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# **ORIENTING TO PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION**

## **A CASE STUDY OF VIETNAMESE TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING TASK- BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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at

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by

**NGUYEN GIA VIET**

---

**2013**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## **STATEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other persons except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature:

Date: **3 April 2013**

## ABSTRACT

Although research into language teacher cognition has become a well-established domain of inquiry for applied linguists over the past few decades, few in-depth studies have explored language teachers' beliefs regarding task-based language teaching (TBLT). Furthermore, in the context of Vietnam, where TBLT is claimed to be adopted in the current national English curriculum and textbooks, no studies have been carried out to investigate the extent of orientation of the teachers toward TBLT.

This qualitative case study aims to occupy such a research space. Following an extensive review of the literature relating to TBLT principles, task characteristics and teachers' beliefs, an analysis of the mandated textbook was carried out to consider the extent to which it followed the principles and characteristics recommended by TBLT proponents. The study employed a multi-method approach to data collection. Specifically, it has investigated the beliefs and practices of a group of eleven English language teachers in two provincial Vietnamese upper secondary schools. Ten collaborative lesson planning sessions, twenty-two observations of skills lessons, twenty-two stimulated recall sessions of the observed lessons, and two focus group sessions were carried out to collect the data. The data, together with insights of the context, were subject to a procedure of grounded analysis, through which the data from various sources were compared and contrasted to identify significant themes.

The data showed that the teachers' patterns of practices were not related to current TBLT principles and favourable task characteristics. For example, the teachers tended to employ activities that were forms-focused, and conducted classroom activities in a non-communicative fashion. Their beliefs were found to incline to a structure-based approach, where language items were pre-taught before activities could be performed. A wide range of hindering factors were identified as constraining the implementation of TBLT in the context, such as the teachers' current state of knowledge and beliefs about language teaching, their perceptions of the significant others, and the role of examinations. In light of a sociocultural

perspective, the teachers' beliefs in the present study were situated, shaped by their experiences as language learners and language teachers, and their interactions with the contexts in which they worked. Their beliefs were also found to be resistant to change. Teachers' beliefs and practices in this study were also viewed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour through which core beliefs were identified to have close relationships to teachers' behaviours in the classroom.

The findings of the present investigation, being a case study, cannot be generalised beyond the context in which the data were collected. Nevertheless, they make an original contribution to academic understanding of teachers' beliefs and their practices in the context of Vietnam, and in relatable contexts. Drawing on the findings, implications for theory, research, teacher professional development and language teaching policies are offered.

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"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it  
is like wrapping a present and not giving it"

(William Arthur Ward)

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Motivation of the study

... teachers in a wide range of settings are being told by curriculum leaders that this is how they should teach, and publishers almost everywhere are describing their new textbooks as task-based. Clearly, whatever task-based approach means, it is ‘a good thing’ (Littlewood, 2004, p. 319)

Opening a recently published English language textbook, one will probably find much of it consisting of ‘tasks’. Indeed, there has been growing interest in using tasks for language teaching and learning in the classroom and researching tasks to identify their roles in language acquisition in the last few decades. However, tasks have been understood and implemented in different ways in different parts of the world. In other words, there is no practical consensus of how tasks are interpreted and carried out in the classroom by teachers. For example, a teacher in an Asian country may understand and use the same task in the same textbook in a completely different way from a teacher in a European country. This can be explained in terms of cultural and contextual factors (Burrows, 2008; Littlewood, 2007). However, teachers’ beliefs are likely to have a more prominent role in what they actually do in the classroom (Borg, 2006). Therefore, there is a need to investigate what language teachers think of language tasks in their specific contexts. In other words, how are tasks and task-based language teaching interpreted and implemented in a context-bound setting?

Language teachers’ beliefs and their relationships to classroom practices have gained much interest in the past two decades, much of it stimulated by Borg (1998, 1999, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2012). Research into teachers’ beliefs has been recognised as important because teachers are regarded as active decision makers

whose thinking plays a central role in shaping classroom events (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2007). Such research helps inform teacher educators and trainers of teachers' personal constructs that may be useful for designing and conducting teacher education programmes. Understanding language teachers' beliefs also has considerable implications for language policy makers regarding, for example, the implementation of innovations. In the specific context of Vietnam, this research can helpfully inform curriculum designers when they consider teachers' capacity for implementing a specific curriculum (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Teachers' beliefs have been investigated in many contexts in education generally and in language teaching and learning in particular (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003, 2006). However, there have only been a few investigations into teachers' beliefs regarding task-based language teaching (TBLT) in Asian contexts, where it is claimed that TBLT is facing problems (Adams & Newton, 2009; Littlewood, 2007).

In Vietnam, it is claimed that the recently adopted English language curriculum for lower and upper secondary schools is task-based, and the textbooks being used consist of (ostensibly) communicative tasks (MOET, 2006a, 2006c, 2006d). Consequently, the new curriculum requires teachers and learners to accommodate themselves to TBLT in their teaching and learning, and expects teachers to create conditions for task performance in classrooms and learners to independently perform tasks to improve their communicative competence.

The motivation for this research study stems from my own experience as a language teacher and teacher trainer. Practising the role of a teacher trainer in both pre-service and in-service programmes has given me the opportunity to observe a variety of teacher behaviours, mostly in lower and upper secondary school contexts. Working as pre-service language teacher trainer, I have observed, for example, that my student teachers sometimes offered ideas which were completely different from input they received in teaching methodology courses (some of my colleagues often commented on these as the students' misunderstanding of the knowledge). Similarly, when I had the opportunity to observe practising teachers, I noticed that the way a particular teacher taught lessons was manifestly different from workshop input and discussion. There were,



I believed, underlying mental constructs that guided such teachers to teach the way they did, which I later referred to as teachers' beliefs.

The motivation became clearer when I had the chance to be involved in a textbook training programme in 2008, which aimed to train teachers to use the new textbook for the final year students (MOET, 2008). Before that, teachers had used English textbooks written for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. One thing that surprised me was that, when asked if they knew what task-based language teaching was, none of the teachers had any ideas. Given that they had used task-based materials before, does this mean that they had done something that they did not know about? Or does this mean that they had not used the materials (i.e., the textbooks) in the way the authors intended? What was actually happening in their classrooms? Referring back to my interest in teachers' beliefs, I started to wonder what teachers held in their mind about this particular approach and how they made use of the textbooks in their actual classrooms. I was determined, then, to enter into teachers' minds, concerning the introduction of the approach in the local context.

## **1.2 Research aims**

The overall aim of the present study is to explore the extent of orientation in teachers' beliefs and their practices to the implementation of task-based language teaching among a group of Vietnamese upper-secondary school teachers (N=11). In particular, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- 1. What relevance, if any, do the identified characteristics of tasks have for the Vietnamese teachers in their planning for and practices of textbook activities?*
- 2. In what ways do the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning converge with, or diverge from, the principles of TBLT?*
- 3. What factors contribute to the facilitation, or hindrance, of TBLT implementation in the Vietnamese context?*

4. *What can this study contribute to an academic understanding of the nature of the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices?*

To address these research questions, the study adopts a holistic perspective of research, using a case study approach in collecting and analysing data.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This research will add to the literature an understanding of language teacher cognition in a context about which little is known, Vietnam. Specifically, it will provide an empirical account of teachers' beliefs and their practices in a context that has been under-investigated (Creswell, 2008), from a different perspective. First, little research done in Vietnam has to do with teachers' beliefs, especially dealing with such an important topic as methodological innovation – the implementation of TBLT in the nation-wide school system – while traditional and Confucian educational values are still predominant in this society (Sullivan, 2000). Secondly, most language teacher belief research studies so far have been carried out by non-Vietnamese researchers, who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Ellis, 1996; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Lewis & McCook, 2002; Sullivan, 2000) and thus may have insufficient social and cultural knowledge about this particular context. This research study has been carried out by a Vietnamese researcher, who has worked in the context for 12 years. Thus it may be assumed to be more culturally and contextually cognizant. This understanding of the context helps gain better insights into teacher thinking.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in light of two theories: Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b, 2005, 2011). While Sociocultural Theory has been applied, explicitly or implicitly, in various ways to investigate teachers' beliefs (e.g., Johnson, 2006), no studies, it seems, in the area of language teachers' beliefs have used the Theory of Planned Behaviour for insightful understanding of teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices. By using the two

separate, but complementary, theories, it is hoped that teachers' beliefs and practices in the present study will be illuminated.

This research will have implications for teacher education and training, in the sense that it will suggest improvements for practice (Creswell, 2008) in both pre-service and in-service programmes. Given that a coherent vision of good teaching and close links to local schools are extremely important for successful teacher education programmes (Creswell, 2008; Zeichner, 1999), this investigation into teacher's beliefs in the particular setting may contribute to such programmes by providing insights into teacher thinking in relation to classroom practices, as well as having implications for consideration in designing professional development programmes, evaluating and improving teaching and learning materials (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

This research may also help inform educational policy makers, and in particular language policy makers, in providing them with information about teachers' beliefs and practices. This is important regarding innovations, such as the situation in Vietnam, in that by understanding teachers' beliefs, it is possible to provide teachers with necessary support in order for any innovation to be effectively carried out.

This study also has practical implications for not only the participant teachers themselves but also other interested parties in relatable contexts. Teachers' beliefs are known to be tacit and implicit (Borg, 2006), thus very few teachers are able to articulate what they actually know, believe and do. The results of this study will help to raise awareness of interested teachers about their own cognition, thus help them to reflect on their teaching process and realise their cognitive processes in order to develop themselves in their teaching career.

Finally, the study is significant in terms of my personal interest in developing a theoretical understanding of teachers' beliefs in relation to their practices. Not only does it help me to understand particular teachers' beliefs, it also provides an avenue of inquiry for me to undertake further research in exploring teachers' beliefs and practices about various topics in the near future.

## **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

This thesis comprises eight chapters. Following the present chapter, Chapter Two provides an account of the context in which this study is situated. The chapter describes the educational context and the status of English in Vietnam, followed by the process of English language curricular changes and a description of the teacher education and teacher development in Vietnam. The last section of the chapter describes the specific context in which the present study is situated, providing information about the educational system where the two schools are located, followed by information about the two schools.

Chapter Three reviews the literature about the two topics relevant for this study: task-based language teaching and teachers' beliefs. Section 3.1 reviews relevant literature regarding TBLT. Section 3.2 looks closely at teachers' beliefs and their corresponding practices. Section 3.3 reviews studies that specifically addressed teachers' beliefs regarding communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching in the literature to date. This section ends with a statement that identifies the gap in which this study aims to situate itself, resulting in the four central research questions.

Chapter Four presents description of the research procedures the present study adopted to answer the research questions. As such, the chapter provides justification of the approach adopted in the present study, followed by a detailed description of the research procedures and a consideration of how warrants were maintained in this particular qualitative research.

Chapter Five provides an overview of the textbooks, followed by an analysis of one of the textbook units, which helps to view the textbook in the light of task characteristics, one important aspect of inquiry this research aims to address.

Chapter Six presents the findings of the present study. The themes and categories are presented according to the data sources: lesson planning, observed lessons, stimulated recall, and focus groups.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings in relation to each of the research questions with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Three: the extent of relevance TBLT has regarding the teachers' practice; the extent to which the teachers' beliefs about language, language learning and teaching fit in TBLT principles; facilitative and hindering factors with regard to the orientation of TBLT implementation in the specific context; and, finally, a theoretical consideration about the nature of teachers' beliefs and their relationships with practices.

Chapter Eight concludes the study by firstly summarising the key points of the study and acknowledging its limitations. Following these, implications from both theoretical and practical perspectives are discussed. The thesis concludes with suggested directions for future research in the area of language teacher cognition.

## **1.5 Summary**

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined the motivational strands that drove the undertaking of this study, which were derived from both my own experiences as a language teacher and teacher trainer, and my interest in theoretical understanding of teachers' beliefs. Following this, a statement of the research aims, together with the four main research questions, was presented. This was followed by statements outlining the significance of the present study, from the theoretical to practical contributions. Then, I have provided an overview of the whole thesis with specific reference to each chapter.

The next chapter, as stated, will present readers with an understanding of the context in which this study is situated.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Case studies always occur within social, real-life contexts (Burns, 2000; Yin, 1994). Thus, to investigate the phenomenon under question, it is important for the researcher to understand the context within which participants are situated. This research, being a case study itself, is conducted with eleven teachers of English in two upper secondary schools in Vietnam, and therefore situated within the sociocultural and educational contexts where the teachers live and work. The chapter first presents key socio-cultural and educational accounts in Vietnam. These are then followed by a description of historical trends of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam in two major periods in its recent history (pre- and post-1986). The next section describes the recent curricular innovation and textbook introduction for secondary schools in Vietnam, followed by an account of teacher education and development. The final section describes the specific contexts where the present study is situated, including the broader provincial location and the two schools where the data were collected.

#### **2.1 Brief account of the socio-cultural and educational context**

Vietnam has a long multi-ethnic and multi-lingual history dating back to 2879 BC, during which time it has experienced many political changes influencing its social, cultural and educational philosophies (see Canh, 2007 for major milestones in Vietnam's history). Due to a long period under Chinese colonisation, Vietnamese intellectual and educational philosophies reflected a blending of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Huyen, 2002). These Chinese ideologies and religious beliefs strongly influenced the Vietnamese culture, although these are claimed “to coexist, rather than to replace, traditional culture and Vietnamese language” (Tuong, 2002, p. 1). The hierarchical principle of Confucianism was

adopted as the required moral and social conduct in Vietnamese society, and was the principal ideology of Vietnamese feudalism. Regarding education, Confucianism emphasised educational opportunities in terms of hierarchies of power, wealth and status (London, 2011). As such, education was primarily available for children of wealthier and higher status families, especially for boys. Also, this philosophical doctrine promoted 'rite' learning and respect to teachers. For example, the slogan '*Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn*' (i.e., learn rite first, then learn knowledge) is found in most Vietnamese schools today. This saying emphasises the need for ethical learning including respectful behaviours toward teachers, older people, and superiors. The Taoist doctrine, which was rooted in resignation and inaction, reflected the view of anti-interference with the natural world and encouraged passivity, disinterest in scientific activities and a sense of fatalism (Canh, 2007). Buddhism, which was introduced by Indian monks, became popular among the peasant class for its alignment with the syncretic beliefs of Vietnamese people. This is because the first Confucian Vietnamese scholars were Buddhist monks (Huyen, 2002), and therefore Buddhist teachings were strongly blended with the philosophy of Confucianism. The strong blending of the Confucian philosophy in Buddhist teachings resulted in the Vietnamese people viewing the world in a way that it resembled the Confucian interpretation of life (Goodman, 2005). These three doctrines were combined, simplified and assimilated during the course of historic-cultural development to become a unique form of Vietnamese culture. This form of culture has long since reflected the educational philosophy and classroom practices in Vietnam, which valued the role of memory and books. Huyen (2002) observed that Vietnamese scholars in the old days were not regarded as deep thinkers, but instead those who read many books and retained many things from books. He further observed:

This exaggerated respect of books inevitably made old teachers transform their students into veritable receptacles. Committing to memory was an absolute priority... Written exercises were only aimed at consolidating the memorising of the formulas of the book. The students, due to being constantly in this passive role, became incapable of reflection and personal judgement. (p. 293)

London (2011) notes that although the impact of Confucian philosophy on education in Vietnam defies generalisation, “Confucian thought and Confucian-inspired social institutions had wide impacts on the development of education systems in Vietnam and legacies of these impacts remain” (p. 8).

During the period of French colonisation (1858-1945), a colonial education system was established in Vietnam, which attempted to bring a new perspective of education that focused on practical training and learning of the French language. The French colonial authorities undertook a restructuring of Vietnam’s education system and “precipitated the demise of Vietnam’s Confucian institutions” (London, 2011, p. 9), leading to the abolition of Confucian examinations in 1918. However, such education policies drew criticism from Vietnamese scholars at the time, which contributed “to the rise of a new and increasingly radicalized anti-colonial intelligentsia, members of which would ultimately overturn French rule” (London, 2011, p.9). Nowadays, the majority of Vietnamese claim to be Buddhist in terms of religious beliefs, while the code of conduct and attitudes to education reflect part of Confucian and Taoist ideologies (Mai, 2005). According to Huong (2010), the Confucian and Taoist ideologies still have a strong influence on the practices in schools, which characterises beliefs about teaching and learning as teacher-centredness and little student participation (Huong, 2010).

In contemporary Vietnam, such ideologies are still reflected in the beliefs, practices and behaviours of different stakeholders concerning education. Parents, for example, believe that it should be best for their children to study as hard as possible to reach as high a level of formal education as possible in order to hope for a prosperous future. Therefore, examinations remain crucially important for children to advance to higher levels of education, which offer prospects of lucrative employment. Canh (2011) notes:

The emphasis on one-off exams that function as gatekeeper to higher educational opportunities strongly influences the attitudes of student knowledge and learning styles. They try as hard as they can to memorise as much as possible the factual knowledge in order to ‘return’ that knowledge at the examinations. (p. 17)



Tuong (2002) observes that in Vietnamese schools, students are regarded as very traditional in terms of learning styles. In the classroom, students are often supposed to be quiet and attentive so as to internalise what is taught by the teacher who is seen as the “complete source of knowledge” (Tuong, 2002, p. 4). Students are often shy and reluctant in group interaction, and are not familiar with asking questions or challenging the teacher’s ideas.

Table 2.1: University entrance examination categories

Categories	Subjects for examination	Examples of university programmes
<b>A</b>	Maths, Physics, Chemistry	Technologies, Finance, Economics, Teacher Education, Engineering, Computer sciences
<b>B</b>	Maths, Chemistry, Biology	Medicine, Pharmacy, Biological technology, Teacher education
<b>C</b>	Vietnamese literature, Geography, History	Humanities, Journalism, Literature, Teacher education, law, tourism
<b>D</b>	Vietnamese literature, Maths, Foreign language*	Finance, Foreign studies, Teacher education, International relations, Law, Economics

(\* Foreign languages currently available for entrance exams are English, French, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and German)

Throughout twelve years of school education, those students who wish to enter colleges and universities are likely to face three most important examinations: lower secondary level graduation examination (at the end of Year 9), national graduation examination (at the end of Year 12) and then the university entrance examination. In the first two examinations, the foreign language subject (mostly English) is one of the compulsory subjects to be tested. In the third, which applies for those who wish to further their education, depending on specific areas of training, some universities require English to be tested as one of the three subjects in the entry examinations. This system explains why learning is examination-focused in major subjects in general, and English in particular. Teachers and students usually devote a great amount of time at Year 9 and Year 12 to revise and

practise for examinations. Many short-term examination practising centres mushroom in cities at the end of every school year to enrol students in the so-called *cấp tốc* (i.e., crash) training courses before they sit for university entrance examinations.

Currently there are four main categories of university entrance examinations for students to choose from (see Table 2.1).

The relevant subjects are intensively focused, especially when students reach their final grade of general education (Year 12). Minor subjects, such as physical education and technologies, are often neglected, because they are not involved in either graduation or university entrance examinations.

The examinations (both graduation and university entrance) have a similar format, but the latter requires more advanced knowledge of English. The English examinations consist of paper-based tests, each of which consists of 70-100 multiple choice questions. These questions mainly test reading, grammar and vocabulary knowledge of English language. The examinations each last 90 minutes (see Appendix L).

These assessment systems have put much pressure on the teachers and students. In addition to learning English in schools, students take extra classes which focus on knowledge of forms and examination strategies to familiarise themselves with the type of examination they are taking. Teachers also face the dilemma between covering the textbook activities as required and providing students with supplementary exercises for examination preparation, especially during Year 9 and Year 12. Although the mismatch between the examination and the syllabus has been raised and publicly discussed, Holsinger's (2005) comment made a few years ago still holds true, "Vietnam has not been able to eliminate the examination and its ubiquitous partner, private tutoring" (p.300).

Secondary school activities in Vietnam are run on a six-day shift system (Denham, 1992), that is, teaching and learning take place in either morning (from 7.00 am to 11.15 am) or afternoon (from 1.30 pm to 5.45 pm) shift. Students have only Sundays free. Secondary school students often go to school either in the

morning or in the afternoon, depending on their assigned shift, and go to ‘extra’ (i.e., private) classes or help around the house or on the farm for the rest of the day. English teachers working in public secondary schools, therefore, can complete their regular teaching in their school in their main shift, and teach in private schools or elsewhere in their free time to earn additional income (Denham, 1992).

A common feature of Vietnamese classrooms is that each class consists of between 45 and 60 students. Classrooms are, therefore, typically cramped with desks and chairs. Four or five students are seated in a desk about 1.6 metres long and usually boys and girls sit at separate desks. Desks and chairs (usually in the form of a long bench) are attached. It is then extremely difficult for students to move around during class time, and for teachers to organise groupwork activities. Thus, a common way of teaching in classes is lecturing, followed by students doing exercises individually.

This section has provided a brief account of socio-cultural and educational factors in Vietnam. Specifically, it has described educational ideologies, followed by a description of the current educational and examination systems in Vietnam. The next section will present the specific contextual information relating to the present study by providing a description of English language learning and teaching in Vietnam situated within two historical and political milestones.

## **2.2 English language learning and teaching in Vietnam**

Since independence in 1945, the situation of foreign language teaching and learning in Vietnam has experienced several shifts and major changes. Due to various political, economic and social changes, a number of languages have been selected to be taught in the school system in Vietnam, leading to the dominance of English language today.

### **2.2.1 Before the Economic Reform (*‘Đổi mới’*)**

After becoming independent from the French in 1945, and defeating the French again in 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts: North Vietnam and South

Vietnam. In the North, the Communists took control, while a US-allied regime was established in the South. Due to the political differences, language learning and teaching between 1954 and 1975 was different in the two Vietnams. In the North, with the support from the former USSR and China, Russian and Chinese languages were promoted in the whole area, while French was still the most dominant foreign language in the South up to 1954, and then English became dominant up to 1975, due to the influence of the USA. During this time, although English was recognised in the North, it was only taught in several upper secondary schools in big cities as a pilot subject (Quang, 1993), and in some tertiary institutions (Hoang, 2011). English was, by and large, regarded as the 'enemy's language', and learnt for the purpose of fighting against the USA (Phuc, 2009). In the South, however, English was recognised as a means of communication for better employment opportunities and overseas studies.

After reunification in 1975, Russian and Chinese languages remained the most popular languages in most schools and universities in the North (Durand, 2006), and began to be introduced in the South. In the following years, learning and teaching Chinese experienced a significant decline due to the political conflict between China and Vietnam (Hoa & Tuan, 2007), the peak of which was the border war in 1979. Russian, therefore, remained the most dominant foreign language. The targets set at the time were that 70 percent of school students would learn Russian, 20 percent would learn English, and 10 percent would learn French (Hoa & Tuan, 2007). The number of students majoring in Russian and learning Russian as a foreign language at tertiary level increased rapidly as compared to other languages (Hoang, 2011). A common belief was that learning Russian was considered the 'golden key' to success, partly because most young people wanted to undertake undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the former USSR, the most influential nation in Vietnam at the time, and the Eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc. In the South, Russian was introduced to schools and due to the political climate at the time, began to gain popularity. Many universities in the South established departments specialising in Russian to train teachers and prospective students to prepare them to be sent to the USSR for undergraduate or postgraduate studies. Due to the popularity of Russian, English experienced some neglect: it was only available in a limited number of upper-secondary school

classes in big cities (Hoang, 2011), and there was a tendency to replace English with Russian in some of the schools once teachers of Russian were available.

### **2.2.2 After the Economic Reform (1986)**

During 1975-1986, Vietnam experienced a serious economic decline, which had to be taken into consideration by the Communist Party. In December 1986, the Sixth National Communist Party Congress released an important document, called ‘*Đổi mới*’ (i.e., renovation), which allowed expanding relationships with multiple foreign countries through the so-called ‘open-door policy’. From this point, the government began to adopt a market-oriented economy (Quang & Detlef Kammeier, 2002). This policy resulted in the recognition of learning foreign languages, not just for studying overseas, but for communicating with foreign counterparts. English, being the most powerful in the economic communication, began to grow significantly in the number of learners. The demand for learning English has become more powerful than ever. To meet the demand, “English language centres have mushroomed all over the country especially in Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi and other big cities” (Hoa & Tuan, 2007, pp. 163-164). In Ho Chi Minh City, for example, “a new English language school opens up every week and parents accept spending fortunes, relative to their incomes, to send their children to those schools even though most of them will never leave the country” (Durand, 2006, p. 49).

In secondary schools, English is considered the main foreign language throughout the country. In the early 2000s English was taught in 91.1 percent of lower secondary schools in Vietnam (Loc, 2005). It is the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)’s policy that the foreign language subject (especially English) is one of the subjects in graduation examinations at lower and upper secondary school levels. Since the 1990s, at the tertiary level, English has become a favourite choice in students’ foreign language subject. Many students also attend English evening classes in language centres, mostly in order to obtain a certificate in English, which they consider a passport to finding a better job in the future. English, therefore, is considered a very important language for success for many people, although as Durand (2006) critically notes, “the status of English at this point is clearly based on perception far more than real needs” (p.49).

In many big cities, since the late 1990s, many international schools and some international universities have been established, the majority of which use English as the medium of instruction across various subjects. Many of these institutions use curricula from developed countries such as the UK, USA and Australia, and several others employ a dual curriculum to cover both Vietnamese and foreign curricula. As these schools and universities are private institutions, they charge a very high amount in tuition fees. However, the number of such schools is increasing, showing that parents are willing to spend a great deal of money for their children to go to such schools, partly because they want their children to be able to communicate in English.

The increasing demand for English learning during the 1990s resulted in a shortage of English language teachers across the country (Canh, 2007). This was due to both the lack of English language teacher trainers at universities and that many graduate student teachers of English sought jobs in other more lucrative employment than education. To address the shortage of English language teachers, many universities offered off-campus teacher education programmes based in provinces, which required lower standards in terms of entrance examinations. According to Canh (2011), the quality of such programmes was at issue, because many of their courses “were not properly delivered, and quality control was not implemented” (p. 20). Also, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russian teachers became redundant due to the high demand for English learning and declining interest in Russian. Universities then offered short courses to retrain Russian teachers to become English teachers. Many Russian-major students took additional English courses so that they would be able to teach English once they graduated. The quality of these teachers, in terms of English language proficiency and teaching methodology, remains an issue until the present.

English language learning in Vietnam has long been considered ineffective. One common public view is that students graduating from upper secondary school are illiterate in English (Loi, 2011). Most secondary school graduates, although having spent seven years learning English, cannot demonstrate their ability to communicate in basic English (Tuoi Tre, 2011). According to Canh (2007), two major reasons contributing to such ineffectiveness are the lack of well-trained

teachers and lack of resources. The majority of teachers who took off-campus training programmes, and retrained Russian teachers of English, are seen to have limited linguistic competence (Canh, 2011), which contributes to the teachers' lack of confidence in conducting communicative activities in their classrooms. Resources for English learning are largely restricted to textbooks, tape players and chalkboard. Several schools in cities have language laboratories, but due to the lack of teacher training in using such facilities, and teachers' negative attitudes towards them, they are usually not appropriately used for learning.

Apart from limited linguistic competence on the part of the teachers, their lack of a range of pedagogical strategies also constrains teachers from teaching communicatively. By and large, classroom teaching has been observed as very traditional, with the teacher explaining grammar rules and models, and students copying linguistic models for learning. This way of teaching, although safe on the part of the teacher, causes demotivation on the part of learners (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Teachers are also reported to be unwilling to change their methods of teaching to a more communicative way (Ellis, 1996; Lewis & McCook, 2002; Tomlinson & Dat, 2004).

Furthermore, English language learning in Vietnam is not supported by the social environment (Loi, 2011). The use of English is often restricted to the language classrooms, although recently some English has appeared in mass media in a few newspapers and on television news programmes. However, according to Loi (2011), these media are not facilitative because English language classrooms are not connected with such contemporary issues as are discussed in these mass media. Therefore, the English language classroom is regarded as a 'cultural island' (Canh, 2000) where students are supposed to learn what is taught by the teachers. The role of the teacher in English language classrooms, therefore, remains primarily as the transmitter and modeller of the target language, rather than as the facilitator and other active roles suggested in current teaching approaches.

This section has provided a description of the learning and teaching of English situated between two historical and political milestones in Vietnam. English, in spite of undergoing ups and downs, has become the most popular foreign

language in Vietnam. The description of the context suggests that in spite of its increasing popularity, English language teaching and learning are facing problems due to various social, cultural and academic constraints. The next section will describe the past and present English curricula in Vietnam, with more attention paid to the current national English curriculum and its accompanying textbooks.

## **2.3 Curriculum renovation in Vietnam**

English learning at secondary schools in Vietnam has long been regarded as textbook-based, that is, teachers use textbooks as the curriculum for their teaching (Canh, 2011). As such, in one particular school year, students are supposed to cover one textbook that has been specified for them. For example, year 10 students are to study English in their *Tiếng Anh 10* (i.e., English for Year 10) textbook. The following sections will describe the two recent curricula and accompanying textbooks from the early 1980s until recently.

### **2.3.1 Previous curriculum**

The previous curriculum, which was developed by local experts, funded by the Ministry of Education (now Ministry of Education and Training – MOET) and was in effect from 1981 until 2002, included two programmes. One of these regulated English to be learnt in a three-year course, starting at Year 10. The other programme provided a seven-year course, in which students learned English from Year 6 until Year 12. At that time, therefore, English was an elective subject in lower secondary schools and a compulsory subject in upper secondary schools. In accordance with these two programmes, two sets of textbooks were mandated for use in secondary schools (Denham, 1992). The first set, the three-year textbooks, was published in the early 1980s. This set of textbooks required students to learn English from Year 10. Then during the early 1990s, the second set, the seven-year-course textbooks, was introduced to extend the range of English language learning, starting from Year 6 (Minh, 2007). Both these programmes specified that English learning should take place in secondary schools for three or four classes weekly, each of which lasted 45 minutes.



The first set of the textbooks, called '*Sách Tiếng Anh hệ 3 năm*' (i.e., three-year course English textbooks), consisted of three textbooks: *Tiếng Anh 10*, *Tiếng Anh 11*, and *Tiếng Anh 12*. Each of these textbooks was to be covered by teachers and students in one academic year.

The second set of textbooks, called '*Sách Tiếng Anh hệ 7 năm*' (i.e., seven-year course English textbooks), similarly, consisted of seven textbooks, used from Year 6 until Year 12, from *Tiếng Anh 6* to *Tiếng Anh 12*.

Both of these sets of textbooks were structure-based, and a predomination of grammar-translation method was implied in them (Denham, 1992). The majority of activities in the textbooks were to develop reading skills, followed by exercises that promoted memorisation of grammatical structures and vocabulary items. A typical lesson began with a short reading text, followed by extensive paper-based exercises which focused on grammatical items being extracted from the text, together with exercises on pronunciation and vocabulary. The main difference between the two sets was that the second set (i.e., the seven-year course) was less compressed than the first one, in terms of quantity of grammatical and lexical forms presented. Regardless of which set of textbooks was used, at the end of Year 12, students had to take the same national examination (i.e., the National Certificate of General Education) in English (Denham, 1992). Students who wished to go further in tertiary education had to take another examination to qualify for a place in universities or colleges. The examination system is still in practice today (refer Table 2.1).

In the late 1990s, along with the impact of English as the global language (Hoang, 2011) which finally became apparent in Vietnam, there was increasing involvement of foreign organisations in Vietnam with intention to support English language teaching, curriculum development and materials development. There was a call for a more uniform and communicative set of textbooks which promoted communication in teaching and learning. In materials development, an American education organisation called the Business Alliance for Vietnamese Education (BAVE) funded the development of a set of English textbooks called '*English for Vietnam*' (Bang & Crabbe, 1999), which consisted of seven books for use from Year 6 through Year 12. These textbooks were piloted in selected

schools in various provinces, but they were never officially approved for use in secondary schools (Minh, 2007), for unknown reasons.

## **2.3.2 New curriculum and accompanying textbooks**

### **2.3.2.1 New curriculum**

In 2002, a new curriculum, followed by a new set of textbooks, was projected by the MOET. The new curriculum regulates that English is compulsory in lower secondary schools (Year 6 – Year 12), and elective in primary schools (Year 1- Year 5). The general aims of general English education are as follows:

At the end of the upper secondary school level, students will be able:

- To use English as a means of communication at a certain level of proficiency in four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and to be able to read materials at the same level of their textbooks, using a dictionary;
- To have mastered basic English phonetics and grammar; to have acquired the minimum of around 2500 vocabulary items of English; and
- To attain a certain level of understanding of English and American cultures; to become aware of cross-cultural differences in order to be better overall communicators, to better inform the world of the Vietnamese people, their history and culture, and to take pride in Vietnam, its language and culture.

(MOET, 2006a, cited in Hoang, 2011, p. 11)

The quotation above clearly advocates English language learning for communication, although it also emphasises the role of reading, pronunciation and grammatical knowledge. Also, while it is unclear what it means by a “certain level” of language proficiency and understanding of native cultures, it seems ambitious to require students “to inform the world of the Vietnamese people, their history and culture, and to take pride in Vietnam, its language and culture.”

In terms of methodological innovation, the new English curriculum advocates “two popular approaches in education and foreign language teaching internationally and domestically: the learner-centred approach and the communicative approach in foreign language teaching, in which *task-based language teaching* is the principal method of teaching” (MOET, 2006c, p. 12,

italics added). As the aims of ELT specified in the curriculum imply that students should acquire communicative competence so as to use English both receptively and productively, it also implies that teachers should use communicative strategies to enable students to achieve such competence. In one of the teacher manuals designed to familiarise teachers with the new curriculum and the textbooks, one of the eight ‘new’ developments as compared to the old curriculum and textbooks is the use of task-based pedagogy:

The fourth new development of the standard Year 10 English textbook is that the activities are designed based on specific tasks (both pedagogical and real-life), each of which is clearly instructed. The method of task-based language teaching has many advantages. First, it provides situations where students use language. Second, it lowers the methodological burden on the teacher [...]: the teacher does not have to be concerned about how to design activities for teaching as usually seen when using the traditional set of textbooks (MOET, 2006b, p. 54, *my translation*)

The curriculum states that teaching content is covered according to themes. These themes are selected to reflect students’ daily life and are recycled from grade to grade, with the later grades learning similar themes at more challenging levels of language and cognition (Minh, 2007). Table 2.2 illustrates how themes are recycled from Year 6 to Year 12 in the textbooks.

Table 2.2: The recycling of themes in the English curriculum  
(adapted from Minh, 2007, p. 21)

Themes	Year	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
You and me/ Personal information		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recreation		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The world around us (1)		✓	✓	✓	✓			
The world around us (2)	- Nature and Environment					✓	✓	✓
	- People and places					✓	✓	✓

In terms of linguistic and cognitive demands, the general objectives indicated in the curriculum show that language and cognitive demands are graded and recycled according to the levels of learning. For example, in listening, similar genres of texts are specified, although they are different in terms of listening text word count and speech speed (see Table 2.3 overleaf).

In terms of delivery hours per week, the curriculum specifies that upper secondary school students using the standard textbooks attend three forty-five-minute periods per week, while those using the advanced textbooks attend four periods per week (refer 2.3.2.2 for distinction between ‘standard’ and ‘advanced’ textbooks). Therefore, in one academic year (35 weeks), standard students attend a total of 105 periods of English, and the advanced ones attend a total of 140 periods, making a total compulsory seven-year programme of 700 and 805 hours, respectively (in Year 9 students attend 70 hours, with two hours a week).

The curriculum specifies two types of assessment to be carried out during any particular academic year: continuous and regular. The former refers to activities in which teachers assess students’ language ability on a day-to-day basis, including oral tests, and fifteen-minute tests, and one-period tests. The regular assessments are compulsory and take place at specific times during the year, and include end-of-semester tests and end-of-year tests.

#### **2.3.2.2 Production of the English language textbooks**

Following the revised curriculum, the textbooks for Year 6 were put into use from 2002, followed by textbooks for Year 7 in 2003, and so on. The textbook for Year 12 was introduced in 2008. All lower secondary school students use the same set of textbooks across the country, while upper secondary school students are offered two different programmes, which are described below.

Table 2.3: General objectives of skills for Years 10, 11, and 12  
(MOET, 2006a, adapted from Minh, 2007, p. 17)

	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Year 12</b>
<b>Listening</b>	Understand the main ideas and details of monologues /dialogues of 120-150 words on the 6 topics covered. Understand texts that are delivered at a slow speed	Understand the main ideas and details of monologues/dialogues of 150-180 words on the 6 topics covered. Understand texts that are delivered at a relatively near-natural speed	Understand the main ideas and details of monologues/dialogues of 180-200 words on the 6 topics covered. Understand texts that are delivered at a near-natural speed
<b>Speaking</b>	Ask and answer about the topics covered. Perform some basic language functions such as giving instruction, expressing opinions, asking direction, asking and giving information, etc.	Ask and answer about the topics covered. Perform some basic language functions such as expressing likes and dislikes, agreement and disagreement, distinguishing facts and opinions	Ask and answer about the topics covered. Perform some basic language functions such as expressing opinions and viewpoints, talking about needs and likes, explaining
<b>Reading</b>	Understand the main ideas and details of texts of 190-230 words on the topics covered. Develop vocabulary strategies: using words in contexts, dictionary skills, etc.	Understand the main ideas and details of texts of 240-270 words on the topics covered. Develop vocab strategies: using words in contexts, dictionary skills, etc. Recognize grammatical elements and discourse markers	Understand the main ideas and details of texts of 280-320 words on the topics covered. Distinguish main ideas and supporting ideas. Use main ideas to summarise texts
<b>Writing</b>	Write texts of 100-120 words on familiar topics based on models or prompts for personal or basic communicative purposes	Write texts of 120-130 words on familiar topics based on models or prompts for personal or basic communicative purposes	Write texts of 130-150 words on familiar topics based on models or prompts for personal or basic communicative purposes

Unlike the lower secondary school level, the upper secondary school level uses a more complex series of general curricula and textbooks for major subjects in general, and English in particular. Upon entering upper secondary schools, students are required to choose to be in either '*Ban tự nhiên*' (i.e. specialization in sciences), '*Ban xã hội*' (i.e. specialization in humanities) or '*Ban cơ bản*' (i.e., non-specialization). In '*Ban tự nhiên*', advanced programmes (in terms of amount of instruction time per week, tests and examinations, and teaching materials) are specialised in four subjects: Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. In '*Ban xã hội*', the advanced subjects include Literature, History, Geography and Foreign Language. In '*Ban cơ bản*', all the subjects are taught in a non-specialised manner, using the standard materials. According to this classification, each of the eight mentioned subjects has two versions of textbooks, called '*Sách nâng cao*' (i.e., advanced book series) and '*Sách cơ bản*' (i.e. standard book series). All other subjects are taught in all three programmes, referred as '*Sách chuẩn*' (i.e., standard series).

The specialised programme in which students enrol determines which set of English textbooks they will use for the next three years. Specifically, those who are science-directed use *Sách cơ bản* series, and those who are humanity-directed use *Sách nâng cao* series. Those students who do not want to specialize in either area simply choose to be in *Ban cơ bản* (i.e., non-specialization) and also use the standard set of English textbooks. This means that students pursuing the standard set outnumber greatly the advanced ones, not only because students who specialise in sciences outnumber those specialising in humanities, but also because most schools in rural areas do not use the specialization type of learning, thus their students all use the standard version of English textbooks. This study focuses on the teachers using the standard version of the textbooks.

Because the textbooks are considered important in Vietnam, the production of the textbooks has generated both positive and negative comments from both researchers and practitioners. Firstly, the textbooks are seen as having “a great deal of improvement as compared with the old series of grammar-based textbooks” (Minh, 2007, p. 13). The improved elements include the catering for four language skills in each unit; the integration between communicative activities

and forms; the provision of many communicative functions; a sense of facilitation for students' independent learning; and interactive presentation of texts and illustrations. The new textbooks provide a variety of opportunities for students to use the language. In the national textbook workshops in 2008, in which I was also involved, many key trainers commented that the textbooks were much more 'communicative' than their predecessors, and that teachers and students were encouraged to do different types of activities, which reduces the level of boredom and demotivation in the classroom.

However, Minh (2007) points out several limitations of the textbooks in her analysis. One overall limitation found in all skills lessons is that the textbooks seem to reflect little of real-world communication. Minh claims that the textbooks contain too much mechanical practice, resulting in inadequacy of communicative practice. As a result of her analysis, Minh identified a number of specific limitations of the current textbooks: the presentation of language input is unrealistic; language use is simplified; elements of genuine communication are eliminated; and the presentation of discrete grammatical points made the books structure-oriented. From this analysis, Minh argues that the content of the books has little correspondence to current theories of language acquisition. The teachers in Minh's study also revealed some problems such as the overloaded content and unhelpful teacher guidance.

This section has provided a description of the past and current curricula in Vietnam, as well as the current curriculum's accompanying textbooks. To facilitate the discussion of the findings in this study, a further overview of the textbooks will be presented together with an analysis of a textbook unit (of four skills lessons) against identified task characteristics, in Chapter Five. Also, Appendix M contains an entire unit from *Tiếng Anh 10*. The subsequent section will shift attention to the situations of teacher education and teacher development in Vietnam.

## **2.4 Teacher education and teacher development**

### **2.4.1 Pre-service language teacher education**

Currently there are two separate systems of teacher education in Vietnam. The three-year college-based system aims to train teachers for lower secondary schools. The four-year university-based system is responsible for training upper secondary school teachers. English teacher education is operationalised under either of these two systems.

The MOET guidelines frame three strands of knowledge that a student needs to gain in order to qualify as a language teacher: foundation knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, and professional knowledge (Canh, 2011). The specific number of credits of each strand depends on the specific curriculum across universities; however, they generally follow the guidelines provided by the MOET (Lap, 2005). Foundation knowledge, which covers 38 percent of the total credits, includes studies of such subjects as Marxist-Leninist philosophy, educational psychology, Ho Chi Minhism, and Vietnamese culture studies. Subject-matter knowledge (about 44 %) includes linguistics such as grammar and phonology; sociolinguistics; British and American literature; the four macro-skills; and contrastive studies such as translation. Around 18 percent of the credits go to professional knowledge, which includes English language teaching methodology, school visits and a school-based practicum. The English language teaching methodology is usually concerned with current popular approaches to language teaching such as communicative language teaching (CLT). However, when teacher students are sent to school to observe lessons and practise teaching, they are usually supervised and mentored by practising teachers who receive no training in appropriate mentoring skills. The teacher students are assessed in eight actual teaching hours by these supervising teachers, who do so in largely idiosyncratic ways, based on their own beliefs and teaching experience. As a result, many teacher students graduating from universities are unsure of what should be the best practice, given, for example, that they are equipped with knowledge of CLT but are instructed to use grammar-translation during the practicum.



In terms of teaching methodology provided in language teacher education programmes, a non-compatible view (Richards, 1998) can be observed. A non-compatible view of teacher education promotes programmes that are articulated around a specific teaching methodology, “which teacher trainees are expected to assimilate and be able to replicate in their own teaching” (Richards, 1998, p. 48). According to English language teacher trainers in Vietnam such as Loi (2012, personal communication) and my own experiences as a teacher trainee and then a trainer, English teacher education programmes in universities in Vietnam focus on providing student teachers with specific techniques of teaching and assessment, most of which are based on the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model, rather than encouraging student teachers to work out approaches that suit their beliefs and styles. Task-based language teaching, as revealed in Canh’s (2011) data, has been introduced in some MA programmes, but has since been understood and enacted at an only surface level.

#### **2.4.2 In-service language teacher professional development**

Vietnamese teachers working in schools are considered to have low access to teacher development (Canh, 2000; Pham, 2007). Firstly, with the poor resources in schools and teachers’ working conditions, teachers rarely have the opportunity to update their theoretical and practical knowledge. They scarcely have access to resources in current English language teaching methodology. Thus, teachers mostly have to rely on their own experience for development. Although it is regulated by the MOET that teachers have to observe their colleagues for at least 18 hours each academic year, not many teachers are able to do so in a reflective manner. This is due to their heavy workloads of teaching and marking students’ papers, as well as their extra work in private classes. The post-lesson discussion among the department staff members often serves to evaluate the observed teacher rather than to give constructive feedback. Teachers are sometimes, during the academic years, observed by inspectors, who are experienced teachers nominated by the provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET). These observations, similarly, are conducted in order to evaluate according to fixed criteria, with few suggestions for improvement.

Secondly, the development of teachers' language proficiency is limited due to the lack of opportunity to use English outside the classroom. Although new graduates may have been equipped with greater knowledge of English and skills during their university studies, because there is no demand to use any English other than in the textbooks, teachers' knowledge and proficiency are eventually narrowed to the ability to use and explain language items provided in the textbooks. As a result, it is often believed that the longer a teacher works in a public secondary school, the more attrition of language knowledge and competence she tends to experience.

Teachers are also provided with some textbook training. However, since there are few experts for these training activities, these workshops are often carried out in a 'cascade' approach. That is, delegates of local trainers receive training from the national experts, and then deliver workshops to lower level delegates (e.g. school representatives or district trainers) who finally organise workshops in school-based locations. Each province organises these workshops in different ways, depending on the funds available and decision of the local authorities. In some provinces, these key trainers were sent directly to schools to train the teachers. In others, another layer of key trainers, who are experienced representatives from schools, were invited to the provincial workshops. They were then expected to convey the knowledge and ideas to their own school colleagues. In the province where this study took place, however, all the teachers in the whole province were invited to receive the workshops in a series of five-day workshops. Teachers were organised into groups, each of which consisted of around 60 teachers and one trainer. The workshops were limited to providing teachers with the overview of the textbooks, teaching techniques, and video demonstrations of model lessons. According to Canh (2011), and in my own experience, such workshops are mainly delivered in a lecture format with the aim of giving the teachers general ideas about, for example, what it is theoretically meant by the learner-centred approach.

Since the early 1990s, several international organisations have been involved in the professional development of English language teachers in Vietnam. Most of the training provided by these organisations is in the cascade approach and in short-term periods. Examples of these organisations are Overseas Service Bureau, AusAID (Australia), British Council, English language Teacher Training Project

(UK), American ELI, BAVE (USA), SEAMEO-RELC (Singapore) and some joint projects between MOET and overseas organisations such as Vietnam's English Teacher and Trainer Network (VTTN), supported by the British Council. Many of these organisations have provided one-off or short-term workshops, mainly to introduce the communicative approach and ways to teach more communicatively.

Some of these organisations, however, have made attempts to extend their training to the classroom level and relate their training to specific curriculum and textbooks in use. For example, the English language Teacher Training Project (ELTTP), funded by the British Government, provided technical support for lower secondary school teachers of English over a six-year period (1997-2003). This project started with training key trainees in a cascade manner, but then followed these trainees to the provinces and districts to support them to deliver workshops and observe teachers in actual classrooms. The project primarily addressed the previous set of textbooks and introduced communicative language teaching, mostly in the form of the PPP, to accommodate the textbook usage. With continuous support from the beginning until the end of the project both at provincial level and school level, the project has stimulated some changes in teachers' methods of teaching (Phuc, 2009). Unfortunately, the project was only able to reach selected areas in 22 provinces, leaving the rest unsupported. Lower secondary teachers in the province where the present study took place received support from this project. Since it finished in 2003, no follow-up activities have been observed to promote teacher changes in other areas in Vietnam. Also, shortly after its commission, the new set of textbooks was introduced and mandated by MOET (see 2.3.2.2), which caused the materials and lesson plans made during the process of the project to become somewhat obsolete, since the new textbooks do not lend themselves to PPP.

The VTTN, which focuses on "changes in approaches and techniques in teaching and learning" (British Council, 2011) for upper secondary school teachers of English, has extended their workshops to provinces for key teachers (Phuc, 2009). This on-going project addresses issues in the current textbooks used in upper secondary schools, and provides professional support for teachers in using such

textbooks. Although this network does not follow teachers in their classroom teaching, most of their workshops are seen to be interactive, and deal specifically to the issues in the textbooks currently in use. However, their workshops have been limited to relatively few representative teachers, leaving the rest unsupported.

This section has described the situation of language teacher education and professional development in Vietnam. Drawing on existing publications on Vietnam and my own understanding of the context, the section has pointed out that language teacher education in Vietnam has long relied on a non-compatible approach, and that teacher development has been considered limited. The next section will provide an account of the context in which this study is situated, by providing geographic information on the broader context and specific information on the two schools where the data were collected.

## **2.5 Context of the study**

With an area of 6,055.6 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1,300,800 people (Ha Tinh Information Portal, 2005), Ha Tinh province is located in the Northern Central region of Vietnam with ten districts and two provincial towns. At the time of data collection, Ha Tinh had 45 upper secondary schools (i.e., Year 10 to Year 12) with approximately 270 teachers of English.

The two schools selected for this study are located in the provincial capital, which has a population of more than 87, 000 people (Ha Tinh Information Portal, 2005). Being the centre of administration, the town is regarded as being the most advantaged in terms of educational opportunities. There are four state upper secondary schools, one of which is a specialised school for gifted students, one private (*dân lập* ‘people-established’) upper secondary school. There are also a university and two vocational colleges. There are two language centres in the town, both offering only English tuition. However, secondary school students do not usually go to these centres for extra learning; instead, they often attend their own teachers’ private classes outside class time. This partly reveals the purpose of

English learning mainly as specifically addressing the examinations and classroom tests, rather than developing communicative competence.

The upper secondary English language teachers in the town share common working conditions. Each teacher, as regulated by the MOET, has to teach 18 hours a week and mark students' test papers, among other school duties. Like other major subject teachers (see Table 2.1 for subjects considered major), English teachers usually take part in '*luyện thi*' activities (i.e., examination practice) as a means of earning extra income, outside their school teaching. These activities may be organised by their own school, a private centre, or the teachers themselves. These teaching activities, for their specific purpose, focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation exercises with the aim of making students more proficient as examination takers. Neither speaking nor listening skills are taught in these sessions. Furthermore, in spite of being based in the capital town of the province, the teachers have received little in-service training and had little access to teacher development, apart from the annual textbook training workshops mentioned above. One teacher in the present study commented that workshop ideas received by school representatives at the workshops were never transmitted to the rest of the teachers. This is because such representatives are limited in training skills, and teachers in the same department are not usually interested in listening and learning from familiar folk. Instead, in department meetings, the teachers are handed out materials from the workshops, most of which are scarcely read or discussed.

