structures that influence it in order to create favourable conditions for teacher learning. It is also necessary for teachers to reflect upon their teaching practices and to participate in site-based learning communities, because this can enable them to address self-doubt and develop an enhanced sense of self-efficacy. If this is managed properly, I believe one day each individual teacher may proudly say to herself/himself, "I have lifted a bar, the bar of low self-efficacy."

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1: Faculty introductory letter and information sheet

APPENDIX 2: Faculty consent form

APPENDIX 3: Participant introductory letter and information sheet

APPENDIX 4: Participant consent form

APPENDIX 5: Ethical approval

APPENDIX 6: Guidelines for focus group discussions

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APPENDIX 12: Example of forms of sources of teacher self-efficacy information in the literature

## APPENDIX 1

### FACULTY INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Phan Thi Tuyet Nga. I am currently a full-time doctoral student at Faculty of Education, the University of Waikato, New Zealand and I would like to conduct research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree. I am writing this letter to kindly ask your permission to conduct the research at .....

The title of my research is “Self-efficacy in teaching: The case of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam”. Teacher self-efficacy in this research refers to the beliefs teachers have in their capabilities to teach EFL effectively. I am interested in this topic because researchers are still exploring this concept, and little or no research has been done in the Vietnamese context. Understanding self-efficacy better might help us to support teachers better.

In this research, I will recruit up to 10 EFL teachers at the faculty and my selection of participants is based on the teachers’ willingness and the match between their teaching schedule and my data collection time frame. The data collection period will be approximately 6 months and be conducted outside the teachers’ teaching timetable and be convenient to them. The potential participants will take part in focus group discussions and individual interviews, and write journal entries. In such activities, the teachers will discuss some topics such as their conceptions of EFL teaching, of themselves as EFL teachers in the university context and the Vietnamese context. I myself will also exchange emails or conduct follow-up interviews in case I want to clarify their ideas. All interviews and discussions will be audio-recorded.

Teachers’ participation in this study is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and may withdraw their data up until the time that they have approved the transcript of their interview. The data received from the teachers will be confidential, be anonymised and shared with no other persons rather than my supervisors. No real names will be used in my research report, and efforts will be made to keep participants, the faculty and the university unidentifiable. Given the fact that the faculty is small, there exists the potential that teacher participation might be identified. However, I will not publish any data that may bring harm to the teachers and the faculty. All the comments made within focus group discussions remain confidential.

The information gained from the teachers will mainly be for producing the thesis. Parts of the research may be used in writing articles or in presenting at conferences. In this instance, confidentiality as discussed previously, will be strictly observed. It might be possible that I will do some presentations at the faculty. In that case, the implications of the study for teaching at the faculty will be presented. My thesis will be published on the University of Waikato’s Research Commons digital repository after it has been submitted, examined and passed.

In case you would like to have further information, you can either contact my chief supervisor, Professor Terry Locke on [locketj@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:locketj@waikato.ac.nz), or me on [tnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:tnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz). The consent form is attached here. Signing the consent form indicates your agreement to my conducting of the research at the faculty.

Thank you very much for your support.

Phan Thi Tuyet Nga

## APPENDIX 2: FACULTY CONSENT FORM

### Research:

#### **Self-efficacy in teaching: The case of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam.**

I, ....., as Dean of ....., ..... University, have been given and read an explanation of the study conducted by Mrs Phan Thi Tuyet Nga. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and have all them answered.

I understand that:

The researcher will not publish any information that brings harm to the participants and the faculty.

The research findings will be published in the researchers' thesis, presented in academic articles or conferences. In case the researcher does presentations at the Faculty's conference, implications of the study for teaching will be published. Her thesis will be published on the University of Waikato's Research Commons digital repository after it has been submitted, examined and passed.

Teacher participation is completely voluntary in this study and they can withdraw from the study at any time and may withdraw their data up until the time that they have approved the transcript of their interview.

No real names will be used in her report, and efforts will be made to keep participants, the faculty and the university unidentifiable.

I understand signing this form indicates my agreement to her conducting of the research at the faculty.

.....

(Signature)

.....

(Date)

### APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND INFORMATION SHEET

Dear .....,

My name is Phan Thi Tuyet Nga. I am currently a full-time doctoral student at Faculty of Education, the University of Waikato, New Zealand and I would like to conduct research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree. I am writing this letter to kindly invite you to be my participant in my research conducted at .....