In terms of teacher development, as mentioned above, the teachers are required by MOET to observe their colleagues at least 18 hours in one academic year (35 weeks). They have to keep an observation booklet for the year, which is frequently inspected by school authorities and inspectors nominated by the provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET). Given their working loads and their lack of interest in learning from their colleagues, keeping such a booklet is regarded as a mere formality, so as to meet the requirement rather than for professional development. Nevertheless, several teachers from this study admitted that they learnt some interesting techniques from their colleagues during observations. Unlike other common schools in the country and in the province,

being based in a close proximity to the DOET office, the schools are more frequently visited by DOET inspection delegates. The teachers reported that they were usually visited twice a year by these delegates, which extended their burden on the preparation of their files (e.g., lesson plans, observation booklets, and students' mark records) and planning to-be-observed lessons to satisfy the delegates' requirements.

With regard to the assessment of teachers' work in the Vietnamese context, language teachers are assessed by DOET inspectors based on a fixed set of criteria developed by the MOET, which relies on the "behaviourist assumption that learning occurs with a quantitative increase in students' knowledge, and that teaching is about presenting information or transmitting structured knowledge" (Canh, 2011, p. 26). A lesson is assessed on whether the teacher has successfully and accurately presented the content of the lesson to students. The teacher is also assessed by their own colleagues on a regular basis, where feedback and assessment are also based on criteria used by inspectors. Observation by both inspectors and colleagues is regarded as "subjective, judgemental, and impressionistic" (Canh, 2011, pp. 26-27). These assessment scores are important in terms of the teacher's professional life, because they are the main reference for teacher ranking at the end of each semester and academic year.

The remaining portion of the section will provide information about the two schools where this study took place. Both of these are considered 'standard' public schools, that is, they are not either specialised or private schools.

#### *School A*

School A is a comparatively long-standing upper secondary school in the province. It was established in 1954 as one of the province's first state upper secondary schools after independence from the French. At the time the present study took place, the school had a population of 1890 students in 41 classes with 99 teachers, among which 10 teachers of English were employed.

School A is located in the centre of the town. It has a relatively large campus with many classroom buildings. At the time of the study, this school had two three-storey classroom buildings, each of which had 12 classrooms. There were also

two one-storey buildings and one two-storey building in use, and one three-storey building under construction. Altogether, the school had 34 classrooms in use. As in many other schools in the town, each classroom is from 45 to 50 square metres large, equipped with 12-14 desks in rows, which attached to similar length benches, one magnetic green chalkboard, one teacher's desk, and two ceiling fans.

Despite having such a large number of classrooms, due to the large number of classes, the school had to organise teaching and learning in the two-shift system. At the time of data collection, all Year 12 and Year 11 classes attended the morning shift, and all Year 10 classes attended the afternoon shift. Each class had an average of 50 students.

The school is comparatively well-equipped with facilities. There is a laboratory and two computer rooms with 45 computers. Each department has a common staff room, which is designed mainly for meeting with a long table and chairs. There is a whiteboard for teaching schedules and notices. Each department is equipped with a computer, without a printer or internet access. The school is also equipped with several CD and cassette players, and two PowerPoint projectors, which teachers take turns to use on special occasions.

Regarding student categorisation, the 2009 data of the school showed that the majority of students were in the *Ban Tự nhiên* (i.e., specialisation in sciences), with 1746 students. Only one class (with 47 students) and two classes (with 97 students) were in *Ban Xã hội* (i.e., humanities), and *Ban Cơ bản* (i.e., non-specialisation), respectively. Although the class following humanity-orientation should be using a different set of textbooks, the department chair told me that all students in the school used the same set of textbooks. English was the only foreign language taught in this school.

### *School B*

In contrast with school A, school B is much newer, formally established in 2004, and enrolling its first cohort of students in 2008. This school was established to meet the increasing demand of student enrolment to upper secondary level in town, and to reduce the number of students in school A. Students who do not meet the academic standard to enrol in school A will have a chance to continue

their education in school B. Therefore, students in this school are regarded as having lower academic ability and learning motivation when compared to those in school A.

At the time of data collection, being in only its second academic year of operation, the school had two class levels: Year 10 and Year 11, consisting of 18 classes, with a total of 829 students. There were 45 teachers, among which there were 6 English language teachers. Although the school was recently established, the teachers were fairly experienced because they were mobilised from other schools in the province when it was first founded. Since the school had only one three-storey classroom building with 12 classrooms, similar to school A, it had to have two shifts of teaching in a day. The classrooms were similar to those in school A in terms of size, facilities and the average number of students per class.

School B is located out of the town centre, surrounded by rice fields. Access to the school is a small road, which is muddy in rainy seasons and dusty in dry seasons. It has four staff rooms with one computer in each. The six English language teachers shared one room with teachers of two other subjects. The school is equipped with a laboratory and two computer rooms with a total of 50 computers without printing facilities or internet access. There were two CD and cassette players for language learning, and one PowerPoint projector for teachers to use in classes when needed.

Regarding student categorisation, all the students in the school at the time were under *Ban Cơ bản* (i.e., non-specialisation). Thus, all the students in school B used the same set of standard textbooks as those in school A. Like school A, English was the only foreign language.

## **2.6 Summary**

With the purpose of providing information necessary for understanding teachers' beliefs and practices in this study, this chapter has reviewed the sociocultural and educational context in which this study is situated. Firstly, it provided a sociocultural and educational account of Vietnam, leading to the argument that the



current education system in Vietnam has long been influenced by Confucian and Taoist ideologies, which are reflected in the hierarchical role of the teacher in the classroom, the low level of student participation, and the prominent role of examinations. Secondly, it reviewed the historical trends of which English as a foreign language has experienced over the last few decades. This section showed that, although English language education was subject to ups and downs due to the political and historical changes in Vietnam, the economic reform in 1986 opened up a great opportunity for English to grow in popularity in Vietnam, leading to its present status as the most demanded language in contemporary Vietnam. This section also provided some brief characteristics of Vietnamese classrooms, in particular some issues relating to English language learning facilitation, such as large class size, and teacher proficiency. Thirdly, the chapter has provided information about the history of English curriculum innovation for the upper secondary school level, together with a general description of the mandated textbooks currently in use. It indicated that although the new textbooks have many improved elements as compared with the old textbooks, some major shortcomings have also been revealed by researchers and practitioners. Fourthly, the chapter has provided an account of language teacher education and teacher professional development in Vietnam. It generally indicates that language teacher education in Vietnam follows a non-compatible view in language teacher education and that teacher professional development opportunities are limited. This chapter has also described the specific context where the study took place with some general information of the place where this study took place, followed by descriptions of the selected schools. The participants of the study will be described in detail in Chapter Four.

The next chapter will review the literature about the two aspects relevant to the purpose of the present study: task-based language teaching and teachers' beliefs.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews the two principal topics for this study: task-based language teaching (henceforth, TBLT) and teacher beliefs. Section 3.1 begins with theoretical assumptions of second language learning which are claimed to support the development of TBLT. Definitions of tasks are then critically reviewed, resulting in a number of principles of TBLT instruction. This is followed by distinguishing tasks from activities and exercises in order to identify key characteristics of tasks. Section 3.2, entitled Teachers' Beliefs, first discusses definitions of the construct of teachers' beliefs, resulting in the operational definition used in this study. Other constructs of teachers' mental lives are then discussed. This is followed by presentations of two theoretical frameworks (Sociocultural Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour) under which teachers' beliefs, practices and their relationships are understood (sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). Section 3.2.5 provides a brief overview of studies on teachers' beliefs generally, followed by a review of previous findings on the relationship between beliefs and practices. Section 3.3, after generally discussing empirical research on teachers' beliefs about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), specifically reviews research studies on teachers' beliefs regarding TBLT, which is the focus of this study. The final section summarises this chapter and identifies the research gaps which this research aims to occupy.

#### **3.1 Task-based language teaching**

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has become attractive over several decades in the area of language teaching in general and the teaching of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) in particular. The quotation by Littlewood (2004) which prefaced Chapter One reveals the widespread adoption of TBLT across the world, and the attractiveness of the term in the language teaching sector. Its increasing popularity is not only because it is new, but also because its

underlying assumptions are supported by a number of theoretical grounds, which are presented in the first sub-section below.

### **3.1.1 Theoretical basis for task-based language teaching**

A number of theoretical grounds have lent support to the emergence of TBLT. The use of tasks reflects learning theories in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, and a number of elements in Sociocultural Theory. Furthermore, TBLT seems to receive theoretical support from three contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) hypotheses, namely the input, output and interaction hypotheses. The three sections below will briefly describe these supportive bases, with the intention of bringing out characteristics that are predominant in TBLT.

#### **3.1.1.1 Communicative language teaching**

Until the late 1960s, structural approaches were prominent in second and foreign language learning classrooms. For example, Audiolingualism was practised worldwide, and Situational Language Teaching was more popular in Britain (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). A call for changing educational principles and practices in Europe in the late 1960s was responded to by a number of collaborative and individual works, including, for example, the teamwork of the Council of Europe, and the writings of Brumfit and Johnson (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Johnson, 1982), Widdowson (1978) and Wilkins (1972, 1976), and other British applied linguists, which “gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 154). The emergence of this approach has marked significant changes in the beliefs about and practices of language teaching and learning, as well as approaches to syllabus design, and material development.

According to advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language is viewed to be more than a set of grammatical and vocabulary items (Nunan, 2004). This view of language was developed from Hymes’ construct of ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes, 1972), in contrast with Chomsky’s (e.g.,

1965) theory of linguistic competence, which focuses on abstract grammatical knowledge. According to Hymes, communicative competence includes the knowledge and ability to use the language regarding:

- Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; and
- Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.

(Hymes, 1972, p. 281)

Hymes' idea was later expanded by other applied linguists concerning language teaching, including Canale and Swain (1980), and Savignon (1993, 1997). Canale and Swain offered a more comprehensive view of the communicative competence regarding language pedagogy by including four components of the term: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Savignon further proposed that language curriculum should include five components: language arts, language for a purpose, personal second language use, theatre arts, and beyond the classroom. Hymes' and Canale and Swain's communicative competence was further elaborated in some complexity by others, such as Bachman (1991) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997).

Favoured in the CLT perspective of language is also Halliday's functional account of language use, which views language as associated with "the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of the language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday, 1970, p. 145). In his 1975 volume, Halliday offered seven basic functions of language with respect to children using their first language: the instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and representative function (Halliday, 1975, pp. 11-17). This view of language,

complementing Hymes', is of great influence on many proponent writings on CLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In brief, as noted by Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT has a rich theoretical base in terms of how it views language. Major characteristics of the communicative view of language were summarised as follows:

- Language is a system for expression of meaning;
- The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication;
- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses; and
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 161)

As noted, Communicative Language Teaching was largely inspired by descriptions of language and language use, with less reference to theories of language learning and acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), although some authors subsequently became more concerned with the relevance of theories of learning in their models (see, for example, Johnson, 1996). Learning implications tended to be referred to on theoretical grounds rather than empirical grounds. However, the CLT view of learning is also claimed to be inferred from its practices, in which advocates (e.g., Johnson, 1982; Littlewood, 1981) describe the conditions needed for second language communicative competence to be developed. Three major elements are considered promoting second language learning: communication, meaningfulness and the task principle (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As such, activities that stimulate communication are supposed to promote learning. In the same way, language that is meaningful to the learners facilitates the learning process. Lastly, language that is used for performing a task is likely to be acquired by learners. These dimensions are captured practically in such principles as learning by doing (Savignon, 1997) or experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), and the role of learners in the learning process (Kohonen, 1992). These views of how language learning principles are associated with CLT and are

fundamental in the development of TBLT, which are summarised and further discussed by Skehan (1998).

Communicative language teaching does not, however, constitute a monolithic and uniform approach (Ellis, 2003b). There is distinction in the literature between the ‘weak’ and the ‘strong’ versions of CLT (Howatt, 1984). The former is based on the assumption that language can be taught by identifying components of communicative competence and their respective grammatical exponents and teaching them systematically. In practice, this version is mostly reflected in the PPP model, where language items are first taught by the teacher, followed by extensive controlled practice such as drills, and lastly by a freer production activity where learners are required to use the language introduced to talk/write about something. The ‘strong’ version, in contrast, holds the radical assumptions presented earlier, that, for example, “language is acquired through communication” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In this version of Communicative Language Teaching:

Learners do not first acquire language as a structural system and then learn how to use this system in communication but rather actually discover the system itself in the process of learning how to communicate. (Ellis, 2003b, p. 28)

The ‘strong’ version of CLT, therefore, is reflected in provision of activities and tasks that give learners the opportunities to use the language in communication, where explicit attention to grammatical features arises only incidentally and attention is merely ‘transitory’ (Long, 1991). Much of this version reflects the characteristics of TBLT, which can be seen in 3.1.2.3.

Littlewood (1984) and Johnson (1996) proposed alternative theories of language learning compatible with CLT – skill-learning models. These theories encompass cognitive and behavioural aspects of learning in the acquisition of communicative competence. Littlewood emphasises the role of practice on the development of skills, which is believed to result in the achievement of communicative competence. Johnson (1996), viewing language as a skill, argues for using

communicative methods to make automatised possible in both directions: from declarative to procedural processing and vice versa.

Another alternative but contrastive way of teaching, which arose from Krashen's theoretical points (see 3.1.1.3), is called The Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Unlike Littlewood's model, this approach focuses on language exposure, or input, leaving learners the choice to produce the language when they are ready. To a great extent, this approach can be regarded as a version of TBLT, since it focuses on meaning and engagement in doing tasks such as giving and following instructions.

Task-based Language Teaching is believed to have risen from the umbrella approach of CLT (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), since it is based upon several key CLT principles presented above. Nunan, for example, states that CLT represents a "broad, philosophical approach to language curriculum that draws on theory and research in linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology" while "[t]ask-based language teaching represents a realisation of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology" (p. 10). Understanding CLT, therefore, may be regarded as a necessary move to understanding TBLT.

### **3.1.1.2 Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) based on the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1987), and his successors, has also been construed to theoretically support task-based instruction, in offering another view into language learning (Ellis, 2000, 2003b). SCT is originally a theory of mental development and functioning (Lantolf, 2006), which claims that learning is mediated through social activity. Central to sociocultural theory is the idea that human cognition is developed from mediation between the mind and the world. This process is mediated by the use of social interaction in forming new knowledge: from object-regulation and other-regulation to self-regulation. The way this new knowledge is mediated is through the use of tools, interaction with others, and the use of symbols (Ellis, 2003b). Vygotsky identified language as the most powerful symbolic means. In second language acquisition,

language is seen as both the means for mediating learning and the object of the learning (Ellis, 2003b).

Lantolf (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf, 2000, 2006) elaborates Vygotsky's theory in application to second language acquisition in general and task-based instruction in particular. With respect to these, he suggests that second language learners are mediated by three sources: by others in social interaction, by self in private speech, and by cultural artefacts such as tasks and technology.

Concerning social interaction, SCT takes verbal interaction into account as a means of regulation, seeing "learning, including language learning, as dialogically based" (Ellis, 2003b, p. 176). Learners of a language first manifest new linguistic features through interactions with others. This process results in internalisation of the features. During this process, learners may experience linguistic challenges when they are in communicatively demanding situations, which will result in learners acquiring the new forms and more stable skills channelled through private speech, defined as "audible speech not adapted to an addressee" (Ohta, 2001, p. 16). When facing difficult tasks, adult learners will externalise the inner thoughts in order to regulate themselves (Foley, 1991). Such externalisation of inner thoughts allows learners to manipulate and practise new linguistic forms which will "thus come to move from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological plane" (Ellis, 2003b, p. 178).

A key construct of SCT is the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), a metaphor used by Vygotsky to describe "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86). This psychological metaphor entails the readiness of the learner to perform a new skill with the assistance of an expert (e.g., a teacher or peer). As such, the learner's present skill is his actual level, and his potential skill is the one that he can perform with the assistance of another expert person. When this new skill is acquired, it becomes the learner's present competence and a new zone is created for a further skill to be developed. This view of learning has important implications for TBLT, especially



in the grading of tasks (Ellis, 2003b), and the application of *scaffolding* in the development of tasks in language teaching (e.g., Nunan, 2004).

### **3.1.1.3 Input, output and interaction**

Krashen (1981, 1987), drawing on empirical studies by Dulay and Burt (1974), formulated five hypotheses (the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, and Affective Filter Hypothesis) to explain second language acquisition, which he collectively called the 'Input Hypothesis'. Central to Krashen's work is perhaps the Input Hypothesis, because it answers the most crucial question of language learning process, that is, how one acquires language. The Input Hypothesis states that second language learners acquire a language structure that is 'a little beyond' where they are, by understanding that language. Learners understand the input basing on the context, their background knowledge and extra-linguistic information happening around the input.

Krashen's work, according to Brown (1998) and Nunan (2004), among others, extrapolates three relevant ideas to support TBLT. Firstly, learners need to understand meaningful messages for learning. Krashen's work regards meaningful reading and listening input as essential, especially in the early stage of language acquisition. This first idea argues against meaningless, decontextualised language work, where learners pay whole attention to a more structural view of language. The second idea is that learners learn new features just beyond their current level. This provides an implied suggestion in line with the conventional saying: Grade the task, not the language (Brown, 1998). The third idea resulting from Krashen's work is the necessity of a motivating and relaxed classroom atmosphere to break down affective filters so as to promote confidence in learning.

Krashen's hypotheses, in particular the Input Hypothesis, have attracted much interest, and indeed have become influential and controversial in the area of second language learning to date (Nunan, 2004), and as noted above, have contributed to the development of TBLT. However, TBLT is supported not only by his hypotheses, but also by a number of others such as Output Hypothesis and

Interaction Hypothesis, both of which examine the effectiveness of output, but in rather different forms.

The term 'comprehensible output' was proposed by Swain (Cummins & Swain, 1986; Swain, 1985), based on the data of immersion students in Canada. She claims that although comprehensible input plays a role in acquisition, it is not sufficient for acquisition to take place fully. Instead, the learner should produce comprehensible output. In doing so, the learner has the opportunity to produce the target language so that she can "pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (1986, p.133). Swain's study reveals that, although the immersion students had a large amount of comprehensible input, they did not demonstrate native-like competence. Swain argues that it is the limited comprehensible output that students produce that leads to acquisition failure. Comprehensible output, argues Swain, is a mechanism independent of comprehensible input, in that it provides the learner with opportunities to move "from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it" (1986, p.136). This hypothesis implies that language tasks should not only provide learners with comprehensible input, but should contain elements that 'push' learners to produce the target language. This idea was initially understood by many task designers and practitioners as relevant to tasks focusing principally on oral work; however, communicative tasks are now claimed to include all four language skills (Ellis, 2003b, 2009).

The role of output is incorporated by Long (1985a) in his Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of negotiation of meaning (linguistic adjustments in conversations to get meaning across). Long asserts that evidence of non-comprehension from the listener naturally leads to reformulation of the speaker's utterance, so as to make it comprehensible for the listener. In this process, when realising a breakdown in communication, that is, the listener does not understand the message, the speaker makes a modification of his message. This can be done through self-correction or with assistance from teachers or peers. Therefore, Long argues that negotiation of meaning promotes comprehensible input as well as output, and thus promotes acquisition. This hypothesis implies that negotiation of meaning should be included in pedagogical tasks. Since Long's (1985a) claim, a

substantial body of research has been undertaken to investigate aspects of tasks that promote negotiation of meaning. For example, Long (1990) found that two-way tasks (such as an information gap task) and groupwork are characteristics that generate more negotiation of meaning. Other research studies (e.g., Berwick, 1990; Crookes & Rulon, 1988; Newton, 1991) investigated the use of open (such as opinion sharing) and closed tasks (such as deciding on a candidate) on negotiation of meaning, and indicated that closed tasks generate more negotiation of meaning than open tasks. Another study, which investigated the effectiveness of planning for task performance (Skehan, 1998), showed that planning not only leads to more negotiation of meaning, but also more fluent and accurate production of language. The Interactionist approach contributes to the formulation of task-based approaches by informing which types of tasks generate more negotiation of meaning and suggesting types of interaction for task-based instruction.

This section has outlined a number of theoretical grounds supporting TBLT. It has reviewed three theoretical strands, the assumptions of which provide theoretical support for the development of TBLT, namely Communicative Language Teaching, Sociocultural Theory and the three SLA hypotheses. The next section will review in detail the concept of task, the principles of TBLT, how tasks are distinguished from other classroom work, and key dimensions of task characteristics.

### **3.1.2 What constitutes a task?**

This section firstly reviews the definitions of the notion of task in the literature. Drawing on such definitions, a number of major principles of TBLT will be presented. This is followed by distinction between tasks, activities and exercises. Finally, a number of fundamental characteristics of tasks are critically reviewed.

#### **3.1.2.1 Definitions of tasks**

The central concept in the methodology of task-based language teaching is of course ‘tasks’. However, in both research and language pedagogy, there has been little agreement as to how a task is defined (Ellis, 2003b).

It is, however, useful to start with a very generic definition of a task provided by Long (1985b, p. 89):

[a task is] a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by ‘task’ is meant the hundred and one things people *do* in everyday life, at work, at play and in between.

According to Nunan (2004), this definition is non-technical and non-linguistic. With respect to the former, it is likely that in everyday ‘tasks’, we do not usually explicitly describe how we carry out such tasks. For example, a person dressing a child does not necessarily spell out what to do first and next, and how to do what they do; they just do it. Also, tasks by this definition may require the use of language (such as making a hotel reservation) or may not require language use (such as painting a fence). It could be noted that whether language use is involved or not, such tasks remain non-linguistic by nature, that is, there is no explicit attention to what language features should be used to complete the task. Such a non-linguistic feature distinguishes tasks from language exercises (Nunan, 2004), the latter of which focus learners’ attention on particular language features.

However, when tasks are defined with pedagogical perspectives, many authors assert that tasks necessarily postulate language use (Ellis, 2003b). For example, Breen (1987, 1989), Bygate (1999), Ellis (2003b), Nunan (1989, 2004), Richards, Platt and Webber (1985), and Samuda and Bygate (2008) all consider that task completion necessarily involves language use for input, output and interaction. Figure 3.1 cites a number of definitions of pedagogical tasks in the literature, which, in spite of revealing the diversity of task-based perspectives across task experts, researchers and practitioners, offer the opportunity to generate principles of TBLT and task characteristics in the following sections.

- 
1. Breen (1987)

[A]ny structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making (p. 23).
  2. Bygate (1999)

[B]ounded classroom activities in which learners use language communicatively to achieve an outcome, with the overall purpose of learning language (p.186).
  3. Candlin (1987)

[O]ne set of differentiated, sequencable, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu (p.10).
  4. Ellis (2003b)

[A] workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various in cognitive processes (p.16).
  5. Nunan (2004)

[A] piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing and interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own
-

- 
- right with a beginning, a middle and an end (p.4).
6. Prabhu (1987)  
[A]n activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process (p.24).
  7. Richards *et al.* (1985)  
[A]n activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing and understanding language i.e. as a response. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make teaching more communicative ... since it provides a purpose for classroom activity which goes beyond practice of language for its own sake (p.289).
  8. Samuda and Bygate (2008)  
[A] holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both (p. 69).
  9. Skehan (1996)  
[A]n activity in which meaning is primary, there is some sort of relationship to the real world, task completion has some priority, and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome (p. 38).
- 

Figure 3.1: Examples of task definitions

The definitions of ‘task’, as well as discussion of its development bases and current approaches in language teaching in the literature, allows for a generation of a set of basic principles that encompass the methodology of TBLT. The principles are presented in the following sub-section.

### **3.1.2.2 Principles of task-based language teaching**

*Language teaching should focus primarily on meaning*

Perhaps the most strongly-emphasised principle underlying various definitions of tasks is the extent to which the task focuses learners’ attention to the message, and

the extent to which it creates a chance for learners to display their linguistic knowledge (Ellis, 2003a, 2003b). In this respect, many authors (e.g., Ellis, 2003b; Long, 1985b; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1996) seem to advocate tasks that focus primarily on meaning. Breen (1987), however, includes ‘exercises’ as tasks in his definition. However, this does not necessarily mean that such exercises represent a type of language work where learners focus on explicit learning of language features, but rather that learners may be encouraged to engage, as noted by Breen (1987), in meaningful activities such as problem-solving, simulations and decision-making. Ellis (2005) distinguishes semantic meaning (i.e., meanings of language features such as lexical items and grammar structures) from pragmatic meaning (i.e., the meanings that occur due to highly contextualised communication), and asserts that in TBLT it is the latter meaning which should be in focus. According to Ellis (2003b, 2005), to achieve pragmatic meaning in task performance, language should be viewed as a tool for reaching task outcomes, rather than the object of learning.

In terms of corrective feedback, task proponents (Beretta, 1989; Prabhu, 1987) also suggest a focus on content (i.e., meaning) rather linguistic errors (i.e., form). Beretta (1989) and Prabhu (1982, 1987) suggest that error treatment should focus primarily on content, and that if linguistic errors are treated, there should be no explanation, exemplification or generalisation. In other words, such linguistic error treatment should not interrupt the flow of meaning expressed by learners.

*Language teaching should direct learners to achieve a non-linguistic outcome in task completion*

A non-linguistic outcome allows learners to focus on conveying pragmatic meaning rather than semantic meaning. In other words, learners should not pay attention to any particular language features in the process of task completion, but should attend entirely (or at least, primarily) to how to reach the outcome of the task. In this sense, as indicated earlier, if completing a task involves language use, learners will use the language as a tool to achieve the outcome. The outcome of a task represents the authenticity of the task. This authenticity serves to answer a crucial question in task design, ‘What drives learners to complete the task?’ In this sense, all the definitions above (Figure 3.1), either explicitly or implicitly,

mention the need to specify some sort of outcomes for a task. The task outcome can be used to distinguish ‘task’ from ‘activity’, in that while the latter may focus on meaning, it does not necessarily carry an outcome. Let us consider the following two examples:

Example 1: Talk to your friends about types of food you like and dislike.

Example 2: Your group are organising a party for your class. Discuss with your friends and decide on a list of food that suit most of your class members.

Clearly, both of the examples above potentially engage learners in expressing meaning, but Example 2 involves a sense of completeness, in that at the end, learners will create a list of food after discussing possibilities among the group (the ‘product’). In the literature many authors also argue that a task outcome can be either ‘product’, or ‘process’, or both (e.g., Samuda & Bygate, 2008). In this sense, Example 1 involves the ‘process’ outcome, in that it requires learners to use language in an interactive process, while Example 2 can be regarded as having both product and process outcomes, which are essential for the process of learning.

*Language teaching should allow learners to make use of any resources available to them to carry out tasks*

This principle is associated with the principle of meaning-focusedness discussed above. In conveying the message meaningfully during the process of task completion, it is important that learners are not restricted to using any particular forms. In other words, they should be allowed to make use of any language resources, both verbal and non-verbal, to express what they want to mean. In language classrooms, it is then advised that provision of predetermined language features (such as a grammatical structure or a new word) is not necessary; rather, it is necessary to engage learners in using the language meaningfully to complete the task, even though through this process learners may encounter linguistic challenges and make errors. Production unfocused (Ellis, 2003b) or unscripted tasks (Bygate, 1999), to some extent, represent this principle (unscripted tasks mean students’ language is not written out for them).



However, this does not mean that there should be no provision of language as part of preparation for task performance. In language classrooms, language provision (or input) may be done through the teacher asking students to read a related text (Willis & Willis, 2007), or getting students to listen (or watch) a similar task performed by other learners (Nunan, 2004). Where teaching of language features is needed, it is particularly important that such teaching does not constrain learners to pay full attention to them; in contrast, these items should be viewed as available language features which students may need to use during the process of task completion.

*Language teaching should provide a place for focus on form in task sequences*

Long (1985a, 1985b, 1991) offers a distinction between ‘focus on forms’ and ‘focus on form’, the latter of which is claimed to be appropriate in task-based instruction. *Focus on forms* is where learners are exposed to explicit explanation of language features, as in conventional approaches such as PPP, and thus is considered outside of TBLT domain. *Focus on form*, in contrast, occurs incidentally during the process of task performance, through methodological procedures such as negative feedback to promote ‘noticing’ and ‘noticing-the-gap’ (Schmidt, 1990) without interrupting the communicative process.

Early proponents of TBLT suggest that tasks should not carry elements of focus on form. Recently, however, such a strong emphasis on meaning raises a concern that learners may pay too much attention to meaning, thus compromising linguistic attention (e.g., Swan, 2005; Widdowson, 2003), leading learners to bypass form, which results in inaccurate language use (Skehan, 1996). There has been a call for some focus on form resulting from arguments on the role of explicit language instruction, which argues for a condition that allows learners to notice the gap between their existing and the potential knowledge in language learning (Schmidt, 1990). This suggests TBLT proponents need to consider a place for form in their own approaches, in finding ways to focus on form without losing the characteristics of communicative tasks.

Various authors (e.g., Ellis, 2003b; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996) propose incorporating form-focused activities into the task sequence, although they do so in different ways. Ellis (2003b) proposed the use of *focused* tasks (as

opposed to *unfocused* tasks, which do not rely on any particular linguistic features). He suggests that there are two ways to make a task focused. The first is to design the task in a way that it can only be completed if learners use the intended feature. However, it is not always possible to design such tasks, especially in terms of production, because in performing the task, the intended feature may not be used, such as when learners use communicative strategies to get around the targeted feature. The second way, according to Ellis, is to make the targeted feature the content of the task, which Ellis (1991, 1997) calls ‘consciousness raising tasks’. Ellis claims that these remain tasks rather than exercises because learners are required to talk about the information together and generate or test hypotheses – which are, therefore, task outcomes. Like in any other topic, this process results in exchange of ideas and information and remains meaning-focused.

Willis (1996) puts forward a ‘task cycle’ in which language analysis is placed after the main task has been completed. The focus on form, then, occurs as a result of the task performance, where learners experience linguistic problems during the main task. Both Nunan (2004) and Skehan (1998), in contrast, argue for a focus on form to occur during the pre-task phase. Nunan (2004), for example, offers a sequence for a unit of work where an explicit focus on form is placed before the main task, but after learners have already been exposed to such linguistic features in a meaningful way. Nunan argues that this occurrence is different from conventional methods in that a focus on form should occur after learners have seen, heard and spoken the language items in contextualised activities, rather than linguistic elements being isolated and presented out of context, as they are in conventional approaches.

By using focus-on-form procedures, teachers will be able to focus on certain specific features that arise from the process of task transaction, such as when a learner makes an error in language production. TBLT literature has suggested that corrective feedback in task-based classrooms should be non-interruptive, in the sense that it does not affect the process of conveying meaning on the part of learners (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Ellis, 2003b), via the use of planned or incidental focus on form (Ellis, 2001). In planned focus on form, the

teacher “preselects a form for attention and designs a focused communicative task that will provide opportunities for its use” (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004, p. 244), that is, focused tasks. In incidental focus on form, the teacher does not pre-specify what form is to be attended to, but rather such a focus arises naturally from the process of communication, with the teacher using such techniques as recast, clarification request, etc. It is important that whether planned or incidental, corrective feedback which is conducted during task performance should remain implicit so that learners do not have to pay entire attention to the feature being corrected.

It is important, and also relevant to this study, to point out that a place for form goes beyond a focus on syntactical features. Ellis (2009) points out that ‘form’ in TBLT also includes vocabulary and pronunciation. Citing Williams (1999), his work with colleagues (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001), and Loewen (2005), Ellis shows that approximately half of identified form-focused episodes in TBLT classrooms deal with vocabulary and pronunciation. For example, during task completion the teacher can always focus learners’ attention on particular vocabulary items, or some pronunciation issues that result from learners’ attempts to perform tasks. Similarly, such focuses can occur in pre-task or post-task phases. However, it is extremely important that any focus on form should always occur in the context of communication and involve learner’s engagement. Researchers have also suggested that learners’ engagement in such focus is significant for language uptake (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Newton, 2001; Williams, 1999).

The TBLT principles above are not meant to be exhaustive, but they represent fundamental criteria for the evaluation of task design and task utilisation in the classroom that the present study on teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding TBLT seeks to investigate. In doing so, it is useful to further distinguish tasks from other classroom work and this will be discussed in the next sub-section.

### **3.1.2.3 Tasks, activities, and exercises**

Tasks can be distinguished from other types of classroom work (activities, exercises) using different perspectives. Kumaravadivelu (1993), for instance, interprets these from the perspective of how pedagogical procedures are viewed.

From this perspective, tasks are used in learning-centred procedures, communicative activities in learner-centred procedures and structural exercises in language-centred procedures. According to this point of view, tasks have a broader and more comprehensive scope than activities, which again are broader and more comprehensive than exercises. Like Kumaravadivelu, Ellis (2003b) distinguishes tasks from exercises from the perspective of the focus of the classroom work. According to Ellis, tasks require learners to “function primarily as ‘language users’ in the sense that they must employ the same kinds of communicative processes as those involved in real-world activities” (p. 3). Learning by this sense is thus incidental, in that learners ‘pick up’ language features implicitly through the process of task completion. Exercises, in contrast, require learners to function primarily as ‘language learners’, that is, they see particular language features as the objects of the learning. In this sense, learning is intentional.

Nunan (2004) offers a similar distinction by arguing that communicative activities are a ‘half-way house’ between tasks and exercises, because in communicative activities, learners are required to practise restricted language items, which is similar to language exercises; and they include characteristics of meaningful communication, which resembles characteristics of pedagogical tasks. Samuda and Bygate (2008) distinguish tasks and analytical activities, considering the former as holistic where learners firstly make a choice in meaning, which results in making choices in wording and grammarisation, which in turn results in choices of pronunciation. Analytical activities, according to Samuda and Bygate, start with a focus on “pre-selected language item or items, as in a drill involving the production of a particular vowel sound or a minimal pair contrast without attention to meaning” (p. 8).

For the purpose of this study, the distinction is established based on a number of criteria which are useful to see the differences between tasks and other types of language work (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Exercise, activity, and task

	Language exercise	Activity	Task
Description	Language work that focuses on analysis (e.g., choose the correct form) or intentional practice of particular language features (e.g., drills)	Meaningful language work where learners attend to meaning while bearing in mind to use some pre-determined language features directed by the teachers or materials	A goal directed activity in which learners use any language available to them to reach a non-linguistic outcome
Focus	Linguistic	Meaning	Meaning
Outcome	Linguistic	N/A	Non-linguistic
Language used	Predetermined	Predetermined	Not predetermined
Completion required?	Required	Not required	Required

Littlewood (2004) offers a useful continuum for task evaluation (reproduced in Figure 3.2) which comprises five degrees of focus: in one extreme there is non-communicative learning (focus on forms), which is aligned with ‘exercises’ by Ellis (2003b), or ‘enabling tasks’ by Estaire and Zanon (1994); at the other extreme there is authentic communication, which is similar to tasks (Ellis), or ‘communicative tasks’ (Esaire & Zanon). This continuum will be useful for analysing teaching practices in this study.

Focus on forms		←	→	Focus on meaning	
Non-communicative learning	Pre-communicative learning	Communicative language practice	Structured communication	Authentic communication	
Focusing on the structures of language, how they are formed and what they mean, e.g., substitution exercises, ‘discovery’ and awareness-raising activities	Practising language with some attention to meaning but not communicating new messages to others, e.g., ‘question-and-answer’ practice	Practising pre-taught language in a context where it communicates new information, e.g., information-gap activities or ‘personalized’ questions	Using language to communicate in situations which elicit pre-learnt language, but with some unpredictability, e.g., structured role-play and simple problem-solving	Using language to communicate in situations where the meanings are unpredictable, e.g., creative role-play, more complex problem-solving and discussion	
‘Exercises’	←	(Ellis)	→	‘Tasks’	
‘Enabling tasks’	←	(Esaire and Zanon)	→	‘Communicative tasks’	

Figure 3.2: The continuum from focus on forms to focus on meaning (Littlewood, 2004, p. 322)

The distinction implies two versions of TBLT in the literature (Skehan, 1996). The ‘strong’ form of TBLT argues against a place for explicit attention to form in a task-based lesson. Tasks, according to this version, are used to engage learners through transactional activities in which language use is contextualised, where language is regarded as a medium of transaction for task completion. A ‘weak’ version of TBLT, or ‘task-supported teaching’ (Ellis, 2003b), sees tasks as an integral part of language teaching, but tasks are integrated into a complex sequence of instruction, where they are preceded and/or followed by focused instruction of language features. In this sense, this approach is “clearly very close to the general communicative language teaching” (Skehan, 1996, p. 39), in that it is compatible with a conventional version of CLT with PPP sequences, with tasks integrated only in the production stage. Ellis (2003b) states:

The distinction between a weak and a strong version of CLT parallels the distinction between task-supported language teaching and task-based language teaching. The weak version views tasks as a way of providing communicative practice for language items that have been introduced in a more traditional way... The strong version sees tasks as a means of enabling learners to learn a language by experiencing how it is used in communication. In the strong version, tasks are both necessary and sufficient for learning. (p.28)

Task-supported language teaching, therefore, is not very different from the weak version of CLT mentioned earlier, because in such a method “a language item is first presented to the learners by means of examples without or without explanation, [which] is then practised in a controlled manner” (Ellis, 2003b, p. 29). Even if there is no presentation of language items, the focus on particular language features that are believed as essential for subsequent tasks (e.g., through an awareness-raising activity) is present in task-supported language teaching.

The distinction between the two versions of TBLT is of relevance to the present study, a fundamental aspect of which is concerned with how the teachers implement tasks in their language classrooms. For example, analysis of classroom practices may result in where the participant teachers are situated in the continuum of meaning/form-focused outlined in these two versions.

The next section will further discuss task characteristics that encompass the underlying principles of TBLT presented above, with the purpose of outlining dimensions necessary for the analysis of textbook tasks and teachers' practices in the present study.

### 3.1.2.4 Dimensions of task characteristics

In investigating teachers' orientation to TBLT implementation, both in terms of beliefs and practices, it is important to identify a representative set of task characteristics in the principles of TBLT in order to gauge such orientation. Definitions of tasks (see Figure 3.1), TBLT principles and discussions of task characteristics in the literature show diverse characteristics as to what a task constitutes. Table 3.2 presents fundamental dimensions of a number of task characteristics in the literature, which are used for this study.

Table 3.2: Dimensions of task characteristics

Dimension	Characteristics	
Focus	Meaning (unfocused)	Form (focused)
Focus on form	Implicit	Explicit
Language in Process	Spontaneous	Predictable
Authenticity	Situational	Interactional
Solution	Closed	Open

The first dimension concerns the focus of the task, that is, whether it focuses on *meaning* or on *form*. This dimension represents the two types of tasks proposed by Ellis (2003b) – unfocused and focused tasks. However, he notes that in second language learning, few tasks focus entirely on either meaning or form. Ellis (2003b) astutely points out that while a task may be regarded as focusing on meaning, there may be some occasions during the performance of the task when the learners have to pay peripheral attention to form, such as when they have to look for an appropriate structure or lexical item to express their ideas. However, as explicitly seen in Figure 3.1 and section 3.1.2.2, all TBLT advocates suggest that tasks should focus primarily on meaning.

Following the distinction made by Long (e.g, 1990) regarding 'focus on form' and 'focus on forms' (see 3.1.2.2), throughout the rest of the thesis, especially when

textbook analysis (Chapter Five) and data presentation and discussion (Chapters Six and Seven), the term ‘focus on form’ is used to refer to the standard TBLT situation where attention to language features arises incidentally within the context of on-going communication. In contrast, whenever the term ‘focus on forms’ is used, it refers to the teaching practice where attention to language features is made explicit to learners through, for example, pre-teaching, explanation, or correction. The term ‘form-focused’ and ‘forms-focused’ are also used to refer to focus-on-form and focus-on-forms practices, respectively.

The second dimension is closely associated with the meaning-form distinction. Following Ellis’ (2003b) argument that a meaningful task could sometimes involve a focus on form, there is a question of whether such a focus is implicit or explicit *during the course of task completion*. TBLT proponents generally favour implicit attention to form if there needs to be any at all (see, for example, the TIP task (Samuda, 2001; Samuda & Bygate, 2008)). Ellis (2003b) argues that even a language consciousness-raising task can become implicit because in such a task, language items become the subject of discussion, and learners, while talking about such features, may still focus on meaning, and do not necessarily use the items in their discussion. Explicitness refers to situations in which learners are aware of the targeted features which are made salient to them. Drawing on the distinction provided by Long (1991), explicit attention to grammar can be referred to as ‘focus on forms’, where task designers and/or the teacher make clear to learners what features they are supposed to learn. This could be followed by intensive explanation and drill of the targeted features, on the assumption that the features would move from declarative knowledge to proceduralised knowledge (Anderson, 1989). This way of achieving explicitness is in line with the PPP model of instruction (Thornbury, 1997), whereby language features are presented and drilled before production of such features is allowed.

Implicitness, on the other hand, is that ‘noticing’ is made to happen in the ‘focus on form’ manner (Long, 1990). In this way, learners ‘notice’ a language feature, such as a grammatical structure, incidentally in the process of task completion. Implicit focus on form still allows learners to focus on meaning, but they have opportunities to reflect on their interlanguage system to identify the ‘gap’ between



their current language repertoire and the new feature. In short, if learners are told to use particular language features for task completion, the process is explicit; on the other hand, if learners are not told what language items to use, but the task itself predetermines some form to be articulated, it can be regarded as implicit.

The next dimension of task characteristics concerns the process of language use during the process of task performance. Textbook tasks can to some extent predict task-in-process, in terms of, for example, whether it stimulates interaction or not (Ellis, 2003b). Tasks that are *predictable* specify language features that learners are likely to use during the course of task completion. Focused tasks (Ellis, 2003b) and the ‘Things in Pockets’ task (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) are examples of predictable tasks. There are two levels of predictability, however. Focused and ‘unscripted’ tasks can be predictable in terms language domain, but they are not ‘scripted’, that is, the language is not written for learners. Scripted tasks are, therefore, regarded as high in terms of predictability. *Spontaneous* tasks are those which do not restrict learners in using any grammatical structures or models, but rather allow them to mobilise any resources available to them for the purpose of task completion. In this way, unfocused tasks (Ellis, 2003b) are spontaneous. When it comes to teaching, however, a process-oriented task may turn out to be a linguistic practice activity if the teacher attempts to make it one, such as when the teacher provides learners with a language framework and asks them to use it for task completion. It is, then, the teacher’s intention and behaviour in the classroom that contributes much to whether a task is predictable or spontaneous.

Another dimension of task characteristics is in terms of its authenticity. Task authenticity refers to a crucial question of what drives learners to complete the task. According to Ellis (2003b), tasks achieve authenticity in either *situational* or *interactional* correspondence. Situational authenticity refers to whether a task corresponds with a real-world activity, such as those in Long’s (1985a) definition. As such, ‘dressing a child’, ‘weighing a patient’ and ‘reserving a hotel room’ are regarded as being situationally authentic. However, classroom tasks do not always have such a characteristic; rather, many language learning tasks are interactionally authentic. This characteristic partially reflects some relationship to the real world (Skehan, 1996). Examples of such tasks are telling a story based on a set of

pictures, and ‘spot the differences’. Although these do not correspond to activities learners are likely to do outside the classroom, the kind of language behaviour used in such tasks represents language behaviour resulting from performing real-world tasks.

Tasks can sometimes be distinguished in terms of task solution (Ellis, 2003b), i.e., the open/closed distinction. *Open* tasks allow learners to decide on a solution which is not intended to be judged as correct or incorrect. In other words, in completing open tasks learners are free to decide on the solution. Tasks that involve learners in making choices, debating, ranking etc. are open. *Closed* tasks, on the other hand, require learners to arrive at a single correct solution. Such tasks as ‘spot the differences’ are closed, because learners will reach a number of differences between two pictures. From the perspective of the Interaction Hypothesis, research has shown that closed tasks generally generate more negotiation than open tasks, reaching a conclusion that “closed tasks are more likely to promote acquisition” (Ellis, 2003b, p. 91).

Researchers and TBLT advocates have identified favourable characteristics of tasks. For example, in Table 3.2, characteristics listed in the first column (meaning, implicit, spontaneous, situational, closed) are claimed to be more positive than the ones listed on to the right. It is relevant for this study to consider these characteristics in relation to the Vietnamese teachers’ utilisation and perceptions of textbook tasks.

This section has covered a number of theoretical issues regarding the development of TBLT, task definitions, the principles of TBLT and some relevant characteristics of tasks in the literature. This review is fundamental in exploring the extent of orientation to TBLT in the teachers in the present study in terms of their beliefs and practices. The next section will shift attention to the other aspect of this study’s topic – teachers’ beliefs.

## **3.2 Teachers' beliefs**

In spite of having lagged behind as compared with mainstream education generally, the area of language teacher cognition has become a well-established domain of inquiry over the past two decades (Borg, 2006). Indeed, a substantial body of research has been carried out to investigate a wide range of issues associated with language teachers' mental lives. This section reviews relevant literature in the area of teacher cognition for the present study. Drawing on the existing literature, an operational definition of teachers' beliefs is offered. This is followed by some distinction between teachers' beliefs and other related constructs. The next sub-section focuses on the nature of teachers' beliefs, by reviewing factors that contribute to their formation and discussing these factors in relation to Sociocultural Theory. The following subsection discusses the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices with relation to the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Section 3.2.5 outlines studies on language teachers' beliefs, providing analysis of topics, contexts, methods, and approaches of available language teacher cognition studies. Section 3.2.6, finally, reviews previous findings regarding the relationships between teachers' beliefs and their practices, an aspect this study seeks to investigate.

### **3.2.1 Defining teachers' beliefs**

Some 20 years ago, Pajares (1992) claimed that teachers' beliefs are 'a messy construct', meaning that such a construct is not easily defined and studied, and this still holds true today. Until recently, there have been various conceptualisations defining different sub-areas under the umbrella term 'teacher cognition'. Borg (2003, 2006) attempts to bring together all notions under this construct consisting of sixteen different aspects of teachers' mental processes, including beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, metaphors, assumptions, conceptions and perspectives – to name a few. Researchers use the terms to mean slightly different things, depending on the purpose of the research and the specific area that they attempt to explore.

Using a broader definition, Borg (2003) states that teacher cognition is "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and

think” (p.81). It can be interpreted that this construct is tacit, mental-driven, and complex in its own meaning, and may include all mental processes that a teacher holds. Borg uses this term to collectively refer to all psychological constructs of teachers’ mental lives (Borg, 2003). Admitting the complex issue of defining this construct, Borg (2006), however, usefully provides a suggestion that in the area of language teacher cognition research, it is adequate to use one or more of such constructs for any particular study’s own purposes.

Following this advice, this study adopts Richardson’s (1996) definition of a teacher’s belief, which is “a proposition that is accepted as true by the individual holding the belief” (p.104). This definition is in line with that proposed by Pajares (1992) which describes teachers’ beliefs as “judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition” (p. 316). In the present study, beliefs are elicited in relation to actual classroom behaviours carried out by the teachers, and thus teachers’ beliefs are identified as interpretation of teachers’ evaluative statements about specific classroom behaviours through which personal ideas, thoughts and judgement about how language should be taught become explicit.

An important issue that this study also seeks to identify is the relative centrality of components within the belief system that teachers hold. Borg (2006, p. 272) notes:

Further research is thus required for us to understand not just what language teachers have cognitions about, but how different elements in teachers’ cognitive systems interact and which of these elements, for example, are core and which are peripheral.

Building on the work of Green (1971) and Rokeach (1968), Haney and McArthur (2002) and Phipps and Borg (2009) have distinguished beliefs that are *core* and those that are *peripheral*. According to these authors, core beliefs are more influential and less susceptible to change. The centrality of beliefs is defined by Rokeach (1968) in terms of “connectedness” (p.5). As such, beliefs that are connected with the individual’s identity and that are shared by others in the community are more connected. Similarly, beliefs that are (positively) experienced or learnt from others through observation are more connected. In

contrast, beliefs, such as those about matters of taste, which are less connected to other beliefs and experience, are considered peripheral.

In the area of second and foreign language teaching, identification of core and peripheral beliefs has been attempted so far only by Phipps and Borg (2009) when they investigated teachers' beliefs in relation to grammar teaching. However, given the limited research in investigating these elements, they argue that:

theoretically, the relationships between beliefs and practices and between core and peripheral beliefs we have posited here are relevant to, and provide a framework for, continuing language teaching research more generally. (p. 388)

Because core and peripheral beliefs are conceptually distinguished in terms of 'connectedness' (see above), in the present study, core and peripheral beliefs are identified according to whether such beliefs are enacted in the classroom behaviours (Haney & McArthur, 2002). As such, core beliefs are defined as those which are both expressed by the teachers and realised in classroom practices. Peripheral beliefs are stated, but are not observed in their teaching. However, in contexts of professional practice, it is possible for someone to believe profoundly in a number of, for example, teaching principles, but have to act otherwise to manage particular situations and constraints. Therefore, look-outs should be maintained for any of such likelihood during data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is also noted that this study involved a prolonged period of data collection, which allowed the researcher to cross-check whether a particular belief belongs the core or peripheral belief system.

### **3.2.2 Teachers' beliefs in relation to other mental constructs**

It is important to distinguish the concept of beliefs from other mental constructs, in particular the concept of knowledge. Beliefs and knowledge have been argued to be interwoven (Verloop, Van Driel, & Meijer, 2001; Woods, 1996) and therefore the distinction between these two constructs is not easily made. Within the conception of 'teacher knowledge', different labels have been used to refer to its sub-concepts, prominently "received knowledge" and "experiential knowledge" (Wallace, 1991), referring to factual knowledge that derives from

academic sources, and reflective knowledge that results from classroom experience. Although researchers such as van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001) claim that knowledge may encompass such constructs as formal knowledge, experiential knowledge and personal beliefs, it is useful, for the purpose of this study, to draw on Zahorik (1986), followed by Richards (1998), where they suggest that teachers' conceptions have three categories: science-research conceptions, theory-philosophy conceptions and art-craft conceptions.

Science-research conceptions are those which view language teaching as a scientific activity, in which teachers operationalise teaching principles from research, follow a tested model of teaching, and do what effective teachers do. Theory-philosophy conceptions are formed based on data-free theories and principles, which shape teachers' thinking of not what works but what ought to work and what is morally right. Richards (1998) suggests that this category can be viewed as rational (what ought to work) and value-based (what is morally right). Art-craft conceptions are those built through the process of developing their teaching skills in different ways according to specific situations. Richards claims that each teacher has their own unique skills and techniques, that there are no general methods for teaching, and that teachers make decisions due to what they feel is best in their specific context.