The title of my research is “Self-efficacy in teaching: The case of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam”. Teacher self-efficacy in this research refers to the beliefs teachers have in their capabilities to teach EFL effectively. I am interested in this topic because researchers are still exploring this concept, and little or no research has been done in the Vietnamese context. Understanding self efficacy better might help us to support teachers better.

I will invite up to 10 EFL teachers to be my participants. My selection of participants is based on your commitment to the entire study process, the match between your teaching schedule and my data collection time frame and your return of the signed consent form within a week. If you are not selected, it simply means you do not meet these criteria.

If participating, you will take part in two focus group discussions, two individual interviews, and write each journal entry per week over three months. In such activities, you will discuss some topics related to your conceptions of EFL teaching and of yourself as an EFL teacher in the university context and the Vietnamese context. I myself will also exchange emails or conduct follow-up interviews with you in case I want to clarify your ideas. The data collection period will be approximately 6 months. Each activity will range from 20 minutes to 90 minutes and be conducted outside your teaching timetable and be convenient to you. All interviews and discussions will be audio-recorded. I will be flexible to take notes if you find recording uncomfortable. We will negotiate the language in which our activities will be conducted.

In my study, your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your data from the study up until the time that you have approved the transcript of your interview. You have the opportunity to add, delete or change anything you said to me when I return your transcripts of focus groups and individual interviews. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions.

The data received from you will be confidential, be anonymised and shared between myself and my supervisors only. No real names will be used in my research report, and efforts will be made to keep participants, the faculty and the university unidentifiable. Given the fact that the faculty is small, there exists the potential that your participation might be identified. However, I will not publish any data that may bring harm to you and the faculty. All the comments made within focus group discussions remain confidential.

The information gained from the teachers will mainly be for producing the thesis. Parts of the research may be used in writing articles or in presenting at conferences. In this instance, confidentiality as discussed previously, will be strictly observed. It might be possible that I will do some presentations at the faculty. In that case, the implications of the study for teaching at the faculty will be presented. My thesis will be published on the University of Waikato’s Research Commons digital repository after it has been submitted, examined and passed.

In case of disputes which cannot be solved by negotiating with me, you can either contact ....., a teacher of Computer Studies at the faculty on .....or my chief supervisor, Professor Terry Locke on [locketj@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:locketj@waikato.ac.nz).

If you would like to have further information, you can either contact my chief supervisor, Professor Terry Locke, or me on [ttnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:ttnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz). The consent form is attached here. Signing the consent form indicates your agreement to participate in my study.

Thank you very much for your support.

Phan Thi Tuyet Nga

## APPENDIX 4 : PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

### Research:

#### Self-efficacy in teaching: the case of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam.

I,....., as an EFL teacher at ....., have been given and read an explanation of the study conducted by Mrs Phan Thi Tuyet Nga. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and have all them answered.

- I have read and understood:
- My participation in this study is completely voluntary.
- My identity and revealed information will be treated with confidentiality.
- There exists the potential that my participation might be identified. However, the researcher will not publish any information that brings harm to me and the faculty.
- The research findings will be published in the researchers' thesis, presented in academic articles or conferences. In case the researcher does presentations at the Faculty's conference, implications of the study for teaching will be published. Her thesis will be published on the University of Waikato's Research Commons digital repository after it has been submitted, examined and passed.
- Signing this form indicates my agreement to participate in the study.

I understand that I have the right to:

- alter, omit or add the information up to the time I return the transcripts;
- refuse to answer any of the researcher's questions during the discussions or interviews;
- withdraw from the study at any time without any question from the researcher and without any disadvantage of any kind.
- withdraw my data from the study until the time that I have approved the transcript of my interview.

I agree to\*: (Please tick the box ✓)

Yes

No

have my interviews and focus group discussions audio-recorded;

☐☐

take part in the focus group discussions twice;

☐☐

take part in the interviews twice;

☐☐

share my journal entries over 3 months;

☐☐

exchange emails with the researcher and/or take part in follow-up interviews to clarify my revealed information.

☐☐

*\*If you tick a "no" next to the first sentence, the researcher will be flexible to take notes during your interviews and focus group discussions. If you tick a "no" next to either one of the last four sentences, you are not eligible to be my participant.*

.....  
(Signature)

## APPENDIX 5 : ETHICAL APPROVAL

Dean's Office  
Faculty of Education  
*Te Kura Toi Tangata*  
The University of Waikato  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Nga Thi Tuyet Phan  
**cc:** Carl Milka  
Professor Terry Locke

**From:** Associate Professor Linda Mitchell  
Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee

**Date:** 21 November 2011

**Subject:** Supervised Postgraduate Research – Application for Ethical Approval (EDU101/11)

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Thank you for submitting the amendments to your application for ethical approval for the research project:

**Self-efficacy in teaching: The case of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam**

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

**Associate Professor Linda Mitchell**  
Chairperson  
Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee



## APPENDIX 6: GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### Round 1 (FG1)

*Main purpose:* To understand teachers' perceptions of socio-cultural context in constructing effective practices.