According to this categorisation, the science-research conceptions can be interpreted as similar to teachers' formal knowledge, referring to "things we 'know' – conventionally accepted facts" (Woods, 1996, p. 195). This knowledge may include, but is not limited to, such terms in teacher cognition literature as pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton, 1999, 2000), pedagogical content knowledge (Howey & Grossman, 1989), theories of practice (Tsui, 2003) and knowledge about language (Borg, 2005). Theory-philosophy may be regarded as teachers' beliefs (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004), indicating personal thinking in relation to specific context of teaching, based on judgement or opinion (Prawat, 1992), gained through the experience of teaching and learning. Various terms used in the literature may represent this construct, including personal theories (Sendan & Roberts, 1998), theories for practice (Burns, 1996; Tsui, 2003), images (Johnson, 1994), and maxims (Richards, 1996). Art-craft conceptions include the knowledge

and beliefs that are transferable into practice in a specific context (e.g., a classroom), and knowledge and beliefs that teachers generate “as a result of their experiences as teachers and their reflections on these experiences” (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999, p. 60). As such, when teachers teach two different classes (e.g., young learners vs. adults) they may employ different sets of knowledge and beliefs into their decision-making process that fit particular learners and contexts. Alternatively, they may similarly generate their own set of knowledge and beliefs due to their understanding of the context, the learners, learning outcomes and expectations, among various others. In this sense, art-craft conceptions may be similarly referred to as teachers’ practical knowledge (Meijer *et al.*, 1999) or ability (Woods & Çakır, 2011).

Although so classified, these constructs are interwoven (Woods, 1996), and cannot always be clearly differentiated. For example, while it may be possible to identify researchers’ knowledge (science-research or ‘formal’) as opposed to teachers’ knowledge (art-craft or practical), it may be difficult to distinguish ‘art-craft’ practical knowledge from beliefs, because both are generated from teachers’ personal experiences and their own view of teaching and learning. It can be seen, however, that the difference in those beliefs derived from science-research and theory-philosophy conceptions represent more ideal conceptions which may or may not be implemented in classroom practices, while art-craft conceptions tend to be those which are successfully transferred in classrooms. In this way, such art-craft conceptions or practical knowledge can be considered part of the beliefs that teachers hold, and closely related to classroom practices. In this study, teachers’ beliefs are identified to include both theory-philosophy and art-craft aspects of teachers’ thinking.

As argued by Woods (1996), given the interweaving nature of these constructs, it is useful to address them in terms of relationships rather than distinctions. In Woods and Çakır (2011), the authors elaborate the relationship between impersonal knowledge (i.e., theoretical knowledge received from the literature or taught in training courses) and personal knowledge (i.e., theoretical knowledge generated from, or reflected on, experience). Their study draws on evidence that impersonal knowledge is highly valued but isolated from teachers’ experience.

However, they argue that once this knowledge “is connected to the more fine-grained texture of actual experience, the theoretical concept [CLT] is deconstructed, personalised and reinterpreted” (p. 388). On the other hand, personal knowledge (or practical knowledge) which derives from experience “becomes articulated and rises to the level of awareness when it is confronted with theoretical knowledge” (p. 389).

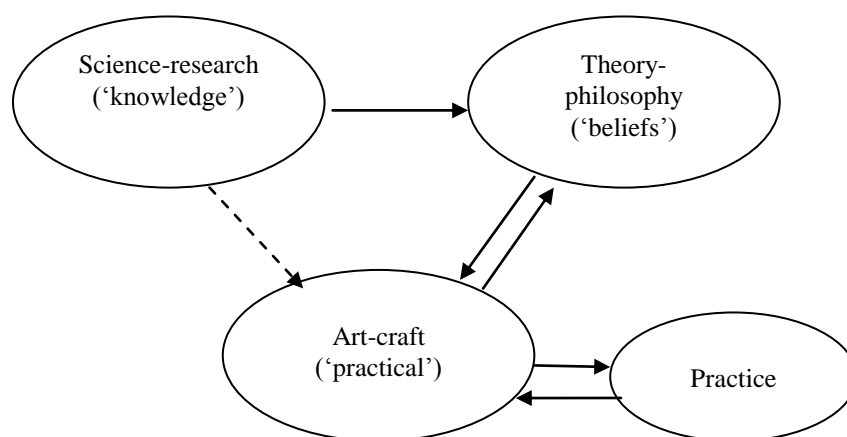


Figure 3.3: Mental constructs of teacher cognition

Drawing on such literature, it is useful now to make claims of relationship among these constructs for the purpose of this study. In Figure 3.3, it can be seen that the science-research (unmodified) knowledge (Woods & Çakır, 2011), or ‘formal’ knowledge (Meijer *et al.*, 1999) contributes to the development of beliefs and practical knowledge, in that teachers develop their own beliefs and practical knowledge based partially on their understanding of theories of language learning and teaching such as TBLT, but from the perspective of classroom research, this formal knowledge is not necessarily integrated into personalised beliefs and knowledge. Beliefs and practical knowledge are closely related, in the sense that what teachers believe about language teaching and learning informs their realised practical knowledge, and in turn, such practical knowledge gained through experiences adds, fosters and modifies beliefs. In the same way, practical knowledge is closely related to classroom practices.

From this point on, when the term ‘beliefs’ is used in the present study, as noted above, it necessarily comprises both aspects of teachers’ personal cognition,



namely theory-philosophy and art-craft cognitions presented in Figure 3.3, and reflects the definition presented in 3.2.1.

### **3.2.3 Nature of teachers' beliefs from a sociocultural perspective**

It can be seen from the aforementioned definitions that teachers' beliefs are personal (every teacher has his/her own beliefs that are different from those of others) and evaluative (it is a matter of truth or falsity). However, this study also acknowledges the social dimension of teachers' beliefs (Clancey, 1997) in that language teachers' beliefs, like other constructs of human cognition, are *situated*. Teachers' beliefs, therefore, are seen to be formed and developed through their experience in a range of social and professional contexts. This stimulates the adoption of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) as a theoretical and analytical framework to understand the nature of teachers' beliefs in this study.

As informed by research, teachers are nowadays regarded as active thinkers (Borg, 2006) because beliefs, like knowledge, are formed through a process of learning. From a sociocultural perspective, the forming and developing of beliefs take place in a social, cultural and contextual setting: "the way in which our consciousness develops depends on the specific social activities in which we engage" (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p. 730). In the present study, taking this perspective, to understand what teachers believe, think and do, as well as why they think what they do, teachers are regarded as learners. This is based on the idea that "in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn" (Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 1). Research on teacher learning has long been reliant on psychocognitivist tradition, which views cognition as a purely mental construct:

Although the psychocognitive paradigm assumed that what teachers thought translated directly into behaviour (i.e., a causal relationship between internal mental processes with external physical practices), the expanded focus on thinking *in relation to* practice in the 1980s and 1990s revealed that what teachers know, think, and even believe can contradict their practice in classrooms. (Cross, 2010, p. 436, emphasis in original)

Thus, Cross elaborates the need for looking at teacher learning from a different perspective, one that encompasses not only teachers' mental constructs, but also their experiences and the world around them. In other words, teachers' beliefs should be investigated taking cognisance of their practice and context. This, therefore, provides a rationale for choosing Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) as the main interpretive framework to understand teachers' beliefs in this study.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) has its roots in the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues. SCT argues that cognitive development is a process of *mediation* in which human beings make use of the cultural artefacts to regulate their thinking and behaviour (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Such a process of mediation is fulfilled through participation in cultural and social settings, such as within families or classrooms. In contrast to behaviourism, which argues that humans develop thinking and new behaviours through imitation, the central idea of SCT is that human mind does not respond directly to the external material world, but rather that cognition is mediated by cultural tools and activities (Lantolf, 2000). In learning, the process of mediation takes the form of regulation, which comprises three stages: object-regulation, other-regulation and self-regulation (see Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In the first stage, learners often rely on objects around them to think. For example, young children usually use sticks or blocks to do calculations. The second stage – other-regulation – involves different levels of assistance and direction from other people: parents, teachers, peers, adults and so on. These two stages are clearly illustrated by the term 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), which is the distance between the actual level of development and the potential level of development under guidance and assistance of objects, adults or more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The third stage – self-regulation – refers to the activity where learners no longer need external assistance or guidance to accomplish a certain task. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2007), self-regulation is carried out through the process of internalization, "the process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual" ( p. 204).

In relation to understanding teacher cognition, Cross (2010) argues that teacher thinking should be viewed under “the contexts within which the interaction between thinking and practice take place” (p.437). Such contexts include social, historical, cultural and political elements which should be taken into account in understanding their thinking. In other words, teachers should be viewed as social agents, whose cognition is influenced by various social factors, such as learning experience, historical background, professional development and the community within which they work.

To address teachers’ beliefs using this analytical framework, Cross (2010) rejects a descriptive-analytic orientation in research design which focuses on the more immediate aspects of teachers’ beliefs and practices - such as analysis relying largely on contemporary interview data, classroom practices, or a combination of both. He then argues for a genetic-analytical orientation, in which:

[A]ny instance of observable activity that takes place in the present (i.e. teachers’ classroom practice) is analysed not only on the basis of what teachers think (i.e., in the here and now) but also the genesis that underpins that thought/practice relationship”. (p.439)

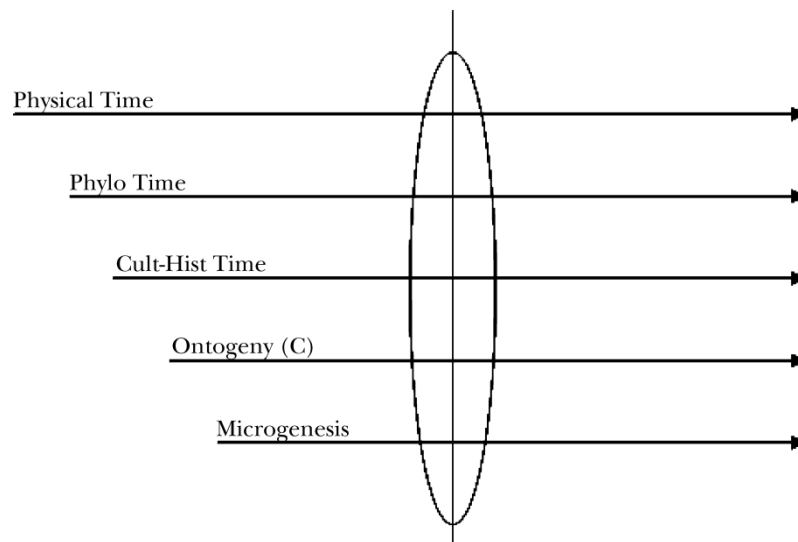


Figure 3.4: Sociocultural theoretical domains of genetic analysis (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 20)

Cole and Engeström (1993) represent this concept of genetic development as including four interrelated domains (Figure 3.4). In this model, the phylogenetic domain considers the development of human beings as a natural species, while the cultural-historic domain looks at the broader context in which humans belong – the social, cultural and historic basis of development. The ontogenesis focuses on the development of the subject as an individual, and the micro-genetic domain includes momentary instances of particular activity the individual engages in, which accumulate to form the ontogenesis domain. The focal point of analysis is represented by the ellipse, which “highlights the nested and interrelated nature of all four domains at any one point of time” (Cross, 2010, p. 438).

Using this concept, Cross (2010) demonstrates that in understanding teacher cognition it is important to have different ‘layers’ of data that represent the domains illustrated, including cultural-historic data (e.g., the broader policy context), ontogenetic data (e.g., teachers’ background and experience), and micro-genetic data (e.g., instances of moment-by-moment classroom practices). These kinds of data will be further discussed in Chapter Four, where the framework is employed in the research design for this study.

### **3.2.4 Understanding classroom decisions: Theory of Planned Behaviour**

In terms of explaining relationship between what teachers think, believe and what they do, it is helpful to refer to Ajzen’s (1991a, 1991b, 2005, 2011) work in the field of social psychology. Specifically, he proposes the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which is used to predict certain behaviour in various social entities (e.g., rubbish recycling; alcoholic drinking; or breast examination).

According to this theory, an individual’s behaviour can be predicted by his/her statements of intention. Intentions to do something are derived from three important direct elements: attitude toward the behaviour (AB), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC).

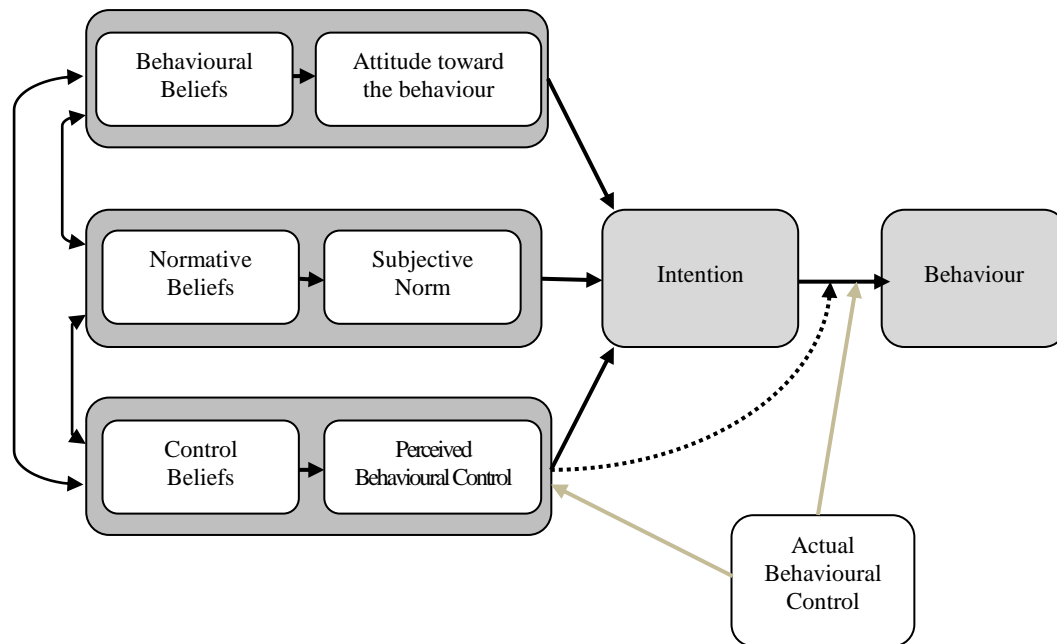


Figure 3.5: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2006)

The attitude toward the behaviour (AB) is defined as including the individual's evaluation of the outcome of the behaviour. In other words, if the person believes that the behaviour will probably lead to a favourable outcome, and if the other two elements support such evaluation, an intention to engage in the behaviour will form. AB is a personal construct that represents the *salient* beliefs that the individual holds about the behaviour. The extent to which the attitude is positive results from the strength of the beliefs about the outcome of the behaviour.

The construct of subjective norm (SN) is defined as the extent to which the individual thinks that the other significant people are supportive of his/her engaging in the behaviour. This social construct, again, represents the individual's *salient* beliefs about whether the behaviour would be approved by other people who are important to his/her life and work. These people, in regard to the area of teaching, may include the principal, the head of the department, 'important' colleagues, parents, and their own students (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996). The stronger the individual thinks that the behaviour is supported, the more likely that SN is transferred to the intention to engage in the behaviour.

Finally, perceived behavioural control (PBC) is defined by the presence of resources and challenges that either facilitate or hinder the behaviour in question. PBC is derived from the individual's *salient* beliefs about whether the behaviour

is facilitated by internal (knowledge, skills, ability) and external (resources, opportunities, cooperation) factors. *Internal* factors include the individual's ability and skills to perform the behaviour in question. In teaching, this is concerned with whether the teacher perceives that she/he has knowledge, skills, and abilities to control over classroom behaviour. *External* factors include perceived presence or absence of facilities such as teaching materials and classroom equipment and higher-level factors such as time, examinations, and academic support.

The three elements of the TPB are claimed to interact to contribute to the formation of the intention to engage in the behaviour. However, as Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) note, "[t]he interplay between the elements will vary across cultures, organisations, and individuals, and the amount of weighting given to each element may also change with the type of behaviour concerned" (p. 355). This is important regarding investigating teachers' beliefs in this study, which takes the historical, cultural, social and contextual factors as interpreting elements to understand their beliefs and practices.

The TPB has been criticised for its rather behaviourist approach (Haney & McArthur, 2002) and its neglect of various other factors such as emotion and affect (Ajzen, 2011). These limitations are acknowledged in the present study to allow reflection for confirmation or/and disconfirmation from the data, and also used as the starting point for any potential enhancement of the theory. Nevertheless, the theory is utilised in the present study as one of the theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices. Firstly, this is because the theory emphasises the role of beliefs, which research in education generally and applied linguistics particularly has shown to play a pivotal role in shaping classroom decision making (see Borg, 2003, 2006). Furthermore, despite its popular application in various domains, it seems that no empirical research studies in applied linguistics have adopted the theory in investigating teachers' beliefs and their classroom behaviours. In this sense, the present study is seeking to occupy a new theoretical ground to understand language teachers' beliefs.

Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) claim that the theory is a useful lens through which the complexity of beliefs can be presented. In the present study, to a large extent,

the way data were collected also reflects the elements in this theory: observation data were used to investigate the classroom behaviour; lesson planning data uncovered intentions the teachers had; stimulated recall, focus group data and the research journal provided information about attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control and the respective beliefs (see 4.4.6).

In short, the TPB is used in this study as a lens through which teachers' beliefs and practices will be understood within the contextual setting. The theory is useful when the data from this study are viewed with reference to the contributing elements of the theory. Thus, no attempts are carried out to investigate, for example, which element in the framework has the major contribution to the formation of certain intentions. The theory, therefore, can be considered an additional interpretive framework through which teachers' beliefs and practices could be theoretically understood.

### **3.2.5 Studies of teachers' beliefs and practices**

Research on teachers' beliefs has identified two major subjects of study: pre-service language teachers and in-service language teachers. There is a substantial body of research investigating pre-service teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning, their initial stages of becoming a teacher, the impact of teacher education programmes, as well as the development of their knowledge and beliefs, among others (e.g., Almarza, 1996; Andrews, 1999; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Cumming, 1989; Farrell, 1999; Johnson, 1992, 1994, 1996; MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2001; Numrich, 1996; Peacock, 2001; Richards, Ho, & Giblin, 1996). This research illuminates student teachers' beliefs about various areas of language and language teaching, teacher learning to teach, student teachers' perceptions of issues in training programmes and practicum, which helps inform the practice of language teacher education. There is also a body of research investigating in-service teachers' beliefs of various pedagogical issues (e.g., Barnard & Scampton, 2008; Borg, 1998, 1999; Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Burns, 1992; Canh, 2011; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Freeman & Richards, 1993; Hayes, 2009; Loi, 2011; Maiklad, 2002; Nishino, 2008, 2009; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Tayjasanant & Barnard, 2010; Woods, 1996), many of which explore teachers' beliefs regarding different aspects of their teaching life such as grammar

and literacy instruction, and usefully attempt to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices.

A diversity of topics has been reported in regard to teachers' beliefs in the literature (see Borg, 2006, for a comprehensive review). Two curricular areas of language teaching are particularly identified: grammar teaching and literacy instruction, while many others focus on general processes of teachers' mental lives, including, for example, beliefs about foreign language learning (e.g., Allen, 2002; Busch, 2010), teachers' identities and roles (e.g., Farrell, 2011; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011), and decision-making and planning (e.g., Woods, 1996). There are also studies investigating teachers' beliefs about methodological aspects, such as communicative language teaching (e.g., Nishino, 2009; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Woods & Çakır, 2011), communicative competence (e.g., Nazari, 2007), and corrective feedback (e.g., Mori, 2011). Few studies have addressed teachers' beliefs about TBLT, in spite of its popularity in terms of material publications and implementation worldwide.

Methodologically, the ways researchers addressed their research questions also vary. These range from large-scale surveys to case studies. Noticeably, most of large-scale surveys were carried out with pre-service language teachers (e.g., Farrell, 1999; MacDonald *et al.*, 2001; Peacock, 2001; Schulz, 1996; 2001), student teachers or teachers enrolled in teacher training programmes, while case studies, ethnography and longitudinal studies investigated the beliefs and practices of in-service language teachers (e.g., Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Borg, 1998; Burns, 1996; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Feryok, 2008; Hayes, 2005; Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, & Son, 2004; Smith, 1996; Woods, 1996). While large-scale surveys provide statistical quantitative accounts of teachers' beliefs, they usually fail to capture insights of perceptive, personal accounts, as well as the relationship between beliefs and practices. Most of the qualitative, inductive in-depth studies have used interviews and/or observation as the main data collection tools for their research. Although such research does not permit generalisations to be made, it is able to capture teachers' stated beliefs and their corresponding classroom behaviours. However, much of research into teacher cognition to date does not address the systemic nature of teachers' beliefs as enacted in their specific



contexts. There is a need for research designs that take into account a complete picture of teachers' activities, and not merely their stated beliefs and self-reports of classroom events (Borg, 2003, 2006; Cross, 2010). Although in a more recent analysis of all teacher cognition research studies in 2011, Borg (2012) notes a trend in using multi-method, qualitative and interpretative stance in teacher cognition studies under review, those studies are generally limited in number and scale.

The adoption of methodological frameworks for inquiry is associated with a theoretical issue in research into teacher cognition. Until recently, research into teacher cognition has relied heavily on a psycho-cognitive perspective, which attempts to address both teachers' beliefs and their relationship with practices from the 'here and now' evidence (Cross, 2010). However, as Cross notes, there has been increasing interest in taking a socio-cognitive perspective to understand teachers' beliefs and practices in recent years. Among them, relatively few studies have taken into account broader social, historical, and contextual aspects of learning to make sense of what teachers think and do; Woods (1996), and Hayes (2005, 2009) are among the exceptions. Woods studied a group of Canadian teachers from an ethno-cognitive perspective, tracking the teachers' process of teaching from broader consideration of the courses they taught, as well as comprehensive insights into teachers' beliefs and practices. Hayes used a narrative approach to investigate the lives of teachers in Sri Lanka (2005) and Thailand (2009). However, these studies addressed teacher cognition without relation to specific applications of language teaching, such as TBLT.

With respect to the contexts of study, the diversity is even more apparent (Borg, 2003, 2006). A wide range of contexts have been studied, including North America, Europe, Australia, and several in Asia. However, as reviewed by Borg, it can be noticed that most of such studies were carried out in English-speaking countries (e.g., USA) and ESL contexts (e.g., Hong Kong), although a limited number of studies reviewed in Borg (2012) indicate a reverse trend. Generally, few studies have been carried out in EFL contexts, where language teaching and learning are regarded as largely, if not entirely, restricted to what teachers and learners do in the classroom (e.g., Canh, 2011; Loi, 2011; Maiklad, 2002;

McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). More specific to the feature of contexts, as noted by Borg (2006), the majority of such studies were pursued in the private sector, including language schools and centres, leaving the state-owned public schools under-researched. However, again the trend may be changing: Borg (2012) notes that 22 out of 25 recent studies he reviewed were carried out in state sector institutions.

I will now shift the focus to research studies on teachers' beliefs that have been carried out in Asian contexts, and specifically in Vietnam, leaving studies on teachers' beliefs about CLT and TBLT until the next section. Many of the following reviewed studies have been mentioned earlier, but here I will focus on the findings about teachers' beliefs reported in their research.

In Asian contexts, along with studies of teacher cognition in education generally (e.g., Cheung, 2005; Fischl & Sagy, 2005), there have been a number of research studies investigating second /foreign language teachers. Although I am aware that there is much published research on pre-service teachers in Asia (e.g., Farrell, 1999; Mak, 2011; Peacock, 2001; Richards *et al.*, 1996; Tercanlioglu, 2001), for the purpose of this study, only a selection of studies on the beliefs of practising teachers in the context are reviewed. These studies are selected in terms of relevance of topic (e.g., those focusing on teachers, views on grammar teaching, and teachers' general approaches) and context features (i.e., practising teachers).

In a trans-country context, Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (2001) conducted a questionnaire survey with 112 teachers in South East Asian countries and Australia. The results showed that the teachers most frequently identified the role of grammar and grammar teaching in communication, followed by their beliefs about learners' independence, self-directedness and responsibility for their own learning. However, the teachers also reported that they had changed their teaching practices into a more learner-centred manner, their basic philosophy of teaching to a mix of methods and strategies in teaching, from using single prescribed material to using more authentic texts, and so on. As for the sources of change, the teachers reported many factors, with in-service courses being the most frequently mentioned, followed by seminars/conferences, student feedback, and self-discovery.

In Hong Kong, Andrews (1997, 1999, 2003) conducted a series of studies focusing on teachers' language awareness and grammar pedagogy. While the 1997 and 1999 studies primarily dealt with teachers' declarative knowledge of grammar, the 2003 study is more to do with teacher cognition of grammar and grammar teaching. This study used a 60-item questionnaire and a battery of language proficiency tests on 170 participants in Hong Kong, together with in-depth interviews with 17 participants. The results are not surprising, in that, for example, there is a strong positive correlation between belief in a form/accuracy-based approach to language pedagogy and belief in a deductive approach to the teaching of grammar, and a strong negative correlation between belief in a deductive approach to teaching grammar and belief in inductive approach to grammar teaching. This study also indicates that there is little relationship between teachers' background factors and the beliefs about grammar teaching, while there is significant relationship between teachers' language proficiency/explicit grammar knowledge and beliefs about grammar/language teaching: teachers with higher levels of explicit grammar knowledge preferred an inductive approach to grammar teaching, while those with lower levels favoured a deductive approach. Analysis of qualitative data showed a tendency towards explicit, deductive form-focused teaching; grammar learning is believed to be a process of accumulation; although teachers showed appreciation of CLT, their understanding of CLT was found to be limited.

In Singapore, Farrell and Lim (2005) conducted a multi-method case study to investigate the beliefs and practices of two teachers in a primary school context. They found that the teachers had a strong belief about the role of grammar and grammar teaching. A relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices was found: the teachers' classroom practices were teacher-centred, form-focused and traditional in fashion. Farrell and Kun (2008) investigated the beliefs and practices of three primary school English teachers regarding the use of Singaporean English (Singlish) in relation to a government policy to promote 'good' English use, and to eliminate Singlish among Singaporeans. One aspect of the study addressed teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the correction of Singlish in the classroom. The results showed that although they stated that it was the teachers' responsibility to correct students' oral usage of Singlish, classroom

observation showed a low frequency of teachers' corrective feedback on Singlish usage. Their findings suggest that "the teachers' consideration of their students' confidence and the flow of the lessons have a substantial degree of influence on their beliefs about error correction" (p. 395).

In China, results from a recent study (Wan *et al.*, 2011) investigating 33 university teachers' and 70 English-major students' metaphoric perspectives reflecting teachers' roles suggest positive attitudes to current approaches to language teaching. For example, all the teachers rejected 'authority' as their perceived role of a teacher. Instead, teachers identified themselves as 'interest arouser' and 'co-worker'. Another recent study regarding English as the global language (Pan & Block, 2011) showed that while the teachers had positive attitudes towards English as a language for international communication, they stated that English teaching in China was still examination-oriented. One of the findings was that, "although English competence is believed to be useful, the deeply rooted examination culture leads to an exam-based syllabus, which clashes with the CLT approach which teachers are supposed to implement" (pp. 400-401). It seemed that the teachers were under a great constraint in transferring their beliefs into practices in such a context.

In Taiwan, Chou (2008) investigated three primary school English teachers' practical knowledge of English language teaching using a qualitative case study approach. Data from interviews, journal entries and classroom observation showed an orientation to CLT in teachers' practical knowledge of language teaching, and that the teachers used a variety of strategies to scaffold students to learn, as well as create a supportive learning environment in their teaching. Also in Taiwan, Su (2006) employed a qualitative study to explore ten teachers' beliefs about and practices of the English learning policy in Taiwan, which prescribed English learning to begin at the first grade of school education and make use of the communicative approach in teaching. The results showed that the teachers had a positive attitude to the policy, believing that children should learn English early. In classroom practices, the teachers tried to modify traditional skill-based activities to become more authentic. However, the teachers identified some constraints to implementation of such a language policy successfully, including

the impact of the proficiency test, students' mixed proficiency, large classes, and parents' expectations.

In Japan, Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) conducted a year-long multi-method study to investigate teachers' beliefs, practices and interactions among a group of teachers in a high school English department. Results from this study indicated that these teachers shaped their beliefs and practices from their previous L2 learning, their teaching experiences, and their internal interactions (e.g., learning from other colleagues). The teachers in this study showed examination-oriented teaching practices, and there was confusion among the teachers about the goals or objectives to teaching English, but they took it for granted that examination-oriented English should be taught. It also revealed that the teachers were under constraints managing school tasks and keeping students in order in their teaching. The study identified that the school's (technical) culture – its norms and values – played significant roles in shaping what and how the teachers taught, and influenced the way the teachers acted to conform to “a particular pattern of teaching, with heavy emphasis on grammar explanation and translation” (p. 811), the practices of which the teachers believed to be important to follow and maintain.

In Thailand, a research study (Segovia & Hardison, 2009) was conducted to explore three teachers' and four supervisors' (i.e., teacher trainers) perspectives of the educational reform (from teacher-centred to learner-centred instruction). While the supervisors were only interviewed, Segovia and Hardison employed multi-methods of data collection with the teachers: interviews, classroom observation, and stimulated recall. The study showed that teachers had challenges in implementing the reform into their teaching, such that some observations “revealed no evidence of communicative language use” (p. 154), and that teachers showed confusion about the reform's principles and application. Constraints were identified, including teachers' concerns about their English proficiency, insufficient training, inadequate resources and lack of professional support.

In Vietnam, several studies on teachers' beliefs have been reported, a number of which concern CLT (Lewis & McCook, 2002; Pham, 2007; Phan, 2004), which will be reviewed in 3.3.1. As for studies on teachers' beliefs about other aspects of

language teaching, a recent study by Canh and Barnard (2009) investigated three upper secondary school teachers' understandings and attitudes towards the curricular innovation in Vietnam, using classroom observations and post-lesson in-depth interviews. The results showed that the teachers, although they had positive attitudes towards the innovation, did not seem to understand the innovation principles prescribed in the Ministry of Education and Training's document, and their classroom teaching was still driven by the traditional method (i.e. grammar-translation).

In a more in-depth qualitative study later, Canh (2011) attempted to explore the beliefs and practices of eight upper secondary school teachers regarding grammar instruction, using interviews, observation and stimulated recall to collect data. This study indicated that the teachers believed strongly in the role of grammar and grammar teaching as the foundation of language communicative development. The teachers showed a preference for teaching language items explicitly, believing that such declarative knowledge would become proceduralised through frequent practice. In another study conducted by the same author regarding teachers' and students' beliefs about grammar instruction, Canh used narrative accounts on 10 teachers, and questionnaires on 39 other teachers and 516 students (Canh, 2012). The findings indicated that a high percentage of teachers believed in the role of grammar in language learning, the role of explicit grammar instruction, the role of grammar practice in the form of exercises, and the role of corrective feedback concerning grammar accuracy. The teachers in this study seemed to be inclined to a grammar-based approach to language teaching. For example, 74 percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement, "Teachers should have students practice using English through communicative tasks, without teaching grammatical structures".

In a university context, Loi (2011) used similar procedures to investigate teachers' conceptions of input, output and interaction. In terms of input, the study showed that the teachers had a synthetic view of input in terms of how language should be presented. In terms of output and interaction, the teachers believed in the role of conducting activities "with a clear focus on the linguistic content intended for mastery" (p.205). The study also pointed out that, in general, the teachers believed

in a synthetic view of language teaching where language is presented in terms of discrete items. In this sense, although not so strongly, the teachers' beliefs are aligned with those in Canh's study.

This section has outlined fundamental findings from studies on teacher cognition regarding areas other than CLT and TBLT. This review has suggested that (a) relatively few studies have been carried out in EFL contexts such as Vietnam although the number is increasing; (b) there is a need for a holistic approach to data collection and analysis in investigating teachers' beliefs; and (c) in order to understand teachers' beliefs and especially the distinction between core and peripheral beliefs, their relationship with classroom practices should be investigated, rather than using merely self-report instruments as many of the studies above adopted. As one of the aims of the current study is to understand teachers' beliefs in relation to their classroom behaviours, the next section will review the literature about this particular aspect of language teacher research.

### **3.2.6 Relationship between beliefs and practices**

Teachers' beliefs are claimed to play a critical role in shaping their classroom behaviour (Farrell, 2007; Pajares, 1992). Indeed, research has indicated that teachers in various contexts bring their beliefs about how language should be learned and taught into classrooms. Various studies report convergence between teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices on a range of aspects, including grammar teaching (e.g., Borg, 1998; Farrell & Lim, 2005), corrective feedback (e.g., Farrell & Kun, 2008; Mori, 2011), among others. For example, Smith (1996) found in her study that teachers who favoured grammar and accuracy tended to adopt curriculum design and instructional strategies that promoted language code, while those who were less interested in the role of grammar focused more on tasks that stimulated student interaction. This finding, according to Smith, suggests the evident role of beliefs in teaching practices, in that the teachers "selected from a range of theoretical ideas those aspects that correlate with their personal beliefs and use the surface features (the techniques) they have found to be effective from experience to meet their practical need" (p.208). Similarly, Burns (1996) found that "the thinking and beliefs which are brought to bear on classroom processes appear to be highly significant" (p.174).

Although Phipps and Borg's (2009)'s study focused on differences between beliefs and practices, they assert that the teachers' "practices *were* consistent with deeper, more general beliefs about learning" (p. 387, emphasis in original). This led them to apply the distinction between core and peripheral beliefs (Green, 1971; Rokeach, 1968) to explain the tensions the teachers had in their data.

However, some research also indicates dissonance between what teachers believe and what they do in the classroom. In many studies, incongruity has been found between what teachers verbally report and their classroom behaviours. In the area of second language teacher cognition research, an early study investigating teachers' beliefs toward communicative language teaching (CLT) by Nunan (1987) found that while the teachers agreed with CLT principles, their classroom practices revealed persistent non-communicative patterns of interaction. Karavas-Doukas (1996) found similar results with divergences between the Greek teachers' attitudes towards CLT and their classroom practices. Also on the topic of CLT, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) found that although the teachers of Japanese in the study expressed their preferences in using communicative activities in their classrooms, their teaching was observed to be "heavily teacher-fronted, grammar was presented without any context clues, and there were few interactions seen among students in the classrooms" (p. 505). In a New Zealand study, Basturkmen *et al.* (2004), regarding incidental focus on form, found inconsistencies between teachers' stated beliefs and practices. For example, one teacher expressed preference for focus on form only when there was a breakdown in communication; however, the majority of form-focused episodes were identified as resulting from inaccuracy in use of a language form, rather than from breakdown in message delivery. There were also divergences in terms of timing for focus on form and the type of correction techniques.

As indicated by Cross (2010), the disparities between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices can be attributed to a range of cognitive and contextual factors. To a large extent, stated beliefs found to be contradictory with practices seem to represent teachers' espoused theories of language teaching (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004), which may be referred to as peripheral rather than core beliefs. On the other hand, core beliefs could be made explicit when teachers are



allowed to talk about specific classroom events. For example, Basturkmen *et al.* provided evidence of teachers articulating their espoused theories (e.g., the communicative approach) when they were asked about their abstract beliefs. The results of such research strategies may be different from those which teachers refer to as their theories in use (their practical knowledge and experiential understanding of language teaching) in concrete instances of classroom events. Also, there are sometimes occasions when teachers are unable to articulate their beliefs, or in others, show a limited understanding of the topic under question (e.g., Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Therefore, in order to understand teachers' core beliefs, it may be advisable to refer to teachers' specific classroom behaviours (Haney & McArthur, 2002). Many social and contextual constraints, community and student variables, are found to direct teachers away from their beliefs when carrying out teaching in the classroom. For example, Fang (1996) notes from a review of a large research body that the "complexities of classroom life can constrain teachers' abilities to attend to their beliefs" (p. 53). Such local constraints may include, but are not limited to, students' use of L1, noise or classroom disciplines (Carless, 2007), students' motivation and proficiency levels (Canh & Barnard, 2009), among others. However, there are also wider contextual constraints such as the backwash effect of examinations and the imposition of mandated curricula and teaching materials.

The complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is relevant to this study, because it aims to explore both what teachers think and do in their teaching life, to uncover factors that account for any correspondence and dissonance between their beliefs and practice, with the overall aim of understanding teachers' mental lives.

### **3.3 Studies on teachers' beliefs regarding communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching**

This section will narrow the review by looking specifically at research on language teachers' beliefs about two fundamental areas relevant to this study: communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT). It will begin with a review of a number of studies that addressed

teachers' beliefs regarding CLT, presented in a context-based reference, that is, studies that were carried out outside Asia, followed by those in specific Asian countries. This is followed by a review of studies that investigated teachers' beliefs about TBLT. These studies are reviewed by presenting major themes found, followed by a statement of theoretical, methodological and contextual gaps in which the present study wishes to situate itself.

### **3.3.1 Studies on teachers' beliefs about communicative language teaching**

Outside Asia, one of the earlier studies on teachers' beliefs regarding CLT was carried out by Karavas-Doukas (1995, 1996). It used an attitude scale questionnaire with 101 Greek secondary English teachers, 14 of whom were observed in their classrooms and interviewed. The interview data from the 14 teachers indicated that the teachers held favourable attitudes towards the approach. However, the observation data showed a general deviation from the principles of CLT. The interview data revealed their lack of understanding of many principles of the approach. In Australia, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) studied ten teachers of Japanese in Queensland state schools and found that teachers' conceptions of CLT were of four types: CLT is about learning to communicate; CLT involves mainly speaking and listening; CLT involves little grammar teaching; and CLT uses activities that are time-consuming. Although the teachers stated that they used CLT in teaching, observation data revealed that the teachers used teaching strategies that were inconsistent with CLT principles. In a similar context, Mangubhai *et al.* (2004) investigated practical knowledge of CLT of a teacher of German. This study revealed that the teacher's "practical theory incorporates many of the commonly listed features of CLT, other features of CLT not usually listed and many features of her general approach to teaching" (p.308). The teacher's beliefs could be seen as 'hybrid', including both CLT and non-CLT features; however, those non-CLT features were not classified as necessarily inconsistent with CLT principles.

In Asia, several studies have been carried out to investigate teachers' beliefs regarding CLT in general and particular aspects within it (e.g., Li, 1998; Liao,

2003, 2004; Nishino, 2008, 2009; Pham, 2007; Phan, 2004; Sakui, 2004; Shawer, 2010). The study by Li was carried out to investigate Korean teachers' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT. Using questionnaires from 18 teachers and interviews with 10 teachers, Li identified a wide range of challenges the teachers seemed to face in using CLT, from four major sources: the teacher, students, the educational system, and CLT itself. As for the first, the study identified the following as the major constraints for CLT implementation: teachers' deficiency in spoken English and strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack of training and retraining in CLT, misconceptions about CLT, and lack of time and expertise for material development. The challenges that came from students included their low English proficiency, lack of motivation for communication, and resistance to class participation. Several educational system issues were perceived to inhibit CLT: large classes, grammar-based examinations, insufficient funding, and lack of support. Lastly, the CLT itself was also found to be problematic with the teachers, with its inadequate account of EFL teaching (as opposed to ESL), and lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments. This study argues a need for the fundamental approach to education in Korea "to change before CLT can be successful there" (p. 696).

In Japan, Sakui (2004) and Nishino (2008) explored teachers' beliefs about and practices of CLT using different research designs. While the former employed a longitudinal multi-method research design and a situated evaluation perspective on 14 teachers, the latter used questionnaires as the only data collection instrument, with 21 teachers. Sakui showed that teachers had limited understanding of CLT. In contrast, Nishino found that the teachers had solid knowledge of CLT. This disparity can be explained as inherent in the data collection methods used. However, both studies revealed that Japanese teachers had positive attitudes towards CLT, with Sakui's teachers commenting they were inspired to incorporate CLT in their teaching practices, and Nishino's teachers expressing willingness to use CLT in their classrooms. However, observation data from Sakui's study indicated that what happened in the classrooms was generally inconsistent with CLT principles, in that, for example, most of class time was devoted to "teacher-fronted grammar explanations, chorus reading, and vocabulary presentations" (p. 157). Both studies revealed similar constraints faced

by the teachers regarding CLT implementation, including the impact of grammar-based entrance examinations and large classes.

In China, following a case study of a single teacher of English, Liao (2003, 2004) found that his participant teacher attempted to overcome contextual constraints to use CLT in her classroom. This led Liao (2004) to argue that “CLT is best for China” (p. 270) once contextual constraints are made clear to the teachers. This argument was challenged by Hu (2005), who presented results from his survey study of 439 teachers across China (Hu, 2003) to suggest that although CLT features can be more or less found in some developed areas in China, they were absent in rural and disadvantaged areas, in which around 70 percent of secondary school students were based.

In Vietnam, there have been few empirical studies investigating teachers’ thinking regarding CLT. Lewis and McCook (2002), during their workshop training on CLT in the South of Vietnam, using journal entries, investigated workshop participants’ (upper secondary school teachers) perceptions and attitudes toward CLT. The results were quite similar to a study in Bangladesh by Chowdhury and Phan (2008), in that although most teachers expressed high willingness to incorporate CLT into their teaching, they preferred to adapt CLT to suit local contexts and learning styles. Phan (2004) interviewed two Vietnamese university teachers during their MA course in Australia concerning their awareness and classroom practices in relation to Asian stereotypes which Western academics (e.g., Ballard & Clancey, 1991; Pennycook, 1994 cited in Phan, 2004) refer to as ‘backwardness’ (Pennycook, 1994). The study revealed that these two teachers reported using a variety of pedagogical approaches similar to those widely practised in Western countries. It suggests that these teachers do not conform to the mentioned stereotypes, but rather have developed their understanding and recounted practices that reflect effective practices in the Western classrooms. The finding is challenged by Pham (2005), who claims that teachers who had been abroad might have learnt interesting ideas about CLT and are usually convinced by such an approach; thus when they are asked about CLT, they may quickly refer to such espoused beliefs, which may not represent their core, deeper thinking, and actual classroom practices.

Following this, Pham (2007) used interviews and classroom observations to investigate beliefs and practices of three university teachers who had been to Australia for MA or postgraduate degrees. The results showed that the teachers espoused CLT, in that they showed sound understanding and positive attitudes to CLT. However, when it came to practice, the teachers described difficulties in employing strategies learnt in postgraduate courses due to a range of contextual, cultural and personal issues, such as the traditional examination system, perceived teachers' and students' roles, and low motivation.

Reviews of studies of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding CLT indicate that teachers in various contexts have mixed views on CLT. Some are said to have sound understanding of CLT, mostly from survey data. Many other studies, especially in Asia contexts, indicated that teachers have limited knowledge of CLT, and that their classroom practices were found to be inconsistent with CLT features provided in the literature. Many contextual constraints have been identified, most frequent of which are linguistic-based examination system, large classes, and teachers' inability to employ CLT. As for teacher cognition research in Vietnam regarding CLT, similar trends can be observed, despite the limited number of studies. Except for Pham (2007) who used a multi-method approach to triangulate the data in a small-scale study, the other studies relied on teachers' self-report data (interviews and journals), thus it is difficult to gauge the validity of the reported findings.

The review above provides basic understandings of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding CLT, focusing mostly on teachers' understanding of CLT, their attitudes towards CLT implementation, and the challenges they face in using such an approach in their classroom contexts. The next section will look specifically at studies on teachers' beliefs regarding TBLT, the focus of the present study.

### **3.3.2 Research studies on teachers' beliefs about task-based language teaching**

Despite language teacher cognition research having now become a well-established domain of inquiry (Borg, 2003, 2006), literature on teachers' beliefs regarding tasks and task-based language teaching is still very limited. This is

surprising given the popularity of TBLT in the form of curriculum and textbook production worldwide (Littlewood, 2004) and growing interest in research tasks in various pedagogical contexts (e.g., Boston, 2008; Edwards & Willis, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Iwashita, 2003; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Mayo & Pilar, 2007; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). In Asia, some literature has reported the use of tasks and TBLT implementation in the classroom, both by researchers (e.g., Carless, 2002; Deng & Carless, 2009; Luk, 2009; Nguyen, Newton, & Crabbe, 2011; Vilches, 2003) and practitioners (see, for example, Edwards & Willis, 2005 for a complete volume of how teachers make use of tasks in classrooms), with little or no focus on teachers' beliefs. For example, although the study by Nguyen *et al.* (2011) did not directly investigate teachers' beliefs, most of their findings deal with teachers' and students' practices. This study is particularly relevant for the present study, both in terms of topics and context of study, because it investigated how teachers and students in a specialised upper secondary school in Vietnam implement the textbook tasks in real classroom settings. Specifically, the findings indicated that the teachers tended to adapt tasks to make them more communicative and relevant to their own students' real-life experience. This study, in contrast to such studies as Canh (2011) and Loi (2011), indicates a great deal of teacher autonomy in terms of textbook task implementation.

The subsequent section, however, for the purpose of this study, will review studies that investigate *teachers' beliefs* in relation to TBLT and aspects within it. Table 3.3 shows all the accessible published and unpublished work on teachers' beliefs about TBLT to date.

Table 3.3: Foci, contexts and methods used in studies on teachers' beliefs regarding TBLT

Source	Foci	Context	Instruments
Andon & Eckerth (2009)	TBLT principles from teachers' views	Four EL teachers in UK	Interviews; observation; stimulated recall
Carless (2003)	Understanding and attitudes towards TBLT; factors	Three ESL teachers in primary schools in Hong Kong	Interviews; observation; post-lesson interviews;

	impacting implementation of TBLT		Likert attitude scale
Carless (2004)	Use of mother tongue; Classroom management; target language production	Three ESL teachers in primary schools in Hong Kong	Observation, focused interviews, and attitude scale
Carless (2007)	Suitability of TBLT	11 secondary school teachers and 10 teacher educators in Hong Kong	Semi-structured interviews
Carless (2009)	TBLT vs. PPP	11 secondary school teachers and 10 teacher educators in Hong Kong	Semi-structured interviews
Cheng & Moses (2011)	Perceptions of TBLT; reasons for choice	132 high school teachers in China	Questionnaires
Deng & Carless (2009; 2010)	Communicativeness in a task-based innovation	Four English primary teachers in Guangdong, China;	Observations; interviews
Hui (2004)	Perceptions of TBLT	50 teachers in Hong Kong; with two case- study teachers	Questionnaires; interviews; observation
İlin, İnözü, & Yumru (2007)	Teacher's and learners' perceptions of tasks	One teacher and students in a Turkish classroom	Pre-observation interview; observation; post- lesson interviews
Jeon & Hahn (2006)	Perceptions of TBLT	228 school teachers in Korea	Questionnaires
McDonough & Chaikitmongkol (2007)	Teachers' and learners' reactions to a TB course	13 teachers and 35 learners in a Thai university	Material evaluation; observation; interviews

Pei (2008)	Teachers' practice and beliefs about TBLT	4 EFL junior school teachers in China	Observations; Interviews
Tabatabaei & Hadi (2011)	Perceptions of TB language pedagogy; teachers' view on TBLT implementation	51 EFL teachers in Iran	Questionnaires
Tavakoli (2009)	Task difficulty	10 language learners and 10 teachers in a college in UK	Interviews
Yim (2009)	Teachers' views of TBLT on TB implementation	10 language teachers in Korea	Interviews

As indicated, to date a total of 14 studies have been conducted regarding teachers' beliefs about TBLT, most of which were carried out in Asian contexts. In terms of geographical contexts, Hong Kong leads with a total of five studies, four of which are from a series of studies by the same author, followed by Korea, China and UK, each with two studies. Thailand, Turkey, and Iran each contribute one study.

In terms of research methodology, it seems that only the series of studies carried out by Carless (2003; 2004; 2007; 2009) provides a comprehensive view of teachers' beliefs and practices in specific (i.e., Hong Kong) contexts, using a variety of methods for data collection. Andon and Eckerth (2009) used three methods of data collection; however, their data were collected from only four teachers. Most of the other studies relied on questionnaires as the principal data source (e.g., Cheng & Moses, 2011; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011), or interviews (e.g., Tavakoli, 2009; Yim, 2009), and thus only illuminated the teachers' *stated* beliefs. Some studies (e.g., Deng & Carless, 2009; İlin *et al.*, 2007) report findings from only one teacher. The study by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) used systematic procedures of collecting data during the task-based course; however, this study focused on teachers' and students' *reactions* of the innovation, not necessarily their underlying beliefs about how language should be learnt in relation to TBLT.



In spite of being limited in quantity, the studies shown in Table 3.3 address a number of aspects in teachers' beliefs regarding TBLT. It is noted that most of such studies have been carried out in Asian contexts, where TBLT is found to face certain difficulties. Littlewood (2007), for example, drawing on studies on CLT and TBLT in East Asia, identifies a number of challenges for CLT and TBLT implementation in East Asian classrooms, including issues related to educational values and traditions, classroom management issues, and language use.

The analysis of the aforementioned studies allowed for a number of themes to be highlighted. These include teachers' understanding of TBLT, teachers' attitudes to TBLT and its implementation, relationship between their beliefs and practices regarding TBLT, and perceived constraints in using TBLT in their contexts.

#### *Teachers' understanding of TBLT*

Many of the studies outlined above addressed the extent of teachers' understanding about TBLT, definitions of tasks, and task characteristics. The study by Hui (2004), who surveyed a group of 50 teachers and explored two case studies in the context of Hong Kong, found that although the teachers stated that they were familiar with the approach, their understanding of TBLT "is rather restricted" (p.59), in that teachers tended to mention one specific feature of TBLT in their responses (e.g., communication), and that there were instances of oversimplification and misconceptions of TBLT. This is explained in terms of insufficient training provided and lack of accessible TBLT materials for the teachers.

However, the majority of the studies addressing this issue claim that the teachers under study demonstrate a basic understanding of TBLT in theoretical terms. Carless (2003), for example, in one of a series of studies carried out in Hong Kong, reveals that two of the three teachers in his study demonstrated sufficient understanding of TBLT, by highlighting key features of tasks available in the so-called Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) document, a task-based curriculum launched in Hong Kong in 1994. These teachers were well-trained and experienced. The other teacher, who was untrained and inexperienced, provided a vague definition of tasks, thus "not distinguishing tasks from exercises or worksheets" (Carless, 2003, p. 490). To some extent, although the level of

understanding was different between Carless's (2003) and Hui's (2004) studies, the claims they made about why teachers had limited understanding of TBLT were similar. Jeon and Hahn (2006) found in the survey data from the Korean teachers that they had sound understandings of TBLT concepts, indicating that the teachers' conceptual understandings were inclined to such key features as communicative purpose, primary focus on meaning, target language use, and student-centredness. In a similar Korean context, Yim (2009) also found that the ten participants in her study were "familiar with TBLT" (p. 37). This was explained by the fact that they had already studied it in their MA course.

In Iran, using Jeon and Hahn's (2006) questionnaire to investigate teachers' beliefs about TBLT, Tabatabaei and Hadi (2011) found similar results in terms of teachers' understanding, in that "teachers convey a considerable amount of practical understanding about key concepts of TBLT" (p. 4). In the context of Turkey, İlin *et al.* (2007) found that the teacher in their study "seems to have developed a sound understanding of task-based learning and has touched on some key elements such as "focus on meaning and 'learner involvement'" (p. 63).

In China, Pei (2008) found that two of the four participant teachers "had more theoretical knowledge about task-based teaching" than the other two, one of whom "had some knowledge about TBLT" and the other had "only a vague concept of TBLT" (p. 107). Cheng and Moses (2011) found that the majority of the teachers they surveyed had a high understanding of task and TBLT, such as teachers understanding that tasks had communicative goals and primarily focused on meaning.

Overall, the level of understanding about TBLT in the studies above is due to the extent and type of input which is made available to participants. In quantitative studies (e.g., Joen & Hahn, 2006; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011), input can be regarded as the information provided in the questionnaire items. Provided with such input, teachers are likely to choose those 'positive' statements to answer the questions. This also explains the limited understanding found in Hui (2004), where the major part of the questionnaire comprised open-ended questions with no input or cue to prompt the teachers. In qualitative studies (e.g., Carless, 2003), input is regarded as the previous training the teachers had, in that the level of

understanding of TBLT depends on whether or not the teachers had been trained. The limitation regarding this aspect of research methodology has been, either explicitly or implicitly, acknowledged in those studies using input-based methods (e.g., Joen & Hahn; Tabatabaei & Hadi), and has been largely discussed in texts on research methodology (e.g., Creswell, 2009).

All the studies above were carried out in Asian contexts, and most of them used interviews and questionnaires to ask teachers abstractly about their understanding of TBLT. One recent study carried out in UK attempted to investigate teachers' teaching principles in relation to TBLT, without having to ask them directly what they know about TBLT. In this study, Andon and Eckerth (2009) found, in the data from the four teachers' principles of teaching, evidence that the teachers had "a well-developed awareness of their own teaching as well as an awareness of [...] core principles of TBLT" (p.304). They claim that the teachers in their study had a good understanding of what they were doing, which was found to be associated with TBLT. Unlike the other studies, Andon and Eckerth did not directly ask the teachers abstract questions about TBLT (such as 'What's your understanding of TBLT?'), but they inferred TBLT features from "the way they talk about tasks, the principles underlying their use of tasks, and the way they implement tasks" (p. 304) to reach conclusions about their understanding of TBLT.

It is important that when investigating their understanding of such an abstract term as TBLT, it may not be sufficient to ask them directly through interviews or questionnaires. In completing a questionnaire, teachers may feel that they should choose the most positive item for their answer, without actually understanding the underlying theoretical and practical concepts of TBLT. In other cases, teachers may express their espoused theories of, or peripheral beliefs about, the concepts being asked (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004), which are usually abstract and do not reflect the core understanding in their belief system. The study by Andon and Eckerth (2009) can be seen as an exception that addressed this potential bias in revealing teachers' understanding of TBLT without mentioning its theoretical terms directly.

### *Teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of TBLT*

Investigations into teachers' beliefs about TBLT in Asian contexts reveal mixed attitudes towards its implementation. While several studies show teachers' willingness to use the approach in their teaching, a number of others indicate teachers' negative attitudes towards TBLT implementation. With regard to the latter, Hui's (2004) study found that teachers generally had negative attitudes to TBLT as an approach and were reluctant to implement it. The teachers admitted that TBLT was not practical in such a context, and lent their support to traditional approaches instead. The teachers viewed TBLT use as a top-down mandate from the government, and argued that for TBLT to be effective, more TBLT training regarding both theoretical input and practical guidance should be carried out. Results from Jeon and Hahn's (2006) questionnaires indicate that teachers generally had a negative view of TBLT implementation in their actual classrooms, due to their perceptions of constraints such as creating undue psychological burden on the teacher, time for preparation, and classroom management.

However, several studies claim that their teachers had positive attitudes toward TBLT implementation. The study by Carless (2003) found that the two experienced teachers were positive toward TBLT. The other teacher, who was less experienced and was the least positive, believed in a 'lecturing' mode of teaching, and the need for classroom discipline, which is interpreted as being remote from TBLT which requires the teacher to release some control. Cheng and Moses (2011) found that the majority of the teachers had positive attitudes to TBLT, and reported their implementation of TBLT in their classroom to increase student motivation, improve student interactive strategies and create a collaborative learning environment. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), in a study investigating teachers' and learners' reactions to a task-based course developed in a university in Thailand, found that the teachers had increasingly positive attitudes to the course as it progressed, in terms of increased learner independence, course content and real world relevance. In terms of course content, for example, they indicated that although both learners and teachers initially raised concerns about a lack of grammar instruction, "by the end of the semester the teachers and learners no longer voiced complaints about the amount or type of grammar instructions provided in the task course" (p. 118). Tabatabaei and Hadi (2011) found that the

Iranian teachers in their survey “had positive views on implementing TBLT as an instructional method in classroom practice” (p. 5), because they believed in the collaborative, interactional and motivational potentials of TBLT. The Chinese teachers in Pei’s (2008) study showed positive attitudes to the method, believing that, for example, “it was important to shift the pattern of ELT from traditional grammar-translation method to CLT and TBLT” (p. 106). The Korean teachers in Yim’s (2009) study, similarly, expressed the opinion that they would like to use the approach when they came back to work after their study.

There is an issue to address regarding reports about teachers’ attitudes here. The question lies in whether such attitudes toward TBLT, no matter whether they are positive or negative, represent the core beliefs the teachers held about language teaching. The review above indicates that most of the findings reported regarding teachers’ attitudes derived from interview and questionnaire data, and no attempts have been made to identify which of such attitudes represents core beliefs and which represents peripheral beliefs. In other words, there has been little connection between these found attitudes and the underlying beliefs which drive classroom actions. In investigating teachers’ beliefs, it is important to understand the deeper, underlying thinking that drives actions rather than merely asking teachers explicitly about aspects of their work.

#### *Constraints to implementation of TBLT*

As noted by Littlewood (2004, 2007), in discussing CLT and TBLT in East Asia, many concerns have been raised relating to TBLT implementation from teachers’ perspective. Following Littlewood’s (2007) categorisation, the constraints these studies reveal can be divided into four major groups: teacher variables, student variables, context variables and the task content.

With regard to teacher variables, as Littlewood (2007) notes, classroom management is the most frequent concern expressed by teachers. Carless (2004) found that the teachers’ “concerns over noise and discipline inhibited task-based teaching” (p. 656). In his later study, Carless (2007) confirmed this result, in which the teachers expressed their concern for loss of control, such as noise and off-task chitchat in their mother tongue. Also, the teachers perceived that they did not have sufficient time for TBLT implementation, given that teachers had to

accomplish tight scheduling of the syllabuses. In his earlier study, for example, he noted that all three teachers expressed the impact of time on task-based teaching, including pressures of completing the syllabus and the time needed for preparation and implementation of tasks (One of the teachers, however, although indicating that TBLT took away a lot of teachers' time, did not see this as negative, but rather a good habit for teachers) (Carless, 2003). Yim (2009) also found that the Korean teachers regarded teachers' limited time availability as a constraint for the implementation of TBLT in their context. Although not related to time for TBLT preparation and implementation, the teachers in McDonough and Chaikitmongkol's (2007) study acknowledged that they needed time to become familiar with TBLT practices. A few studies have revealed teachers' concerns about their own ability to employ TBLT in their classroom. Jeon and Hahn (2006) found that teachers expressed a lack of confidence (in knowledge about TBLT) as the biggest reason to avoid its implementation. These teachers also revealed their self-perceived inability to use the target language as another constraint to deploying TBLT, as did the teachers in Yim (2009) in a similar Korean context who mentioned teachers' lack of language proficiency as one of the constraints for TBLT implementation.

The teacher educators in Carless's (2007) study raised the concern that TBLT was too complex for teachers to fully understand, and thus to use successfully in their context. In Tabatabaei and Hadi's (2011) study, although they expressed welcoming views on TBLT implementation, the teachers identified similar constraints, such as a lack of knowledge of TBLT and limited language proficiency. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) found that during the process of implementing the task-based course, the teachers raised "some concerns about their own ability to implement the task-based course" (p.120), such as how to communicate the course's philosophy to their students. Consequently, they expressed the need for learner and teacher support in carrying out such a course. Teacher-related variables, therefore, can be considered one of the most influential constraints to TBLT in EFL contexts.

The second category – the student variables – reflects the teachers' concerns about their students' ability and behaviour. The studies by Carless (2003), Pei (2008)

and Yim (2009), for example, found that the teachers had concerns about students' proficiency levels in TBLT implementation. In Carless's study, while the teacher who taught higher level students advocated TBLT and did not report concerns on students' proficiency, the other two who taught lower level students regarded their students' language proficiency as problematic. This concurs with Tavakoli's (2009) finding in which linguistic demands were perceived by both teachers and learners as the key factor contributing to task difficulty. Another constraint was teachers' concerns over learners' use of their first language to complete the tasks (Carless, 2004, 2008). The teachers in his 2004 study "identified the pupils' use of Cantonese as the most prominent difficulty that occurred during tasks" (p. 642); in such a monolingual context, the pupils tended to avoid using the target language (i.e., English) and used their mother tongue to complete the tasks instead.

The third category – the context – includes several constraints. First, the teachers in the studies by Carless (2007), Pei (2008) and Yim (2009) revealed that the public text-centred examinations are one of the factors that inhibited language teaching and learning from being task-based. Related to this, the teachers and teacher educators in Carless's (2007) study observed that TBLT puts too much emphasis on oral work, which was seen as incompatible with the current examination system. A cultural aspect was also observed, when one of the participants in the study mentioned that TBLT does not fit Chinese culture of expression, which is less auditory and more reliant on written texts. A social factor was revealed in Yim's (2009) study, where teachers expressed their concerns over the lack of support from stakeholders such as parents, superior personnel, and colleagues. Cheng and Moses (2011) found that the biggest concern that the teachers had about TBLT implementation is the size of their class, which is in line with the studies by Jeon and Hahn (2006), Pei (2008) and Yim (2009), in that large classes were perceived by the teachers as inhibiting them from conducting successful modes of working in TBLT.

The fourth category – the task content itself – can be seen as problematic. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) found the teachers' concerns about course materials, such as the abundance of activities assigned for each lesson, and

“difficulty integrating and transitioning between course materials, which included a commercial textbook, a student workbook a teacher’s guide with reference materials, and individual assignments” (p.122). Carless (2003) reported that teachers were concerned about the relevance of topics provided in the textbooks, while Pei (2008) reports one teacher’s concern about the limitations of the current textbook, such as the lack of “a systematic approach consistent with communicative teaching principles” (p.109), for TBLT to be successfully carried out. The teachers in Carless’s (2004) study expressed a concern that some tasks stimulated too much ‘making’ and ‘doing’, such as drawing and colouring, and thus little production of the target language was involved. Some other tasks required minimal use of the target language; thus when it came to performing them, “rather than engaging in the negotiation of meanings predicted by theories of TBLT, students were more inclined to use simple strategies which made fewer language demands (such as guessing)” (Littlewood, 2007, p. 245). In Carless’s (2009) study, the teachers disclosed a concern that the amount of grammar instruction was insufficient in TBLT, which reflected their inclination to adopt a PPP approach instead of TBLT. Carless (2009), therefore, taking from the teacher educators’ view that a ‘soft’ version of TBLT should fit teachers’ existing beliefs and practices, suggests that a ‘situated version of TBLT’, which incorporates elements that suit the teachers’ beliefs and context, may be suitable for such a context as Hong Kong. In other words, there have been reports for such local teachers to ‘adapt rather than adopt’ (Littlewood, 2007) the approach to suit the local contexts.

#### *Relationship with classroom practices*

Few studies have addressed the relationship between what teachers say and what they actually do in the classroom. Although in such studies as Carless (2003, 2004) and McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) observation data were used to interpret teachers’ beliefs, no explicit findings are presented to address this relationship. The study by Andon and Eckerth (2009) found some comparative relationship between teachers’ principles and their actual use of tasks in the classroom. However, in other studies where this issue is dealt with, both Hui (2004) and İlin *et al.* (2007) indicate mismatches between teachers’ stated beliefs and their classroom behaviours. In Hui’s study, for example, while most teachers



reported that they acted as a facilitator in their classroom, observation of the two teachers indicated that classrooms were teacher-fronted and product-oriented. Similarly, in spite of having a sound understanding of TBLT, the teacher in İlin *et al.*'s (2007) study was found to practise merely a weak version of TBLT, or what Ellis (2003b) referred to as task-supported language teaching.

Deng and Carless (2010) observed four primary school English teachers in China concerning the relationship between examination preparation and TBLT as a pedagogical innovation in the context. Using Littlewood's (2004) framework to analyse the communicativeness of the teachers, the authors found that most of the teachers' classroom work belonged to non-communicative and pre-communicative boxes, with the public school teachers being close to the former and the private school teachers the latter. The authors concluded that the impact of examinations on teaching methods were found to be strong in the public school teachers, while this was observed to be "present but modest" and "almost nonexistent" in the private school teachers (p. 299). Regarding TBLT, the authors found consistency between their understandings of TBLT and classroom practices, with the teacher having better understanding of TBLT frequently using communicative activities in classroom teaching.

### **3.4 Summary**

The review of studies in teachers' beliefs above has identified a number of limitations of the research in this area. First, as mentioned earlier, although TBLT has attracted enormous interest in language education worldwide, few studies have attempted to address what teachers think, know and believe about the approach. In comparison with language teacher cognition research in general, this area of research can be seen as somewhat under-researched. Secondly, in terms of theoretical and methodological issues, many of the studies have taken a psycho-cognitive approach to understand teachers' beliefs, with little relation to socio-cultural aspects of learning. In other words, teachers' beliefs, and in some studies, their practices, were investigated without a consideration of broader historical, cultural, contextual factors (This explains why such consideration has been discussed in Chapter Two). More importantly, few studies explored teachers'

beliefs with reference to the specific language programme, syllabus, curriculum and materials that they were using in order to gain insightful accounts of their mental lives. The studies by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) and Carless (2003, 2004) can be an exception to this. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), for example, investigated teachers' and students' reactions to a task-based course, under an innovative intervention in a university context, where a task-based course was introduced and teachers' beliefs were tracked over a period of time to discover how they responded to such a course. In this sense, however, it only touches part of teachers' beliefs.

Thirdly, although in some studies specific contextual factors were taken into consideration, in that teacher thinking was investigated under specific curriculum and classroom practices, the role of teachers as social agents was little addressed. This has linkages to what type of data was generated to interpret teachers' beliefs. Many of the studies reviewed above used questionnaires and interviews as instruments for data collection. Using solely either of these tools may result in the data collected being merely statements of peripheral beliefs.

Although some of the studies used a combination of methods, the scope of such research was limited. It could be well argued, then, that in order to fully understand teachers' beliefs regarding TBLT, it is important to consider a wide range of factors contributing to forming and exercising teachers' beliefs, including broader educational and political factors, specific task implementation, and teacher interaction in a social context. Therefore, relevant sources of data should be gathered to account for teachers' beliefs from this perspective. In other words, there is a need for an in-depth qualitative study that takes a holistic view of teachers' beliefs and their practices. Furthermore, the review above indicated that most of the studies carried out in Asian contexts were conducted in either ESL countries (e.g., Hong Kong) or developed countries (e.g., Korea). Except for the survey by Cheng and Moses (2011) in China, no studies addressing this issue have been conducted in an EFL, developing country, and specifically none in Vietnam. Given that teachers' beliefs are situated and context-dependent, it is always useful to add to the literature another context of research. This is particularly important in response to a call for teacher cognition research in state-sector settings where

teachers are non-native, the syllabus is prescribed, and access to theories is limited (Borg, 2006).

Finally, as reviewed above, few studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices, and none of them made efforts to identify core and peripheral beliefs in relation to what teachers do in their classroom teaching. This study aims to fill this gap by applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b, 2005) to understand such relationships. Given that no teacher cognition research into CLT and TBLT has utilised the theory, its application in this study can be regarded as seeking a new theoretical ground in understanding teachers' beliefs and practices.

This review has indicated that research on teachers' beliefs about TBLT has so far provided a limited understanding of what teachers believe, know, and think regarding this increasingly attractive approach in language teaching. More importantly, little has been known about how teachers have made use of tasks in EFL contexts where TBLT has been adopted as a top-down policy. This study, therefore, is making a modest attempt to address these gaps in the literature.

From the understanding of the context in Chapter Two and research spaces summarised above, this research will attempt to address the following questions:

- 1. What relevance, if any, do the identified characteristics of tasks have for the Vietnamese teachers in their planning for and practices of textbook tasks?*
- 2. In what ways do the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning converge with, or diverge from, the principles of TBLT?*
- 3. What factors contribute to the facilitation, or hindrance, of TBLT implementation in the Vietnamese context?*
- 4. What can this study contribute to an academic understanding of the nature of the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices?*

The next chapter will present the research stance for this study, and detail procedures which were taken to gain access to participants, collect and analyse data to answer the questions above.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the research paradigm and methods that the present study adopted to address the research questions given in Chapter Three. In sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, I present and justify my choice of research paradigm, qualitative research, and case studies. These are then followed by a detailed description of the present study (section 4.4): an initial series of TBLT workshops, the preliminary studies, sampling and gaining access, a description of the participants, discussion of ethical issues, methods of data collection and analysis, and an account of assuring research warrants

#### **4.1 Research paradigms**

A research paradigm refers to “a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107, emphasis in original). It reflects the worldview that guides researchers to take action (Creswell, 2009; Guba, 1990). Our actions, whether as a lay person or researcher, cannot take place without reference to a particular worldview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Guba and Lincoln (1994) outline several competing paradigms in research, including positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. These paradigms are revisited and expanded by Creswell (2009), who categorises the paradigms into postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. These paradigms are by no means exhaustive, and are dependent on the nature of the specific inquiry. A combination of two or more paradigms, or employment of one sub-paradigm under a broader one can be possible in many research projects (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Taking a broader view, the aforementioned paradigms can necessarily fall into two major traditions of research methodology: positivism and naturalism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Richards, 2003). The positivists rely on “the role of discrete and

distinct steps on the path to knowledge and the best way of discovering things” (Burns, 2000, p. 7), and hold “a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). Their assumptions tend to be reductionist in the sense that their ideas are reduced to small, discrete items to be tested. They also assume that the world is governed by laws and theories which need to be “tested or verified and refined so that we can understand the world” (p. 7). Therefore, determinism, reductionism, empirical observation and measurement, and theory verification are among the major principles espoused by the positivist tradition of research. The type of data generated for positivist research is largely quantitative, “because the data are typically numeric in nature” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 6). A traditional researcher, for example, would create a set of hypotheses under the research inquiry and go about testing them in the field or in the laboratory (Burns, 2000), or measuring the relationships between variables with statistical tests.

Naturalism is regarded as an alternative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) which is intended to reject the long-standing dominance of positivism. Naturalistic inquirers believe that (social) reality is more complex, and call for a more holistic approach to inquiry, which takes into account naturalistic sociocultural elements such as contexts, values, and the role of the inquirer. Naturalistic research findings are, therefore, ‘created’ rather than ‘discovered’ (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The findings are believed to be generated from the interaction between the inquirer and the implicated groups, and/or among members of a particular group.

Research theorists have made some attempts to compare and contrast these two traditions of research inquiry with the purpose of reducing the confusion and illusion among researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for example, present some distinguishing features of positivist and naturalistic paradigms (see Table 4.1), which usefully provide information about these two traditions’ assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between the knower and the known (epistemology), generalisability, causality and the role of values (axiology).

Table 4.1: Contrasting Positivist and Naturalist Axioms  
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37)

Axioms about	Positivist Paradigm	Naturalistic Paradigm
The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable	Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic
The relationship of the knower to the known	Knower and known are independent, a dualism	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable
The possibility of generalization	Time- and context-free generalization (monothetic statements) are possible	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (ideographic statements) are possible
The possibility of causal linkages	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects
The role of values	Inquiry is value-free	Inquiry is value-bound

The strengths of the positivist tradition of research include the extent of precision and control through quantitative and reliable measurement, and sampling and design (Burns, 2000). However, in educational research, this tradition has been proved to be problematic, since “human beings are far more complex than the inert matter that is studied in physical sciences” (p. 9). This is because human beings interact with the environment in an active way, and because each individual responds to the environment in a different way. It is, then, not possible to operate a controlled environment in educational contexts as can physical scientist with laboratory techniques.

Under the umbrella view of naturalistic inquiry, a number of worldviews have been identified, such as constructivism and pragmatism (Creswell, 2009). These paradigms, although not being equivalent to qualitative research (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993), by and large, rely on this approach of data collection and analysis. This is because most of the studies under this tradition are concerned with capturing qualities and attributes, rather than with measuring or counting facts to address

their research problems (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Creswell (2005), referring to research in education, regards naturalistic inquiry as constructivism, and maintains that this view emphasises the importance of the participants' views, the setting or context (e.g., a classroom), and highlights the meaning they hold in regard to educational issues (p. 43).

The need for an in-depth understanding has resulted in many naturalistic researchers using a qualitative approach to research, since it allows researchers to “capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world, to understand events from the viewpoints of the participants” (Burns, 2000, p. 11). Likewise, many educational researchers favour the naturalistic approach to research so as to take into account the complexity of the world under inquiry. Considering the strengths of naturalistic inquiry, this study takes this approach (i.e., naturalism) to address the issues concerning teachers' beliefs and their practices in the specific educational context described in Chapter Two.

The next section outlines the nature of qualitative research relevant to the present study.

## **4.2 Qualitative research**

The section above discussed research traditions in terms of how researchers view the world. Another way to look at the types of research is to consider the nature of the data gathered. In this respect, contemporary research methodologies identify two types of research, commonly referred to as quantitative and qualitative research (e.g., Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Since quantitative research is associated with numeric measurements, its research studies usually fall into the positivist tradition. Likewise, as naturalistic research often seeks to understand values and meaning, its data are by and large qualitative (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Since the present research adopts naturalism with qualitative data, the following sections will discuss and justify qualitative research in this study.

Qualitative research is often criticised by quantitative advocates as lacking rigour, in that it does not always offer the validity and reliability of the claims, or demonstrate the generality of findings (Berg, 2005; Burns, 2000). In other words, qualitative research studies do not meet the same criteria as quantitative research projects. Burns (2000), however, states:

What is often not understood is that the criteria that one considers appropriate for quantitative scientific work in education and social sciences are not those that are necessarily appropriate for work that rests on different assumptions, that uses different methods, and that appeals to different forms of understanding. (p. 11)

This does not mean that qualitative research has no concern about such central tenets as reliability and validity. Edge and Richards (1998) strongly argue that these aspects are still extremely important in qualitative research, but “the same terminology is not only usable in both braches” (p.343), and so can be re-defined fit the purpose of research in social sciences in general and applied linguistics in particular. (These issues will be discussed further in 4.4.9).

Proponents of qualitative research, in turn, claim that quantitative research fails to take into account the social and cultural worlds of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), the relationship between the researcher and participants (Silverman, 1993), and personal interpretations from both researchers and participants (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The power of qualitative inquiry is its ability to provide rich understanding of the research problem in the specific context from the insider perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Burns (2000) also asserts that the popular rationale for applying a qualitative approach to research “rests within criterion of meaning” and “the distinctive insights made possible” (p.11).

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research involves studying “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Furthermore, Snape and Spencer (2003) argue that the general purpose of qualitative research is to provide “an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the



social world, by learning about people's social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories" (p.22).

In justifying a methodological framework for a particular study, it is important to be aware that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research does not need to be contradictory, but rather such a distinction can be complementary. In fact, many research studies, recognising the compatibility of quantitative research in the qualitative approach, have taken both forms of inquiry in their research design to fit their aims in particular projects. So a mixed method approach has emerged in the methodological literature (Creswell, 2005, 2008, 2009). This approach is useful when the research is intended to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data. While quantitative data provide useful information on a large sample and yield results on frequency and magnitude of trends, qualitative data offer insightful perspectives on the research topic and provide a complex picture of the situation, which, when combined together, allow the research to assess both outcomes and process of the social phenomenon. For example, a research project can make use of both questionnaire and interview data to interpret findings. There are also cases where interviews can take the form of a survey or an open-ended questionnaire. It is, therefore, the researcher who decides which methods are appropriate within the scope, topic and context of their research project. The present research, as can be seen below (4.3), adopts qualitative research tradition, because it only aims at investigating the insights of the participants, rather than outcomes based on a large sample.

Qualitative research, depending on the purpose of study, can collect different forms of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state:

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interviews; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual lives. (p. 4)

Given the purpose of the present study is to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to task-based language teaching in the context of Vietnam, and a call for a more holistic qualitative research design in the field, this study takes a naturalistic, qualitative case study approach as the most appropriate method of inquiry. Such an approach necessarily allows for the possibility to gain rich understanding of teachers' beliefs and their practice, and at the same time, to ensure research validity through various procedures of data triangulation.

### **4.3 Case studies**

Case study research is observed to have “a long history in educational research and has been used extensively in such areas as clinical psychology and developmental psychology” (Burns, 2000, p. 459). As the name implies, case study research concerns a ‘case’ – the unit of analysis for research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). The unit of analysis may include an individual, a class, a programme, or a community. Whatever the subject is, to qualify as a case, such a unit of analysis “*must be a bounded system* – an entity in itself” (Burns, 2000, p. 460, emphasis in original).

It is noted that “case study is not necessarily identical to naturalistic inquiry” and that “a case study can be either quantitative or qualitative”, or both (Burns, 2000, p. 460). However, as Burns notes, it has been observed in educational research that most case studies have been carried out using naturalistic, qualitative methodology. The aim of a case study is to gain in-depth understanding of the subject being studied. It, then, focuses on the process rather than the outcome, and on discovery rather than on confirmation.

This study uses a case study approach as a strategy of inquiry because its purpose and conditions fit the characteristics of naturalistic qualitative research in general and case study research in particular. Firstly, the purpose of my research is to seek in-depth information and perspectives from the participants individually. The ultimate goal is to gain the meaning that underpins their views, stories, actions, and behaviours that are bounded by their own context. Case studies are chosen because they allows the researchers to “seek to understand and interpret the world

in terms of its actors, ... [and] observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that the context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects” (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 181). Secondly, according to Cohen *et al.* and Yin (1994), contexts, which are dynamic and unique, allow investigations of complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors. This study, in investigating teachers’ beliefs in relationship to their classroom practices and employing the sociocultural perspective in teacher cognition interpretation, takes the context as one important element from which such value-laden, tacit, dynamic and highly context-bound beliefs (Borg, 2006) are illuminated. By adopting case study research, the meaning from data collected from the group of teachers in their natural setting (Creswell, 2009) is allowed to emerge.

While a case study may involve a single method of data collection (e.g., interviews), such a design would limit the validity of the study. Borg (2006) claims that using a single method in teacher cognition research is inadequate to reveal the complex nature of teachers’ mental lives. The possibility to relate beliefs to practices is only feasible when a number of methods are applied in data collection. Hence, although some single-method studies on teacher cognition are found in the literature (e.g., Hayes, 2009; Peacock, 2001; Phan, 2004), the majority have relied on two or more research methods for data collection. Several studies were carried out using two main methods, such as interviews and observation (e.g., Feryok, 2008), observation and stimulated recall (Canh & Barnard, 2009). Some others used more methods, such as Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) with interviews, observation, and questionnaires.

As is evident from the literature, a pluralistic research perspective (Borg, 2006), with complementary use of methods of data collection, permits an understanding of teachers’ beliefs and their relationship with practices. Following such a tendency in teacher cognition research, this study particularly employs a multi-method design to unpack dimensions of teachers’ beliefs by exploring how they plan their lessons, how they teach in the classrooms, and how they report their thinking and rationales for classroom behaviours, as well as their reflection on the materials they are using.

In short, to be a case study, two important characteristics should be noted: the context and the possibility for in-depth understanding. First, being a multi-case study, the present study takes individual teachers as sub-cases from which analysis starts. In this way, each participant teacher is considered a bounded system in which different aspects of their work are investigated. However, as can be seen in 4.4.8.2 and the way the findings are presented in Chapter Six, the whole group is considered a ‘case’, because data collection and analysis are carried out within a particular context (see 2.5). Secondly, the present study utilises a number of methods for data collection. This approach allows for in-depth understanding of teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to understanding of the context where the teachers work.

The next section will present a detailed description of the present study.

## **4.4 Present study**

This section will describe specific procedures that were undertaken during the process of the present study. It begins with a description of a workshop series which I organised for the purpose of participant recruitment. This is followed by a brief description of two preliminary studies. The next section (4.4.3) provides detailed procedures to address such issues as sampling, gaining access, and approaching participants, followed by information about the participants and an account of ethical issues. Section 4.4.6 provides rationales and detailed procedures of the methods of data collection employed in this study, followed by how the data were managed and transcribed. The last two subsections describe the process of data analysis and strategies to ensure rigour in this research.

### **4.4.1 Workshop on TBLT**

In late December 2009, I organised a series of one-day workshops focusing on the methodology of TBLT aiming at upper-secondary English teachers in the town and nearby areas. The workshops had the following aims:

- To get to know potential participants for the study, and to seek interest in participation in the study;

- To conduct the preliminary study (see 4.4.2); and
- To provide potential participants with technical TBLT terms and concepts, its underpinning assumptions about learning (such as input, output and interaction), as well as its potential implementation with reference to the textbooks the teachers were using

The workshops, occurring on three consecutive Sundays, each lasted from four to six hours of delivery and discussions. In the first session, thirteen teachers attended the workshop. The number of workshop participants decreased gradually in the next two sessions, with eleven in the second and eight in the third. Five of the eventual eleven participants of the present study attended all three sessions; six other participants of the study, however, had not attended any of the workshop sessions.

The workshops were organised in an interactive and flexible format. There were a wide range of activities: watching video lectures, reading extracts of articles, face-to-face input sessions, and discussions. The amount of content delivered in each was negotiated with the participants, rather than on the detailed plans made beforehand. For example, in the second workshop, several teachers expressed their desire to leave early for a social activity organised at their school. This resulted in some negotiation with the rest of the teachers, which led to the decision that the session would end before lunch. As a result, several planned contents were not realised on the day. Some of them were selected for delivery in the next session.

It may be useful to discuss the role of the workshops on teacher cognition for this study. Initially, one of the aims of the workshops was to provide the teachers with TBLT concepts and issues so that during data collection, teachers would be able to bring to the surface what they perceived and how they reacted after some time applying the ideas from the workshops. However, as the workshops happened during the ‘revision’ period, when teachers and students were preparing for end-of-semester examinations, the teachers were not likely to apply ideas received from the workshops directly into their teaching. Additionally, during this time, the teachers were very busy finishing marking students’ test papers before the start of

examinations, so they did not have much time to reflect on the workshops. The data gained from the five teachers who attended the workshops confirmed these assumptions: there were few distinctive patterns of beliefs and practices to prove that they had acquired theoretical ideas from the workshops. In fact, the data from these five teachers were found to be similar to those from the other six teachers who did not attend the workshops. So, the workshops achieved the two first aims, while the third aim was left unachieved.

As mentioned, my intention at first was to ask the teachers directly about what they knew, believed, and felt about TBLT after having received the workshop contents. However, when participants for this study were selected and School B teachers (see 2.5) did not attend the workshops, the situation left me in a dilemma:

- Either collect data from School A teachers (who attended the workshops) in the proposed way, i.e., ask them with direct reference to TBLT in stimulated recall and focus group sessions, and collect data from School B teachers without any reference to TBLT; or
- Collect data from both groups of teachers in a uniform way without direct reference to TBLT.

After considering that the first option would be too complicated for me as an emerging researcher, and that the purpose of my study was to look for patterns of beliefs and practices regarding the whole group rather than comparing them, I decided to take a uniform avenue of inquiry across all eleven teachers. I asked the teachers questions which did not directly use technical concepts and terms used in the workshops. This decision also aligned with my approach to understanding teachers' beliefs, following the claim that teachers' beliefs are implicit (Borg, 2006; Pajares, 1992) and the implicit techniques of eliciting teachers' beliefs adopted by Andon and Eckerth (2009). Therefore, during the process of data collection, I tried to avoid reminding School A teachers of the workshops.

#### **4.4.2 Preliminary studies**

The present research study was guided by two minor preliminary case studies, one of which was concerned with which language to use for data collection (Nguyen, 2009), and the other investigated teachers' general beliefs about language teaching and learning (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen & Bygate, 2012), using a set of narrative frames adapted from Barkhuizen and Wette (2008).

With regard to the former, I investigated whether it would be better to use L1 or L2 in data collection with my eventual Vietnamese English language teachers. I interviewed three Vietnamese English teachers using the Vietnamese language (L1) and three teachers whose L1 was not Vietnamese (Farsi, Burmese, and Chinese) using English. Six interviews, each of which lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, were carried out. The focus of this study was to discover how the interviewer used questions in L1 and L2. In particular, three issues were investigated regarding all the questions used by the interviewer: question types (e.g., open, closed, and probes), structural complexity (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) and conceptual loading (i.e., the number of concepts that require the listener's cognitive processing). The findings indicated that in terms of question types, while there was little difference in using open questions between the two languages, there were significant differences in the use of closed questions and probes. As the interviewer, I used far more closed questions and far fewer probes in English than in Vietnamese. Regarding structural complexity and conceptual loading, my English questions contained a greater percentage of compound and complex sentence patterns, and carried larger numbers of concepts than the Vietnamese counterparts. The study also revealed certain better quality with regard to insights and relaxation in the interviewees' answers. This study concluded that it is much better and more suitable to use our mutual L1, rather than English, as the medium of interaction to interview during the process of data collection.

To gain familiarity with my likely participants and to obtain preliminary information for the present study, in December 2010, I conducted another preliminary study using a set of 'narrative frames' (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008) with a group of 23 upper secondary English teachers. The use of these narrative

frames and the findings are reported in Barnard and Nguyen (2010) and Nguyen and Bygate (2012).

The teachers in this preliminary study were from three upper secondary schools in the town where the main study took place.

The narrative frames, in the form of guided compositions with sentence starters and linkers provided in Vietnamese, were distributed to the teachers during and shortly after the workshops. These frames consisted of three parts. The first part asked the teachers to write about their general approaches to language learning and teaching; the second part about the role of grammar; and the third part, the crucial frame, asked the teachers to reflect on one lesson they had recently taught.

The findings from this study indicated that although the teachers generally expressed positive attitudes towards communicative language teaching, they emphasised the key roles of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in teaching and learning. Specifically, most of the teachers wrote that grammar should be mastered by the students as the basis for communication to take place. In the third frame, teachers revealed their concerns about students' inability to complete assigned communicative activities, perceived by the teachers as due to their students' limited knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. On the whole, the teachers stressed the role of memorisation in English teaching.

These findings were used as a point of reference for my subsequent data collection and analysis.

#### **4.4.3 Sample size, selection, and gaining access**

##### **4.4.3.1 Samples**

Small sample sizes are acceptable for qualitative research (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008) which “can be equally effective for small or large numbers of participants” (Drew *et al.*, 2008, p. 187). This is because the purpose of a particular qualitative research case study is to seek to understand phenomena in depth and detail rather than to seek generalisations based on large sample sizes (Patton, 1990, 2002). Thus, unlike a quantitative design, where sampling strategies should be considered for ‘representativeness’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2000), this



study uses a small number of participants. In other words, this study's sample does not represent the wider population (though its results may be relatable to similar Vietnamese contexts), but it does allow an in-depth understanding and interpretation to be made regarding the case. Therefore, convenience and purposive sampling strategies were employed to gain access to the participants.

Firstly, I selected schools which are convenient for me to travel to and from, i.e., those within the town where I live. However, according to the purpose of the study, public schools were selected because these schools were currently using the mandated 'task-based' textbooks (private schools were not required to use such textbooks). Also, such schools should have at least three teachers of English, to allow me to organise data collection activities in groups, such as lesson planning sessions and group discussions (see 4.4.6.) Secondly, convenience sampling was applied to select participants who were "willing and available to be studied" (Creswell, 2005, p. 149). Within the community of English language teachers, I did not have difficulties in gaining access to a number of teachers who would be happy to take part in the study. In fact, some of the participants in the study are my college friends, and others had previously worked with me in several training workshops, such as the textbook training. Therefore, it was somewhat advantageous for me regarding time spent for establishing rapport and building initial trust.

#### **4.4.3.2 Gaining access**

In Vietnam, gaining access to the participants is a hierarchical process. Although it might not be difficult to identify potential participants, I was bound to go through a number of gatekeepers before formally asking teachers to participate in this study. First of all, I approached the provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET) to seek permission for gaining access to schools. I presented myself in the Vice-Director's office with a letter containing the information and purpose of the study, and the potential schools where I would like to undertake the research. The Vice-Director kindly granted me a letter of recommendation to each school.

With the letter in hand, I went to each school, met the principal, and presented them the letter of recommendation and letter of information. Of the three principals I met with, two (i.e., of Schools A and B) warmly welcomed me and expressed their support for my study. The other principal (of School C) also agreed for my research to be carried out in his school, but raised a concern that the research might affect teachers' work. He said that observing each teacher three times would place some burden on them, and that the teachers would not have enough time to prepare lessons for observation. Although I explained that my intention was to observe their scheduled lessons, which did not require special preparation, he finally suggested that I observe only one lesson from each teacher in his school. As a result, although two teachers from this school were also asked to plan their lessons, be observed, and attend stimulated recall sessions, their data were excluded from the present study.

With the permission from the principals, I started to contact the heads of English departments, to whom I provided the information and purposes of the study. I then asked them for their help, by inviting me to one of their weekly academic meetings, where I could meet the teachers and invite their participation.

#### **4.4.3.3 Approaching participants**

With the support from the head of the English department, I arrived at their department's weekly academic meeting. Handing each teacher a letter of information and a workshop schedule, I talked to them about my research and invited them all to participate in the workshop series about language teaching. I also showed them all the documents that were issued by their higher authorities, and encouraged them to ask any questions related to the research and the workshops. In the meeting with School A's teachers, most teachers were interested in the workshops and expressed supporting attitudes towards the research, although some of them revealed time constraints due to the workload at the end of the semester.

During the workshops, three teachers teaching Year 10 classes and two teachers teaching Year 12 classes were enthusiastic to participate, and thus all five were eventually selected for participation. In the meeting with School B (the teachers

from School B were not able to attend the workshops), all the six English teachers in the school were willing to help, thus all of them were included in the study. In School C, five teachers were willing to help, but due to the time overlap in data collection among the schools and the fact that this school was much more distant from the town centre than the first two schools, only two teachers were observed, interviewed in stimulated recall sessions, and carried out lesson planning, each once, as requested by the principal. Although, in total, thirteen teachers were involved in this project, data from eleven teachers (from Schools A and B only) were used for transcription and analysis.

In Table 4.2 (overleaf), Teachers 1-5 are from School A, and Teachers 6-11 are from School B.

#### **4.4.4 Participants**

Eleven teachers participated in the present study: ten female and one male, teaching English Years 10, 11, and 12 at the two upper secondary schools (see 2.5). For the sake of confidentiality, the teachers were labelled by numbers (i.e., Teacher 1 – Teacher 11). The teachers were numbered according to which lesson-planning group each teacher belonged to and their teaching experience. Where experience was found the same, the teachers' age was taken into account to number them, as the case of Teachers 4 and 5 (Teacher 4 was senior in age). For example, the first group of three teachers that carried out their first planning session was identified as Group 1, in which Teacher 1 was the most experienced, and Teacher 3 the least. According to the levels they were teaching, four lesson planning groups were formed. Groups 1, 3, and 4 consisted of three teachers and Group 2 two teachers. Teachers in Groups 1 and 4 were teaching Year 10 classes; teachers in Group 2 were teaching Year 12 classes; and teachers in Group 3 were teaching Year 11 classes. In Table 4.2, each group is separated with a line. At the average age of 33 years, these teachers ranged from 28 to 36, with teaching experience between five and thirteen years. All the teachers had experienced using the new textbooks for at least three years. They were all university graduates with qualifications in English language teaching. Teacher 3 had a dual degree in English and French.

Table 4.2: Participant teachers' profiles

Teacher	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Service (Years)	In-service training
1	36	Male	BA (TEFL)	13	Two VTTN workshops (2006, 2008)
2	34	Female	BA (TEFL)	12	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
3	30	Female	BA (FLT & TEFL)	8	VTTN workshop 2008 Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
4	34	Female	BA (TEFL)	12	VTTN workshop (2006) Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
5	33	Female	BA (TEFL)	12	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008 )
6	35	Female	BA (TEFL)	13	VTTN workshop 2008 Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
7	34	Female	BA (TEFL)	12	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
8	33	Female	BA (TEFL)	9	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
9	34	Female	BA (TEFL)	12	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
10	32	Female	BA (TEFL)	10	Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)
11	28	Female	BA (TEFL)	5	VTTN workshop 2008 Textbook training (2006, 2007, 2008)

In terms of in-service training opportunities, the teachers in the present study had been involved in a number of formal and informal workshops. Table 4.2 lists all the formal workshops that the teachers had attended. Five teachers had attended the VTTN workshops, which directly dealt with issues in the current textbooks. Two of them were the heads of the English departments (Teacher 1 and Teacher 6, of schools A and B, respectively), and had received these workshops twice. All

the teachers had attended three textbook training workshops over the period of three years, each of which occurred before the launching of a particular textbook.

#### **4.4.5 Ethical issues**

This doctoral study strictly abided by the University of Waikato's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (University of Waikato, 2008).

The present study followed strictly the procedures regulated in terms of gaining access to participants and obtaining their informed consent (see Appendices A and B). Throughout the project, I was fully aware of any potential risks that the research may cause to the participants, so every step was taken to minimise such risks. Apart from explaining to the participants in detail the aims of this study, the activities involved, and the time they might have to spend on the research, the teachers were guaranteed that their identity was kept, to a maximal extent, confidential. For example, a common expectation from school authorities was that after any observation, the observer should report to them about how well the teacher had taught in that particular lesson. To address this concern, I made it clear and explicit to the teachers that any information from observation and other sources of data was not transferred to any other third parties, and that the purpose of collecting such data was for the research only. I also made explicit to the school authorities that the information obtained would only serve the research purpose and thus there would be no 'reports' to them about the observed lessons. Moreover, in selecting participants to participate in this research, as the regulations (University of Waikato, 2008) required, I requested those teachers who showed both interest and willingness to participate to formally sign the consent forms, after having explained to them all information they wanted to know, and encouraged them to ask questions. Teachers who said that they had little time (but also agreed to participate) were excluded from this study because I was aware that they might drop out during the process of data collection. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from participation any time during and after the data collection without having to give any reason for so doing (although none of the teachers did drop out). During the process of data collection, although the teachers spent a tremendous amount of time on this

research's activities, I made every attempt to keep the extent of intervention and interruption to their daily work to a minimum.

In presenting my findings in journal articles, book chapters, conferences and to my supervisors, I also employed procedures to keep the confidentiality of my participants. No real names were used in any of the publications and presentations. In most of the cases, as indicated in Table 4.2, the teachers were numbered, but in some other cases, pseudonyms were used. School identity was also protected: they were identified as Schools A and B.

The data in this thesis fairly and fully represent the results as I honestly perceived them. Attempts have been made not to commit or condone plagiarism. During the process of data collection, data analysis and writing up this thesis, I was fully aware of the ascription of authorship. For example, data was not distributed to others except my supervisors. Only on two occasions were extracts of data given to others for the purpose of ensuring validity and reliability: a Vietnamese colleague who translated back-version of data extracts, and a colleague researcher who helped me interpret findings from extracts of data. Even though these data extracts were distributed to them, they were in the form of printed copies in which participants' names had been anonymised. After their work was completed, the extracts were returned to me. In brief, I acknowledge that I have conformed to professional standards and codes of ethics relevant to the discipline.

In this study every action has been made to safeguard the participants' and schools' confidentiality and minimise any negative influences that it may cause to the teaching and learning activities in the schools, and teachers' participation was fully voluntary and explicit.

#### **4.4.6 Methods of data collection**

As indicated, this research study adopted a qualitative case study approach as best suited to address the research questions raised in Chapter Three. As qualitative research, the purpose of this study is to seek meaning in natural settings (i.e., classrooms), examining events, behaviours and reasons that underpin personal theories and principles, rather than to test *a priori* theories (Drew *et al.*, 2008;

Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010; Pavlenko, 2007). This multiple case study was carried out using the following data collection methods:

1. Group lesson planning;
2. Observation;
3. Stimulated Recall; and
4. Focus groups.

In this study, teacher participants were English language teachers who can speak both Vietnamese (L1) and English (L2). The preferred language to communicate with the participants was identified as Vietnamese (see the first preliminary study in 4.4.2), although in all of the sessions with the teachers I asked them to choose the language in which they would like to conduct the discussion. Using L1 would also potentially produce better quality data because participants were more comfortable and more easily able to express complex cognitive processes.

In the sections that follow, I will discuss the data collection methods and procedures used.

#### **4.4.6.1 Lesson planning sessions**

Lesson planning sessions are in some way similar to focus groups (Latess, 2008) when participants are given a topic to discuss among themselves rather than with the interviewer, through which participants' views will emerge rather than being predominated by the researcher's agenda (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). This type of data collection can provide "orientation to a particular field or focus" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 288), and allows beliefs to be naturally expressed in a less pressing manner (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Lewis, 1992). However, unlike general focus groups, lesson planning sessions used in the present study provided the participants with a clear objective that needs to be achieved, which is the lesson plan, thus potentially providing more reality-oriented, rather than ideal-oriented, data (Borg, 2006). In this study, lesson planning sessions as an instrument of data collection can be regarded as an innovative tool for no studies have reported using such a tool in the literature. The use of this tool was inspired from such studies as Woods (1996) and Loi (2011), who investigated teachers' beliefs through interviews based on

lesson plans teachers had made before. However, the use of lesson planning sessions in this study reflected a more naturalistic approach to data collection. Instead of asking for (ideal-oriented) rationales for any intention, it was a more appropriate alternative to ask them to perform the planning in an interactive manner in order to capture teachers' actual processing (reality-oriented) of their thinking and decision-making.

In the present study, participant teachers who taught the same level (e.g. Year 10) in the same school were allocated in dyads or triads and invited to plan textbook skill lessons that they were to teach shortly (e.g., the following week). The reasons for this were that it was anticipated to be easier for the teachers in the same school to get together; they were likely to know one another well enough to fully express their ideas in these discussions; and it was believed that they would plan the lesson naturally because this dealt with what they would teach in due course. At first, I intended to be in the room with the teachers to make sure that they did the job as required and also observe their behaviours during the process of planning (see Appendix C). However, after the first session with one of the groups, I realised that my presence in the room affected the way they thought and made decisions in planning. The teachers frequently turned around and asked for my opinions on various decision-making processes. Finally, I decided to remove my presence after making sure that the audio-recorder had switched on. The groups and number of sessions collected are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: The lesson planning sessions

	Teachers	School	No of sessions
Group 1	1, 2, 3	A	3
Group 2	4, 5	A	2
Group 3	6, 7, 8	B	2
Group 4	9, 10, 11	B	3

Ideally, the lesson planning sessions would have been carried out prior to subsequent classroom observations of the planned lessons, as planned initially in my research proposal, to create systematic phases of data collection. However, as



the teachers were so busy with their teaching loads and other duties at the end of the semester, getting them together was extremely difficult. As a result, only one lesson was carried out this way. Other lessons were planned randomly, that is, for example, one particular planned lesson was not necessarily observed afterwards. In doing so, I let the participants choose a suitable time and place to meet and plan any lesson, as long as it was the one they were likely to teach the following week. Once they agreed on the time and place, I met them, gave necessary instructions, and turned on the voice recorder. I then left the room for them to discuss as freely as possible. Having asked the teachers to turn off the voice recorder when they finished, I came back later to collect it and discuss the next possible session. This type of data collection took place occasionally over the period of five months. The lesson planning sessions lasted between 18 and 55 minutes. In total, ten lesson planning sessions were audio-recorded.

A sample of the lesson planning data is provided in Appendix H.

#### **4.4.6.2 Observation**

Observation is among the most common methods used in educational research generally, and teacher cognition research in particular (Borg, 2006, 2012). Observation is useful in the sense that it allows the researcher to capture ‘live’ data and to discover things that might be missed in interview protocols (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). In language teacher cognition research, Borg (2006) emphasizes the preference of non-participant over participant observation, as well as the need for ‘authenticity’, i.e., natural activities. In other words, to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices, it is essential to visit the classrooms in the usual setting without interrupting the natural process of teaching and learning.

In this study, non-participant observation was considered one of the major methods of data collection, and was used as the basis for subsequent stimulated recall interviews (Borg, 2006). Recording of the observation data in the present study took two simultaneous forms. The first form, unstructured narrative field notes (Patton, 1990), provided the extensive details of the lesson. It was more descriptive than reflective, with some demographic information also being noted (Creswell, 2009). The second form of recording used a video recorder. With their

permission, two lessons from each participant teacher were recorded, making a total of 22 lessons. Apart from providing data for stimulated recall sessions, data from this type of collection were an important source for analysis.

Participant teachers were asked to select two skills lessons to be observed. Before each lesson, I arrived at the class and set up the camera. The camera was placed at the back of the classroom to capture the whole class and teachers' actions. Being aware that using a video camera may affect the teachers' behaviour, I decided to leave the camera in one position without touching it during the lesson. Videoing like this obviously could not capture closely the teacher's particular behaviours, such as their emotional processes, but this compromise meant that the teachers were found to be quite relaxed and almost forgot the presence of the camera in their class. During the lessons, I sat quietly in a pre-arranged place where any intrusion was likely to be minimal. Both the teachers and students were made aware of the presence of the camera as well as the researcher. At first, some teachers were a little nervous about the video camera while the students seemed excited about being videoed. However, these feelings quickly disappeared as the lessons proceeded. The teachers were seen to be as natural as their usual selves while the students were so busy focusing on their tasks that they seemed to forget the presence of the camera and the researcher in the classroom.

The video camera was the main tool for data collection, but during the observation, as mentioned, I actively took notes on the lesson sequences as well as interesting incidents, particularly those I thought related to implementation (or non-implementation) of TBLT. For example, on various occasions I took notes on teachers' responses to students' errors. The videos served as the principal stimulus for the subsequent stimulated recall sessions. Nevertheless, when the teachers were not able to generate comments and thinking, the field notes regarding interesting points provided a useful source of questions that I used to probe their comments.

A sample of the observational data is provided in Appendix I.

#### **4.4.6.3 Stimulated recall interviews**

Stimulated recall (SR) has been widely used and seen as an effective way to study teachers' interactive decision making and thinking processes (Borg, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Yinger, 1986). Because teachers cannot talk about what they think while they teach, retrospective accounts are the best ways to 'relive' teachers' thinking and behaviours. Stimulated recalls, in general, are unstructured. Teachers are encouraged to take the initiative to comment on any aspects of the lesson (Borg, 2006; Meijer, 1999; Woods, 1996). However, as Woods notes, the researcher should sometimes play the role of a facilitator to give prompts because teachers vary greatly in the extent to which they take the initiative to comfortably identify episodes and comment on their own lessons.