- When you hear the term “effective EFL teaching”, what comes to mind?
- Describe the EFL teaching context in Vietnam.
- Describe the EFL teaching context at the home university and how it is related to your teaching.

### Round 2 (FG2)

*Main purpose:* To understand teachers' self-reflection of their participation in the study in relation to self-efficacy.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of participating in this study?
- How has your experience of participating in this research made you feel so far?
- How do you see yourself as an EFL teacher at this point in time? Any changes?
- Do you think that the changes in yourself as an EFL teacher has caused by the participating experience in this study? If yes, how would you explain for the changes?
- Do you have any discoveries about yourself as an EFL teacher after participating in this study?
- What do you say about the impact of your beliefs in your teaching ability on your EFL teaching?

## APPENDIX 7: GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

*Main purpose:* To understand teachers' perceptions of : personal teaching competence (e.g. personal traits, teaching knowledge and skills), relationships with colleagues, leaders and students, family responsibilities, teaching resources and constraints in relation to self-efficacy.

### Round 1 (IT1)

1. How do you become an EFL teacher?
2. Describe the best EFL teacher you know.
3. Do you think that effective teachers are the ones who are loved by their students?
4. What do you say about your English proficiency level? What is its relationship with your teaching ability?
5. In teaching students at the faculty, what is your strong point regarding different kinds of knowledge and skills?
6. Last year, the university launched the policy which requires EFL teachers to obtain a TOEFL or IELTS certificate. What was your reaction to this?
7. How do you use teaching materials, e.g. textbook, in your classroom?
8. Some people say that it's important to use English as the only medium of instruction in an EFL classroom. What do you say about this?
9. Please tell me one of your successful sessions. What contributed to the success?
10. Please tell me one of your unsuccessful sessions. What caused the unsuccessful experience?
11. What are advantages and challenges do you have as an EFL teacher?

### Round 2 (IT2)

1. How do you feel after a teaching week?
2. Have you ever been complimented or rewarded for what you have done as an EFL teacher at the faculty?
3. Describe a class you like to teach and a class you dislike to teach this semester.
4. Do you think that you are effective in teaching all students in your class?
5. Do you think that this semester you have taught effectively? What made you think so?
6. Some teachers say that professional development opportunities provided at the workplace are very important to their teaching practices. What can you say about your situation?
7. What do you consider as the main obstacles or facilitators to your teaching?

## APPENDIX 8: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

*Think about the day or the week you have just had. I want you to focus on anything which seems to have affected the way you feel about your EFL teaching - no matter how minor it seems.*

Examples of the things you might include are:

- Any student's behaviours or actions
- Anything students have said in class to you or out of class
- The way in which students have interacted with each other
- Comments from colleagues or university leaders
- Things you have noticed in the environment

Would you please:

- write each reflection in the pages of your folder. Try to separate the reflections so that I can see the different influences on your feelings.
- Send them to me/ leave them in the locker under my name in the faculty office.
- or scan and email your folder entries to me on [ttnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:ttnp1@students.waikato.ac.nz)

Thank you for your reflections

## REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY

Week:.....Date:.....

Name:.....

<b>What has happened?</b> <i>What was it that influenced you?</i> <i>Who was involved?</i> <i>Where did it occur?</i>	<b>What was your reaction?</b> <i>How did it make you feel?</i> <i>What did you think about it?</i> <i>Did you do anything as a result?</i>

## APPENDIX 9: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

### A. Classroom observation instrument

Duration: 45 mins.

*Date:*

*Teacher code:*

*Class code:*

*Subject:*

Table A1.

<b>Room organization</b> <i>(draw a picture here)</i>	<b>Total no. of students</b>	<b>Available teaching resources and conditions</b>

Table A2.

<b>Time/duration</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Observable task/behavior</b>	<b>Tally</b>	<b>Comment</b>

## B. Meeting/informal discussion observation instrument

Duration: 60 minutes

**Date:**

**Location:**

**Meeting/discussion No.:**

Table B1

**Room organization**

*(draw a picture here)*

Table B2

Time/duration	Activity	Observable task/behavior	Tally	Comment

## C. Guidelines for follow-up interviews (FI)

1. What do you like and dislike when teaching EFL at the faculty?
2. What you think about the new policy informed in the meeting today that teachers will be observed from next semester?
3. Why do you often keep silence in teacher meetings?
4. What is your feeling after today's discussions with your colleagues?

APPENDIX 10: EXAMPLES OF INITIAL CODING PROCESS

My's construction of effective instruction			
Original data chunks	Translated data chunks	Initial codes	Data source
<p><b>Hãy miêu tả một người thầy/cô giáo dạy tiếng Anh mà bạn ngưỡng mộ</b></p> <p>MY: Lúc mình học thầy thì công nhận cái cách mà thầy dạy khác người khác. Mình học không có cái cảm giác căng thẳng. học rất nhẹ nhàng. Thầy rất nhẹ nhàng. Lúc nào thầy cũng cười hết á. dù cho bữa đó mình quên học bài đi, thầy cũng có cách la mình nhưng cũng la cái cách mà để cho mình không cảm thấy bị xúc phạm, bị cái gì mà trầm trọng hết, lúc nào cũng cười hết và cũng khuyên mình rất là nhẹ nhàng . Cái quan trọng là mỗi là thầy hỏi mà mình trả lời đúng thì thầy cho 1 cục kẹo nho nhỏ , không đáng bao tiền nhưng mình thích lắm .Lúc nào thầy cũng cười. Thầy dạy tiếng Anh theo cái cách ngôn ngữ rất đời thường. Không có kiểu dạy tiếng Anh ở trên trời hay mò ở đại dương.</p>	<p><b>R: Please describe one of your admired teachers of English.</b></p> <p>MY: When I learnt with him, I have to say that the way he taught was so different from that of other teachers. I didn't feel stressed at all. It was very relaxing. He was very gentle. He always smiled. Although sometimes I forgot to do homework, he knew how to scold me. The way he scolded me didn't make me feel insulted. He always smiled and advised me very gently. One important thing is whenever I gave a correct answer, he gave me a small candy. It wasn't worth much but I liked it very much. He was always smiled. He taught simple English, everyday English. Nothing's too difficult or irrelevant.</p>	<p>Relaxing learning environment Gentle attitude Smile</p> <p>Respect students/Smile /gentle attitude</p> <p>Praise Smile</p> <p>Teach simple, everyday English</p>	Individual interview 1
<p><b>Theo bạn, dạy tiếng Anh hiệu quả là như thế nào?</b></p> <p>My: <i>Mình thì cho rằng dạy tiếng Anh hiệu quả thì là dạy cho học trò của mình đam mê học tiếng Anh vì mình không thể theo nó mình dạy mãi suốt cuộc đời học tiếng Anh của nó được. Mà mình gieo vào</i></p>	<p><b>R: What does effective teaching mean to you?</b></p> <p>MY: I <i>myself</i> believe that effective EFL teaching is to motivate students to learn because we cannot follow them and teach them for their whole lives. It's something like we sow a passion for English discovery in students, once students</p>	<p>Effective teaching is to motivate students to learn</p>	Focus group 1

<p>nó niềm đam mê khai phá khám phá tiếng Anh, thì một khi nó khám phá rồi thì nó không cần mình nữa, tự động nó tung cánh ra nó muốn làm gì thì làm. Niềm đam mê học theo suốt nó, giống như mình ngày xưa được thầy Tùng khơi dậy niềm đam mê ngay từ lúc đầu.</p> <p>THANH: [giống như là đốt lửa lên]</p> <p>MY: giống như người ta nói sắt đang lạnh cho nó ấm ấm lên thì khi nó đam mê rồi thì. Mình nghĩ như vậy mới giỏi, <i>chú không phải dạy kiến thức</i>. Mà dạy cho nó niềm đam mê. Mình thích như vậy hơn, vì tiếng Anh nó rộng bao lâu vô bờ bến, biết dạy chừng nào cho hết</p>	<p>already discover English, they will not need us, they automatically learn whatever they want. The learning passion will follow them. Like me, my passion for English learning was evoked by Mr Tung since I started learning English.</p> <p>THANH: [Like how we start a fire]</p> <p>MY: Like what people say iron is cold but when it is made warm, it...I think this is effective teaching, <i>not to teach knowledge</i>, but to foster passion. That is what I prefer because English knowledge is immense, we do not know when we finish teaching all knowledge.</p>	<p>Effective teaching is not to teach knowledge Effective teaching is to foster learning passion</p>	
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## APPENDIX 11: TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF EFFECTIVE EFL TEACHING PRACTICES