In this study, stimulated recall interviews were carried out based on the data (videos and notes) from lesson observations. The purposes of these sessions were to capture teachers' interactive thoughts and decision-making processes retrospectively (Borg, 2006). To do so, I used extracts from the video recordings and my observation notes as the stimuli. Also, rationales for particular behaviours and decisions were probed to further understand the teachers' personal principles and approaches to language teaching. After each observed lesson, the teacher participant was invited to watch the video of the lesson and to comment on any episodes that they wished to (see Appendix D). In principle, the SR sessions were supposed to be free-flowing, in that participants were allowed to initiate comments as they wished; however, as noted above, in many occasions of a specific session, I paid particular attention to the 'interesting incidents' noted in the field notes and probed them to comments on them, or asked them to clarify their rationales for any particular behaviour. In circumstances where teachers could not initiate comments, the notes on the lessons were used to investigate the beliefs behind certain decisions they made in the classroom. To maximize 'accessible memory' (Gass & Mackey, 2000), each SR session took place shortly after the observed lesson. Most of these sessions were carried out within the day, usually in the interval period between the teachers' two lessons or in the afternoon. Some others were done the next day. The SR sessions were audio

recorded and they lasted between 25 and 80 minutes, depending largely on the teachers and the time available.

A sample of the stimulated recall data is provided in Appendix J.

#### **4.4.6.4 Focus groups**

Focus groups, as noted by Cohen *et al.* (2000) and Latess (2008), is a type of group interview in which participants interact with each other rather than with the researcher, based on topics/questions set out by the researcher. In several research studies (e.g., Gladman & Freeman, 2012), focus groups are used to generate themes and categories for subsequent design of a particular study, such as for a questionnaire. Focus groups are useful to generate insights from a group's perspective (Morgan, 1988), and to triangulate with other forms of data collection (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). As a form of group interviewing, focus groups can generate a wide range of responses (Lewis, 1992) in a relaxing environment, apart from time saving. Focus groups can be useful because they serve to stimulate ideas among participants who share similar expertise and experiences in language teaching. Thus, this type of data collection can capture insights through the process of co-construction of ideas and reflective comments. In this study, the data collected from the focus groups were also used to cross-check with other sources of data. Focus groups were feasible for this study because they were carried out on the basis of schools.

In the present study, after all other data were collected, I asked the teachers from each school to meet for the last time in their department meeting room to conduct the focus group session. These sessions were carried out with a focus on the textbooks that the teachers were using. Two focus group sessions, each of which involved teachers working at the same school, were carried out. It had been intended that focus group questions (see Appendix E) were to be sent to the teachers prior to the sessions; however, due to many of the teachers not having access to emails, and the difficulty of meeting every teacher one or two days prior to the sessions to hand over the questions, the questions were distributed to the teachers in the sessions instead. In these sessions, I acted as a facilitator of the focus groups, asking the questions one by one and allowing the teachers to discuss

these among themselves. However, in various circumstances I extended the discussion by posing further questions I thought were important regarding any potentiality of TBLT implementation or orientation within the scope of textbook discussion, and in some circumstances the teachers themselves took the initiative to extend their discussion to various issues (some of which may not be relevant to the topic of the study!). In either case, they were encouraged to talk as freely as they felt. Each session lasted for approximately one hour, and these sessions were audio recorded.

A sample of the focus group data is presented in Appendix K.

In addition to these methods of data collection, in this study I used extensive field notes as supplementary data to gain understandings of the teachers' practices and beliefs. The field notes, being in the form of a reflective research journal (Borg, 2001), recorded all the facts and perceptions I felt relevant to the inquiry on various occasions, such as when I attended the teachers' academic meetings, or when I talked with a particular teacher in a more social manner. This source of data not only helped the analysis process, but also provided a detailed understanding of the contexts which allowed me to describe the settings in Chapter Two.

In employing the methods of data collection, I am aware that in research into teacher cognition, that in order to understand such abstract constructs, it is more important to investigate those that are tacitly held than explicitly expressed. Borg (2006) notes:

It is also clear that teachers' cognitions may assume different forms depending on the manner in which they are elicited; i.e. teachers may express a particular belief when responding to a survey but state an apparently contradictory view when talking about actual examples of their practice. (p. 107)

Given that teachers' beliefs are naturally tacit (Borg, 2006), the truth of such constructs is gained in this study by involving teachers in more implicit activities in which their beliefs necessarily emerge rather than asking them directly using abstract terms and concepts (Andon & Eckerth, 2009).

#### **4.4.7 Managing and transcribing the data**

During the process of data collection, I made duplicate copies of each data file to make sure that I would not lose them through technical problems. I also made attempts to transcribe as much as possible between data collection sessions, with the purpose of making data analysis a cyclical process (Borg, 1998). However, due to the tightly organised schedule with the teachers, I could not start a full analysis during the data collection. As a result, the majority of the data were transcribed when I returned to New Zealand.

Transcription of individual audio or video files started with listening or watching the whole file to make overall sense of what was going on, before I actually listened again to transcribe verbatim into word documents in English. This meant transcribing and translating were done simultaneously. That is, I listened to the audio extracts in Vietnamese and wrote down the translation in English. Once an audio file had been transcribed and translated, I ran through the audio and word files together again to check the accuracy and to add any meaning that I missed during the earlier process. To make sure the translation was accurate, I asked for help from a colleague who back-translated some English extracts into Vietnamese. These back-translated versions were then compared against the original files to make sure that they were similar in meaning. As a result, transcripts available for access are largely in English.

Once transcribed, the data were managed according to case study principles. The data from each 'sub-case' (in this sense, a teacher) were allocated together to make up one 'case' folder. In the cases of lesson planning and focus group data, the whole session was copied to the folder, with the particular teacher's statements highlighted. A much larger folder was established to represent the overall 'case' (i.e., the group). Another folder was made to include group data (i.e., lesson planning and focus groups) to be analysed separately.

The following were what I had in my data folder:

- Eleven folders each containing data from one particular teacher;
- One folder containing all the data of the study; and

- One folder containing all the collaborative data, i.e., lesson planning and focus group sessions.

Duplicate copies of these folders were made and stored in a lockable cabinet in my office. Then each of these folders was imported into the computer software *Nvivo* 7 (Bazeley, 2007). At first all the data transcripts were imported into one *Nvivo* file, but then I realised that this did not illuminate individual teachers' beliefs, practices and perspectives. As a result, I decided to create further eleven files within *Nvivo* to analyse the data from individual teachers.

#### **4.4.8 Data analysis**

Data analysis adopted for this study was an iterative process in which I repeatedly went forward and backward in searching, coding, categorising, comparing and contrasting of the themes. The general principles of analysis were based on Charmaz's (2006) grounded approach to data analysis. As in any qualitative research study, the data analysis in this study started with running through the data again and again to get a general sense of the whole data. After some key points had been noted several steps were carried out. These will be described in detail in the following sections.

##### **4.4.8.1 Analysing individual cases**

Identifying each teacher participant as a 'sub-case', I started to analyse the data inductively from individual teachers. Analysis of these data followed Charmaz's (2006) practical steps. It began with the process of initial coding, which resulted in a list of open codes (or nodes). This coding process involved identifying meaningful segments (Tesch, 1990) that were found relevant to describe teachers' beliefs and practices. Particular attention was paid to statements and classroom incidents related to principles of TBLT and characteristics of tasks. Each of these segments was coded using an appropriate 'node' labelled by myself. The first teacher's data that I analysed resulted in a tremendous number of open nodes. However, as this process went on, the number of open nodes in the subsequent teachers' data tended to decrease, as the themes and categories had emerged. Below is an example of the data segment coding:

Table 4.4: The initial coding process

Extracts	Source	Codes
So we [...] replace the ‘discussion’ task by a gap-filling one. [Replace] this one, this later task [discussion], because our students will find it difficult. They can’t discuss, I believe.	Lesson planning; Teacher 7	Replacing activities concerning students’ language proficiency
T: Task 2. Dialogue [writes on board, reading along] A: What-kind-of-film-do-you-like/-want-to-see? B: I-like-love-story-film	Observation; Teacher 3	Presenting language structures
For example, in Task 2, they had to use ‘may’. This was kind of basic requirement, which asked them to use this to agree or to disagree. Just kind of giving opinions	SR; Teacher 2	Role of language features in production
Sometimes I feel that teaching using the new textbooks is somewhat non-sense. I mean, what are teaching and learning all for? While we spend all these three years teaching and learning communicatively, at the end point students do not seem to gain anything because the exams test different things.	Focus group; Teacher 1	Constraint between textbooks and exams

An example of what open nodes looked like in *Nvivo* in the initial state of data analysis is provided in Appendix F.

When open nodes had been established, the next step was to run through the nodes again and again so as to put them together, rename them, and organise them into categories. The categories were then re-organised to generate broader themes to form tree nodes. Figure 4.1 shows the initial outline of the tree nodes of the first teacher.



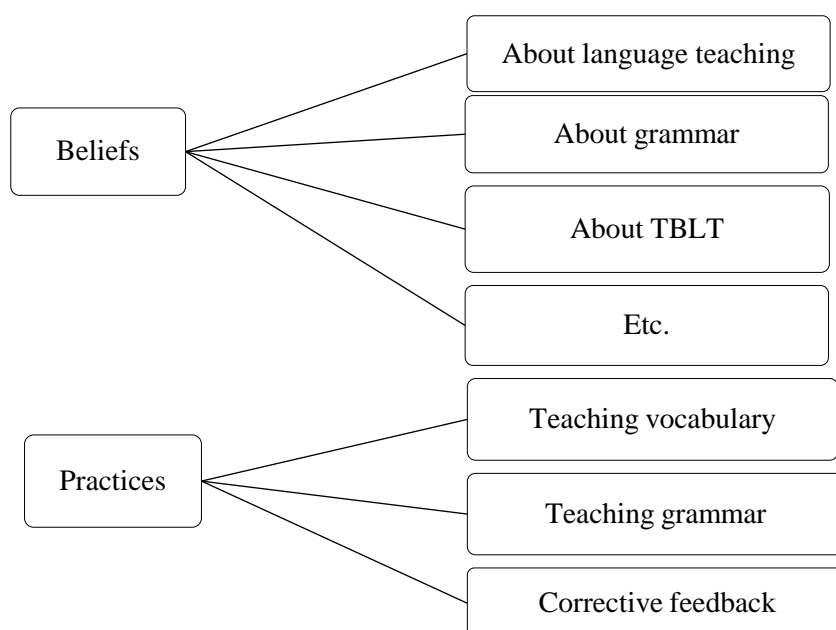


Figure 4.1: Initial tree nodes

This process was repeated for the data from all eleven teachers.

#### 4.4.8.2 Analysing cross-case data

Once the data for each teacher were initially analysed and I had gained an overview of their beliefs and practices, I began to compare and contrast the themes, categories, and nodes across the teachers. I realised that the teachers in this study shared so many beliefs and practice patterns that it was possible to build a cross-case tree of nodes resulting from most commonly found themes, categories, and nodes in all the eleven teachers' individual tree nodes.

Although the cross-case tree of nodes might have provided sufficient themes that described an understanding of the teachers' beliefs and practices, I decided to take another step of cross-case analysis by independently analysing individual sources of the data collected. This process was less tedious than the earlier ones, given that now I had been informed by the themes and categories derived earlier. However, I was willing to add any new themes that emerged during this step (see Appendix G, for a snapshot of interactive data in *Nvivo*). In this process, I also looked for the opposites or contradictions of what had been found, as a procedure of data validation. In doing so, I was aware of the possibility warned in the

literature that research data are often used to support particular points or arguments, where data presented may miss ‘irrelevant’ or ‘inconvenient’ data (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 2004). Therefore, whenever a seemingly contradictory piece of data was found, it was coded in the corresponding category with a subtraction mark (-), to make it available in the subsequent processes of review and re-categorisation. During this process, I also started to incorporate the principles of TBLT and task characteristics outlined in Table 3.2 to understand the relevance of what the teachers believed about language teaching and their practices with reference to TBLT. I realised that doing it this way gave me more insights into teachers’ beliefs and practices because I could view teachers’ meaning in context, i.e., within their discussions in which references to the textbooks were made. This process allowed me to generate a new cross-case tree node, consisting of themes and categories from all sources of data based on the initial nodes generated from individual teachers.

The list of themes, categories and nodes generated were used to compare and contrast against TBLT principles and characteristics I reviewed earlier. At this stage, following the ‘thick’ *description* of the teachers’ beliefs and practices, I started to establish a ‘rich’ *interpretation* of the data regarding my research questions. In presenting the themes and categories in my findings chapter, I decided to track the data down again in order to provide quantitative results of the trends happening in the data. For example, given my observation that the lesson planning data indicate some frequency in retention of textbook activities, I tracked this down to find out which types of activities (and how many) the teachers preferred to retain. This tracking process was facilitated by *Nvivo* since the programme allows users to view the number of references for a particular node. As a result, tables of these trends were presented in the finding sections involving lesson planning and observation data.

#### **4.4.9 Validity and reliability**

Qualitative research has sometimes been criticised for its lack of rigour inherent in the process of data collection and interpretation (Burns, 2000). Research rigour, by and large, lies in the extent of validity and reliability a research study claims to achieve. Validity (including internal and external validity) and reliability are

rooted in the positivist view of research (Kirk & Miller, 1986), but when it comes to qualitative research, these terms are defined and interpreted from interpretive view of research (Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Comparative terms in quantitative and qualitative research (Davis, 1992)

<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability/ Consistency

Internal validity in quantitative research concerns whether a research study actually measures what it is supposed to measure in order to achieve the most truthful results. In other words, how well the results match the reality (Burns, 2000). However, in qualitative research, as Davis (1992) notes, it is more important that “findings and interpretations are credible to those being researched” (pp. 605-606). Thus, the ‘truth value’ lies in the trust participants have for the researcher, the honesty of their answers, the researcher’s understanding of the context and culture, and the use of time and methods to triangulate the data. Also, in case studies, it lies in the researcher “giving a detailed account of how they carried out the study” (Burns, 2000, p. 476). Internal validity in qualitative research can be achieved in various ways. According to Davis (1992), credibility can be enhanced by using “procedures such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation” (p. 606).

In this study, different strategies were used to enhance credibility. Firstly, following Burns (2000), Edge and Richards (1998), to enhance the ‘trustworthiness’ of the study, a detailed account of how this study was conducted is provided in this chapter. This account includes the process of data collection, changes during data collection, how data were managed and stored, and how data were analysed. This account necessarily provides readers with a research-related story of what was going on during the process of undertaking this research. Secondly, I spent roughly five months working closely with the teachers. Such a prolonged engagement (Davis, 1992) gave me sufficient opportunity to get to

know the teachers, understand their practices and cultures of teaching, and to build trust. This engagement together with my own experience of the context as a member of the community allowed me to judge what was true and honest and what was not in teachers' statements.

Furthermore, the process of triangulation suggested by many methodology writers (e.g., Burns, 2000; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Davis, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was applied. This study adopted a multi-method approach to data collection, which allowed me to view the nature of inquiry from different sources and viewpoints. Since triangulation can take several other forms, such as time triangulation (or prolonged engagement – see above), multiple investigators, and data collection from multiple participants (Davis, 1992), the use of different methods to collect different sources of data is claimed to be “the heart of qualitative research’s validity” (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 34). However, as well as the triangulation of time (prolonged), data sources and research methods, this study’s validity was enhanced by collecting data from different participants (i.e., multiple case studies) in order to validate data across participants.

Another concern regarding validity of a case study is the reactive issue (Burns, 2000), concerning the role of the researcher during the process of data collection and interpretation. This means the researcher’s presence “may affect the behaviour of the observed unit” (Burns, 2000, p. 447). In this study, I was fully aware of how my presence may potentially affect the validity of the data. Therefore, it was important to provide a detailed account of “what the relationship or history was between the researcher and the researched, and what bearing that relationship had on the research process or interpretations” (Duff, 2008, p. 118) so as to make explicit any possible biases derived from the researcher’s presence and activities. As mentioned in 4.4.3.1, of the eleven teachers, two were my college friends, six of them I knew as friends of friends, and since it was such a small town, I occasionally met them in social settings. I got to know the remaining three teachers for the first time during the period of participant recruitment. However, academically all the teachers knew me in the role of a university lecturer and occasional teacher trainer, although until that time I had mainly worked as a teacher trainer to lower secondary school teachers. I participated as a teacher

trainer in one VTTN workshop, which involved two teachers in this study, in 2006, and one textbook training workshop for Year 12 textbook in 2008, which involved all the teachers in the province. Although I had clarified with the participants my role as a researcher concerning this particular project, it may be the case that the teachers regarded me as an expert in terms of language teaching. This factual situation explained why I had to frequently remind the teachers that I would like to observe their *normal* lessons – the type of lessons they practised routinely in their own classrooms rather than ‘observed’ lessons, which required special preparation and technology use, as perceived by the third school’s principal mentioned in 4.4.3.2. This also explained why I chose such methods of data collection as lesson planning sessions, non-participant observation and focus groups to minimise my role during the process of data collection.

However, I admit that my role in the process of data collection may still affect, to a certain extent, the data collected. For example, two teachers chose to use PowerPoint presentations in one of their observed lessons, which, through my experience with the teachers and understanding of the context, was not often the case in normal practice. Therefore, in my interpretation of the data, being aware of the issue, I have tried my best to guarantee that the findings were as trustworthy as possible. In doing so, sometimes I had to look behind the scene relying on my experience and understanding of the situations, as well as checking back and forth through various sources of data in making conclusions about my interpretation. Apart from such particular circumstances, I believe that my participants provided me with data as truthfully as possible.

External validity in quantitative research involves insuring that research findings are replicable. According to Davis (1992), external validity is established when “the findings can be generalized to other contexts and/or subjects” (p. 606). This construct is alternatively referred to as generalisability (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, and especially in case studies, “external validity is not of great importance” (Burns, 2000, p. 476). The focus of a qualitative case study is on the characteristics of the case, i.e., its particularity (Stake, 1988). In qualitative research, researchers attempt to claim transferability (Davis, 1992) or relatability (Bassey, 1981) rather than seeking external validity. As such, a

qualitative case study may be transferable to other contexts or times depending on the reader: that is, the reader decides to what extent the findings of the study are applicable in their own situations (Burns, 2000). Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide a rich, detailed description so as the reader can determine the extent of transferability (Davis, 1992). Like many other case studies, the present study also aims to focus on transferability. Although teachers are different, among themselves, between schools, and across provinces in Vietnam, they may share similar characteristics, such as using the same textbooks and working under similar conditions. The results of this study, therefore, may be transferable to other contexts in Vietnam.

Reliability is concerned with the extent of consistency the results of a research study produce. In other words, are the results replicable (Davis, 1992)? In quantitative research, reliability is assured by the use of testing instruments to make sure that results are stable, consistent, and predictable. However, in qualitative case study research, Burns (2000) argues that "it is impossible to establish reliability in the traditional sense" (p. 475). This means that in qualitative research, testing instruments or measures are not used to seek reliability. In fact, Burns (2000) and Davis (1992) argue that instead of reliability, qualitative researchers focus on dependability, the extent to which "the results make sense and are agreed on by all concerned" (Burns, 2000, p. 475). Different ways of enhancing dependability in qualitative research are identified, including triangulation (Burns, 2000; Davis, 1992), peer debriefing, member checks, inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and the researcher reporting any possible biases that occurred during data collection and analysis (Burns, 2000). In the present study, dependability was enhanced by triangulation (as stated above), peer debriefing, inquiry audit, and close examination of possible personal biases. Peer debriefing in my study involved working closely and frequently with supervisors during the process of preparing the research proposal, data collection, and data analysis. This procedure resulted in critical analysis of the methods chosen, the data, and the interpretations made. Inquiry audit was made through exchanging data extracts with a colleague researcher to authenticate my interpretation to make sure that with the same set of data, different (qualitative) researchers would interpret to yield similar results. Also, as noted in 4.4.8, the analysis of the data in

this research included repeated analysis and re-analysis of sources of data. This means an extract of data was analysed at least twice at two different times. This process can be regarded as another way to enhance the dependability of the research.

I was aware of the possible personal biases that might have occurred during data collection and analysis. The first could be due to the extent of my experience as a researcher, represented in the way I asked questions in stimulated recall sessions and the personal reflection in the observation notes. However, as my data collection process proceeded, I could observe there was improvement in such issues, such as my using more probes than closed-ended questions in stimulated recall sessions. This awareness of the initial limitation was seriously taken into account during the analysis of the data. Frequent checking and re-checking of information across different data sources over time were carried out to validate the accuracy of conclusions. Also, particular care was taken in judging the questions I used to identify whether bias in participants' answers could be affected by the questions I asked. Secondly, despite the advantages I may have regarding understanding of the culture and context, my role as a cultural 'insider' could sometimes hinder me from investigating in-depth the relevant issues during data collection and interpreting the data in an objective way. In several circumstances, I was likely to take some interesting issues such as 'the role of teacher in English classes' for granted, and thus necessarily missing some valuable data that may contribute to the overall quality of the study. My role as the cultural insider also affected the process of interpretation. In the initial stage of data analysis, I sometimes felt that the data did not provide me with enough information to analyse, and that the data represented mostly commonsense circumstances. Therefore, I had to frequently take a step back and look at the data as an outsider so as to make the familiar strange (Mannay, 2010; Mercer, 2007). This study had proposed to carry out member checking, i.e., having participants check on the information collected. However, due to the tight schedule of data collection, and the frequent power cuts at the time, little transcription and summary of data was made in the field for the teacher participants to check. Furthermore, only three teachers in this study had access to email, but rarely checked their mail based on the common practice that teachers in the contexts do not use email for work

purposes and rarely for personal communication. Due to this situation, the idea of member checking was abolished. While it was impossible to collect further data and seek clarification from participants, the potential problems of ‘cultural insider’ were further reduced by discussing results with supervisors and other PhD candidates within the research group that I participated in throughout the course of the study.

## **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has provided brief accounts of research paradigms, qualitative research, and case studies, followed by detailed accounts of the present study. By reviewing the research paradigms and the nature of qualitative research, and given the claim that teachers’ beliefs and practices are context-bound, a qualitative case study was chosen as the most appropriate design for the present study.

This chapter presented details about a series of TBLT workshops, the preliminary studies, followed by issues of sampling, gaining access and recruiting participants. After providing detailed information about the eleven teacher participants and considering ethical issues, the chapter considered the methods of data collection, data management and analysis. In short, the present study used lesson planning sessions, observation, stimulated recall, and focus groups as methods of data collection. It employed grounded theory approach for data analysis (Charmaz, 2006) in two separate layers of analysis.

The issues of validity and reliability have also been considered. Overall, it is hoped that I have provided sufficient information about the present study so as to allow for a comprehensive view of what had happened concerning the process of designing methods, collecting, managing and analysing data.

The next chapter will present an analysis of a unit from the textbooks the participant teachers were using.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS OF A TEXTBOOK UNIT

Because this case study takes a socio-cultural perspective, the investigation into teachers' beliefs and practices needs to take into account full contextual environment. This chapter presents an analysis of the materials the participant teachers were working with. Specifically, it provides an overview of the textbooks and brief analysis of one unit in one of the textbooks, as a contextual factor from which teachers' beliefs and practices could be more thoroughly understood.

#### 5.1 Overview of the textbooks

Textbooks for Years 10, 11 and 12 are based on the curriculum issued in 2006. They cover topics specified in the curriculum, and are claimed to follow “learner-centred and communicative approaches, with task-based teaching being the principal teaching method” (MOET, 2006c, p. 12). Specifically, each unit is based on a topic (e.g., music), around which texts, tasks, activities and functions are organised. There are a total of 16 units in each of these textbooks. Each unit contains five lessons, each of which is required to be covered in a period of 45 minutes. The five lessons in any unit are invariably sequenced in the same order: Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Language Focus (see, for example, Appendix M). The textbooks are accompanied by teachers' manuals, cassettes/CDs, and students' workbooks. Also, further publications are available in local shops supporting the use of these textbooks. Most frequently used by students is the optional *Để học tốt Tiếng Anh* (*To learn English well*) series, commercially written and published, which contains answer keys for activities and exercises both in textbooks and workbooks, as well as translations of the texts, and explanations of vocabulary and grammar structures in particular lessons.

The reading lesson is organised in three stages: *Before you read (BYR)*, *While you read (WYR)*, and *After you read (AYR)*. In the *BYR* stage, one or two activities are included to introduce the topic of the reading text, and to elicit students' background knowledge of the topic. The *WYR* include the text itself and two or three tasks, mostly in the forms of true/false statements, multiple choice items, comprehension questions, and matching exercises. These tasks generally involve students in skimming, scanning and guessing the meaning of new words in context. The *AYR* stage usually involves students in one productive activity where they are required to talk or write about information in the text or some related issues. Minh's (2007) analysis of the reading lessons indicated that the reading texts are not varied in terms of text types, with a predominance of essays (113/148).

Speaking lessons consist of three or four tasks, sequenced from more controlled to freer types in terms of language which students are required to produce. The initial tasks usually provide some language input in the form of examples for students to work in pairs or groups to practise language functions followed by somewhat freer activities in which learners are supposed to produce language on their own.

Listening lessons are presented in a similar format as the reading lessons, with *Before you listen (BYL)*, *While you listen (WYL)* and *After you listen (AYL)* stages. The types of activities and tasks involved in listening lessons are also similar to those in the reading lessons.

Writing lessons usually consist of one or two tasks, with the first task providing a model or list of questions to guide learners in the following writing activity. Writing text types vary in terms of genres, such as general essays, personal letters, memos, graph description, and narratives.

The Language Focus lessons have two parts, the first of which deals with pronunciation, and the second provides practice for grammar and vocabulary. In the Pronunciation section, students are required to practise certain phonemic sounds, stress or intonation patterns. The Grammar and Vocabulary section comprises a number of decontextualised exercises. That is, such exercises are in

the form of sentence transformation, verb conjugations, or gap-fill, but with no apparent connection between them, or between them and the previous pronunciation exercises. It is claimed that this section aims to revise grammatical and lexical items considered ‘central’ of the unit (MOET, 2007, p. 4). To most extent, the items revised in these lessons are found in the skills lessons of the same unit, reflecting some extent of delayed focus on form in Willis’ (1996) task cycle, although this cycle is based on a large unit, rather than on a particular lesson, and is intended by textbook designers.

Every three units, there is a *Test Yourself* section, which is intended to check the progress of achievement of language knowledge and skills over the last three units. Each of these sections includes four parts: listening, reading, grammar, and writing. No speaking is tested in these sections.

The following section will provide an analysis of a textbook unit in light of the task characteristics discussed in Chapter Three. As the present study is concerned with how teachers make use of skills lessons, only such lessons are analysed in light of task perspectives and no attention will be paid to *Language Focus* and *Test Yourself*. The reason for not including an analysis of these two sections was that all the exercises in them consistently focus explicitly on linguistic items (see Appendix M), and thus do not bear any task characteristics used as criteria for analysis in this chapter. Furthermore, although I was aware that such sections might contribute to the overall beliefs of the teachers regarding how to teach the language (evident in teachers occasionally mentioning how they went about working with these sections), the sections were not observed in the classrooms as part of the current study.

## **5.2 Analysis of one textbook unit**

This section will analyse one textbook unit to illuminate the nature of the textbooks the teachers were using. The chosen unit is *Unit 13, English 10* (in this analysis the lessons are retyped for ease of reference, however, as mentioned above, a photocopy of the entire unit can be found in Appendix M). This unit is chosen for analysis because: its lessons were mostly observed in this study; the

lessons seem to cover a range of different task types that are found in most units; and this book was used by two groups in both schools. In analysing each of these lessons, a general description of the lesson will first be presented, followed by detailed analysis of tasks which is based on the characteristics outlined in Table 3.2. Specifically, tasks are analysed in terms of focus (meaning/form), the extent of focus on form (implicit/explicit), language predictability in task performance (spontaneous/predictable), task authenticity (situational/ interactional), and solution type (closed/open). For the purpose of the present study, every activity in these lessons will be analysed under these characteristics, although some of them are not labelled ‘tasks’ in the textbooks, and in many cases the ‘tasks’ do not qualify as tasks (see further discussion in 5.3).

### *Reading lesson*

The reading text covers basic information about the film-making industry, in 192 words, which conforms to the 190-230 words as stated in the curriculum’s objectives. This lesson consists of a total of five tasks (including the *BYR* and *AYR* sections). Two tasks involve pairwork, two individual, and one groupwork, representing some variety in the mode of working. In terms of macro-skills provided in this lesson, a variety is also observed, in that in the three *WYR* tasks, one deals with guessing meaning in context, one with reading for specific information, and one with reading for gist (see Figure 5.1.)

#### **A. READING**

##### **Before you read**

*Work with a partner. Answer the questions.*

1. Do you want to see a film at the cinema or on TV? Why?
2. Can you name some of the films you have seen?
3. What kind of films do you like to see? Why?

[a photo of the national cinema centre]

##### **While you read**

*Read the passage, and then do the tasks that follow.*

The history of what we call cinema today began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, scientists discovered that when a sequence of still pictures were set in motion, they could give the feeling of movement. In the first two decades of its existence, the cinema developed rapidly. In those early days, films were little more than moving photographs, usually about one minutes in length. By 1905, however, films were about five or ten minutes long. They used changes of scene and camera positions to tell a story, with actors playing character parts. In the early 1910s, audiences were able to enjoy the first long films, but it was not until 1915 that the cinema became an industry. From that time, film

makers were prepared to make longer and better films and build special places where only films were shown. The cinema changed completely at the end of 1920s. This was when sound was introduced. The change began in America and soon spread to the rest of the world. As the old silent films were being replaced by spoken ones on the screen, a new cinema form appeared, the musical cinema.

**Task 1.** Find the word in the passage that can match with the definition on the right column.

1. _____	film-making industry
2. _____	series of related events or actions
3. _____	a period of ten years
4. _____	quickly and in a short time
5. _____	part of a film
6. _____	a person in a film

**Task 2.** *Work in pairs.* Answer the questions

1. When did the history of cinema begin?
2. What did scientists discover at that time?
3. Did films in the early days have sound?
4. When were audiences able to see long films?
5. When was sound introduced?
6. What form of films appeared as the old silent films were being replaced by spoken ones?

**Task 3.** Decide which of the options below is the best title for the passage

- A. The Story of a Film Maker
- B. A Brief History of Cinema
- C. The History of the Film Industry

**After you read**

*Work in groups.* Talk about the passage, using the cues below

19<sup>th</sup> century                      1910s                      1920s  
1905                                  1915

Figure 5.1: The reading lesson  
(*Tiếng Anh 10*, pp. 132-134)

Table 5.1: Task characteristics of the reading lesson

Task dimensions	BYR	WYR			AYR
		Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	
Focus	Meaning	M/F	M/F	Meaning	Meaning
Focus on form	n/a	implicit	implicit	n/a	n/a
Language	Spont	Spont	Spont	Spont	Spont
Predictability					
Authenticity	Sit/Int	Int	Int	Int	Int
Solution	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

\*Note: Spont = Spontaneous; Pre = Predictable; Sit = Situational; Int = Interactional; n/a = not applicable

A closer investigation in the light of task characteristics (see Table 5.1) indicates that most of the tasks were intended to focus on meaning, in that they require students to focus on conveying or understanding messages, rather than directing students to any direct reference to language features. Task 1 seems to focus primarily on meaning, with a peripheral focus on form, because while it requires students to infer meanings of words in context, it simply focuses on vocabulary; however, the primary focus is on meaning, and attention to form can be regarded as implicit. Task 2 seems to focus more on meaning than form, because it engages students in finding the information in the text in order to answer the questions. However, there may be some peripheral attention to form, given the fact that those questions are formed using the structures found in the text; thus students may simply follow the structures to answer the questions, without necessarily understanding the questions and required information.

In terms of language process, all the tasks seem to advocate spontaneous language use. In other words, it is unpredictable as to what language features students may use to carry out the tasks. For example, in Task 2, although the questions specifically direct students to information in the text, the students can use a variety of language forms to address the questions: they can either use full sentences (e.g., ‘the history of cinema began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century’), or simply the information itself (e.g., ‘the 19<sup>th</sup> century’), or just a longer chunk of language (e.g., ‘it began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when scientists discovered that when a sequence of still pictures were set in motion, they could give the feeling of movement’). Although one could argue that the language is still predictable because students are supposed to use the language provided in the text, such predictability cannot be fixed in any one language item. Task 3, which requires students to choose the best title for the text, is very open in terms of language predictability, where much negotiation can be assumed as a result of completing the task.

Interactional, rather than situational, authenticity can be found in most of the tasks. In other words, no tasks directly refer to something students are likely to do in their real-life situations. Most of the tasks, as in any reading and listening lessons, are input-dependent, in that they are built around the reading text. The *BYR* activity, however, can be regarded as both situational and interactional

because asking and answering such general questions about films and cinema are likely to represent certain real life activities, such as when they have conversations about films and their interests. However, if that happens, it is rarely the case that they talk about such specific issues as the kinds of films they like watching; but it necessarily allows some interaction to occur. The other tasks are not considered situational because they simply do not represent out-of-classroom activities. We cannot say, for example, reading the text and answering a set of questions is something students are likely to do outside the classroom. However, these tasks remain *interactional* (i.e., they carry a certain extent of authenticity in task completion), in that students need to activate their cognitive schema and interact with their partners, group members, the teacher, and the reading text in order to complete the tasks.

In terms of solution type, except for the BYR activity, all the tasks in this lesson are closed in nature, that is, they require students to arrive at a correct solution. The *BYR* activity, in which students are supposed to discuss general questions related to their personal backgrounds, may result in different information being shared among students. All the other tasks, which address information specific to the reading text, require an agreement in terms of information provided in order to complete the tasks.

### *Speaking lesson*

Like all other speaking lessons, the activities involved in this lesson are all labelled 'tasks'. There are four tasks. Generally the tasks seem contextualised, given the topic students have been familiar with in the reading text. In terms of working mode, the lesson varies in that two tasks involve pairwork, the other two groupwork.

<b>B. SPEAKING</b>			
<b>Task 1.</b> How much do you like each kind of film? Put a tick (✓) in the right column. Then compare your answer with a partner's.			
Kind of film	Very much	Not very much	Not at all
Science fiction			
Cartoon			
Horror			
Detective			
Thriller			

**Task 2.** *Work in groups.* Find out what your friends feel about each kind of film. Use the words in the table below.

**Example:**  
*A: What do you think of horror films?*  
*B: Oh, I find them really **terrifying**.*  
*C: I don't quite agree with you. I find them very **interesting**.*

Detective films	Interesting
Science fiction films	Moving
Love story films	Good fun
Cartoon films	Violent
War films	Boring
Thrillers	Exciting
Action films	Terrifying

**Task 3.** *Work with a partner.* Find out his/her preferences for films. Use the cues below.

**Example:**  
*A: Which do you prefer, detective films or science fiction films?*  
*B: Well, it's difficult to say. But I suppose **I prefer science fiction films to detective ones**.*

- Thrillers or science fiction films
- Horror films or detective films
- Love story films or cartoon films
- Cartoon films or science fiction films

**Task 4.** *Work in groups.* Talk about a film you have seen. Use the suggestions below.

1. Where did you see it?
2. What kind of film is it?
3. What is it about?
4. Who is/are the main character(s)?
5. How do you feel about it?
6. Why do you prefer it to other films?

Figure 5.2: The speaking lesson  
 (Tiếng Anh 10, pp. 134-135)

Analysis of the speaking lesson reveals that Tasks 1 and 4 are meaning-focused. Task 1, which asks students to firstly tick appropriate level of preference for each type of film, followed by a comparison activity in pairs, can be regarded as meaning-focused. There is no implication, either explicit or implicit, for students to attend to any particular language features. Task 4 is similar, except for a list of guided questions which might control the grammatical structures students are likely to produce. However, these questions do not necessarily direct students' attention to such particular structures embedded in the questions, but they rather guide students' attention to meaningful content they should include in their discussion. Tasks 2 and 3 are more form-focused, although elements of meaning-focusedness can be inferred. For example, in Task 2, students have to listen to



their partners in order to select appropriate adjectives that describe films. Furthermore, if students free themselves from such examples, they are likely to produce more meaningful utterances. However, it can be predicted that students might catch the emphasis of the examples (in italics, with some expressions in bold), and rely on the examples to replace the information and ideas. In this way, the tasks would become explicit in terms of form (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Task characteristics of the speaking lesson

Task dimension	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4
Focus	Meaning	F/M	F/M	Meaning
Focus on form	n/a	Explicit	Explicit	n/a
Language Predictability	Spont.	Pred	Pred	Pred
Authenticity	Int	Int	Int	Int/Sit
Solution	Open	Open	Open	Open

\*Note: Spont = Spontaneous; Pre = Predictable; Sit = Situational; Int = Interactional; F/M = Form/Meaning; n/a = not applicable

In terms of language use, except for Task 1, the tasks can be seen as predictable. Given the form-focused nature of the outcomes of Tasks 2 and 3, if closely followed, these tasks are likely to result in students substituting ideas and information to complete the tasks. Task 4 can also be considered predictable because, given the guiding questions, students may easily rely on such possible language features, such as past simple, expressions of feelings and preferences, and so on.

All the tasks can be interactional, rather than situational. This is because students are rarely likely to ask about *types of films* in real world situations. In this lesson, Tasks 1, 2 and 3 all refer to talking about types of films. Task 4 seems to represent more real world activities, in that it asks students to talk about a film they have seen; however, it is not likely that they would do so in real life with a set of guided questions. Moreover, while it can be seen as a linguistically enabling task for a possible out-of-class interaction, it is unlikely that the students would discuss this among themselves in English. All the tasks are open in terms of solution types. There is no specific requirement for students to agree on an answer, or single correct solution for completion of these tasks.

## Listening lesson

### C. LISTENING

#### Before you listen

- How often do you do each of the following? Put a tick (✓) in the right column. Then compare your answers with a partner's.

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Go to the cinema			
Watch TV			
Listen to the radio			
Go dancing			
Chat on the Net			
Listen to music			

- Listen and repeat.

*Titanic*

cinema

instead

suppose

guess

picnic

#### While you listen

**Task 1.** Listen to the dialogue. What are Lan and Huong planning to do together?  
[a photo of two girls looking at a *Titanic* poster]

**Task 2.** Listen again. Write their plans for the next week on the calendar.

	Lan	Huong
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		<i>work and go to the singing club</i>
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

**Task 3.** Compare your answers with a partner's. On what day can they meet?

#### After you listen

*Work in groups.* Talk about Lan and Huong's plans for the next week. Use the information you have written on the calendar.

Figure 5.3: The listening lesson

(*Tiếng Anh 10*, pp. 136-137)

Table 5.3: Task characteristics of the listening lesson

Task dimensions	BYL	WYL			AYL
		Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	
Focus	Meaning	Meaning	Meaning	Meaning	Meaning
Focus on form	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Language Predictability	Spont	Pred	Pred	Spont	Spon
Authenticity	Int	Int	Int	Int	Int
Solution	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open

\*Note: Spont = Spontaneous; Pre = Predictable; Sit = Situational; Int = Interactional; n/a = not applicable

The BYL in the listening lesson includes a pairwork activity to familiarise students with the topic, and a short ‘listen and repeat’ activity. The WYL has three tasks, two of which involve listening, and one of which involves comparing the listening results. The AYL activity asks students to talk about the plans of the two interlocutors. The characteristics of these tasks are summarised in Table 5.3.

All the tasks in the lesson can be rated as focusing on meaning, except for the ‘listen and repeat’ activity, a pronunciation practice of words that occur in the listening text. The BYL activity involves students comparing personal leisure activities, which may result in meaningful interaction. Task 1 asks students to listen to the dialogue and answer a general question about the listening topic, which is listening for gist. Task 2 involves listening for specific information, in which students are required to fill in the two interlocutors’ plans for the week. This task, like Task 1, focuses students’ attention onto the messages conveyed in the listening text. Task 3 requires students to compare the answers in Task 2, and to make an inference as to when the interlocutors can meet, based on the filled calendars. Again, in doing this task, students attend to meaning, using their cognitive skills such as logical inference to solve a non-linguistic problem. The AYL activity, although vague in terms of outcome, also focuses on meaning, in that it asks students to talk about the interlocutors’ plan, summarising what they are doing the next week.

In terms of the predictability of language use, it can be seen that the BYL activity is quite spontaneous, in that although students are constrained to talk about specific items in the table, they may use a variety of language features to compare their answers with those of their partners, except for the ‘listen and practice’ one. Tasks 1 and 2 are input-dependent, and can thus be rated as predictable in terms of language use. Task 3 and the AYL activity, however, do not constrain students to use any specific language features.

All the tasks can be rated as interactional in terms of authenticity, in that they allow language use, but none of them seem to represent daily life activities. With regard to solution type, while the BYL and AYL activities are open, all the three WYL tasks require students to agree on correct answers.

### Writing lesson

Similarly to the speaking lesson, the writing lesson involves labelled ‘tasks’. This lesson consists of two tasks, the first of which provides a model descriptive essay with a set of comprehension questions. The second task requires students to write a similar essay to describe a film they have seen, basing it on the model and questions.

#### D. WRITING

##### Describing a film

**Task 1.** Read the following description of the film *Titanic*, and then answer the questions below.

Of all the films I have seen, *Titanic* is the one I like best. *Titanic* is a tragic love story film. It is about the sinking of a luxury liner (ship) on its first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The film is made in America. It is based on the true story of the *Titanic* disaster that occurred in 1912. The main characters are Jack Dawson and Rose DeWitt Bukater. Jack Dawson is a young and generous adventurer. While on board, he saves Rose DeWitt Bukater from killing herself, and although she is already engaged, the two fall in love. The ship hits an iceberg and sinks rapidly. More than a thousand people die in the disaster, including Jack Dawson.

1. What is the name of the film?
2. What kind of film is *Titanic*?
3. What is it about?
4. Where is it made?
5. What is it based on?
6. Who is/are the main character(s)?
7. What do you know about the character(s)?
8. Does the film have a happy or sad ending?

**Task 2.** Write about a film you have seen. Use the description of *Titanic* and the questions above as suggestions.

Figure 5.4: The writing lesson  
(*Tiếng Anh 10*, pp. 137-138)

Table 5.4: Task characteristics of the writing lesson

Task dimension	Task 1	Task 2
Focus	Meaning	Meaning
Focus on form	n/a	n/a
Language Predictability	Pred	Spont
Authenticity	Int	Int
Solution	Closed	Open

\*Note: Spont = Spontaneous; Pre = Predictable; Sit = Situational; Int = Interactional; n/a = not applicable

In the light of task characteristics (Table 5.4), it can be seen that both tasks focus primarily on meaning, in that they allow students to understand the model text in the first task, and to convey their message in the second task. Although one can say when students carry out the second task, for example, they may have to look for forms (words, structures) in the model to write, they do so for the purpose of conveying their message, rather than practising such language items.

In terms of language use, Task 1 can be seen as predictable, because it guides students to answer specific questions relating to information in the model text, while Task 2 can be rated as spontaneous because students, although they may rely on the model and guided questions, are free to express their ideas based on their own language proficiency. Both tasks are interactional, supposing neither represents real life episodes. In terms of solution type, Task 1 is closed, requiring students to reach correct answers, while Task 2 does not require any specific correct answers to be given.

### 5.3 Additional issues

There are several issues that arise when this coursebook is placed against the criteria of task-based language teaching. One of the central issues is that, since tasks include a clear non-linguistic outcome by definition (see 3.1.2.1), the dimension of ‘outcome’ should be taken into consideration. Most, if not all, of the analysed ‘tasks’ fail to meet this criterion. Therefore, the ‘outcome’ dimension was not included in the analysis. This issue needs to be taken into consideration when examining teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to TBLT. For example, look-outs were made for circumstances where teachers show their attitudes, either explicitly or implicitly, to this aspect or their attempt to adapt particular ‘tasks’ to make them have some sort of non-linguistic outcome. The authenticity of language input may be another issue. In the listening lesson, for example (see Figure 5.3); specifically, people do not usually rely on what they do *on the day* to arrange an appointment, but rather they should discuss *time of the day* to reach to an agreed meeting schedule (in this case, to see a film). The lack of input authenticity may lead to the lack of task authenticity, because such unrealistic

information could make learners feel that the task is artificial and less likely to be engaged in completing it.

Another issue that could be noted from the unit is that there is little connection in terms of meaning between the ‘tasks’ within lessons as well as within the unit. Each task seems to shift to the use of different language features. This can be serious, because it could affect whether teachers are inclined to form- or meaning-focused instruction in the classroom. For example, a teacher, noting the shift in the use of language features in different ‘tasks’ in one particular lesson, may decide to draw attention to the features, especially in Vietnam where textbooks are considered some sort of authority. Taking this issue into consideration will help reduce flaws in analysis and interpretation.

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the textbooks teacher participants were using, and presented an analysis of the four skills lessons of a textbook unit. No analysis of the Language Focus lesson was carried out, because this lesson focuses entirely on forms and represents no characteristics of task, and that no observation of such lessons was carried out in the course of data collection to make reference to in data analysis.

In general, the analysis of the lessons reveals that although they do not conform to a strong task-based design, the lessons represent a generic form of TBLT. Firstly, it can be seen that most of the tasks focus primarily on meaning. Therefore, relatively little explicit attention to form (‘focus on forms’) can be observed, especially in the receptive skills lessons. In this regard, it can be assumed that a focus on form may be delayed until the language focus lesson, or it rests on the teacher to attend to form spontaneously in during-task processes. The speaking lesson, however, can be quite form-oriented, where Tasks 2 and 3 display an orientation to using specific grammar features and given vocabulary items. However, the practice of these forms, if it occurs, does not seem to significantly relate to, or lead into, Task 4, where students talk about a film they have seen, rather than discussing the *types of films* with specific features practised in the

earlier tasks. In this sense, even if it is regarded as a ‘weak’ representation of TBLT, it still has a *sequencing* problem in that the language features practised in earlier tasks do not seem to occur in this latter task. Also, all the tasks in the speaking lesson are open in terms of solution. This, according to the literature, may be used to predict that carrying out the tasks result in relatively little negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 2003b). However, Tasks 1 and 4 provide non-linguistic outcomes which can be inferred from the instructions.

In terms of task authenticity, nearly all the tasks are interactional rather than situational. Even though the only *BYR* activity represents some real world characteristic, it is not wholly situational. It can be seen from the analysis that most of the tasks in this unit characterise some extent of interactional authenticity because they seem to provide students with opportunities to use language in meaningful ways. In such language use opportunities, in most of the tasks, use of language can be seen as spontaneous, in that there are no pre-determined language features that students have to use for task completion.

On the whole, although the analysis above indicates that the textbooks are not entirely in line with a strong task-based design, the materials can be regarded as useful for task-based implementation thanks to the favourable characteristics the tasks have in the analysed unit.

The following chapter will present the findings about teachers’ beliefs and practices from the data generated from lesson planning sessions, observations, stimulated recall, and group discussions.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **FINDINGS: VIETNAMESE TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING**

This chapter reports on the findings of the data collected and analysed, in answering the overarching research question of the present study:

*To what extent are the English upper secondary school teachers orienting to the implementation of TBLT in their context?*

Specifically, four main research questions that encompass the question above are identified:

- 1. What relevance, if any, do the identified characteristics of tasks have for the Vietnamese teachers in their planning for and practice of textbook activities?*
- 2. In what ways do the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning converge with, or diverge from, the principles of TBLT?*
- 3. What factors contribute to the facilitation, or hindrance, of the implementation of TBLT in the Vietnamese context?*
- 4. What can this study contribute to an academic understanding of the theoretical nature of the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices?*

As in many qualitative research projects, the findings in the subsequent sections are presented in a way that the themes reflect the data collection procedures, and hence do not necessarily directly address the research questions above (each research question will be discussed in order in Chapter Six). Specifically, the first theme – planning for lessons – derives mainly from lesson planning data; the



second theme – classroom practices – is from observation data; the third theme – teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning– comes from stimulated recall data; and the fourth theme – textbook reflection – derives mainly from the focus group data. There are also cases where more than one source of data is used to support the theme in question, e.g., data from stimulated recall are used to illustrate themes about attitudes, the fourth theme. Presenting in this way helps gain better understanding because data are presented within the specific context of data collection procedures, thus providing better ideas of what was happening, rather than fragmented pieces of data deriving from various sources in order to support a particular theme. Presenting in this way also helps highlight the general trends that emerge from each of the data sources, and at the same time allows me to explore both individuals’ beliefs and practices and, simultaneously, conduct a cross-case analysis of each data source from all the eleven teachers in this study. As such, for each theme, the common beliefs and practices (general trends), with selected illustrations of data, are presented, followed by contrasting beliefs and practices from individuals in regard to the theme (if any).

This chapter presents findings following the sources of data. First, section 6.1 presents the way these teachers planned their skills lessons with reference to TBLT characteristics. Section 6.2 presents findings about the teachers’ practices in their actual classrooms, from observation data. Section 6.3 provides the teachers’ rationales for classroom behaviours reported in the previous section. The final section, section 6.4, is devoted to reporting teachers’ understandings and their attitudes in relation to the use of the textbooks and their perceptions of constraints to their effective implementation.

In the sections and subsections that follow, neither the teachers’ real names nor pseudonyms are used to identify the participants. Instead, each participant teacher is numbered according to their lesson planning groups and their teaching experience (see 4.4.4 for how the participants were numbered). Some pseudonyms are used in observation extracts, where students’ names were used, and sometimes in stimulated recall sessions, when teachers made reference, for example, to a colleague. The coding system used in this study follows a format of teacher-data source reference. For example, T2.O2.Year 10.Speaking stands for Teacher 2, the

second observation, teaching Year 10 in a speaking lesson; T3.SR1.Speaking means Teacher 3, the stimulated recall following the first observation of a speaking lesson; T5.FG2 means Teacher 5, the focus groups conducted in School B. However, where an extract including more than one teacher's turn is used, such as in lesson planning and focus groups, a group-data source format of reference is used for coding. For example, G1.LP1.Speaking stands for Group 1, data from the first lesson planning session for a speaking lesson; SA.FG means an extract from teachers in School A, of their focus group data. Except for observation data, all other sources were conducted in Vietnamese and translated into English by myself. Observation extracts, however, were originally transcribed, and were only translated (in *italics*) where Vietnamese was used.

I acknowledge that the data presented below are necessarily selective and partial, in that extracts chosen are, in my view, intended to illuminate the nature of inquiry set in my research questions and are most representative regarding the participants' beliefs and practices. Although peer debriefing and inquiry audit were carried out during the course of the study, it is in the nature of qualitative research that the data were primarily interpreted according to my own perspective as the researcher. Having this in mind, the selection of the presented data reflected my best belief that those data were necessarily the most representative regarding the themes and categories being represented.

## **6.1 Planning for skills lessons**

In this section (and throughout this chapter), whenever the term 'activity' is used, it refers to either a task, an activity, or even an exercise, whether drawn from the textbooks or imported by the teachers. This term is used to encompass various types of language work (and to avoid the use of the term 'task'), for many of these cannot be regarded as tasks according to the TBLT characteristics outlined in 3.1.2.4, such as reading aloud a dialogue or a short pronunciation practice of new words. The aim of this section is to investigate how the teachers used different types of textbook activities, and imported their own, in their planning. Therefore, whenever an 'activity' is mentioned, it may be task, an activity, or an exercise.

Data from lesson planning sessions reveal five trends in how teachers made use of the textbook activities in planning: retaining, adapting, replacing, adding and omitting the textbook activities. By retaining, the teachers agreed to keep the task exactly the same, without any modification. Adapting means the teachers made some changes to the task, mostly in terms of task characteristics, i.e., whenever the teachers showed an intention to change or remove a task characteristic from discussed task, such as switching between form-focused and meaning-focused. By replacing, the teachers replaced the task in question with another task. Adding a task means that the teachers agreed to add another task to the lesson without taking any task out. Likewise, omitting a task means that the teachers decided to take a task out of the lesson without adding another one to replace it. Table 6.1 shows the tendency of how the groups planned different types of lessons.

Table 6.1: Overview of teachers' planning sessions

	Number of activities				
	Reading (l*=3)	Speaking (l=2)	Listening (l=2)	Writing (l=3)	Total (l=10)
Retained	9	2	5	3	19
Omitted	2	0	0	0	2
Adapted	1	4	2	3	10
Replaced	2	0	0	2	4
Added	6	3	2	1	12

\*Note: l = number of lessons

The sub-sections that follow will examine more closely how the teachers planned for the activities these ways.

### 6.1.1 Retention and omission of textbook activities

Table 6.1 shows that the teachers tended to base their planning on the textbooks, showing their intention to keep 19 of the textbook activities unchanged. This shows a tendency towards textbook dependency on the part of the teachers. This tendency may reflect the fact that the activities were perceived as suitable for their students, or the authority of the textbooks was perceived, or else the teachers were unable to justify the activities. Noticeably, most of the retained activities

belonged to either reading or listening lessons, with 14 out of 19 activities retained.

Reading activities outnumbered others in terms of retention: out of 14 activities (including pre-reading activities) being discussed, nine activities were retained for teaching (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: The activities retained in planning for reading lessons

	MIC*	T/F	CQs	MCQs	GFs	Dis	MIIs	Total
Discussed	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	14
Retained	0	2	2	1	2	1	1	9

\* MIC: meaning of words in context

CQs: Comprehension questions

Dis: Discussion

MIIs: Choose the main ideas (for a paragraph, or title of text)

T/Fs: True/False statements

MCQs: Multiple choice questions

GFs: Gap-fill

A closer look at the reading activities that were retained revealed the teachers' preference for activities that were more closed-ended in terms of solution type (i.e. that requires single correct answers), such as multiple choice questions and true/false statements. In contrast, such activities as 'finding meaning of words in context' were not retained, although they were closed-ended. Actually, these activities were omitted from the lessons, with the teachers intending to teach vocabulary before these. The use of closed activities reflected two common conventional ideas: the first is that such closed activities represent similar forms to examination questions; and the second is the role of teachers in a Confucian-ideological context, that the 'final' answers are always from the teacher. Closed activities in the textbooks, no matter whether they are meaning or form-focused, are likely to result in the teacher providing the correct answers in front of the whole class, a common feature of Vietnamese classrooms.

With regard to the teachers' reference to the examinations, in their discussion of the activities, several teachers referred their suggestions to the type of questions in the examinations. For example:

#### *Lesson Planning Extract #1*

T7 Keep it [Task 1: Multiple choice] the same

T6 Yeah, keep this task the same

- T7        Yeah. That's it.
- T6        As to you, what else could be done? Anything else [such as] the gap-fill task we have suggested? Or we...
- T7        No, this multi-choice task is good, because they [students] will do it in examination. No problem with this. This task [Task 2: Answer comprehension questions] is to read for more understanding. These two are good. (G3.LP1. Reading)

Although closed tasks are identified as useful in terms of negotiation of meaning in the literature, it may not be the case in the reading (and listening) tasks, where students are likely to have few opportunities to interact with each other. Also, the lesson planning data show that the teachers never mentioned any rationales that are, directly or indirectly, related to negotiation of meaning. Therefore, my interpretation of their retention of such closed activities is that the teachers were aware of the types of examination questions students had to take, and they also wanted to retain a prominent role in providing the final answers to their students. Another possibility is that these tasks tended to be easier and take less time to provide feedback on, a factor in association with the manageability of teacher workload they mentioned in adapting the textbook activities in 6.1.2.

Another reason for keeping such activities is that the teachers were aware of students' language proficiency. For example, Teachers 1 and 3 were discussing a true/false statement activity, i.e., Task 2:

*Lesson Planning Extract #2*

- T1        We should keep Task 2 unchanged
- T3        Uh huh?
- T1        This kind of task is easy. They [students] can do it.
- T3        Yes, leave it as it is. (G1.LP1.Reading)

How easy such a 'task' is should be unpacked. My investigation of the statements revealed that the activity was not easy in terms of language processing: for some of the statements students have to make inferences in order to answer correctly. My interpretation is that the teachers considered it easy because in doing such a activity, students do not have to produce language: all they have to do is to simply

mark on the True or False squares provided. This reflects the teachers' perceived insecurity in letting students produce language in an uncontrolled manner.

However, there were instances where teachers kept open-ended activities for teaching. The extract below followed *Lesson Planning Extract #1* above, in a session where Teacher 6 and 7 discussed their reading activities. The following extract concerns their consideration of a post-reading discussion activity.

*Lesson Planning Extract #3*

- T7 For our students, doing these tasks is difficult. Like this discussion. Difficult for them to discuss.
- T6 So, so we take it out?
- T7 So we keep this 'questions' task, and replace the 'discussion' task by a gap-filling one. This one, this later task [discussion], because our students will find it difficult. They can't discuss, I believe.
- T6 I think they can. Like my class, I think they can.
- T7 Let's see. [reads from book] Which British activities are popular in Vietnam? There's not much to discuss about this.
- T6 Quite a lot.
- T7 I'm afraid they can't speak.
- T6 We have hundreds of free-time activities.
- T7 Humm ... So we keep this? Or change it?
- T6 This part [task] should be kept. 'Discuss the question' can be interesting. I think we should keep it.
- T7 There is nothing to say...
- T6 Because... they can have two columns in their notebook. In one column they list the British recreation activities, and Vietnamese ones in the other. Then they can give their opinions on those, by comparing and contrasting. Huh? Interesting that way. (G3.LP1.Reading)

At first, Teacher 7 suggested replacing the discussion activity with a gap-fill one, because "they can't discuss". This is likely to have reflected her concern about students having to produce language. The statements "there's not much to discuss about", and "there's nothing to say..." reflected this concern, rather than one about students' background knowledge of leisure activities in Britain and

Vietnam, because this information had been provided in the text, and students certainly had some basic knowledge of popular leisure activities in their own country. However, she eventually had to concur with Teacher 6, with some uncertainty. This agreement does not necessarily mean that Teacher 7 was convinced by her colleague, but rather represents a power relationship (Teacher 6 was the chairperson of the department, and more experienced than Teacher 7) and a sense of consensus (avoidance of confrontation) commonly observed in Vietnamese school settings.

Listening activities were also retained in similar ways. Table 6.3 below shows the teachers' preference for such closed-ended activities as true/false statements, multiple choice questions and gap-filling, while they showed an intention to adapt or omit such open-ended activities as discussion and listing (e.g., list benefits of reading books). In discussing seven activities in the two listening lessons, the teachers decided to retain five activities for teaching, most of which were closed-ended in terms of solution type, and required little or no language production.

Table 6.3: Activities retained in planning for listening lessons

	True- false	Multiple choice	Gap-fill	Discussion	Listing	Total
Discussed	2	1	2	1	1	7
Retained	2	1	2	0	0	5

Similar to reading activities, the teachers discussing listening activities reasoned that such activities should be retained because they were feasible in their classes. They focused much of their attention on the ability of their students to complete such activities. The teachers used such descriptors as “simple” (Teacher 4, Teacher 6), “familiar”, “easy”, “short” (Teacher 4, Teacher 5), and “not so challenging” (Teacher 8) to describe the activities they decided to retain. Below is an extract from Group 3.

*Lesson Planning Extract #4*

- T6           How about Task 2? Missing words...
- T7           Keep it. This is a familiar task for students.
- T8           Yeah, I guess it's probably not so challenging

- T7            How many words do they have to fill [in each gap]?
- T6            I think one. Let's see... Yeah, five gaps five words
- T8            [reads from key] "wonderful", "disease"...
- T6            Quite simple. We [teacher and students] will be able to  
make it. (G3.LP2.Listening)

These teachers were discussing a gap-filling activity, which followed a true/false statement activity of a listening lesson. This activity was perceived as feasible because of "five gaps; five words", which requires minimal production of language and little demand for listening to longer chunks of text. This, again, represents my interpretation of teachers' concerns about students having to produce language discussed earlier.

In speaking and writing lessons, the activities the teachers finally agreed to retain for teaching had similar features to the activities they retained in reading and listening lessons. They decided that such activities as were closed-ended and controlled in terms of language use should be kept unchanged.

Table 6.4: Speaking activities retained by the teachers in planning

	Matching	Information gap	Practise dialogue	Reasoning	Total
Discussed	1	1	2	2	6
Retained	1	0	1	0	2

It can be seen from Table 6.4 that, in planning the speaking lessons, the teachers retained controlled activities such as matching (match words with gaps), and dialogue practices. Of the two activities that asked students to practise dialogues, the teachers decided to keep one unchanged and the other to be combined with another activity, in order to extend the dialogue, which in fact did not change the nature of the activity. In contrast, the activities that require free production of language, such as reasoning, were adapted (see 6.1.2).

Like other retained activities, those retained in speaking lessons were considered feasible. For example, Teachers 9, 10, and 11 were planning the 'matching' activity, which required students to pick words from column B to match with gapped questions in column A.



*Lesson Planning Extract #5*

- T10        Okay. But how should we go teach this task? How can we make it interesting? Not just letting students fill in information, like this.
- T11        This? I think all we should do is matching, because doing another thing makes it difficult for them [students].
- T10        Matching is just ordinary, like what they require here in the book.
- T11        Just that, like in the book. If we modify the task, students might not follow, I mean, they won't be able to make it.... This, I think we should keep it, matching, then we show them to use which questions to ask about what.
- T9         The aims of this task, I think, first is to introduce them to some vocabulary, and second to teach them to use the questions...
- T11        ... how to use the questions for this later task.
- T9         So I think matching will do. That's for Task 1.
- T11        Task 1 will be the same.
- T9         Keep it the same. (G4.LP1.Speaking)

Although Teacher 10 showed a preference for changing the activity to “make it interesting”, both Teacher 9 and 11 agreed that they should not make any changes. This activity is forms-focused, in that the list of gapped questions are decontextualised, and to do it students have to make use of their declarative knowledge of grammatical forms, such as in ‘When was the city founded?’. My interpretation for this is again similar to the way they retained other activities, in that by ‘easy’ for students, they meant something requiring minimal language production. Furthermore, as indicated in the extract, the teachers were aware that this activity served as a preparation (e.g., “to show them to use which questions to ask about what”, and “to teach them to use the questions”) for the later one, which is an information-gap activity. This represents the teachers’ orientation for introducing predetermined language items before a communicative activity.

Similarly, in the three planning sessions for writing lessons, the teachers showed their intention to retain activities that were more linguistic-focused and closed-ended in nature, including a gap-filling activity, a matching activity and a

statement ordering activity (Table 6.5). In contrast, it was decided that freer activities such as letter writing and essay writing were to be adapted or replaced (see 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 ).

Table 6.5: Writing activities retained by the teachers in planning

	Gap-filling	Matching	Ordering	Letter writing	Controlled Speaking	Essay writing	Total
Discussed	1	1	1	1	2	2	8
Retained	1	1	1	0	0	0	3

The teachers in Group 1, while discussing a gap-filling activity and an ordering activity in a lesson requiring students to write an informal letter, did not state why they decided to retain such activities. They quickly mentioned that they should keep the activity without giving a reason.

*Lesson Planning Extract #6*

- T1      What about Task 1? May be ...
- T2      Just get students to finish [filling] these three letters, then demo [Task 2]...
- T3      Rearrange [Task 2].
- T1      Rearrange [the sentences to form the] letter. (G1.LP2.Writing)

The ‘task’ at issue was a gap-filling activity, which required students to pick already given expressions to fill in gaps in three short letters. Earlier in this planning session, the teachers decided to add another activity in which the teacher should elicit ways of accepting and refusing on the board. It may be the case that the teachers, having considered presenting language items before, regarded these two activities as further practice resulting from the introduction of the language items.

However, in the other two sessions, the teachers explicitly reasoned that such focused activities were important for students as preparation for the later activities. An awareness of students’ language proficiency was also revealed when they talked about why they should keep the activities unchanged. In one lesson planning session, Teachers 4 and 5 were discussing a matching activity, which required students to match a list of jumbled questions into the outlined format of

an essay that should be used to describe a football match. The outlined format included three sections: introduction, details of the match, and conclusion. Students were supposed to pick the questions and put them into appropriate sections of the format.

*Lesson Planning Extract #7*

- T5           What should we do here [Task 1]? Should we change anything?
- T4           I think we should keep it. This [task] is important, you know, because it provides structures for students to write in Task 3. So let's...
- T5           Yeah let's keep it. Otherwise they won't know how to write. Are the questions okay?
- T4           Hmm... [reads question] 'Where and when did the match take place?' ... I think they are fine. If they [students] write full answers to these [questions], they will be able to write the essay. (G2.LP2.Writing)

Teacher 4 said that the activity was important as the questions in it included language *structures* that students needed to use when they were to write the essay, which was agreed by Teacher 5, who commented that students would not be able to write if no such questions were given to them. The teachers thus believed that a provision of language structures (in this session, in the form of questions) is important, which reflects a form-oriented approach to writing. In other words, they believed that students would not be able to produce a piece of writing unless they were given a set of language structures to use in their writing. This belief was further reinforced in Teacher 4's statement that students needed to answer the questions in full in order to put the sentences together to form an essay (see also Teacher 6's provision of language items in *Observation Extract #5*, section 6.2.2).

In terms of activity omission, as indicated in Table 6.1, only two reading activities were taken out of their intended lesson sequences. Interestingly, both of the activities omitted were 'word meaning in context' activities, which required students, for example, to read the text and work out the meaning of several words by matching the words with definitions. Although these were closed activities,

they might offer a learning opportunity, in that students should have the opportunity to work out the meaning of words in a meaningful way from the context where the words occur. The teachers, while discussing omitting the activities, gave no explicit reason for so doing. Teachers 1 and 2's decision to omit the activity was recorded as follows.

*Lesson Planning Extract # 8*

- T2            Okay. ... So we omit Task 1, right?
- T1            Okay... Task 2...
- T2            Task 2. In Task 2 we keep 'Decide whether the following statements are true or false'.
- T1            Task 2 belongs to While-reading
- T2            Yes.
- T1            So cut Task 1 off, right?
- T2            Yes. (G1.LP1.Reading)

As this extract reveals, the teachers decided to omit fairly quickly, without much consideration about why they should do so. So it may be inferred that these were their routine practices. This routine, as observed in their classroom practice, referred to the rationale that these activities were not necessary because they had chosen to teach vocabulary items before, which included the introduction and drilling of the words intended to be inferred in these activities. Indeed, in the other session where the omission of the activity was recorded, the three teachers mentioned all the words in the activity while they were choosing new words to teach:

*Lesson Planning Extract # 9*

- T9            Now the new words... For the new words, let's choose several words... five words.
- T11          Between five and seven.
- T9            There! [points to Task 1 (meaning from context) and reads aloud] 'emotion, lull, delights, communicate, integral part, mournful, solemn'. There! (G4.LP2.Reading)

It might not be incidental when Teacher 11 said that they should choose between five to seven words to teach, which prompted Teacher 9 to indicate exactly those words (seven words in total) in the activity that they later decided to omit.

This section has shown that although a general sense of textbook dependency was observed, the teachers tended to retain activities for teaching to reflect their forms-focused orientation in planning for skills lessons. Most of the activities retained were forms-focused, closed, predictable, and required minimal language production and spoken negotiation of meaning. In the planning sessions, the teachers raised their concern about the relevance of such activities for students' examinations and the insecurity of having students produce language without having been pre-taught the key language items. This section has also shown that the teachers' omission of vocabulary activities indicates a routinised practice in which they found those activities irrelevant in their teaching sequences. The omission is closely associated with the way they added vocabulary teaching as pre-task activities (see 6.1.3).

### 6.1.2 Adapting activities

It might at times be difficult to identify whether the teachers were actually adapting activities (as compared to retaining or replacing). In my analysis, as mentioned earlier, adapting means keeping the goal of the activity, e.g., to write a letter, but changing one or more characteristics already designed in the textbook activity.

Table 6.6: Types of adapted activities in the teachers' planning

Lesson	Reading	Speaking	Listening	Writing
No. adapted	1	4	2	3
Activities adapted	Discussion	Reasoning (x2); Info-gap; Dialogue	Listing (x2)	Essay writing (x2); Letter writing

Table 6.1 indicates that the teachers in this study showed their intention to adapt more productive skills than receptive skills activities. Four speaking activities and

three writing activities were adapted, while the number of reading and listening activities adapted was one and two, respectively.

Table 6.6 shows the types of activities they planned to adapt in which lessons. It is noted that, except for the dialogue activity, all the adapted activities were potentially meaning-focused, that is, they were likely to provide students with opportunities to use language to convey their messages, rather than merely practise language features. For example, the discussion activity involved students in talking about the consequences of losing forests, the importance of water in life and what they should do for the future of the earth. Although such topics may not necessarily be attractive, they potentially engage students in meaningful discussion. Also, despite most of the activities being interactional, some of them were situational in terms of authenticity, such as the letter writing activity and one of the listing activities. Furthermore, except for the dialogue practice, all other activities seem to be unpredictable in terms of what language items could be used by students. These activities, if engaged in by students, generally stimulate production of language, either in oral or in written form.

The most common in the ways the teachers adapted the activities above was to change the focus of the activities, specifically from meaning to form (or forms). In this way, they tended to change the condition where implicit language input or no language input was available to one where language input was introduced and made explicit. In doing so, the teachers tended to add another element to the activity: providing and practising language models. This resulted in the activities potentially pre-determining the language features students would use during performance. Five out of the ten activities were adapted this way. Ample evidence of the teachers' awareness of the particular forms they wanted to make explicit to students was found across the sessions.

In the extract below, for example, the awareness of forms was evident among Teachers 9, 10 and 11 when they discussed how to adapt an information-gap activity (Task 2, *Tieng Anh 10*, p. 159).

*Lesson Planning Extract #10*

T11                      And this [Task 2], this has a model...

T10	We should present it on an extra board; put it on directly.
T11	All right, this should be presented.
T10	We put it up and lead it in. We ask them the questions and ask them to answer.
T11	Put it on the board.
T10	We give them the model.
T11	This model, yeah?
T10	That will do. What else is this? (G4.LP1.Speaking)

It might be possible to infer that the teachers were actually aware of the structures in this planning extract, because they intended to bring forward the ‘model’. Teacher 10 suggested that they should present the model on “an extra board”, which was conventionally understood as a poster. She said, “put it on directly” to mean that there was no need to elicit from the students, but instead, the teacher should show them the model. Next, she suggested that the teacher get students to rehearse the model (“lead it in”, “we ask them the questions and ask them to answer”). What this teacher meant here was that after presenting the model on the board, the teacher would probably start rehearsing the model with the students, to get them to practise the model before they applied it using other information in the boxes. Although there was no explicit intention to explain any particular structures, their decision showed that they were explicit in showing students what language features to use. This intention included the extensive rehearsal of the model and their emphasis on it when they wanted to put in on an ‘extra’ board. If students’ attention was focused on using the model and replacing information to practise the language, the language they were likely to use was predictable.

Furthermore, it can be noted that the three teachers, like many others in their respective sessions, were actually focusing on the instructional procedures, that is, how to go about teaching these activities, without reflecting how useful such activities were for their own students. Specifically, they tended to neglect the nature of the activity. It should be noted that this activity [Task 2] was not ‘information gap’ by nature. Instead of gapping information so that students could genuinely ask to find information, all the information about the two cities was already provided on one page. The activity, therefore, was not characterised by task authenticity. While the activity was not situational (i.e., involving asking

information about the other city), the teachers did not seem to make it interactional, for example, by planning to provide students with different information. This may reflect their views that they had to take the textbooks for granted; but given my experience with the teachers, it would also be due to their limited knowledge of CLT approaches in general, and few practical skills in operationalising information-gap activities in particular.

In the same planning session, the teachers decided to modify the last activity (Task 4), which was a reasoning activity. This activity asked students to work in groups and tell each other which city they would prefer and give reasons. This activity, even preceded by form-focused activities, remained meaningful, spontaneous, and somewhat authentic (interactional). Before the following extract, Teacher 9 had suggested several times that they join Task 4 into Task 3, a dialogue practice, until her suggestion caught her colleagues' attention.

*Lesson Planning Extract #11*

- T10        Putting them [Task3 and Task 4] together is fine. But what are the procedures?
- T9         It just results from the conversation task [Task 3]. Like, when they have already done this task [practising the dialogue], A asks B a question 'In your opinion, which city do you prefer?', and B will answer 'I prefer..., because...'. Just a bit of expansion
- T10        Then, I think the teacher should model the conversation with a student
- T9         Also in the useful language section we should provide the question ['In your opinion, which city do you prefer?'].
- T11        Yeah... so that's it. Put these two tasks together, and that's fine.
- T9         Agreed? (G4.LP2.Speaking)

Similar to the way they modified the other activity, the teachers planned to change Task 4 from meaning to forms-focused, spontaneous to predictable, and authentic to inauthentic. Firstly, instead of allowing students to talk as they wished about which city they prefer in a spontaneous manner, the teachers tended to simplify



the activity, by providing an additional pair of exchanges joined to the previously practised dialogue. Although students may still be able to convey some meaning (i.e., they can express which city they prefer and give at least one reason), their attention was likely to be focused primarily on the specified structures given by the teacher, and their language use would be restricted to such language items only. This would probably result in some predictable language features being used. Furthermore, although the original activity was interactional rather than situational, the modified activity appeared less interactional, because it was likely to stimulate little negotiation of meaning, given the framework students would be constrained to follow. This analysis, again, shows a sense of insecurity in the teachers' views about having students talk without provision of language features.

Similar to such speaking activities, in discussion about adapting writing activities, a movement from meaning to forms was evident. Specifically, the teachers showed an intention to provide students with particular structures and expressions to support students in their writing. The extract that follows illustrates that the teachers were trying to plan how they would elicit language expressions prior to the writing activity to help students 'accept or refuse' in a letter writing lesson.

*Lesson Planning Extract #12*

- T1      Let's make the question clear first
- T2      'How do you accept or refuse an invitation?'
- T3      Okay. Done. Will we write students' answers on the board, or  
get them to write?
- T1      May be we get students to tell the answers and we write on  
the board.
- T2      Yes, teacher writes on the board.
- T1      Teacher writes on the board.
- T2      ... Okay. Should we add some more ideas?
- T1      While we elicit if they could add anything, we just write on  
board, maybe from the book, maybe from elsewhere, or we  
may want to add some more ourselves, if they can't ...  
(G1.LP2.Writing)

In this extract, the teachers devised an instructional question which they intended to use to elicit expressions of accepting and refusing in letter writing. It is noted that such expressions had already been available in the textbook; however, this extract shows that the teachers were trying to make such structures focused and explicit. Similar to my analysis above, this reflects the teachers' belief that key language features should be provided prior to any production of language.

Not only were the teachers aware of specific language structures, they also showed some awareness of a general structure of letter writing where such language structures fit in. After noting down all the language expressions they would expect from students, the teachers continued to discuss how to make clear to students the general format of a letter.

### *Lesson Planning Extract #13*

- T2        The next task [Task 2] is complete [rearranging] the letter.
- T1        [Then] we give out the form [i.e., the letter organisational frame].
- T2        I mean, get students to read the [complete] letter and ask them to give out the form.
- T3        I remember already giving my students forms of letters some time at the beginning of the semester.
- T2        Forms are different; each kind of letter has its own form. In this case, if you accept, there must be 'thank-you', then arrangements.
- T1        Uh, thank-you.
- T2        Refusing or accepting, then arrangement if accepting, then ending, signature.
- T3        We don't need to write date in this type of informal letter, right?
- T2        The form is general. But the body ... the middle part is the body of the letter; the body is different in each kind. For example, in this invitation letter, there is a reason for invitation, then the invitation, then ending.
- T3        Then it's Task 2, okay? Teacher gives the form of the letter.
- T2        Ask students to give the form.
- T3        Ask students for the form. (G1.LP2.Writing)

The original activity [Task 2] was form-focused, in that it required students to rearrange mixed up sentences to make a complete letter. However, such a focus on form can be considered implicit, because there was no implication to raise

students' awareness of how such a letter was structured. Here, the teachers were making a connection between Task 2 and Task 3, by asking students to provide the form of the letter prior to Task 3. By doing so, they were actually bringing explicit attention to forms prior to the activity. This, again, shows that these teachers advocated a provision of language features prior to language production.

This section has shown that in lesson planning sessions, the teachers in the present study tended to adapt activities that required spontaneous production of language. They showed their intention to adapt the activities so that these became more form-focused, and if there was already some focus on form, to make it more explicit (i.e., focus on forms), and predictable in terms of language use. In general, this would reflect their belief that language production requires explicit provision of relevant language features.

The next section will present the way these teachers added elements to the lessons and how they replaced the activities in their textbooks.

### 6.1.3 Adding and replacing activities

As can be seen in Table 6.1, the teachers tended to add many activities to their planned lessons. Table 6.7 shows the types of activities the teachers intended to add in the lessons. In general, reading activities outnumbered other skills activities in terms of addition.

Table 6.7: Adding activities to the lessons

	Reading (3)	Speaking (2)	Listening (2)	Writing (3)
Vocab teaching	3	1	1	1
T/F statements	1			
Com. questions			1	
Word race (game)	1	1		
Guessing game		1		
Kim's game	1			
Total	6	3	2	1

It can be noted from the table that the teachers in this study added the teaching of vocabulary in most of the lessons they were planning. The teaching of vocabulary, regarded by the teachers as a pre-task activity, was added in all the three reading

lessons, one in two speaking and listening lessons, and one in three writing lessons. (Although adding vocabulary sounds like a pre-task activity, the teachers seemed to consider it a separate one from the main activity. This explains why I categorised this as adding rather than adapting).

Indeed, a high portion of time was spent in discussion of vocabulary preparation. The general trend was that they discussed what vocabulary items to teach, and the way to present them to students. Take, for example, the following extract where the teachers were planning a reading lesson. In this extract, they started with identifying the new words they found in the reading text.

*Lesson Planning Extract #14*

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| 01 | T1 | Let's deal with vocabulary first. The 'While you read' section will be dealt later, okay?              |
| 02 | T3 | Okay.  |
| 03 | T1 | What words should we teach?  |
| 04 | T3 | 'Destroy', ... or they may have known this word...   |
| 05 | T1 | 'Destroy'?   |
| 06 | T3 | They have known, 'variety', ...  |
| 07 | T1 | Maybe they have known 'destroy'; 'eliminate' is already there, they have met before. What other words? |
| 08 | T3 | 'Cancel'. Actually this is not a key word.   |
- (G1.LP1.Reading)

It was decided that they started planning by identifying the words that they thought students had not known, as indicated in various statements (04, 06, 07). They might think that unknown words were likely to cause comprehension problems for students, thus these words should be picked out to teach before students read the text. This extract exemplified the general trend to bring forward decontextualised vocabulary teaching as a fundamental step of teaching. The teaching of vocabulary had a connection with the provision of language structures when teachers showed their intention to adapt speaking activities, in that teachers believed that students would be unable to perform well unless they were taught language features prior to a particular activity.

This pattern continued, with teachers mentioning many words and considering whether students would know them, until they reached agreement to teach five words that they found in the listening text.

*Lesson Planning Extract #15*

- T3            So we teach 'eliminate', 'circulation', 'run-off',  
                  'hydroelectric'.
- T1            And this word.
- T3            'Destruction'. Fine.
- T1            'Destruction'?
- T3            Five words. Fine. 'Destruction', 'eliminate'...
- T1            'Eliminate'...
- T3            'Circulation', 'run-off', 'hydroelectric'.
- T1            'Run-off' and 'hydroelectric'.
- T3            'Hydroelectric'.
- T1            Where is it?
- T3            'Hydroelectric'? Where is it? Let me see...
- T1            Ah, here it is. 'Hydroelectric dam'.
- T3            'Hydroelectric' means 'thủy điện'
- T1            'Dam' means 'đập'. So it means 'đập thủy điện'.
- (G1.LP1.Reading)

Having reached an agreement about which words to teach, they went on discussing how to teach these words. In this episode, the teachers talked about certain techniques for presenting vocabulary, such as 'situation', 'translation', 'explanation' and 'synonym'.

*Lesson Planning Extract #16*

- T1            Shall we plan how to teach each of the words?
- T3            Possibly yes, right?
- T1            'Eliminate'. 'Loại bỏ', right?
- T3            Yes, 'loại bỏ'. This word, give out a situation in which  
                  Vietnam football team, or a certain team, is eliminated,  
                  right?
- T1            You mean, to use the technique...
- T3            Situation.

- T1 Maybe.
- T3 ‘Circulation’, use translation shall we?... ‘Circulation’: ‘Sự lưu thông’ or ‘sự lưu hành’, should we explain or...?
- T1 ‘Lưu thông, lưu hành’.
- T3 It might be difficult. How about translation?
- T1 Yes, use translation to save time.
- T3 ‘Run-off’ means ‘chảy, trôi đi’, right? ‘cuồn đi’. How do we explain this word? Explanation? We may explain ‘liquid which flows from something’. It means a certain liquid flowing from something.
- T1 Run-off. Does it have a synonym?
- T3 Run-off? I haven’t looked it up. We haven’t taught this lesson before. Leave it there.
- T1 ‘Hydroelectric’. Use example for this word. ‘Trị An’ hydroelectric.
- T3 ‘Sông Đà.’
- T1 Done. Example, right? (G1.LP1.Reading)

The extensive time given for discussing vocabulary teaching reflected their emphasis on the importance of vocabulary for students’ comprehension of the text. The teachers showed their intention to make use of the most popular techniques of teaching vocabulary known in the local context. These techniques were introduced to lower secondary school English teachers during 1998-2001 by specialists of ELTTP, a British project aiming at training English language teachers at lower-secondary schools to teach English communicatively using the old sets of lower secondary level textbooks (see 2.4). The techniques were meant to present new words in some meaningful contexts, thus to avoid entirely context-free teaching. However, the techniques themselves allow the teacher to pull a word away from its original (in-text) context, and put it in another limited context (or sometimes context-free). ‘Synonym’, for example, is a technique where the teacher provides a similar meaning word and asks students to provide the target word (e.g., ‘what is another word for ...?’). This reflects a common belief from teachers that by doing so, they could lift any linguistic problems from students, instead of allowing them to face the problems and find out the answers themselves.

Table 6.7 also indicates that, except for the two while-phase activities added in a reading lesson and a listening lesson, all the activities were added to the pre-task phase, in the form of warmers. These were short and focused on reviewing vocabulary or eliciting the new topic for the lesson. The following extract is an example of this.

*Lesson Planning Extract #17*

- T6 Warmer.
- T7 Let's do Kim's game.
- T6 Kim's game?
- T7 Kim's game. We present some pictures of activities. Many activities, right, like reading newspapers, watching TV, playing sports, shopping, singing....
- T6 Shopping, singing, meeting friends, listening to music, watching sports, spending time outdoors... playing musical instruments...
- T7 Uhm, then get students to glance at the pictures, using powerpoint [slides], right?
- T6 Uh huh.
- T7 They glance at the pictures, in about five minutes, ah three minutes, okay?
- T6 About two minutes.
- T7 Two minutes. Then students in teams go to the board and write
- T6 Divide them in teams and go to board.
- T7 That short and simple, okay?
- T6 Huh uh. Now, 'While you read'...(G3.LP1.Reading)

In the extract above, Teachers 6 and 7 were discussing adding a warmer (Kim's Game) into the lesson sequences. Given that the topic of the reading text was about leisure activities, the purpose of the added activity was to raise the topic of the lesson and to activate students' vocabulary repertoire of leisure activities. Most of such warmers may be quite communicative, except that they were likely to result in little outcome in terms of language use and cognitive demand.

Table 6.8: Replacing activities in lesson planning

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Textbook activity</i>	<i>Replacing activity</i>
Speaking	1. Discussion	Sentence writing
Reading	2. Discussion	Brainstorming
Writing	3. Question-Answer	Reading a model essay
	4. Question-Answer	Reading a model essay

There were only four activities the teachers considered replacing with other activities in the lesson planning data. Interestingly, they were two discussion activities in speaking and reading lessons and two question-answer activities in writing lessons. Table 6.8 shows the textbook activities as opposed to those proposed by the teachers.

It can be seen from the table that the teachers tended to replace discussion activities with more form-focused and teacher-controlled, predictable activities. In the first example (1), the teachers considered replacing a discussion with a sentence-writing activity. This textbook activity required students to tell each other in groups which city they prefer and give reasons. The teachers, however, decided that they should replace it with writing (cf. *Lesson Planning Extract # 11* from another group).

*Lesson Planning Extract # 18*

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| 01 | T1 | So we only have five minutes for Task 4   |
| 02 | T2 | Task 4 is simple. I think we might want to change it into writing? Tell each group to produce a paragraph?              |
| 03 | T1 | No! No! That will take a lot of time; we must save time for feedback, mustn't we?                                       |
| 04 | T3 | Yes, so group writing is not possible.  |
| 05 | T2 | But I like the idea of writing...   |
| 06 | T1 | Well, in that case, we should ask students to write 3 sentences using comparatives, then ask them to swap for checking. |
| 07 | T3 | Uh huh.   |
| 08 | T2 | Yeah, let's do that, but remind them to have a look at the example provided.  |
| 09 | T3 | Sure. (G1.LP3.Speaking)   |



It can be noted that the teachers were actually replacing the discussion activity with a type of grammatical exercises, because at the end they agreed to ask students to “write three sentences using comparatives” (06), a grammatical point also raised by another group of teachers planning the same lesson (see *Lesson Planning Extracts #10* and *11*, section 6.1.2). In this sense, the replaced activity would become forms-focused, predictable in terms of language use, and lacking authenticity in terms of outcomes.

The other discussion activity belonged to a pre-reading phase. The textbook activity required students in pairs to discuss different types of music, e.g., folk music, which would result in their matching a list of music types to their definitions. The teachers decided to replace this activity with a brainstorming activity, as follows.

*Lesson Planning Extract #19*

- T10      Playing music...?
- T9        This fits into the topic of the lesson, plus it arouses enthusiasm at the beginning of the lesson.
- T10      Maybe. What about you, [T11]?
- T11      Playing music might be a good idea, but normally we...
- T10      We have to use technology, while normally we don't have such a thing in our class.
- T11      Good for observation.
- T10      Yeah, this is an idea for observed lessons.
- T11      For normal lessons, I think playing music is not appropriate.
- T9        Are we planning for an observed lesson or a normal lesson?
- T10      No! No! Just a normal lesson, like the one we are teaching.
- T9        If it is should be normal, then there can't be music, so we have to use the second option.
- T10      Let's do it like this: get students to brainstorm as the whole class on the board all the kinds of music they know.
- T9        Types of music.
- T10      When they have given all the kinds of music, we check the list and then ask: 'What kind of music do you like?' We can even ask further such as about their favourite music band, or...
- T9        The singers they like...

- T10        Then we can tell them types of music they don't know. Then we lead them to the reading text. Okay?
- T9         OK.
- T10        All agreed? Then...
- T9         We take this out.
- T11        This [discussion activity] has been talked through.
- T9         Yeah! Yeah! This has been planned; take this out. Let's move to new words.
- T10        Not this one any more [the discussion activity].
- T11        New words...(G4.LP2.Reading)

In this planning session, Teacher 9 firstly suggested that they play a piece of music to students to raise their interest in the topic of the lesson. However, the teachers then agreed that this would be difficult because they had to rely on 'technology' (in this case, they may refer to a cassette/CD player). They also tried to distinguish 'normal' lessons from 'to-be-observed' lessons, with observation needing special preparation, in terms of facilities (This showed an aspect of constraints faced by the teachers). When the teachers reached the agreement that this planning session is for a normal lesson, they decided not to use technology, that is, not to play music as a warmer. Following the suggestion from Teacher 10, they came to agree that they would organise a teacher-led brainstorming activity in which students would list types of music on the board, followed by the teacher asking a question about their preference of music, and probably others. This extract uncovers the teachers' awareness of their own practices, particularly the use of technology in the classroom, in that they show little willingness to use technology unless they really have to, such as in listening lessons.

It is noted that the textbook activity was product-oriented (matching), and may vary in terms of process outcome (students may discuss types of music in detail, or they may simply match them with a definition, without having to talk). The teacher activity seemed to retain the product-oriented characteristic (a list of music types); however, the process of interaction may be predictable: that is, students calling words (i.e., minimal oral production) and then the teacher writing them on the board.

The other replaced activities were question-answer activities from two writing lessons, and were discussed by the same group of teachers (Teachers 4 and 5). The activities were quite similar in terms of procedures. Specifically, they were from essay-writing lessons, one of which asked students to write a book report and the other required students to write a description of a football match. Before these activities, students would have been given a list of questions to reorder into an essay sequence (introduction, body, and conclusion). The question-answer activity asked students to work in pairs and act out asking questions and answering them, as preparation for the next writing activity. In both planning sessions, the teachers decided to replace the question-answer activity with a modelling activity. The extract below was where they planned the book report lesson.

*Lesson Planning Extract #20*

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| 01 | T5 | It should be fine. Now this task [Task 2]... I think...  |
| 02 | T4 | For writing lesson, I usually skip this task.  |
| 03 | T5 | Skip this?   |
| 04 | T4 | Skip. I mean, these types of tasks are for speaking, you know, and here we...  |
| 05 | T5 | You are right. We should focus on writing. Skipping should be all right... How about putting another task in?                                    |
| 06 | T4 | Another one? What do you think?  |
| 07 | T5 | May be we could show them some sort of model, you know, this type of writing is quite difficult, may be a model could help them see how to write |
| 08 | T4 | Humm... you mean showing the model essay on an extra board [a poster]?   |
| 09 | T5 | Yeah, to show them how to write...   |
| 10 | T4 | Okay, so we select a book report, write on an extra board...   |
| 11 | T5 | Write a simple one, based on the questions... erm, title of the book...  |
| 12 | T4 | How about <i>Harry Potter</i> ? They just...   |
| 13 | T5 | Yeah, let's take that, write simple... nine sentences.   |
- (G2.LP2.Writing)

The reason for replacing the activity was that the teachers considered this activity irrelevant for a writing lesson, in that Teacher 4 said “these types of tasks are for speaking”, and that in writing lessons they “should focus on writing” (05). When they agreed to replace the activity (“putting another task in”), Teacher 5 suggested that they should provide students with a model essay, which was expected to guide students on how to write a book report. They later came up with a sample book report of *Harry Potter*, which was dealt with in the previous speaking lesson. It can be noted from this extract that there was a certain awareness of students’ limited proficiency in their decision to replace the activity, as seen in the comment by Teacher 5 that this type of writing was difficult for their students (07). There was also a sense of language control in the extract, when Teacher 5 suggested that they should write nine sentences in the model essay, which was the number of the questions already provided in the previous activity. Later in this planning session, the teachers talked about how to link each sample sentence to the particular questions in the previous activity. Similar patterns were found in the other session in which the two teachers replaced the activity.

This section has shown that the teachers in this study showed a certain tendency to add several activities into the lesson sequences. Most of all, they tended to add a vocabulary section and a short warmer into the pre-phase of the lesson. As for replacing activities, similar to the adapting and retaining activities, the teachers tended to show their intention to replace free or/and interactive activities with a more language controlled and predictable activities.

In general, lesson planning data showed that in retaining, omitting, adapting, replacing and adding activities to the planned lessons, the teachers showed a general orientation for teacher control and explicit language instruction in the skills lessons. The teachers tended to retain such controlled and language-work activities for teaching. They tended to move away from the communicative features of the activities in adapting those that require, for example, free production of language. Similarly, the activities that were added and replaced were very often forms-focused, predictable and required minimal language use. The general interpretation is that the participant teachers favoured a teaching approach which involved explicit instruction of language items for either

comprehension or production to happen. The next section reports themes and categories emerging from observation data in the teachers' classrooms, in search of the extent of conformity and nonconformity to their intentions presented in this section.

## 6.2 Classroom practices

This section will present the findings from the observation data. In the subsections below, firstly, general trends of how the teachers made use of the textbook activities are presented in the form of tabulation, to indicate the extent of retention, adaptation etc. of the textbook activities in actual classroom practices. Next, this section will look more closely at the particular practices relating to TBLT application. It will look at the way the teachers adapted textbook activities, the way they added vocabulary teaching into their lessons, and their forms-focused practices through corrective feedback.

To facilitate understanding of the classroom transcripts presented in this section, the following conventions are used.

#1, #2	number of extract
01, 02	speaker turn
T	teacher
Ss	More than one student speaking
S1, S2	Unknown students
[...]	Interpretive/narrative comments
(...)	Part of quotation omitted
F[i]nal	Speaker's actual pronunciation
..., /, //, ///	Hesitation, Pauses (in seconds)
<...>	Overlapping speech
(xxx)	Unintelligible speech
<b>Bold</b>	Emphasis made by the speaker
<i>Italics</i>	Translation of Vietnamese speech/ Observation notes
Foot-ball-play-er	Teacher speaks and writes at the same time

### 6.2.1 General conformity of lesson planning data

Table 6.9: Activity retention, adaptation, replacement, and omission in classroom practices

	Reading		Speaking		Listening		Writing	
No.	23	%	22	%	25	%	11	%
activities								
Retained	12	52	7	32	13	52	4	36
Adapted	3	13	12	55	4	16	6	55
Replaced	3	13	1	5	5	20	1	9
Omitted	5	22	2	9	3	12	0	0

Table 6.9 shows the general patterns of how the teachers made use of textbook activities in classroom teaching. Similarly to their intention in the lesson planning data, the percentage of retained activities in reading and listening lessons (both at 52%) is higher than in speaking and writing lessons (32% & 36% respectively).

In contrast, the number of activities that were adapted was higher in speaking and writing lessons (both at 55%) than in reading and listening lessons (13% & 16% respectively). This pattern reveals the extent of textbook dependency on the part of the teachers, in that the teachers had to rely on the reading and listening texts provided in the textbooks, and given that most of the activities in these lessons are related to such texts, the percentage of adapted activities in these lessons was low.

Similarly to lesson planning data (see 6.1.3), the teachers added some activities to their lessons, most of which were warmers and vocabulary teaching. Table 6.10 shows the number of activities added to the lessons actually observed.

Table 6.10: Number of added activities to classroom lessons

	Reading	Speaking	Listening	Writing
Added	8	6	10	7

Out of the 31 added activities, the majority of these were vocabulary teaching (18), followed by short warmers (9). The rest of them were comprehension questions (2), a gap-fill activity and a question-answer practice activity.

Similarly to the results in the lesson planning data, most of the retained activities in classroom practices were closed in solution types and predictable in terms of language use. All the true/false activities in reading and listening lessons were kept for teaching (100%). Such activities as matching, comprehension questions, and gap-fills were among the high rate of retention.

In contrast, many of the freer activities, where language use was potentially spontaneous and where more production of language was required, were actually adapted, omitted or replaced in classroom practices. Notably, most were discussion activities, which take the forms of pre-reading/listening discussion, while-speaking discussion, and post-reading/listening discussion. Out of 17 discussion activities observed, seven activities were adapted (41%), three were replaced (18%), five were omitted (29%), and only two were retained (12%). Other activities that were among the higher rate of adaptation, replacement, and omission were information-gap, group report, and writing of different genres.

In general, the findings in this section reflect the general trends found in the lesson planning data, that the teachers in this study tended to retain focused, predictable and closed activities while they generally adapted, replaced and omitted more unfocused and spontaneous activities. Also, observation data in general support lesson planning data in that the teachers added various activities to the lessons, most of which were vocabulary teaching and warmers. In the sections that follow, I will present the particular ways that the teachers presented their lessons by looking at how they treated language features, meaningful communication and correction.

### **6.2.2 Explicit supplementation of language structures**

Table 6.9 shows that the teachers were likely to adapt more productive skills activities than receptive skills activities. The most frequent way of adapting productive activities was by introducing some attention to forms prior to student performance. Observation data show that the teachers had a strong inclination towards explicit structure presentation as preparation for student performance. In the observed speaking lessons, all the teachers used the same strategy to provide a frame to students' talk for the activity in question: explicit modelling, i.e.,

presenting a model on the board and practising it as whole-class work. Specifically, the teacher would present the conversation model on the board, explained it, had students practise saying the model thoroughly before getting them in pairs or groups.

Teacher 3, for example, was presenting a model in one of her speaking lessons (see Figure 5.2).

*Observation Extract #1*

- T Task 2. Dialogue [writes on board, reading aloud as she does so]  
A: What-kind-of-film-do-you-like/- want-to-see?  
B: I-like-love-story-film.
- T Love story film. Đây là phim gì các bạn? *What kind of film is this?*
- Ss Tình cảm *Love story*.
- T Cartoon film, and so on.
- T [continues to write, reading aloud]  
A: What-do-you-think-of-love-story-films?  
B: I-find-them-really-interesting/moving...
- T And so on. Tức là ta suy nghĩ về bộ phim đó như, như thế nào? Nó hay, nó hấp dẫn, hay nó dở, có phải không? *That is, what do we think of the film? Is it interesting, exciting, or awful, right?* (T3.O2.Year 10.Speaking)

It was noted that the model was already given in the form of an example in the textbook. Teacher 3 seemed to focus students in using this particular model later in the activity, by writing the model on the board, along with an explanation about using the model. It was also noted that while the teacher was writing the model on the board, the students were doing likewise in their notebooks. This teacher behaviour was possibly due to her intention to provide students with a particular framework, which students could use in their asking-and-answering activity, with replacement of information (in this case, a type of film and an adjective to describe it). This inference was later confirmed in the simulated recall session with the teacher (see 6.3.1). Therefore, students were likely to focus primarily on



the features, with only a peripheral attention to meaning when they had to state an adjective to indicate what they thought about the type of film. However, this activity would not necessarily focus on genuine meaning, because the way they should ask and answer did not seem to reflect any particular reflection of students' thinking, but instead to give an overall statement of the type of film, the adjectives to describe which had been provided.

After getting students to drill the dialogue given, the teacher continued by providing a lengthy explanation of a grammatical structure, as follows.

*Observation Extract #2*

- T      Như vậy, để đưa ra một ý kiến, để đưa ra một ý kiến về... ý kiến về một bộ phim hay một vấn đề gì đó thì các bạn có cấu trúc gì?  
[writes on board] Ta có gì? Subject cộng gì? *So, to give an opinion... an opinion about a film or something what structure do you have? What do we have? Subject plus what?*
- Ss      Find.
- T      Cộng somebody hoặc là gì? *Plus somebody or what?* Something. Cộng với gì? *Plus what?* Adjective. OK? / I find thì là gì? *I find what?* I find them really interesting or terrifying. Or violent, violent, moving and so on.
- T      [draws a frame around the structure] (T3.O2. Year 10.Speaking)

Here, Teacher 3 started to focus students' attention explicitly on one particular structure embedded in the model she presented above. She elicited the structure "to find + something + adjective" with an explanation of the usage of the structure. Then she went on to provide some adjectives to go with the structures such as "interesting" and "terrifying". This explicit focus on forms was likely to indicate her intention for students to remember this structure, and to use it in the subsequent activity.

Teacher 4, in a speaking lesson, after introducing the topic of the lesson, started to lead students to the model that she would like her students to use in carrying out the activity.

*Observation Extract #3*

- 01 T OK. Now do you like, er, do you like playing any sports?  
Whole class. Answer my question: Do you like playing any  
sports? [nominates a male student] Hoang, please?
- 02 Hoang I like, er, playing soccer.
- 03 T I like playing soccer. Now, er, why do you like playing soccer?
- 04 Hoang Because I think, er, I can run more and more fast with the ball.
- 05 T Because I can run ....
- 06 Hoang More and more...
- 07 T Ah, faster and faster. OK? Humm.
- 08 T Now soccer and tennis, which do you prefer?
- 09 Hoang Soccer.
- 10 T Why?
- 11 Hoang I don't like playing tennis.
- 12 T Ah...[smiles] yeah. Thank you. Good. Now we will practise  
saying like that. Practise saying like that.
- 13 T [writes] Task-one: Now for example [writes] A: Do-you-like-  
playing. Or you can say do you like watching – any-sports?  
OK. You answer. B: .... Yes or no. You can answer yes or no,  
then 'I-like-playing or I-like-watching...'.  
14 T If your friend says yes, you can say [writes] A:-which-sport-  
do-you-like-playing? You can ask your friend about playing, or  
–watching. And you give your answer [writes] B:.... OK?  
15 T Humm, and you can ask another [writes] which-sport-do-you-  
prefer, ... like I asked your friend [points to Hoang]. (T4.O2.  
Year 12.Speaking)

In this extract Teacher 4 first tried to perform a model with one student in front of the class (01-11). It was noted that there was no such model in the textbook. From turn 01 until turn 07 the conversation went on quite spontaneously, in which the teacher seemed to extend the conversation on the basis of the student's answer. However, in turn 08, she started to ask a question that was probably unrelated to the flow of the conversation ("Tennis and soccer, which do you prefer?"). This showed that the teacher was likely to have this model conversation in mind, and was trying to build the conversation up around such a model. Indeed, shortly after this (from turn 13), the teacher started to write the model on the board, which

explained how to ask and answer in a way similar to that which she used earlier with the student. Although this teacher, unlike Teacher 3, was not focusing her students explicitly on any particular structure, an intention to focus on forms was evident.

In another speaking lesson, Teacher 8 spent 25 minutes preparing for a four-minute activity. The extract below is from my observation notes.