Teachers	Teachers have a role in engendering and fostering student engagement/motivation				Teachers have a role in helping students improve their English						Teachers' knowledge		
	Relevant activities	Real-life situations	Challenging activities	Auxiliary activities	Feedback	Controlled-to-free practice	Preparation strategies			Medium of instruction	English proficiency	Pedagogical content knowledge	Teaching contexts
							Clear instruction	Mind – mapping	Language preparation				
<b>My</b>	CLT	CLT	The GTM	CLT	CLT	0	0	0	CLT	CLT	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Anh</b>	The GTM	0	The GTM	0	0	The GTM	0	0	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Thanh</b>	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	CLT	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Thu</b>	CLT	0	The GTM	0	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Hoa</b>	CLT	CLT	0	The GTM	CLT	0	0	CLT	0	CLT	The GTM	The GTM	CLT
<b>Phuong</b>	The GTM	CLT	0	0	The GTM	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	CLT
<b>Nhung</b>	0	0	0	The GTM	0	0	The GTM	0	The GTM	CLT	The GTM	The GTM	0
<b>Hung</b>	1	0	The GTM	The GTM	0	0	0	0	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM	The GTM

(0 = The strategy was not mentioned; 1 = It is not clear whether CLT or the GTM was used)



## APPENDIX 12: EXAMPLES OF FORMS OF SOURCES OF TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY INFORMATION IN THE LITERATURE

Sources	Forms
<b>Mastery experiences</b>	<p>Student successful performance and achievement (e.g. Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, 2009; Morris and Usher, 2011; Milner, 2002)</p> <p>Past teaching performances (e.g. Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, 2009; Morris and Usher, 2011; Poulou, 2007)</p> <p>Mastery of content and skills (e.g. Palmer, 2006; Palmer, 2011; Morris and Usher, 2011; Lee, 2009; Chacon, 2005)</p> <p>Mastery of English language (e.g. Lee, 2009; Chacon, 2005)</p>
<b>Social persuasion</b>	<p>Praise, encouragement, teaching award (e.g. Morris &amp; Usher, 2011; Zeldin and Pajares, 2000; Palmer, 2011)</p> <p>Support (e.g. Capa and Woolfolk Hoy, 2005; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Woolfolk Hoy, 2007)</p> <p>Respect (e.g. Cheung, 2008; Milner, 2002; Milner &amp; Hoy, 2003)</p> <p>Enthusiasm (Mulholland &amp; Wallace, 2001; Poulou, 2007)</p> <p>Norms of neglect (e.g. Milner &amp; Hoy, 2003)</p> <p>Criticisms (e.g. Milner, 2002)</p> <p>Negative feedbacks (e.g. Capa and Woolfolk Hoy, 2005)</p> <p>Lack of feedbacks (Mills, 2011)</p> <p>Social isolation, stereotype threat, non-responsiveness (e.g. Milner &amp; Hoy, 2003)</p> <p>Workshops and development courses (e.g. Tschannen-Moran &amp; McMaster, 2009; Tschannen-Moran &amp; Johnson, 2011; Palmer, 2011)</p> <p>Coaching and mentoring (e.g. Tschannen-Moran &amp; McMaster, 2009; Ross &amp; Bruce, 2007)</p>
<b>Vicarious experiences</b>	<p>Seeing/observing others teach (e.g. Zeldin and Pajares, 2000; Capa and Woolfolk Hoy, 2005; Palmer, 2011; Mills, 2011)</p> <p>Imagining others teach (e.g. Capa and Woolfolk Hoy, 2005; Ross &amp; Bruce, 2007)</p> <p>Hearing about others teach (e.g. Mulholland &amp; Wallace, 2001; Ross &amp; Bruce, 2007)</p> <p>Self-modeling (e.g. Palmer, 2006; Ross &amp; Bruce, 2007; Johnson, 2010)</p>
<b>Affective states</b>	<p>Anxiety, stress (e.g. Ross &amp; Bruce, 2007; Milner &amp; Hoy, 2003; Palmer, 2006)</p> <p>Depression (Kim &amp; Kim, 2010)</p> <p>Fear, doubt, pressure (e.g. Milner &amp; Hoy, 2003; Poulou, 2007; Watt, 2013; Palmer, 2006; Milner, 2002)</p> <p>Tiredness, exhaustion, fatigue (e.g. Poulou, 2007; Morris &amp; Usher, 2011)</p> <p>Sleep loss, constant worry, uncertainty (e.g. Watt, 2013).</p> <p>Happy, excitement (e.g. Morris &amp; Usher, 2011; Mills, 2011)</p>