The teacher asked students to imagine what they would do if they had had a two-day holiday. She collected ideas from the students and wrote them on the board. Then, the teacher drew three smiley faces on the board, asked students to give them names. This generated fun atmosphere because students chose their classmates' names. The teacher told the class that these three people were from Class 11A2 [this name was in the textbook, not the current class] and they were discussing spending their holiday. The teacher wrote the name of each person and elicited what each person should say. The students dictated the expressions each person should say to the teacher from the example in the textbook, which were,

Lan: Let's go camping

Duc: Yes, let's do that. Then we can rest and enjoy ourselves in the quiet countryside.

Dieu: Oh, I don't think it's a good idea. If we go camping, we'll have to bring a lot of equipment with us.

The teacher wrote exactly the conversation on the board. During this process, the teacher stopped at some points and clarified the meaning of some phrases using Vietnamese. The teacher went on to ask the students to repeat after her chorally chunk by chunk (e.g., "then we can rest" and "and enjoy ourselves") three times each. Then she asked two triads to stand up and read aloud the conversation, with the teacher correcting their pronunciation mistakes from time to time. Next, the teacher asked the class what Duc and Dieu were doing, to elicit the words "agree" and "disagree", from which she wrote these two words in two columns on the board and asked students if they could generate more expressions of these two kinds. The teacher wrote the expressions, both from students and of her own, and got the whole class to drill the expressions chorally three times each. She emphasized that it was important to know how to

agree and how to disagree. Then the teacher drew students' attention to Task 3 in the book, which provided suggestions on the reasons for agreeing and disagreeing to go camping. Both the teachers and students spent about 10 minutes translating and drilling these suggestions. The teacher then told students to use the expressions, the model and the ideas to complete Task 3, which asked students to *continue* the conversation (which had been written on the board), using the suggested ideas. The teacher organized the class in groups of three or four to complete the activity. While students were working, the teacher went around the class, making sure that students were working on the activity. What the students in front of me were doing was replacing information in the model with the suggestions one by one, and keeping the three-exchange conversation in control. For example, student A would start by 'Let's go camping', then student B agreed and student C disagreed. This pattern went on until they almost finished with all the suggested ideas in the textbook. After four minutes, the teacher stopped the activity. (T8.O1. Year 11.Speaking)

Teacher 8's classroom practices in this lesson were, to my interpretation, entirely divergent from central principles of TBLT. First, an explicit focus on forms was evident, in that the teacher was intensively focusing students' attention on the model and related expressions. Although she was not actually presenting one or more specific structures, she made it explicit that in this activity students must practise how to agree and disagree. In many instructions and corrective feedback, the teacher insisted on students using the model that was provided. Therefore, it is evident that the teacher was focusing on the particular way of working with the activity, and thus forms were attended to more than meaning. Secondly, it was observed that the teacher was not trying to provide the students with an outcome to reach to (e.g., to decide whether or not to go camping). Instead, what would happen from the preparation of both the teacher and the students was substitution of the structures and given ideas to make up a conversation. Indeed, the following was what happened next when the teacher got students to stand up and re-perform what they had done.

#### *Observation Extract # 4*

- T Volunteers? Now who can? The first, the first [nominates a group]
- S1 Let's go camping.
- S2 Yes, let's do that, then we can er enjoy spec....
- T Spectacular. Spectacular.
- S2 Spectacular scene...
- T Scenery.
- S2 Scenery.
- S3 I don't think it's a good idea. We have to bring a lot of [e]quipment and suppl[i]es...
- T Supplies. Supplies.
- S3 Supplies which are quite heavy.
- T OK. Very good. Thank you. Now another, another group. Another group! Yes, this group please. (T8.O1. Year 11. Speaking)

It is amply evident that what students were supposed to say in their discussion was predictable. In other words, students were not seemingly allowed to use any other language resources for the activity. In fact, in another re-performance, the teacher interrupted the students to insist on them following the model closely. Also, there was no expansion of the model conversation. And yet the activity required students to *continue* the conversation, supposedly resulting in interesting debates on whether or not they should go camping.

The above illustrations show that the teachers adopted a version of PPP in their speaking lessons, and that the way they carried out the activities was to a large extent divergent from the TBLT principles outlined in Chapter Three. It is likely that the teachers preferred to provide their students with language features prior to performance, although in many of the speaking lessons, such activities were scarcely completed, because most of the class time had been used for teaching and practising the features.

In most writing lessons in which their activities were observed to be adapted, a similar way of adaptation to one in the speaking lessons was carried out by the teachers. Usually, the textbook activities were quite focused, in that they already provided, for example, questions to scaffold the writing. The teachers, however,

took a further step in clarifying the focus by providing students with structures and expressions for students to use in their writing. Below is such an extract from Teacher 6's writing lesson.

*Observation Extract # 5*

- 01 T [writes] Two. Useful-language. Now. OK. You can use some useful language for your writing. Now have a look here. First, you can you structure 'classify...' [writes] classify-into-different-cate-cate-gories. Second, 'put....' [writes] put ... put-on-different-different-page. Right. Provide-somebody-with-something or ask-somebody-to give-them or ...
- 02 Now, classify into different categories, put them on different page ... Now, more ideas? Can you? Useful language you also use them ...
- 03 Có thể dùng gì nhỉ? *What can you use?* [writes] provide-somebody-with gì nhỉ? *What?* With-something. Các em có thể dùng gì nhỉ? *What can you use?...* Mời bạn Toàn nào? *Toan please?* Em có thể cho cô một vài ví dụ. *Please give me some examples.*
- 04 Trong quá trình viết các em có thể dùng những cấu trúc này để làm gì? *While you write how can you use these structures?...* Để viết thành câu *To write complete sentences.* Chứ các em làm sao mà viết thành câu? *Otherwise how can you write complete sentences? ...*
- 05 Toan (xxx)
- 06 T To be interested in something, hoặc là *or* with something có được không nhỉ? *is [it] possible?* ... Được không? *Is it?* Toan? [writes]
- 07 Toan To be interested...
- 08 T In gì nhỉ *what?* Some-thing hoặc là *or*, doing-some-something.
- 09 Toan Something.
- 10 T Something. Hoặc là ta có thể sử dụng gì nhỉ? *Or what can we use?* ... Like, hoặc *or*, love / enjoy... etc. huh? Thank you... Mời bạn khác nào? Mời Hằng nào? *Another person please? Hang please?* (T6.O1. Year 11.Writing)

This extract was from an observed writing lesson where students were required to write an essay describing their collection (stamps, books etc.). The extract took place after the teacher had elicited the organisation of the essay on the board. As can be seen, the teacher started to provide students with a number of structures and expressions as useful language for students to write their essay. She made it explicit to the students that they needed the structures to make complete sentences (04). This procedure went on until around ten items were written on the board. Similar to the speaking lessons presented above, the activity was adapted in that forms-focused input was brought to the lesson, possibly changing the students' attention during the activity completion.

In replacing activities, similarly, the teachers generally brought teacher-controlled activities to the lessons. The brought-in activities included, for example, sentence writing (Teacher 2), gap-fill, brainstorming (Teacher 3), answers given, grids (Teacher 4), summary, and comprehension questions (Teacher 5).

This section has illustrated that in teaching productive activities, the teachers in the present study adopted a PPP model into their instructional procedures, although in many of the observed lessons the last P (Production) was scarcely observed. This adaptation was done, in various lessons, through some explicit presentation of language models (e.g., conversations, structures, expressions) with the expectation that students would use such models to practise language. As such, this section has shown that the teachers' classroom practices of productive skills lessons largely differed from general principles of TBLT in the literature.

### **6.2.3 Context-free vocabulary teaching**

Reflecting their intentions in lesson planning data, in all the observed receptive skills lessons, and some of productive skills lessons, teachers generally added an activity which focused intensively on teaching and drilling vocabulary items that were found in the listening or reading text, or that were required for students to use in speaking and writing activities. In the 14 lessons when vocabulary was observed being taught, teachers spent between five and thirteen minutes teaching and drilling vocabulary. The general format of this activity was that teachers used the mentioned techniques (see 6.1.3) to elicit vocabulary items from students,

wrote them on the board, got students to provide meanings, and got them to repeat the words chorally and then individually. Noteworthy is that the teachers were presenting vocabulary in a context-free manner. That is, the words were taken out of the text and taught separately, without any reference to their occurrence in the text before activities were carried out. There was little evidence to show that these teachers provided students with vocabulary support while students were carrying out the activities in the in-task phase.

Teacher 1 was perhaps the person who spent more time than others dealing with vocabulary. In both of his observed lessons, he spent 12.5 minutes for the reading lesson and 13 minutes for the listening lesson on pre-teaching vocabulary. The extract below represents how he elicited vocabulary from students.

*Observation Extract # 6*

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| 01 | T  | Now class, how we say, how we say 'loại bỏ', 'loại trừ' in English?   |
| 02 | S2 | (xxx)   |
| 03 | T  | Ah, (xxx). /  |
| 04 | S3 | [E]liminate.  |
| 05 | T  | [E]liminate or eliminate?   |
| 06 | S3 | Eliminate.  |
| 07 | T  | Yes. Eliminate. Right? Eliminate. All right. Class read after me. Eliminate.  |
| 08 | Ss | Eliminate.  |
| 09 | T  | Eliminate.  |
| 10 | Ss | Eliminate.  |
| 11 | T  | [writes] Loại bỏ. Eliminate. Loại bỏ hoặc loại trừ. [writes on the other side of board] Destroy. Who knows the word?            |
| 12 | Ss | Phá hủy.  |
| 13 | T  | Phá hủy. It is a ... it is a verb. Right? What is the noun of this word? What is the noun of this word? [points to one student] |
| 14 | S4 | Destruction.  |
| 15 | T  | Destruction. In Vietnamese?   |
| 16 | Ss | Sự tàn phá <i>Destruction</i> .   |
| 17 | T  | Ah, sự tàn phá. Sự phá hủy. Good. Now class, read after me. Destruction.  |



- |    |      |   |
|----|------|---|
| 18 | Ss   | Destruction.  |
| 19 | T    | Destruction.  |
| 20 | Ss   | Destruction.  |
| 21 | T    | [writes] De-struc-tion. Sự-tàn-phá. Sự tàn phá, sự phá hủy, sự hủy hoại. Right. Destruction. Good. [writes a sentence on the other side of board] You know, Hòa-Bình-and-Cát-Bà-are-...-in-Vietnam. What are they? Tin? |
| 22 | Tin  | Dam.  |
| 23 | T    | Dam? Yes. Maybe. Yes, Linh?   |
| 24 | Linh | Hydroelectric dam.  |

[This patterns goes on for three more words] (T1.O1. Year 10.Reading)

The extract above shows that the way this teacher taught vocabulary reflected his planning with another colleague (see *Lesson Planning Extract #16*), that is, he used the various techniques of presenting vocabulary mentioned to pull the words out of the context so as to focus on their discrete meaning and pronunciation. For example, in turn 01, he used translation to elicit the word “eliminate”, with an attention to pronunciation later, followed by extensive choral repetition of the word. Likewise, he used word variant for “destruction”, and situation for “hydroelectric dam”.

When all the words were presented and written on the board, the teacher got students as the whole class to repeat after him chorally 3-5 times, depending on how well students said the word. After this, the teacher called several students to repeat the words individually, with the teacher correcting pronunciation on the spot.

Teacher 9 was using a PowerPoint projector to present vocabulary. She was using a similar pattern to that used by Teacher 1, i.e., taking the words out of the text to teach them separately. Below illustrates how she presented vocabulary in one of her reading lessons.

#### *Observation Extract #7*

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 01 | T | Before you read, please pay attention some vocabulary [writes Vocabulary]. |
|----|---|--|

- Now look at screen [clicks] what does this mean?/ <s: bảng, table>Ah, bảng thi đấu *tournament*. How can you say in English? <s: soccer>/// [T clicks word] Tournament.
- 02 Ss Một cuộc đấu *Tournament*.
- 03 T Right. OK. The first [writes] Tournament. Giải đấu hoặc bảng thi đấu *tournament*.  
Ok. Now how can you say ‘nhà vô địch’ in English?
- 04 Ss Champon, champon [*sic*].
- 05 T Champion. Right? [clicks] Champion. Right. [writes] What about the championship means? Championship.
- 06 Ss Giải vô địch, giải vô địch *Championship*
- 07 T OK. Championship [writes] Giải vô địch *Championship*  
And look at screen, what is this?
- 08 Ss C[u]p. Cup.
- 09 T How can you say this in English?
- 10 Ss Cup. Cup. Cup.
- 11 T Cup. Another word?
- 12 S10 Trophy.
- 13 T Trophy. Right. Now [clicks] Trophy, very good. [writes]  
And er, how can you say ‘đánh bại’ in English?//// Nào người khác nào? *Another person please?*
- 14 S11 [calls from seat] Defeat.
- 15 T Ah, defeat. Right. Now look at screen [clicks] Defeat. Right. Defeat. [writes]  
Anh, what does ‘victory’ mean in Vietnamese?
- 16 Ss Chiến thắng *win*. <Sự chiến thắng> *Victory*.
- 17 T Chiến thắng? *Win* [*v*]?
- 18 Ss Sự chiến thắng *Victory* [*n*].
- 19 T [clicks] Sự chiến thắng *Victory* [nods]. Very good. Victory. [writes] Victory. Very good.  
Have you finished? [copying words to notebooks]
- 20 Ss Yes.
- T Yes. Now please look at these, and read after me, please. Now, tournament. (T9.O1. Year 10.Reading)

Similarly to Teacher 1, Teacher 9 also used various techniques to elicit vocabulary items from students. However, she did not get students to repeat the words while presenting. After each word was shown on the screen, the teacher wrote it up onto the board. Then she had all the students repeat after her, following the same pattern as Teacher 1 above. It was noted that both Teacher 1 and Teacher 9, like most other teachers, made no attempt to refer the words to their original context in the reading texts; thus the words, despite being focused by elicitation and repetition, were dealt with in a context-free manner.

Some teachers, however, in listening lessons used a more context-related strategy of checking vocabulary: getting students to listen to the text and identify the words presented. It was noted that this strategy was a step extended from the context-free presentation of vocabulary presented above. That is, after such a presentation, the teacher asked students to listen to the listening text, and say “stop” when they heard a word that they had just been taught. When students said “stop”, the teacher paused the tape and asked students what word they had heard, and referred to the words on the board. This strategy was observed being used by teachers from School B: Teacher 7, Teacher 8 and Teacher 9, for listening lessons. Below is the extract in Teacher 7’s listening lesson.

*Observation Extract #8*

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| 01 | T  | Now, you are going to hear passage. Now listen it carefully and say ‘stop’. When you hear these words, you can say ‘stop’, okay? |
| 02 | Ss | Yes.   |
| 03 | T  | Yes. [writes on top of words] Listen-and-say-stop. Now, tell me. Now, repeat ‘Stop’.   |
| 04 | Ss | Stop.  |
| 05 | T  | Again.   |
| 06 | Ss | [louder] Stop.   |
| 07 | T  | Again.   |
| 08 | Ss | STOP.  |
| 09 | T  | [prepares tape for 40 secs, then plays tape]   |
| 10 | Ss | Stop.  |
| 11 | T  | [pauses tape] What?  |

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| 12 | Ss | Fed up. Fed up.   |
| 13 | T  | Ah, got fed up with. OK. Fed up with [points to the board]. OK?<br>Go on [continues tape].  |
| 14 | Ss | Stop  |
| 15 | T  | What?   |
| 16 | Ss | Available.  |
| 17 | T  | Available. Ok [points to board]. Nói đồng thanh cho nó to lên<br>tý, nha <i>Please chorus a bit louder.</i> Go on [continues tape].<br>(T7.O1. Year 11.Listening) |

It can be noted that the activity above was not related to the meaning of the words in context. Rather, it was more like a sound recognition exercise. This extract further illustrates that like some other teachers in this study, Teacher 7 used strategies to focus on the forms of the language, instead of using the language to comprehend or convey meaning.

This section has shown the way the teachers in this study added vocabulary teaching to the lessons. In this respect, it has illustrated that the teachers generally presented vocabulary in a context-free manner, in that they taught the words out of their original context with a focus on one discrete meaning and pronunciation practice. There was also some convergence in the findings from the lesson planning data, particularly in the way the teachers discussed rationales for vocabulary teaching and their focus on discrete items. The next section will present the extent of meaningful communication, a central tenet of TBLT, in the way the teachers conducted their skills lessons.

#### **6.2.4 Extent of genuine communication**

In this study, apart from examining how the teachers made use of the textbook activities in their context, the extent of teachers' practices toward meaningful communication was also sought, with respect to one of the main principles of TBLT, which is the meaningful engagement of students in task performance. The observation data, however, indicated general non-genuine communication in the class. In all the lessons observed, there was little evidence of meaningful communication being conducted by the teachers, although all of them had the

students working in pairs and groups for the required activities. In such pairwork and groupwork, students were generally to practise dialogues following the models that were presented by the teacher, with some substitution of information already given, either in the textbook or by the teacher. Although video data did not capture closely what students actually said and did during their closed pairwork and groupwork, my observation notes indicated that, for example, in speaking lessons students kept to the model conversations, without any expansion of ideas and natural communication (see, for example, my observation notes on Teacher 8's lesson and *Observation Extract #4*). In one of my observation notes of a Year 12 speaking class, I wrote:

... a few students in front of me quickly ran through the conversation, and waited for the teacher to call pairs for re-performance; some of them after finishing the conversation opened maths workbooks, possibly preparing for the next lesson of the day. (T4.O2.Year 12.Speaking)

However, when it came to the 'report' phase of an activity, in which students were required to re-perform what they had done in closed pairs or groups, it became evident that what happened in the classroom was non-communicative. In other words, while students were doing what they were required to do, they were directed to attend to forms, rather than meaning, and that they were doing it so as to finish the job given to them without having to think about what to express. More important was that the teachers seemed to be satisfied with what was happening.

In the extract that follows, Teacher 2 was asking one student about his perception of 'the zoo of new kind'.

*Observation Extract #9*

- |    |      |  |
|----|------|--|
| 01 | T    | Yes. Er Minh?  |
| 02 | Minh | Er, I think animals will may er feel happy                           |
| 03 | T    | Cả 'will' cả 'may'? <i>Both will and may?</i> No. No. No. Er, again. |
| 04 | Ss   | Lại. Lại. Lại. <i>Again. Again. Again.</i>                           |
| 05 | Minh | I don't think animals will may feel happy.                           |
| 06 | T    | 'Will may'? Not 'will may'.  |

07	Ss	Will. Will.
08	T	Will. I think use “will”.
09	Minh	(xxx)... feel happy.
10	T	Again.
11	S1	I don’t think...
12	Minh	I don’t think er animals er will er will feel happy.
13	T	Ah, yes. I don’t think animals will feel happy. Yes. (T2.O1. Year 10.Speaking)

In this extract, Teacher 2 was focusing on correcting the student’s mistake (which will be discussed in 6.2.5). However, while the teacher was focusing on the form, she seemed to neglect the meaning of the message this student wanted to convey. With both the teacher’s correction and other students’ support, the student eventually produced the correct statement, with much more hesitation than in the original one. It is interesting to note that the teacher did not seem to be concerned about the meaning, despite the activity requiring students to give their opinion about ‘the zoo of new kind’. In fact, the eventual statement the student produced at the end (12) had an opposite meaning to which he had stated earlier (02). However, the teacher seemed satisfied because the student had at last used the correct form (13). This extract, among various others, illustrates that in classroom practices, the teachers attended to forms frequently, especially regarding students’ production of language. It seems that the teachers considered producing correct forms more important than expressing meaning, a view that coincided with the view that language forms should be the starting point (and ending) for teaching.

Below is an extract of a speaking lesson in Teacher 10’s class, where the teacher asked students, in pairs, to stand up and re-perform what they had been doing, i.e., asking and answering using the model on the board and information (about different football World Cups) from a table in the textbook.

#### *Observation Extract #10*

01	T	Now the first, who can? Now you and you?
02	S1	Thưa cô là <i>Dear teacher</i> , where was er the second World Cup held?
03	S2	Thưa cô là <i>Dear teacher</i> , it wa <T: it was; it was>

- held in Italy.
- 04 S1 Which team er play in the er final match?
- 05 S2 Thưa cô là *Dear teacher*, Italy and er Czechoslovakia.
- 06 S1 Which team team became er came the champion?
- 07 S2 Thưa cô là *Dear teacher*, Italy team.
- 08 S1 What wa the er score?
- 09 S2 Thưa cô là *Dear teacher*, 2-1
- 10 T 2-1. Good. Thank you. And another. Another.  
(T10.O1. Year 10.Speaking)

Earlier in the lesson, the teacher had presented the language model which reflected the turns students took in the extract above. The students were actually replacing information from a table in the textbook in the model to make the conversation. There was no evidence of spontaneous information exchanges in the extract. Furthermore, it seemed that students were trying to ‘report’ to the teacher (by using the phrase ‘Thưa cô là’) that they were using the correct language they had been expected to use, rather than using the language for meaningful purposes.

It was also evident that the teachers, in conducting activities that included speaking, were focusing on mechanical classroom management. In fact, they seemed to make sure that students ‘took the right turns’ in their conversations, rather than letting them speak in a spontaneous manner. In such lessons, the teachers would assign each student to a role, and would expect students to follow exactly the turns that they were assigned to. Below is such an example.

#### *Observation Extract #11*

- 01 T Now work in pairs please. In pairs please, and ask and answer your friend about what you like and don’t like and why, okay?  
Now work in pairs please [waves her hand up and down indicating the first line of students, all the way down to the end]  
One, row number one! OK. And number two [does it again with next line] Number one work with number two. [goes to next lines] One... and two. Work together. ... [goes to next half of class] One... two... one...two... Number one: ask; number two: answer... One ask two answer.  
[T goes round class insisting students talk in pairs]

- 02 T [One minute later] Now change role. Change role. We had number one ask, number two answer. Now, number two: ask; number one: answer. Change role [swapping her hands] Change role...(T4.O2. Year 12.Speaking)

This extract resulted from teacher modelling and presenting a model conversation (see *Observation Extract #3*, section 6.2.2). Teacher 4 was conscious in assigning roles for students, indicating, for example, that number-one students should be asking questions, and number-two students should be answering (01). After one minute of students asking and answering, the teacher asked students to switch roles and do similarly in asking and answering (02). It can be seen from the teacher's intention that students were likely to practise the model in exactly the turns that they were assigned.

The sense of turn control also happened in the post-phase of an activity, where the teachers took the opportunity to correct students' mistakes. However, apart from the tremendous amount of feedback on pronunciation (see 6.2.5), there was evidence to show that teachers tried to keep the 'correct' flow of the conversation they expected students to follow. For example, Teacher 8, after getting students to work in groups, asked three students to stand up and re-perform the activity of a speaking lesson (see observation notes on the lesson, section 6.2.2, for what happened earlier).

#### *Observation Extract #12*

- 01 T Yes, you please. Stand up.
- 02 S1 Let go camping.
- 03 S2 Er... let do that...
- 04 T Let's go camping? ... Er yes, let's do that. What else?...The reason?
- 05 S3 I don't think that a good idea...
- 06 T Sorry. Sorry, [S2], em phải *you must*...give reason. Khi em nói đồng ý với bạn thì em phải đưa ra cái gì các em nhỉ *When you agree with your friend what must you provide, whole class?*
- 07 Ss Lý do Reason.



08	T	Đúng rồi! <i>That's correct!</i> Giờ bạn mô nói rồi? <i>Now whose turn is it?</i>
09	S2	Then we ... then we can er enjoy the tree flowers and the wildlife.
10	T	Then we can enjoy the trees, flowers and the wildlife. Yes. Next?
11	S3	I don't think it a good idea we have to sl[e]p in a tent
12	T	In a tent. Sleep in a tent.
13	S3	...the weather might be bad.
14	T	Might be bad. Yes. Yes?
15	S1	But we can get close to nature.
16	T	But we can get close to...?
17	S1	The nature.
18	T	Nature. Yes. (T8.O1. Year 11.Speaking)

It is clear that the teacher guided students to use the particular language model, and expected students to take the correct turns in their conversation. In this triad work, the teacher was trying to shape the students to produce the pre-assigned information. At the very beginning of the talk, the teacher prompted Student 2 to provide a reason for such an agreement (04). When the students did not follow what she suggested (05), the teacher stopped the conversation and explicitly indicated that another piece of information was needed (the reason for agreeing – 06). This explicit interruption was then extended for attention to the whole class (07), before she asked the triad to continue the conversation as assigned, with the teacher repeating students' utterances from time to time. It was also noted that there was no indication of expansion of the dialogue in a meaningful fashion, yet the activity asked students to *continue* the talk. In fact, the students were carrying out the activity using the same model with substitution of ideas from the textbook.

In the observed receptive skills lessons, the teachers in this study, to a large extent, tended to follow the textbook activities closely, a trend that reflected their planning presented above. In general, the teacher asked students to read the instructions, with the teacher clarifying issues in the questions, asked students to read/listen for the answers, and conducted a whole-class answer feedback. As for the post-listening or post-listening activities, most of the teachers did not have

enough time to reach the activities before the bell rang, and often the teachers told students to do the activities at home.

However, when a teacher had a chance to use such a (speaking) activity in receptive skills lessons, she or he generally used the same strategy as reported in speaking lessons. For example, Teacher 3 decided to replace a post-listening activity, which asks students to “say how a forest fire may start and what every camper ought to remember”, with another one. Specifically, she asked students to “build a dialogue” expressing what they had done to protect forests. She started this activity by eliciting students’ ideas about what should be done to protect forests, and then she wrote on the board a question which she told students to use to ask their friends (“What did you do to protect our forest?”). After putting students in pairs to ‘build the dialogue’ (students wrote their dialogue on a piece of paper) for about two minutes, the teachers started to ask students to perform their dialogue:

*Observation Extract #13*

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| T    | Minh nào <i>Minh please</i> ? Minh and Loan?                                   |
| Loan | What did you do to protect the forest?   |
| T    | Yes. What did you do to protect the forest? [points to indicate Minh’s turn]   |
| Minh | Ar, I think, we, we should ban cutting down the trees ... and grow many trees. |
| T    | Yes. [suggests further flow of conversation] ‘And what about you?’             |
| Minh | What about you?  |
| Loan | Ban hunting valuable woods.  |
| T    | We should ban hunting valuable woods. (T3.O1. Year 10. Listening)              |

A sense of control over a turn-taking procedure was evident in this extract, where the teacher clearly indicated her requirement that students should take turns talking in that manner. Although the students’ exchanges may be meaningful, their talk was limited to such a four-exchange conversation.

This section has reported that the classroom interaction was generally non-genuine. Most of the classroom interaction was observed to be a form of language practice through using pre-determined language models. Therefore, divergences from the characteristics of tasks such as meaning-focusedness and spontaneousness were observed from the teachers' classroom practices. The next section will present the way the teachers in this study carried out corrective feedback, in relation to the feature of focus on form in TBLT literature.

### **6.2.5 Corrective feedback**

Observation data also showed a general tendency of teachers giving corrective feedback, mainly in the pre-task and post-task phases. In speaking lessons, pre-task corrective feedback happened while rehearsal of the presented model took place, and post-task corrective feedback happened when students were asked to re-perform their activity in an open manner (i.e., standing for everybody to see and hear). There was little evidence of on-task corrective feedback. This may be because the classes were so big that the teachers could not participate in individual groups or pairs. There were rare occasions when the teachers were seen to talk to some specific groups or pairs, but their interaction was not captured due to the distance from the video camera. In writing lessons, corrective feedback happened usually in the post-task phase, where the teachers asked students to put their writing onto the board and then corrected mistakes in front of the whole class. This was a typical strategy of giving feedback in Vietnamese classrooms, as shown in some previous studies (e.g., Canh, 2011). Again, there was little evidence of on-task corrective feedback in writing lessons.

Most of the corrective feedback dealt with pronunciation mistakes made by the students. In general, when the teacher noticed students pronouncing something incorrectly, s/he would draw the whole class's attention to it, explain it and get students to repeat the correct items after the teacher's model. For example, in a reading lesson, during the post-reading activity, Teacher 9 provided a table on her PowerPoint screen, which showed the years and the events relating to the football World Cup history, and asked students to talk about the events. Before getting students to talk, Teacher 9 focused her students' attention to saying years.

#### Observation Extract #14

- T Now, note the numbers, okay? Những con số *The numbers*. Now, the first./// Now who can? Now? [points to one student]
- S1 Thừa cô là *Dear Teacher*, one er one thousand nine hundred oh four.
- T One thousand <s1: thousand> nine hundred <s1: oh four> oh four? Đó là cách các em đọc năm phải không? *Is that the way you all say years?* Đó có phải là cách các em đọc năm hay không? *Isn't that how you say years?*... Nào, các em phải nghiên cứu cách đọc năm *Come, you must study how to say years*. Năm 1904 ta đọc như thế nào các em? *How do we say the year 1904, whole class?*
- Ss Nineteen...
- T Ah, nineteen oh four. OK. Check the answer. [clicks] nineteen oh four?
- Ss Yes. (T9.O1.Year 10. Reading)

It should be noticed that the teacher was likely to have anticipated that her students would probably make such a mistake in saying years, because she had already prepared a PowerPoint slide which helped her show students how to pronounce the items. This was confirmed later in the follow-up stimulated recall session. The teacher actually had planned to focus students' attention to the pronunciation of years in this reading lesson.

However, most of the corrective feedback given by the teachers in this study tended to be quite incidental. In the extract that follows, for example, Teacher 10, when noticing students pronouncing the names of countries incorrectly in the rehearsal phase of a speaking activity, decided to stop and focused their attention to this pronunciation issue.

#### Observation Extract #15

- 01 T Now you and er you please.
- 02 S1 Where was the first World Cup held?
- 03 S2 It was er held in er Uruguay.
- 04 S1 Which team played in er the final match?
- 05 S2 Uruguay and er Ar[hen]tina.
- 06 T Argentina.
- 07 S2 Ar...
- 08 S1 Which team became the champion?

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| 09 | S2 | Uruguay.   |
| 10 | S1 | What was the score of the final match?   |
| 11 | S2 | Four-two.  |
| 12 | T  | Thank you. Sit down... Now you can look the table again and practise the dialogue... |
| 13 | T  | Now read some names of countries. Uruguay. Now read after me. Uruguay.               |
| 14 | Ss | Ss Uruguay.  |

[This went on with 11 country names; each was repeated at least twice chorally] (T10.O1. Year 10.Speaking)

The teacher noticed that S2 made a mistake in pronouncing ‘Argentina’ (05) and corrected it in the form of recast (06). However, when these two students had finished their conversation, on a second thought before asking students to practise the conversation (12), she decided to get all the students to repeat all the names of the countries listed in the textbook table (13). This extract illustrates that the teacher, like others in the present study, paid much attention to correcting students’ pronunciation mistakes. This behaviour was complementary to their view on the importance of accuracy in students’ language production (see 6.3.3).

It seemed that all the teachers would take every opportunity to correct students’ pronunciation, not only in speaking activities. For example, in a writing lesson taught by Teacher 6, after collecting posters the groups had written about their hobbies, the teacher called the representative of a group to go the board and read their essay aloud. While this student was reading the essay aloud, the teacher stopped her every now and then and corrected her pronunciation mistakes. The student repeated the correction after the teacher and continued to read the essay. This pattern went on until the students finished reading the essay. In the stimulated recall that followed, the teacher reasoned that it had to be done because it was “one of the teacher roles” (T6.SR1), showing her view that teachers were responsible for correcting students’ mistakes whenever they were spotted.

It may be often easier to recognise a pronunciation mistake than a grammar one, especially when the teacher is not a native speaker of the language. Therefore, it is quite understandable that most of the feedback provided by the teachers in this

study was on pronunciation. However, this further supports the tendency of the teachers to take any opportunity to correct students' mistakes when they were recognised.

Although corrective feedback focused extensively on pronunciation, there were occasions when teachers attended to syntax in their feedback, most of which tended to be quite explicit. Teacher 2, for example, in one of her speaking lessons, in the rehearsal stage of a speaking activity, asked a student to stand up and perform the activity, during which she focused on a grammatical mistake (see *Observation Extract #9*, section 6.2.4). In that extract, the teacher realised that the student made a grammatical mistake ('will may' – 02). The teacher pointed out the mistake explicitly and asked the students to try again (meta-linguistic clue – 03). When the student continued making the similar mistake again (05), the teacher used the repetition ('will may?'), followed by another meta-linguistic clue ('not will may' - 06). As noted, the extract shows that the teacher explicitly focused on forms.

Teacher 7, in a listening lesson, during the post-listening activity, asked the students to make questions and answers about the character in the listening text. She arranged students in pairs, pointing out that the number-one students should prepare questions, and the number-two students should prepare answers. She wrote a starting question "What is his hobby?" on the board and asked students to continue. After students worked out the questions and answers for three minutes, she started to call students to stand up and perform the dialogue. Below is such a performance.

*Observation Extract #16*

01	S1	What is hobby? What is his hobby?
02	S2	I like....
03	T	No, not I like...
04	Ss	He likes...
05	T	He...
06	S2	He likes reading book. (T7.O1. Year 11. Listening)

Like other teachers, Teacher 7 used an explicit technique to point out the mistake for students, using a type of meta-linguistic clue (03). Then, after other students had provided support in prompting the correct item (04), the teacher prompted the student using a type of corrective elicitation (05). It can be noted the correction given by the teacher was explicit. Similarly to Teacher 2 (see *Observation Extract #9*, section 6.2.4), Teacher 7 did not seem to be aware of the interruption on the flow of the conversation the students were trying to work on.

The data also indicated that the teachers not only attended to corrective feedback regarding linguistic features, they also did so regarding classroom discipline. The video recording indicates many occurrences of teachers correcting students' manners in class. For example, Teacher 7, when seeing a student talking to her without standing up, reminded the student to do so. Teacher 5 showed an annoyed face when one student spoke to her without addressing her as "Thưa cô" (i.e., Dear Teacher). This aspect of their work reflected a Confucian ideology which requires appropriate manners on the part of students, and reflected the conventional expectation that required the teacher to act as moral guide and moral cultivator in the classroom.

In short, this sub-section shows that the teachers in this study generally took the opportunity to correct students' mistakes as much as they could, and that most of the corrective feedback carried out by the teachers was on forms, rather than on meaningful content of the students' language production. The data showed that most of the correction given by the teachers was on pronunciation, with fewer mistakes on syntax. There was no evidence of corrective feedback that was based on content. Also, in all the correction episodes, the teachers tended to be explicit in pointing out the mistakes to get students to say the correct items on the spot. The data presented here support the other sources of data in which the teachers viewed corrective feedback as an important procedure in teachers' work (see, e.g., 6.3.3). However, the types of mistakes they chose to give feedback on and the way they gave it represented a considerable divergence from corrective feedback principles in the TBLT literature.

The observation data, to a large extent, confirm the intentions the teachers had in their planning sessions. In this section, it can be seen that the teachers in this study

tended to present grammatical structures and context-free vocabulary as preparation for student performance. Also, language performance in the classrooms seemed to a large extent dependent on some linguistic features and classroom management procedures, and thus was non-communicative. It was also found that the teachers gave corrective feedback on language elements in a quite explicit manner.

The next section will report the teachers' rationales for their behaviours in the classroom practices presented in this section, in search of the teachers' beliefs about how language should be learnt and taught.

### **6.3 Teachers' beliefs about aspects of language teaching and learning**

Stimulated recall data reveal a wide range of reasons for particular classroom behaviours presented in section 6.2, which were used to interpret the teachers' beliefs regarding aspects of language teaching in relation to TBLT. The following sub-sections present the teachers' underlying rationales for their practices in search of the teachers' beliefs about how English language should be taught in the present study.

#### **6.3.1 Structure-based approach to teaching**

Stimulated recall data generally show a strong inclination for a structure-based approach to teaching. This was most evident when the teachers commented on their speaking and writing lessons. Specifically, the teachers believed that each lesson, or in some cases, an activity, should be built around some language structure. They believed that such a feature should be emphasised so that students would be able to remember it.

Most of the teachers presenting language structures in speaking and writing lessons confirmed that their aim was for students to use the structures presented. Teacher 3, for example, when asked about her intention for presenting the grammar structure (see *Observation Extracts* #1 and #2, section 6.2.1), confirmed that she wanted her students to use that particular language structure, "I did want



them do use the structure ‘find something adjective’. Yes.” (T3.SR2.Speaking). She thought that the structure was the main focus because it was printed in bold in the example conversation. She said: “I read from the book, in which it was printed bold, so I picked it out and presented it; I thought it was some kind of focus” (T3.SR2.Speaking).

Teacher 2, similarly, commented on her intention to focus on a particular form in her speaking lesson (see *Observation Extract #9*, section 6.2.4):

For example, in Task 2, they had to use ‘may’. This was kind of basic requirement, which asked them to use this to agree or to disagree. Just kind of giving opinions [...] And I just gave them ‘I think’ and ‘I don’t think’ as additional items, for them to give opinions. (T2.SR1.Speaking)

Teacher 2 believed that in order to express their opinion about ‘the zoo of new kind’, students had to use ‘may’, which she thought would be the focal item of the activity. Similarly to Teacher 3, she also confirmed that she wanted her students to use the structures presented, “I just wanted to use the model because this would make it easier for them. They could use them because they were there” (T2.SR1.Speaking).

Following her comments above, Teacher 3 provided another explanation for focusing students on using the model for language production:

- R            If you had let students talk as freely as they wished, would they have been able to talk?
- T3           I’m afraid not. I believe everything must be guided in detail. So all I wanted them to do was to use information about other films and replace information in the model. It would take more time to let them make questions and answers by themselves, while at that time, I had only 10 minutes left. Difficult to carry out. [...] I cut off one question though, that is, ‘What is it about?’, and question number 6 was not necessary, because question 5 was there already. (T3.SR2.Speaking)

Teacher 3 believed that it would be difficult for students to carry out the activity without showing them how to do it. She later emphasised that the model was very important in framing how students would work for the activity. She said she wanted students to replace the information into the model to make new conversation. In this sense, what she expected was more like a substitution drill than a meaningful activity.

The teachers generally believed that grammatical structures were best presented in the form of mathematical ‘formulae’ so that the structures were easier to remember. Teacher 3, for example, commented on an episode where she focused students’ attention by drawing a frame around a structure (see *Observation Extract #2*, section 6.2.1):

At least you must identify a focus for the part [...] I think students will remember better with the formula. This is the general form. When they need to use the structure, all they have to do is to fit vocabulary into it and make sentences. (T3.SR2.Speaking)

Echoing Teacher 3, Teacher 11 claimed that getting students to use the language without giving such a ‘general form’ was just “rote learning” (T11.SR2.Speaking). According to her, it made more sense for students if they understood the rules and used them in language production, rather than asking students to use structures without any syntax explanation or generalisation. In this sense, from the teacher’s perspective, language was rule-driven.

Commenting on the issue of how such structures supported the performance of the activities, the teachers reasoned that presenting grammatical structures explicitly would make it easy for the students to understand what to do. In most cases, the teachers explained that they did this because they were aware that students did not have enough language knowledge to carry out the assigned activities. Teacher 6, for example, commented:

We must provide them with those [structures]. Even the structures were there in the book, if we don’t tell them explicitly, they won’t understand. I don’t believe that they [students] will be able to use structures that have not been taught to them. If you want students to

express their ideas successfully in speaking and writing, they should be provided with relevant structures. [...] To make them understand what to do, you have to tell them that this is the structure that they need to use. (T6. SR2.Speaking)

Teacher 6 believed that it was important to pick out the structures embedded in conversations and to present them explicitly to students in order to guide students in how to do the activity. Reflecting her personal approach, she believed that language items should be taught before students would be able to use them in classroom activities. In other words, she seemed to believe that language use should be preceded by explicit grammar instruction. She also thought that it was important that the teacher made clear to students what language structures they need to use in a particular activity. In her opinion, a ‘task’, whatever it means, should be governed by some grammar structures.

Echoing this, Teacher 10, referring to a speaking lesson episode where students were supposed to ask and answer about different World Cups, gave a rationale for explaining in detail the model already printed in the textbook, as follows.

The model was already in the book. But I thought if I just asked students to look at the model, students wouldn’t be able to realise, or imagine, how to structure the conversation - what question to be made from which column. Therefore, I elicited the model using the information in the book to guide them step by step how to structure the conversation. So I put, time [of the World Cup], then year, - and here the first question could be formed ‘When was the first World Cup held?’, and I showed them how to answer that particular question, and so on. I thought guiding them like this made it clear for their own practice thereafter. (T10. SR1.Speaking)

It is obvious that like other teachers, Teacher 10 believed that such language models provided students with a framework for language production, but they should be made explicit to students for them to “realise, imagine, and structure the conversation”, in Teacher 10’s words.

Another rationale for such an explicit presentation of grammar structures, noted by many teachers, was that this seemed to be the best way to safeguard student language output accuracy, because “otherwise they would make a lot of mistakes” (T11.SR2.Speaking). This issue will be further elaborated in section 6.3.3.

Teacher 4, however, said she did not really mean that the students had to follow the model (see *Observation Extract #3*, section 6.2.1), but she wanted her students to work in a similar manner:

Before giving the model, I had already had a conversation with one student, and the utterances were not completely the same, but similar, you know, asking what sports they liked, which sports they preferred. But to make it more natural, I think I should have let them ask and myself write on the board. But I wrote it myself. Writing it myself like this was likely to impose my words on them. But I didn’t really mean it. I was thinking I would like them to work that way, that is, one asks and one answers, and take turns. (T4.SR2.Speaking)

But similarly to other teachers, she later confessed that she had to do it “because if I let them speak by themselves, they wouldn’t be able to. I have to always give them such models, otherwise they won’t speak” (T4.SR2.Speaking).

It is also noted that the teachers’ beliefs about the importance of grammar instruction (in this case, presentation of structures) were further reinforced in focus group data. In such sessions, where the teachers had a chance to elaborate their views on grammar teaching, the importance of explicit grammar presentation was emphasised. On a more philosophical view, Teacher 5 said:

The point is, the overall aim of teaching is that we should teach in a way that students will be able to engrave the knowledge being taught- you know, structures and words, and then through practice they will retain the knowledge in their mind. It’s important that the knowledge is well-practised, otherwise it will slip away when new knowledge is taught. (T5.FG1)

Teacher 5’s statement showed clearly her personal approach to language teaching and learning. That is, she believed language teaching should begin with presenting

language items necessary for use in target activities, then having students practise the items in a controlled manner, before having them do so on their own. In the same session, she and other teachers in the group further emphasised the importance of the practice stage, because knowledge of the language would not be retained in the students' memory unless this was carefully attended to. This view of language teaching can be regarded as similar to the conventional PPP approach, which many teachers in similar contexts used in previous studies.

More specifically on the way the teachers commonly presented structures, echoing Teacher 3 above, Teacher 4 said:

I think it is the easiest way for students to remember them. They are like [mathematical] formulae from which you can fit vocabulary in to make sentences. If we don't do it that way, students will not be able to remember anything. (T4. FG1)

The teachers seemed to understand that in such skills lessons, there were one or more structures which were supposed to be learnt by students – and thus to be taught by the teachers, and that it was the teacher's responsibility to make it explicit to their students. Teacher 1 said:

In the books, a model of language is included in each task. No, no one [asks us to present the model], even in the guide book, there is no such a thing saying that we have to present the model. But by making the model available there, it is supposed to be used, and should be the focus of the task. I think we should present them carefully so that students can use them correctly in the task phase. It's the teacher's responsibility to make this clear. (T1.FG1)

In the other focus group discussion, the teachers in School B also showed an inclination towards what the teachers in School A stated. For example, Teacher 10 stated that such grammar features should be dealt with explicitly so that students could attain systematic knowledge for their future use. Teacher 11 further added that teaching without telling students explicit rules did not help students' understanding, and it was like rote learning. She also said:

To master grammar properly, they have to understand the nature of grammar rules. They might not need this in reading, but in speaking they have to understand the rules to speak correctly. For example, if the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural etc. Understanding such a thing will result in saying the sentences correctly. [However] in speaking lessons, they apply 'rote' learning, you know, remembering the sentences and saying them out loud. (T11.FG2)

The preference of teaching language items prior to activities was further expressed by the teachers when they referred to a specific lesson, as follows.

- R      Do you usually insert grammar into skills? For example, when you are teaching, you realise that there is a certain structure that might need explaining, ...
- T9      Yes, there might be some expressions that they don't know, then we have to present them for students
- T7      For example in this writing lesson we have to teach grammar first
- T9      Many expressions or phrases that they don't know
- T7      For example this writing lesson [Unit 10], we have to teach grammar for them before they write, such as "let's + bare verb". In this whole lesson there are eight structures, we have to teach them before they really do the writing. (SB.FG2)

The teachers generally shared a perception that they should teach grammatical items needed to carry out the activity prior to students doing it. It can be inferred from Teacher 9's comments above that she viewed language learning as a cumulative process, in the sense that language items needed teaching so as to be learnt. More specifically, Teacher 7 illustrated a writing lesson (letter writing) where there were eight model sentences and pointed out that they needed to teach those structures for students to be able to write their letters.

This sub-section has demonstrated that, referring to speaking and writing lessons, the teachers in this study showed an inclination towards a structure-based approach, realised similarly in a representation of the PPP approach in grammar teaching. They believed that each particular activity or lesson should serve to practise some particular language structure, around which communication or

meaningful ideas (if any) would be built. They also believed that for students to carry out particular activities that required production of language, language structures should be presented to them and practised so that the forms could be memorised. The next section, then, will specifically present the teachers' views about the role of memorisation.

### **6.3.2 Memorisation approach to teaching vocabulary**

The previous section has necessarily implied that the participant teachers believed that if students memorised language rules, they could probably make use of such rules in communication. Yet their belief about the role of memorisation in language learning was more evident in the stimulated recall sessions regarding receptive skills lessons. In these lessons, the focus on forms was seen in terms of lexical items (and pronunciation practices) rather than grammatical structures. The way these teachers viewed the role of vocabulary in receptive skill activities was found to be similar to the way they viewed grammatical structures in productive skill activities. As such, they believed that it was important for students to know the meaning of the words that they did not know before they carried out listening or reading activities.

In many of the stimulated recall sessions, teachers revealed their responsibilities to teach and help students to memorise vocabulary. They said that together with grammar, vocabulary played a very important role for language to be developed; and more specifically, for students to perform the activities in question. The common rationale for teaching vocabulary separately was that by doing so, the items, once focused, would stay in students' mind longer. Also, they commented that teaching vocabulary would help students understand reading and listening texts better, and they wanted to do this because they wanted to build up their students' vocabulary repertoire day by day, "it's like putting up some bricks day by day to build a house" (T2.SR2.Speaking).

Teacher 1, in a stimulated recall of a reading lesson, gave a rationale for spending time on vocabulary as a separate activity. He said that eliciting, rather than introducing was important for vocabulary items to be memorised.

In teaching vocabulary, it usually takes a lot of time if you elicit carefully. But when I was observed by other teachers, their feedback was that I was focusing too much on vocabulary, [that] in such long [i.e., including many activities] lessons, if you focus too much on vocabulary... But if you don't elicit well, it is difficult for them to remember. We need to give them a cue, so that they can think and find out...If we just introduce the words quickly, the words won't stay in their mind. In long lessons, we have pressure from two sides: if we spend too long on vocabulary, it takes the time off the main lesson. But if we just tell them, it is like '*nước đổ lá khoai*'<sup>1</sup>; they won't stay in their mind. (T1.SR1.Reading)

Eliciting new words (that is, giving students a cue for them to call out the words) from students, he believed, may take away class time, but it was beneficial in that the words would be remembered. In other words, he thought that for students to remember the words it would be best to pick the words and focus on them separately, otherwise the words would slip from students' mind, reflected in his mention of the proverb '*nước đổ lá khoai*' (water goes off the kumara leaf).

Teacher 1 said it was very important for students to memorise vocabulary items taught in class, and that "I test them on the words they have learnt the lesson before in every lesson, to check that they learn [the words] at home" (T1.SR1.Reading).

Teacher 2 raised the importance of vocabulary memorisation referring to an activity in which she spent about 15 minutes checking students' memorisation of the words she had taught them the previous lesson. She asked questions like, "What words did you learn?" and "What does it mean?" She said this starter activity was important because it allowed the teacher to discover whether students had learnt words at home, and by doing this, students would have a chance to revise the words from the previous lesson. She said later on:

This starter activity, you know, I usually do this. I only use games [for revising vocabulary] sometimes. Games take away class time

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<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese proverb. Literal meaning: "water goes off the kumara leaf". This means something, however taught, is not retained in memory.



and students become very noisy. Of course, they are fun, but if games are to be used, they should be short. Yet, this revising activity is important, firstly because this will create a comfortable environment, rather than ‘go to the board and write new words’, which students are frightened of. On some necessary occasions, I also give them marks. (T2.SR1.Speaking)

Teacher 2 said she liked this checking activity because students would feel comfortable with it. Although she believed games are fun, she felt constrained when using them because they took away class time and made the class noisy. Also, she viewed this kind of activity [asking students about words taught previous lesson] as communicative, by which she said: “I was focusing on speaking skill – communication. I wanted to make them get used to communication, and feel comfortable in communication” (T2.SR1.Speaking).

In another episode, in which the same teacher read the text aloud (which gave information as input data in a speaking lesson), she stopped from time to time at ‘difficult words’ and explained them in Vietnamese. She commented in the stimulated recall: “My constant wish is that students should take every chance to develop their vocabulary repertoire. This was such a chance” (T2.SR1.Speaking).

Many teachers believed that students who did not learn new words would face difficulty in comprehending the text. Teacher 1, for example, commented on a reading lesson that “those who had a good repertoire of vocabulary could manage the reading, but others couldn’t” (T1.SR1.Reading). He even expected students to learn variants of words, as he said below.

[Those who have limited vocabulary] don’t even make sense of a variant of a word. For example, they may know a verb in the present tense, but they don’t with its past tense, such as sell-sold, or say-said, or comparison: they know big - but they don’t know bigger. (T1.SR1.Reading)

Teacher 3, in a stimulated recall of a listening lesson, had a more cautious view of how vocabulary teaching helped students understand texts.

- R According to you, how did the words you taught help the students?
- T3 I told the students that these were key words. They helped, to some extent. For example, I taught the word ‘forester’, which occurs in the listening text. Upon hearing this word, students would be able to guess the meaning of that sentence. Yeah, they helped to some extent, and of course not all. But yes.  
(T3.SR1.Listening)

Teacher 4 thought that the most important thing in reading was to make sure students had enough vocabulary to be able to understand the text. She said:

Personally I think the most important thing in this type of task [reading] is that students would be able to read, understand and answer the questions without any difficulty; we need to prepare them carefully with any new words. (T4.SR1.Reading)

Teacher 9 had used PowerPoint slides to present vocabulary in a reading lesson. When she had successfully elicited a word, she showed it on the slide, and also wrote it on the board. Regarding this, she commented:

It is a requirement that teachers have to write important items on the board, so that students will know that they are important and copy them into their notebooks. If we [teachers] do this, students will too. At the end of the lesson, they will have something in their notebooks for revision at home. In this lesson, although the words were there on the slides, they would be there for a short time. If we write on the board, the words will last longer in the lesson. (T9.SR1.Reading)

The ‘requirement’ that Teacher 9 mentioned was interpreted as conventional expectation (from authority or colleagues) that teachers should write up important items on the board, to show students that the items were important and worth learning. In this case, although the words had been presented on the slides, the teacher further emphasised them by writing them on the board so that students could copy the words for revision at home.

Teacher 5 was giving the rationale for her decision to teach vocabulary in a writing lesson, as follows.

I had to consider a lot in teaching vocabulary, because vocabulary teaching in a reading lesson is different from that in a writing lesson. In a reading lesson, students need vocabulary to understand the content of the lesson; in a writing lesson, they don't need to know how to pronounce new words. That's my opinion (T5.SR1.Writing)

It can be seen that Teacher 5's view of vocabulary teaching was similar to Teacher 4's above, in that they believed it was essential to teach vocabulary for receptive skills lesson, because this helps students in understanding the text. Teacher 5's rationale for teaching new words in the writing lesson was her awareness of the students' limited words in relation to the topic in question.

With regard to why teaching vocabulary happened in such a context-free manner, the teachers seemed to believe that doing so was the best way for students to memorise the words. Although the teachers were aware that the textbooks included such activities as 'find meaning of words in context', they chose to pick the words and teach them separately, as Teacher 4 said: "In the textbook, they say: 'Find the Vietnamese meanings for the following words'. But in my lesson, I just taught them" (T4.SR1.Reading). In fact, in every reading lesson, where there was such an activity, having taught the vocabulary, the teachers tended to skip it or run through it very quickly before getting students to read the text. From the teachers' perspective, teaching vocabulary this way "helps words stay longer in students' mind" (T1.SR1.Reading), and "creates opportunities to help students practise pronunciation" (T7.SR1.Listening).

Teacher 7's belief about the appropriate way to teach vocabulary was further reinforced in the focus group data, in referring to such a 'find-meaning-in-context' activity in one of the textbook. She said:

For example, this lesson [Unit 10, *Tiếng Anh 10*] isn't appropriate. For example, this task [Task 1] is designed to teach vocabulary, you see? But usually we have to teach a list of vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson, before reading the text, then when we come

to this task, it overlaps with the vocabulary teaching. If we don't teach vocabulary at the first place, and follow these, students won't understand the text. So we often teach a list of vocabulary first, then skip this task. (T7.FG2)

This view expressed by Teacher 7 coincides with the pattern of adding vocabulary activities in their lesson planning data (see 6.1.3). As such, the teachers in the present study believed that teaching vocabulary before students read or listen to the text was essential, thus it became inappropriate to use such activities as 'finding meaning in context'. This is likely to be rooted in the belief that letting students read the text before teaching vocabulary would cause difficulty in comprehension.

This section has illustrated that the teachers in this study held a general approach to teaching which emphasises the relationship between memorisation and language learning. On the one hand, the teachers believed that memorisation of new words was essential for language development. This explains why the teachers chose to present the words out of the context and focused on practising them. On the other hand, they believed that teaching new words was fundamental for language comprehension and production in subsequent activities. Such activities as inferring word meaning from the context were not considered appropriate by the participant teachers. In the main, the beliefs about memorisation of discrete lexical items and making use of such items in comprehending texts and producing language are not consonant with the general assumptions advocated by TBLT proponents, who claim that language learning is a holistic process and that TBLT allows for the learners to explore language features (structures and lexical items) noticed.

### **6.3.3 Importance of accuracy**

Overarching in the rationales for the explicit corrective feedback the role of accuracy was emphasised. The teachers in this study believed in the utmost need to make sure that their own and their students' language production was error-free. On the administrative level, this was considered a requirement from administrative authorities, namely the head of English division, the principal and

especially the inspectors nominated by the Department of Education and Training. “If they come into your class and find that you are using English incorrectly, or letting students speak or write incorrectly, you may get into trouble” (T1. SR1.Reading). Maintaining accuracy in class was likely to meet the teachers’ ‘sense of professionalism’, in that “students don’t expect their teacher to use English incorrectly in class” (T6. SR1.Writing), and student language consequences, in that “it’s the teacher’s responsibility to control the accuracy in class, otherwise it may take a lot of time later on to fix up their [students’] mistakes” (T8.SR2.Listening). Obviously, teachers were serious about accuracy, not only in front of their own students, but also with their colleagues. Teacher 3, who was originally trained as a French teacher, talked about her concerns about pronunciation accuracy:

In terms of pronunciation, I always look up words from the Oxford dictionary I installed on my computer, but the English pronunciation is different from American. For example, I just wonder, this word from the beginning of the book which people [colleagues] in my division said I was wrong, which upset me. The British would say ‘anxious’ but Americans say ‘[e]nxious’. Very clear. People said I pronounced incorrectly, and that I was affected by my French. So I was upset about this. I told Thi[a colleague-pseudonym]: ‘I am always very careful,’ and I showed her [the word] on my computer, which surprised her. Thi herself had not said I was wrong, but some others did. I know she has always trusted me. (T3.SR1.Listening)

What Teacher 3 said revealed a common expectation among colleagues of language teachers in the context: that this expectation may place some pressure on the part of the teachers about keeping language use accurate in the classroom, especially when they had to be observed by inspectors or colleagues. This expectation may derive from a conventional idea that mistakes made by students reflected teachers’ own inaccuracies in their teaching. In a context where teachers are evaluated on the basis of their language proficiency displayed in teaching, the teachers seemed to be aware of such caution for not making errors in language use in their classroom teaching. The phenomenon was reflected in various academic meetings I had the chance to attend. In the meetings, when there was a ‘feedback

on observation' involved, a considerable proportion of time was spent talking about any errors the observed teacher made either on the chalkboard or in their speech. The phenomenon, therefore, seemed to place a tension on the teachers' use of language in classrooms, and contribute to their belief about the role of accuracy in their teaching.

Given that most of the corrective feedback given by the teachers in the observation data dealt with pronunciation, the stimulated recall data indicated that teachers emphasised the importance of making sure that students pronounce words correctly. These teachers thought that their students were generally weak in terms of pronunciation, and that it was their responsibility to correct mistakes that students made.

In viewing the importance of reinforcing students' practice of pronunciation, Teacher 1 said, "although we have a section for pronunciation in the Language Focus lesson, I think we should have a whole lesson for this issue" (T1.SR1.Reading). Similarly, regarding a specific episode in which pronunciation was corrected (see *Observation Extract # 14*, section 6.2.5), Teacher 9 said:

To tell you the truth, with regard to pronunciation of numbers, years, dates and so on, I think it may be worthwhile to have a whole lesson dealing with these. So at that moment, I just smiled and moved on, keeping that issue in mind. (T9.SR1. Reading)

Feeling constrained about students' pronunciation problems, and helpless in finding a way to help students regarding this issue, Teacher 10 said:

I often spend more than half of the Language Focus lesson dealing with pronunciation, but so far it has not seemed to work; we keep practising and practising, but they [students] would forget everything the next lesson. I think there must be a way out there to help students memorise pronunciation, rather than giving students phonetic symbols and getting them repeat after the teacher frequently. (T10. SR2.Reading)

Teacher 11 observed pronunciation mistakes at a word-level (i.e., sounds and stress), and, similar to Teacher 5, blamed the nature of English language pronunciation when she had a chance to elaborate this issue. She said:

Pronunciation is the most serious problem that my students have. Every sentence they say they make at least one pronunciation mistake. I spend a lot of time teaching them pronunciation, but it's really difficult to remember all these. I often focus on the sounds and stress, because students usually make far more mistakes with these [...] English pronunciation is difficult for us teachers as well, because spelling and sound are not always the same. We have to look in dictionary for pronunciation every time we come across an unfamiliar word. (T11.SR2.Speaking)

Obviously, Teacher 11 was aware that her students made many mistakes in sounds and stress, and that this was due to the difference in sound and spelling in English pronunciation. Her extract also revealed a concern about the teacher's ability to help students pronounce words correctly.

Teacher 6, in a writing lesson, after students had finished writing on posters, asked one female student to go to the board and read out her group's essay. While this student was reading the essay aloud, the teacher interrupted her from time to time and corrected her pronunciation mistakes. In the stimulated recall session that followed, the teacher reasoned that this was how she often made students aware of their own pronunciation mistakes. She said:

I do this mostly every day, firstly for students to practise skills, and then create the opportunity for students to recognise their own mistakes, so that they can learn from that. Those words that this student said incorrectly are just common words, so I thought I didn't need to teach them carefully; I just corrected once she made a mistake. (T6.SR1.Writing)

According to Teacher 6, getting students to read the written essay aloud was a form of giving them skills practice. Her comments also revealed that correcting mistakes was a common behaviour in her class. In the extract above, Teacher 6

pointed out that the words the student made mistakes on were “common words” (which, she revealed later, were the words that had been known to the students); therefore, it was not necessary to “teach them carefully”. In the later part of the stimulated recall interview, she clarified that if the mistakes were on “new words”, it was important for the teacher to explain and drill them carefully. Like Teacher 6, the other teachers, as mentioned earlier, had a tendency to correct students’ mistakes ‘on the spot’, that is, whenever a student made a mistake, the teacher would take the chance to draw the whole class’s attention to the mistake and correct it. Teacher 10, for example, upon hearing a student make a mistake in pronouncing the name of a country, corrected the mistake and went on asking students to repeat all the country names presented in the textbook (see *Observation Extract #15*, section 6.2.5). She explained in the stimulated recall that her preference was that she had a list of the names always on the board to refer to every time students made mistakes.

R        After that, do you still remember, you got students to say the names of several countries....

T10     Some names that were difficult to pronounce... If I had the chance I would provide them with a table of selected names, which could stay on the board for the whole lesson, and get students to say them. But I hadn’t prepared for this, so when this came, I just did that [getting students to repeat after teacher]. But if I had picked up the [country] names and put them on an extra board, that would have been much better.

R        How better?

T10     Well, students would be able to see the names all the times during the lesson, and if they made mistakes with saying the names, I could easily refer to the board for correction. (T10. SR1.Speaking)

This teacher, in a different episode, was asking a pair of students to re-perform what they had done. When the students were doing this, the teacher positioned herself right next to the students. In the stimulated recall, when asked, she explained that she wanted to hear clearly what the students said so that she could spot mistakes they made and correct them.



- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 01 | T10 | I wanted to hear them clearly.               |
| 02 | R   | Why did you want to hear clearly?            |
| 03 | T10 | So that I could correct their mistakes       |
| 04 | R   | To correct their mistakes?                   |
| 05 | T10 | For example, students kept saying ‘f[i]nal’. |
- (T10.SR1.Speaking)

Although the teachers tended to emphasise the role of accuracy and showed a strong preference to correct students’ mistakes, Teacher 9, referring to her explicit attention to the mistake in reading lesson (see *Observation Extract #14*, section 6.2.5), did not seem to regard such an activity as ‘correction’. She said:

I didn’t really correct the mistakes; I just re-played the correct items.  
 I mean, I didn’t focus on the mistakes, you know, identifying them and having the whole class to repeat. But I thought I would save it until another chance, because I didn’t have time in this lesson.  
 Many, many students have problems with this [pronouncing years].  
 (T9.SR1.Reading)

According to Teacher 9, correcting the mistakes as she did (drawing students’ attention to the mistake and getting them to provide the correct answer) was not regarded as correction. Rather, she viewed error correction as identifying the mistake and getting the whole class to repeat after the teacher until students said it correctly. Like other teachers in this study, she was aware that her students made many mistakes with pronunciation.

In summary, the teachers’ rationales about their behaviours in the classroom revealed their general beliefs about language teaching, that such teaching should begin with explicit focus on forms (structures or vocabulary), followed by practices of the items, before communication could build up (see Figure 6.1).

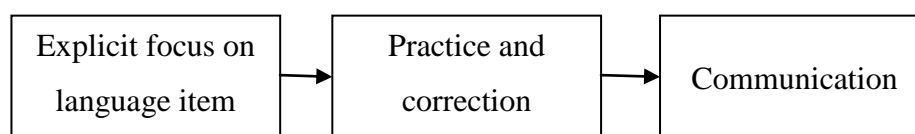


Figure 6.1: Teachers’ beliefs about how language should be taught

This section has reported that the underlying beliefs held by the teachers in this study were related to forms-oriented approaches to language teaching. The teachers believed that language input (in this sense, structures and vocabulary, as well as the practice of pronunciation) should be provided before students start practising skills. They generally believed that explicit presentation of grammar provides students with a generalised understanding of the rule, thus minimising the chance of mistake making. They also believed that teaching vocabulary separately (context-free) helps focus students' attention to the words, for them to remember the words better, and creates the opportunity for practising pronunciation. Oriented by these forms-focused approaches, the teachers believed it was important to safeguard accuracy in both teachers' and students' language production. The next section will shift attention to the teachers' reflective comments relating to aspects of the textbooks they were currently using, with reference to TBLT.

## **6.4 Textbook reflection**

Data presented in this section are mainly from the focus groups. In these focus groups, the teachers provided reflective comments on different aspects of the textbooks, including their perceived constraints in using the textbooks, their understandings of tasks, their attitudes to the textbooks, their perceptions of changes in teaching methodology as a result of using the textbooks.

### **6.4.1 Constraints**

In the focus group data, the constraints regarding TBLT were elicited through teachers' comments on the textbooks, instead of asking them directly; this is because of my recognition of their limited understanding of the notion of task and TBLT (see 1.1 and 6.4.2). Four such constraints were identified: the mismatch with the target examinations, time for grammar, difficulty, and students' motivation.

### *Mismatch with the target examinations*

Perhaps the most prominent constraint that the teachers had was how to mediate the textbooks and the type of exams students were supposed to take. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are two important exams for students: the national general certificate exam (in which foreign language is compulsory), and the university entrance exam (in which foreign language is required for ‘D’ category). At the time of data collection, the English examination paper contained 80 multiple choice questions, which tested reading, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation knowledge (Appendix L). Teachers in both schools felt the tension between ‘getting things done’ and ‘getting things achieved’. On the one hand, they felt that they had to follow the prescribed textbooks to make sure that they had done their job properly. On the other, they felt the constraint to provide students with more knowledge about the sorts of things that would occur in students’ future exams.

Teacher 1 revealed this dilemma in the focus group discussion:

Sometimes I feel that teaching using the new textbooks is somewhat non-sense. I mean, what are teaching and learning all for? While we spend all these three years teaching and learning communicatively, at the end point, students do not seem to gain anything because the exams test different things. (T1.FG1)

Teacher 4 commented on the perspective of students:

For example, at the end of next week they have to sit for the semester exam. Although they have three lessons for revision next week for this, this week we still have to teach [skills] lessons in the textbook. No wonder students are burning with impatience. They have to face with the skills while they have to think about the exam that is completely different. (T4.FG1)

In the same vein, Teacher 9 said in the other focus group session:

They [other people] say that with these new books, to study for the general exam, still it’s like ‘*cưỡi ngựa xem hoa*’<sup>2</sup>. You learn one way, but you are tested another. Exams focus on language, grammar

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<sup>2</sup> Vietnamese proverb. Literal meaning: “Watching flowers while riding on a horseback”. It means that something is only understood on its superficial meaning

only - which the language focus lesson serve - but learning focuses  
on all skills - NOT like any other subjects! (T9.FG2)

The comments above revealed the major constraints the teachers had to face in using the textbooks. As such, they believed that the textbooks were not appropriate for the objective of learning in the context, which was passing the examinations. All the teachers seemed to be aware of the conflict between the textbooks and the examinations. This explains why the teachers tended to work on the types of activities that are compatible to examination questions in planning sessions and in classroom teaching presented earlier in this chapter.

Aware of the mismatch between the textbook content and the students' learning objective (i.e., passing exams), the teachers observed the mismatch between what they were doing in the classroom and students' expectations. Teacher 4, who was teaching Year 12, stated:

Still, it's funny to teach Year 12; this is the grade when they start to focus on the exams. They don't want to learn things in the textbook anymore, because many topics are as in Grade 10's books. Now that they are aware of what it [exam] is all about, it's really difficult to get them to participate in skills, you know, standing up and saying something. [We] can't get them moving, especially at the end of the year. (T4.FG1)

Another Year 12 teacher, Teacher 5, commented:

[Students refuse to take in] because learning this way does not meet their learning objective - the exam. For example, many students find a bank of exam papers and realise that there is nothing to do between what they are learning and what they have to do in exams. (T5.FG1)

The teachers in this study perceived that the textbooks were not practical for students, which explains why teachers sometimes had to move away from some of the textbook activities and focus on linguistic issues to accommodate students' expectations and needs. Teachers from both schools, on various occasions, confessed that to deal with the mismatch, they had to cut out many textbook activities so that their students would have more time for examination practices.

Several teachers also talk about ‘afternoon classes’, where students came after their official class time and were given grammar exercises to practise grammatical knowledge.

### *Time for grammar*

Another constraint perceived by the teachers, also associated with the examination constraint, was their perception that there was little time for grammar in the new textbooks. As indicated in Chapter Five, each unit in the textbooks consists of five lessons, each of which is allocated in one period of 45 minutes. Being aware of the dilemma between the textbooks and students’ expectations, the teachers realised that the time allocation for grammar teaching was very limited. They stated that the allocation of one lesson for language focus was not enough for them to cover all the grammar points of the unit. Teacher 11 said: “Some lessons contain much knowledge about grammar; for example, the ‘direct-indirect’ sentences can’t be taught in one lesson” (T11.FG2). Teacher 7 added:

There are also exercises. We are not only teaching, but we have to also get them to do exercises on the structures. There is too little time allocated to grammar, while the knowledge of grammar needed to teach is huge. (T7.FG2)

Teacher 11 also added:

I find it not so hard for the vocabulary - but grammar is the one that worries me most [...] It’s fortunate we still have afternoon classes where we can teach them grammar. If there are just class times, students will never be taught enough grammar. (T11.FG2)

While co-constructing their constraints in relation to textbook use, the teachers confessed that they had to make the most of class time to incorporate grammar into their teaching, mostly in the form of grammar exercises, for students to learn. Teacher 3 said she usually gave much homework on grammar, while Teacher 4 said she usually encouraged students to look for ‘extra’ resources that contained grammar exercises for their own practice. Teacher 5, a Year 12 teacher, revealed the pressure to teach grammar from her own students in the following extract.

In my class, when I had just written new words on the board and made myself ready for the reading text, they started to ask, ‘Teacher, please that’s enough. Please teach grammar for us to sit for the exam.’ I knew they were asking for real. (T5.FG1)

Teacher 8, who was from School B, confessed that she sometimes had to replace a listening lesson with grammar, because “they [students] don’t want to listen; they prefer grammar” (T8.FG2). She further added:

We usually let students listen with the easier tasks; if we still have time, we usually insert grammar of the unit into this [listening lesson]. (T8.FG2)

In harmony with Teacher 8, other teachers revealed that they did ‘insert’ grammar in many skills lessons, in the belief that grammar teaching at that point was necessary for the activity (see also 6.2.2). Teacher 10 also said:

For example, like this [speaking] lesson, we have to insert grammar into it. Like, this lesson on ‘third type conditionals’, we have to present grammar in the speaking lesson. This structure ought to be taught at the end [the language focus lesson], but we have to bring it to the speaking lesson. (T9.FG2)

Discussing how they could insert grammar into reading and listening lessons, Teacher 8 commented that she was forced to deal with “many expressions or phrases that they [students] don’t know” (T8.FG2). She further added how:

[I] ask students to underline the sentence, then copy it onto the board, draw out structure, so that in the future when they come across the structure they can deal with it, otherwise how can they deal with all this new knowledge? (T8.FG2)

Teacher 10 later gave a rationale for such insertion of grammar:

We usually teach vocabulary separately, so students use them to understand the text; but when they come across something new, such as why this verb has -ing ending, but not to + verb, for example, then

we have to explain why it is that way, and in which situations it goes as infinitive. (T10.FG2)

These statements show that the teachers in the present study faced a dilemma between using the textbooks and their perceived need for grammar to meet their students' expectations and learning objectives. Such a constraint was likely to result from their experience with the students, their awareness of students' learning objectives, and their beliefs about the role of grammar memorisation for students' learning. Again, this shows a strong focus on forms-oriented approaches on the part of the teachers, and a belief in bottom-up language processing in terms of how students learn language. i.e., students learn the language through decoding discrete items to make meaning of texts.

### *Difficulty*

The teachers also revealed that using the new textbooks was, to some extent, causing difficulty on the part of the students. Their perception of this issue was compatible with their concerns about students' language proficiency to complete the communicative activities presented in the earlier sections (6.1 and 6.3). Generally, they said that the books contained too much language knowledge, in that vocabulary was 'heavy' (see also the negative attitudes to the textbooks in section 6.4.3), and that their students' current status of proficiency was not ready to absorb such vast knowledge. Teacher 2 said:

There is too much. Most of our students are not good at English, then they can't possibly learn all the stuff provided in here. [There is] too much for them. (T2.FG1)

Another teacher said:

I think students have to work very hard in order to remember all the knowledge and vocabulary. While they have to learn other subjects, this is simply too difficult for them to learn all. (T5.FG1)

In the other focus group session, the teachers revealed similar constraints on the part of students. Teacher 7 was comparing the old sets of textbooks with the new ones:

I think in the old textbook, firstly grammar was lighter, second the vocabulary was lighter, and the reading texts were shorter. Coming to these new textbooks, there are too many new words. We as teachers and students are heavily under pressure about vocabulary. Also, in the old textbook, grammar items were laid out in a clear way, so we knew what we had taught and what we had not. In this new set of textbooks, grammar is presented in a confusing order, and more importantly, everything is lengthy. (T7.FG2)

While discussing the difficulties students might have in using the textbooks, the teachers referred to specific lessons to illustrate their points. Teacher 9, while talking about a reading lesson, said that such activities as summarising were too difficult for students, and that it might be easier for them to use more controlled activities such as gap-filling. She said:

Some lessons ask them to summarise with few suggestions, which make students unable to do. Like this, this lesson, this task asks students to stand up and summarise the whole reading text. Oh no, this is gap-filling, which is okay; they can do it.... In my opinion, it would be good if every reading lesson was designed like this: at the end of the lesson, there should be a task like this - gap-filling like this. It should contain a summary of the text and gaps for students to fill in. This would be easier for them. Some of the lessons at the end students are asked to summarise the text themselves, which I think is extremely difficult. (T9.FG2)

Teacher 10 added, “In listening lessons, there are also the post-listening tasks. These ask students to ‘tell story about ...’ you know, asking them to tell what they have heard... Or talk about...” (T10.FG2).

The teachers’ comments above illustrate their preference for language-decoding activities (rather than language production) and closed activities presented in section 6.1. This drew on the teachers’ perceptions of students’ language proficiency and ability to memorise language items to explain the difficulty of the textbooks. Two dimensions of difficulty were identified by the teachers, both of which are linked to linguistic issues: the length of texts and the requirement to



produce longer chunks of language. As with the former, the teachers believed that longer texts resulted in too much vocabulary and language structures which could not be covered by teachers and students in class. With regard to the latter, as indicated in earlier sections of this chapter, the teachers did not believe that their students could use the language in a spontaneous manner. Their perception of this difficulty led them to retain, adapt and use activities in lesson planning and classroom practices in a way that minimal production of language would be carried out by their students.

### *Students' motivation*

The teachers generally felt that students did not have good motivation to work with the new materials. Most of them blamed the mismatch between the textbooks and the examination (as above). Teacher 1 said, “the students are not aware of the importance of English” (T1.FG1), and revealed that students did not usually enthusiastically participate in practising language skills in the classroom. Adding to this, Teacher 2 commented that students “don’t care about skills; all they are interested in is passing the exams” (T2.FG1).

Teacher 11 said in the other focus group session:

[B]ut generally students are not willing to remember, even when we present them something interesting and important, [such as] those things for exams, but they don’t care - about 5-7 of them in a class do. (T11.FG2)

But students’ lack of motivation was most revealed in stimulated recall sessions, where teachers commented on specific behaviours students had. In general, the teachers commented that they could not teach communicatively because students did not cooperate with the teachers. Teacher 1, for example, referring to an episode in which many students did not really work as requested by the teacher, said:

Well, I couldn’t do anything about it. These students don’t have a motivation to learn English. It was lucky that they didn’t tamper and annoy other students. I am aware that they don’t want to learn

English, because this subject is not their focus for the [university entrance] exam. (T1. SR1.Reading)

Teacher 3, similarly, mentioned this issue in the stimulated recall session of a listening lesson:

Many even didn't pay attention at all. I mean, these students for the whole period they didn't pay attention at all. Many students are like that – doing nothing in my class. But I have been told that you can't manage to get everybody, all 50 students in the class, to work, and to pay attention. Having a portion of them work is just good enough. It's usual. Not just this lesson. (T3.SR1.Listening)

In the second stimulated recall of a speaking lesson, she kept saying this about a different class:

To tell the truth, there were just five to seven students who were really learning; other students didn't know anything. At all. They were not willing to learn. They just came to class and sat there. They were there because they had to be there. (T3.SR2.Speaking)

Teacher 8 was more frustrated about students' unwillingness to learn, although she said she had tried different ways. From her students' reactions, she started to believe that games would not help improve students' motivation. In the extract that follows, when asked why students did not seem excited about doing the activity, she said:

T8 I think it has something to do with their motivation. I often observed students' reactions to see if they can find learning interesting. So when in class, I usually have to change my plan and give them a game to play when I notice that they are bored. But they don't seem to be interested. What students. Like this morning, I was so annoyed that I had to reprove class 11B. I taught them everything, but then they just kept sitting there, doing nothing, no matter what I asked them. Then I asked them: 'Do you want to play a game?' you know what they said, 'Oh don't! Let's not. We're tired.' I got demotivated, you know. Because they don't

know anything of English, they even don't want to play a simple game!

R That's interesting.

T8 When I speak to them in English, they tell me: 'Please Teacher, speak Vietnamese'. But every time I speak English, I translate into Vietnamese afterwards. Well it depends on the class you are teaching those. Of all classes I teach, only 11H want to learn; other classes are like, they let teachers do whatever they like on the board, without responses. You know, I've run out of strategies.  
(T8.SR1.Speaking)

The teachers' perceptions of their students' lack of motivation to learn and to participate in communicative activities helped explain why teachers had to move away from the communicative features of some activities provided in the textbooks. The teachers had to rely on the students' reactions to justify their teaching in the classroom. So, although the teachers might want to make use of the activities in the textbooks, their perception of students' motivation hindered them from carrying out communicative activities.

#### **6.4.2 Understanding of tasks**

Confirming my initial perception, focus group data indicated that the teachers in this study had a limited understanding of tasks and task-based language teaching, both explicitly and implicitly, despite some of them having participated in a series of workshops about TBLT some five months earlier. Explicitly, the teachers were not able to articulate their understanding of the concept 'task'. Some teachers tried to avoid answering such questions as "What is your understanding of a task?" and others showed understanding only on a surface level. They were not even willing to probe or problematise their understanding. The extract below is from School B's focus group:

R: As you see in your textbook, every lesson contains tasks. What is your understanding of a task?

T6: Just a name.

R: What do you mean?

T6: Like an activity – something students have to do in class.

- T7: Like an activity. Yeah.
- R: <turns to T11> What do you think, [T11]?
- T11: <shakes head>
- R: Does a task necessarily include grammar learning?
- T6: No. Tasks are not for grammar. Like, you see, in Language Focus lessons, we don't have tasks – we have exercises. I think tasks are for skills.
- R: Uh huh...
- T10: But I think grammar is important for tasks. I mean, we need to provide students with grammar structures to support them in tasks.
- T9: I think so too. (SB.FG2)

Teacher 6's understanding that tasks were not for grammar arose because in the textbook all skills components are followed-up by 'tasks' while in the Language Focus lessons, the activities are labeled as exercises (as can be seen in Appendix M). This led to her conception of a task as confined to the skills lessons as equivalent to an exercise in the grammar lessons. However, this conception only reflects her 'notice' of such differences in the labels found in the textbooks, and thus did not represent her understanding of tasks associated with the literature. She did not seem to show any disagreement with Teacher 9 and Teacher 10, who stated that tasks should be preceded by the pre-teaching of respective grammar items - a belief commonly found throughout this chapter regarding the role of grammar and a forms-focused approach to teaching. There was no evidence of task principles and characteristics outlined in 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.2.4, either explicit or implicit, in the teachers' interactions when they talked about their interpretation of tasks.

Later in the same focus group, Teacher 6 further exemplified her understanding by referring to an activity in the textbook which required the students to read and identify which of the given statements are true and which are false according to the information in the text. Teacher 6 thought it was a good 'task' because "it forces students to read to find out which statements are wrong. They have to read to find out" (T6.FG2). At the same time Teacher 9 stated that answering multiple-choice questions was a good reading comprehension 'task'. For her, "if students

can answer these questions, they will understand the text” (T9.FG2). In the same focus group session, Teacher 8 commented that such activities as “answer the questions” and “discuss” were too far difficult for her students, which was generally agreed by other group members. Their statements illustrate an underlying belief that appropriate activities in their context are those that require little production of language, that require correct answers, and that resemble examination questions students answer in the future.

Implicitly, the teachers did not capture the rationalisation of how lessons were allocated in such a way that TBLT is reflected, i.e., communication followed by a focus on form. A common belief was that the way lessons are organized was unusual, as revealed in the following extract:

- T7     The way they are organised is weird. In most common English language textbooks, usually grammar should be the starting point, while in the textbooks grammar is placed at the end of each unit.
- T8     Yeah, for that I think those textbooks used in language centres like *Streamline* and *Headway* are much better.
- R       What do you mean?
- T8     They are clearly sequenced. We know exactly the grammar points to teach... and the activities relating to them afterwards.
- (S2.FG2)

The extract above shows that the way the lessons are organised was incompatible with the teachers’ current belief systems about how language should be taught. Echoing Teacher 7’s comment about teaching grammar first, Teacher 8 further elaborated that such structural textbooks as *Streamline* and *Headway* were more appropriate because they were sequenced in a way that they considered how language teaching should progress. This belief was shared by Teacher 3 in the other group discussion when she stated that on many occasions she started a unit by bringing the Language Focus lesson forward to teach grammar points before letting students practise skills in subsequent lessons.

In the other focus group, the teachers did not show a specific understanding of TBLT referring to the textbooks, either, even though these teachers had attended

the TBLT workshops (see 4.4.1) roughly five months earlier. When prompted to rationalise the allocation of lessons, Teacher 1 said, “Probably the book writers want to imply that skills are more important than grammar, so communication should be focused first” (T1. FG1). Teacher 2’s comment added another point, but not necessarily to their understanding of TBLT, because she regarded skills lessons as functioning to provide language knowledge. She said:

May be the language focus lesson acts as a revision lesson of the knowledge students have learnt before in skills lessons. They may have learnt a structure in a speaking lesson, for example, then here they have the chance to revise it and do more exercises to remember it. (T2.FG1)

Teacher 4 was not sure why, but like Teacher 2, she gave her own assumption that grammar was delayed because students had learnt it already in lower secondary school, and that this delay served as a consolidation to students’ previous knowledge.

I’m not sure. I think it might be because all those grammar points have already been taught in lower secondary school, therefore now we do not need to start with grammar, but focus on communication, and then review grammar points to consolidate students’ knowledge. (T4.FG1)

This section reveals that the teachers in this study had little understanding of the theoretical assumptions of TBLT. In general, they showed limited understanding of the notion of task as perceived by the textbook writers and TBLT advocates, either through explicit expression or implicit rationalisation in the textbook organisation. One possibility may be that the teachers had not been informed of the method. Another possibility may be that, although they may have been informed, the teachers were not ready to internalise the concept of task, given their existing beliefs about learning and teaching, and their perception of ‘what works’ in their context. In either case, their understanding reflects a limited extent of readiness in their belief systems for the implementation of TBLT.

The next section investigates their attitudes toward the textbooks they were using, to identify their perceptions of issues in the textbooks in relation to TBLT.

### 6.4.3 Attitudes to the textbooks

While other sources of data indicate teachers' beliefs and practices using the textbooks, their explicit attitudes to the textbooks were mainly revealed in focus group data. Generally, teachers from School A tended to advocate the textbooks more than teachers from School B. During their discussion, the teachers from School A co-constructed a number of advantages that the new textbooks brought to both teachers and students, while those from School B seemed to identify more disadvantages than advantages of the textbooks.

The teachers, especially those from School A, were inclined to favour the new textbooks. Firstly, the teachers generally felt that the textbooks were communicative, and that activities were sequenced appropriately for both teachers and students, in agreement with Teacher 1 in the following extract.

Using the new materials results in a lot of speaking because they have many free activities such as pairwork and groupwork. Students have more opportunities to practise dialogues. Thus the books are communicative. Also, the lessons are well-laid out, so they are very easy to conduct in class. (T1. FG1)

This statement about the textbooks can reveal the teacher's interpretation of what it means by 'communicative'. In fact, similarly to how Teacher 2 viewed communication, Teacher 1 thought that being communicative in language learning was equal to interacting with each other in pairwork or groupwork. The subsequent comment from other teachers in the group revealed similar assumptions: they thought that the books were communicative because students had opportunities to *practise* the language. In their discussion, there was no evidence of mentioning the inclusion of meaningful activities in the textbooks.

The teachers also commented that the textbooks were useful for learning, in that they provided a clear framework for students to follow, and that the design of

activities created opportunities for students to use the language. For example, Teacher 3 said about the usefulness of the textbooks:

[The new textbooks] are very useful for students in that they provide a wide range of [language] input and information. They also consist of different skills, which you could not find in the old ones. In other words, there are sufficient resources for students to learn, and they create a lot more opportunities for students to practise the language. Also, the layout design in the new textbooks is very clear. For example, if students cannot catch up with what teachers say in class, they may be able to look at the book at home and work it out. Revising this way will recall what happens in class, so they will be able to consolidate their knowledge at home. (T3.FG1)

Furthermore, the teachers made explicit that the production of the new textbooks made the teacher's job easier, because the lessons were laid out in a way that meant little planning was required. Teacher 4, echoing Teacher 1 above, said:

It seems easier to teach using this new set of textbooks, because everything is there; we do not have to design activities for teaching in class. Using the old books, we had to spend time thinking about what to do. For example, a unit was usually allocated for four lessons, while there were few exercises. We had to spend about two or three lessons on the reading text, which was from four to five sentences long. So we had to think of how to spend such a long time with such few materials. [Using] the new books, sometimes we do not have to plan lessons at all, we just go in and follow the book for teaching. (T4.FG1)

Teachers' comments about the positive sides of the textbooks revealed several underlying rationales. The extent of textbook dependency can be inferred from these comments and cross-checked data, which reveal the teachers' inability and willingness to reflect on the textbooks and adapt activities to make them communicative. Teacher 4 said that teachers do not have to think about what to do with the new textbooks, and that all they had to do was to follow them in teaching, while Teacher 3 viewed one beneficial function of the new textbooks as knowledge consolidation at home.



Negative attitudes towards the textbooks were mainly revealed in the focus group data with the teachers from School B. Again, the sense of textbook dependency on the part of teachers was also revealed when teachers talked about the challenges teachers and students had to face. Teacher 6 felt that the new textbooks were far more complicated than the old ones.

In the old book, everything was very simple. The reading text, for example, consisted of four or five sentences. It was really easy for students to understand the text. In most cases, we just needed to translate the text for them. The texts in the new books, however, are far lengthier, thus it is impossible to use the old ways. Then we have to carefully select sufficient new words [to teach] for students to read and understand the text. (T6.FG2)

Teacher 7 commented on the pressure to cover lengthy lessons:

Of course, these new textbooks are far more difficult for students than the old ones, because they contain longer texts, and far more vocabulary items, and a listening lesson in each unit. The lessons are lengthier, so we have to make use of our time effectively to cover the whole lesson. In many lessons, we have to give students the left-over for homework. (T7.FG2)

Again, the teachers perceived that the new textbooks' lessons were too lengthy and complicated in terms of language knowledge, which resulted in teachers' and students' difficulty in covering any particular lesson in a 45-minute period. Possibly the teachers believed that what was in the textbooks was what had to be covered, and that such activities were already standardized and should not be questioned. This reflected a long-standing conventional perception that their lesson is 'burnt' if they cannot finish everything in the textbook lesson, and that their job for the lesson is thus not fulfilled.

Some teachers in School B commented that although the textbooks provided a variety of information for students to work on, they simply neglected grammar teaching. At the end, Teacher 10, with some caution, stated:

I think it might be better to use the old textbooks, at least for grammar - they provided systematic knowledge of grammar, which could at least give a firm basis of grammar knowledge. With these new books, everything is diluted. At the end students might not master much. (T10.FG2).

This comment from Teacher 10 echoed other teachers' views about a place for grammar in lesson sequencing (see 6.4.1). In this sense, the teachers generally believed that a 'clear' lesson should provide teachers with what to teach and students with what to learn, in terms of *knowledge*. In other words, they thought that a language lesson should start with some grammar to be taught, followed by practice from controlled to freer activities. Teacher 10 said that the lessons in the new textbooks are 'diluted' because they simply do not provide a linguistic focus around which teaching and learning should be built.

The teachers' attitudes towards the new textbooks can be regarded as situated, illuminated by the contrasting attitudes between the two groups of the teachers. Teachers from School A tended to advocate for the textbooks while teachers from School B revealed more challenges in implementing them. Firstly, although students in both schools were the residents of the same town, those going to School A were considered more proficient than their counter-parts in School B (see 2.5). Thus, generally they may have little difficulty in learning with the materials. Those going to School B were mostly those who had failed to enter School A, following the results they obtained at lower secondary schools. They might find it harder to use the new textbooks, especially the amount of new vocabulary and the length of a lesson. The teachers, therefore, obviously commented on the textbooks considering students' proficiency level and their teaching experience with their own students.

The data presented in this sub-section revealed general attitudes to the textbooks, but can be used to infer the teachers' method-logical beliefs. It can be seen that in their provision of positive and negative comments about the textbooks, the teachers showed no evidence in their stated beliefs that were relevant to the general principles of TBLT and specific characteristics of tasks. The positive comments were mainly restricted in the variety of language features and

information the textbooks supplied. Some teachers perceived these as negative due to the length of the lessons they had to cover. Especially, they found the lessons diluting, a powerful term to suggest their orientation for some grammatical focus in a particular lesson. Aligned with their limited understanding of TBLT presented in 6.4.2, their attitudes towards the textbooks (and aspects in them) show an unfavourable tendency to employ communicative language teaching in general, and TBLT in particular.

#### **6.4.4 Perception of changes**

Data from focus groups show that the teachers perceived many changes in their teaching methods as a result of using the textbooks. When asked to compare their practices at the time of data collection and five years before, one teacher said:

There are huge differences. We feel that we are far more active, and of course we work harder in class, [and] students enjoy being communicative. There are a lot of interactions in class, between teachers and students, and among students. (T4.FG1)

All the teachers in this focus group seemed to agree with Teacher 4, and were willing to extend the discussion on this topic. They said that the materials (in this sense, the textbooks) and their colleagues' teaching had great influences in shaping how the teachers teach in their classrooms. When prompted on the influences, Teacher 3 stated:

The materials [cause the changes]. We have to change due to them. Also, we have been influenced by other colleagues, mainly those we observed from lower-secondary schools. Those teachers had applied communicative techniques from ELTTP<sup>3</sup>, which worked very well in their classes [...] The methodology materials were photocopied widely so it was easy to get hold of them. We tried to apply some of the techniques and ideas and they were good. Not all of them could be used in upper secondary schools, though, such as those childish games. (T3.FG1)

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<sup>3</sup> English Language Teacher Training Project, see 2.4.2

Commenting on the role of change of the textbooks, Teacher 8, in another focus group, said:

I think the way we teach now has changed due to the change in the books that we are using. The lessons are much more communicative, and we feel that we have become more active in class using these books. (T8.FG2)

The changes perceived by the teachers indicated that the textbooks had a role in changing the teachers' practices, in that classroom teaching had become more active, and interactive. However, analysis of the actual classrooms (see 6.2) revealed that the changes only happened at the *surface* level, that is, the structure of a lesson might change, but the nature of teaching did not necessarily change. Specifically, while what happened in the classroom may be observed as interactive with, for example, pairwork and groupwork, the activities provided to students were merely linguistic-focused; therefore the nature of such classroom interactions was forms-focused. The espousal of communicative teaching found in focus group data is therefore interpreted as representing their peripheral, rather than core, beliefs. Although the teachers perceived that the textbooks were communicative, and that they followed them, my analysis of their beliefs in relation to their specific classroom behaviours (see 6.3) indicates that their beliefs about learning and teaching remained forms-focused.

It is important to note that while extending the discussion on changing methodologies, the teachers expressed their view that in-service and textbook training workshops had had little influence on their changing teaching methods. Commenting on the role of in-service workshops, the teachers gave positive comments on those carried out by external agencies. One of them said:

Yes, they were useful, some of them, especially those carried out by the VTTN<sup>4</sup>. This way or that way, they reflected what had been done by ELTTP, but they made the techniques specific, by applying them into specific lessons in our textbook. So they were applicable for us. For example, in a VTTN workshop held some years ago, Tung [pseudonym of a trainer] was demoing how to present 'present

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<sup>4</sup> Vietnam English Teacher and Trainer Network, see 2.4.2

progressive’ with the song ‘Are you sleeping?’ We applied that right away in our class, and it worked very well. (T4.FG1)

However, they downplayed the role of local workshops, as illustrated in the following extract.

T3 As for the summer workshops organised by the [local] DOET, I felt we participated because we had to, but they were often useless. They did provide some new techniques, but they were difficult to apply to our classrooms. And most of the times, they were just like ‘*cưỡi ngựa xem hoa*’<sup>5</sup>. Not useful at all.

T1 Tell me about it. (SA. FG1)

As for the textbook training workshops, which were also run by ‘local’ experts, the teachers had a similar attitude to these. For example, Teacher 2 said, “They were not useful at all. Specifically, they didn’t give us any new ideas or techniques to go away with” (T2.FG1). When prompted to extend their discussion on this, other teachers commented that the textbook training workshops were normally boring, and that they had learnt little from such workshops. Teacher 5 gave quite a complete anecdote of a training session:

Generally, they gave us a bunch of materials they got from the upper level. And [they] asked us to read. [These materials] consisted of sample lesson plans and some theoretical things. Then we were asked to watch a demo lesson, which was interesting, but we did not learn anything from it. Then [we] were asked to work in groups to plan a lesson from the book. This lady asked us to choose a person from our group to teach in front of the big group. And that was all for the day. The next day we went on the same things with different skill lessons. To some extent, they were helpful, because they introduced us to the book, and how to deal with it, but we didn’t go away with anything new. (T5.FG1)

The attitudes the teachers had towards workshops and textbook training show a certain resistance in the beliefs of the teachers. Teacher 2 expected that workshops

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<sup>5</sup> See the explanation of this proverb earlier on page 229.

should provide teachers with new techniques to teach English. This shows that the teachers were struggling to make the best of the textbooks. Furthermore, their perceived attitudes show that such workshops were not likely to suit the teachers' existing beliefs, and thus were not able to influence the teachers into positive changes, in neither their belief systems nor practices. Local workshops were not appreciated by the teachers because they were not usually interesting, and they were delivered by local experts, usually their colleagues. This may be because the local experts had limited training skills, and to some extent, held similar beliefs about language teaching with these teachers; therefore, what was delivered by these experts could not trigger changes. Apart from the quality of the workshops, the teachers did not believe that they would learn much from someone who had similar proficiency and expertise to their own. This explains why the teachers described negative experiences in the local workshops.

This sub-section has indicated that when talking about changes as a result of using the new textbooks, the teachers perceived that they had made considerable changes. However, the changes were observed as being on a surface level, as their practices were still forms-focused by nature, and their underlying beliefs associated with specific classroom behaviours showed that a change to communicative teaching had not completely taken place in the context of the study.

## **6.5 Summary of findings**

This chapter has presented four major themes that describe teachers' practices and beliefs regarding the implications of TBLT in the upper secondary schools in Vietnam. The themes each mainly derive from one particular source of data, with supplementary evidence from other sources when available.

First, data from lesson planning sessions indicated a general inclination towards forms-focused and predictable types of activities (see

Table 6.11). As such, the teachers in this study tended to retain activities that are closed in terms of solution type, predictable in terms of language use, and linguistic in terms of focus. A similar trend could be found in the way the teachers intended to adapt the activities in the textbooks, in that the teachers showed their

intention to provide explicit language models and structures for any activities that required production of language.

Table 6.11: Summary of findings from lesson planning data

<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Activities of high rate</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
Retaining	T/F; Gap-fill; MCQs; Matching; Dialogue Practice, Ordering	Closed; Predictable; Form-focused	Feasible for students' proficiency; representing type of exams; role of teacher
Adapting Replacing	Discussion; listing; Reasoning; Essay writing	Spontaneous; Interactional; Meaning-focused	Required minimal production of language; need for a 'focus'
Adding	Vocabulary teaching	Context-free	Comprehension relies on bottom-up processing of discrete lexical items
Omitting	Words in context	Meaning-focused	Not relevant once teaching done

The teachers also showed a tendency to replace activities that required language production with ones that required minimal production of language, such as gap-fill. In most of the planning sessions, the teachers decided to add a separate vocabulary teaching activity to each lesson, and in some, a short warmer activity. Given the pre-teaching of vocabulary, the teachers decided to omit vocabulary activities in the main phase. In the main, this section has indicated that the teachers in the present study prefer activities that focus on forms and are predictable in terms of language use. Their preference to use closed activities showed their wish to control their teaching with regard to the teachers' role, classroom management and language use.

The patterns found in the lesson planning data reflected a general belief that discrete language items (grammar structures and vocabulary) should be presented and practised before they could be put into use. Believing in this approach, the teachers stated that students would not be able to carry out activities that required production of language, such as discussion, unless language items had been

provided to them, which explains the trend of retention and adaptation in their planning. This also explains their belief about how language texts were comprehended: students understanding texts through a bottom-up process, i.e., they understand the whole text through decoding individual items in the text.

Table 6.12: Summary of findings from observation and stimulated recall data

Patterns	Underlying rationales
Explicit supplementation of language structures prior to activities that required language production	Grammar features were the basis from which communication is built up Practising language features resulted in fluency and accuracy
Decontextualised teaching of vocabulary	Students understand texts through decoding discrete language items to make sense of the whole texts New words separately focused would provide pronunciation practice and facilitate memorisation
Non-genuine communication	Communicative competence started from learning correct form which became automatised through practice
Immediate, explicit error correction	Errors caused bad habits and would be difficult to fix Students should be explicitly directed to the errors so as to avoid making the same errors in the future

Table 6.12 provides a summary of the findings from observation and stimulated recall data. These include the teachers' significant classroom behaviours and their associated rationales which explained their underlying beliefs. The data from classroom observation confirm most of the patterns found in the lesson planning data. In all productive skills lessons, the teachers adapted activities by providing explicit supplementation of language structures before getting students to do the activities, and commonly started receptive skills lessons with decontextualised vocabulary teaching. Observational data also indicate that what happened in the classroom interaction was non-genuine in terms of meaningful communication, and the teachers mostly used immediate strategies of error correction.

The data from observation reflected similar underlying rationales representative of the teachers' beliefs shown in stimulated recall data. As such, the teachers believed that communication should be built around some specific grammatical



features, which may be inferred as the disposition towards a structure-based approach in productive language teaching. Similarly, the illustration of non-genuine communication in the observation data reflected a forms-oriented approach in the beliefs of the teachers, which specified that communicative competence was developed through the practice of language features until they became automatised. As for error correction, the teachers believed that errors may contribute to the hindrance of such an automatised process and that they should be made explicit and corrected once they occurred so as not to happen in the future.

Stimulated recall data uncovered a number of rationales for classroom behaviours, and thus represented their beliefs in structure-based orientations to teaching. The teachers confirmed their intention to guide students' language practice through language models. They believed that students should keep to the presented language models or features as communicative practice. Their rationales for forms-focused instruction and error correction illustrated a belief that language development started from conscious learning of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, followed by thorough practice of such items before they could be applied for communication. Believing in this approach, the teachers emphasised the sense of 'focus' and the teachers' role in any particular lesson, in that each lesson should have some linguistic focus where language features were taught and practised through teachers' guidance.

The focus group data revealed several constraints in using the mandated textbooks, bringing about factors hindering TBLT implementation. Examinations were the most prominent constraint, which in turn had impacts on other constraints against the potential of TBLT. The linguistic-based examination contributed to shaping the teachers' beliefs about how they should teach English in their context, which led them to perceive that the allocated time in the curriculum was not sufficient for grammar teaching and practice. The teachers' perceptions about the difficulty of the textbooks confirmed their underlying beliefs that language learning largely relied on memorisation. Furthermore, their perceptions on students' lack of motivation in classroom interaction may be a hindrance for TBLT, but this again revealed a relationship with the objective of learning they perceived students had, i.e., the exams. Overall, the fundamental hindrance can be inferred as resulting from the teachers' beliefs about how

language was learnt and should be taught. These beliefs led the teachers to their perceptions about the context, the textbooks, and others.

Focus group data also revealed that the teachers in this study had limited understanding of what constitutes a task, a sense of textbook dependency, and recognition of incompatibility between the textbooks and their beliefs. These were likely to have resulted from their insufficient access to current language teaching literature, their contextual constraints such as examinations, and expectations they perceived from other stakeholders. The data indicated that the teachers believed in the standardisation of the textbooks mandated to them, which may be inferred as some extent of inability, inflexibility, and lack of critical judgement in using the textbooks. The only critical comments the teachers had about the textbooks were about the mismatch between given activities and the examinations, and the level of difficulty students had to face. There was no evidence from focus group data or from other data sources to indicate the teachers' willingness to adapt the textbooks in a way that activities became more meaningful and communicative. Although the way the teachers talk about changes might show that the textbooks might act as an agent of change in their teaching, the changes were observed to be at the surface level, in that the teachers followed the textbooks, but did not necessarily change the nature of teaching, i.e., from a focus on forms to a focus on meaning. Focus group data also indicated that workshops did not influence the teachers in terms of changing their beliefs and practices, because they seemed to be incompatible with their existing beliefs about language learning and teaching, and their negative experiences with workshops made them downplay the role of workshops as opportunities for teacher development.

The findings presented in this chapter do not necessarily mean that the teachers' beliefs and practices were backward or deficient. In fact, there was a substantial amount of evidence (some of which can be found in the data extracts presented) to show that the teachers have established and developed sound pedagogical principles in their teaching. Examples are their concerns and attempts to motivate students to learn; decisions to be selective in choosing unknown vocabulary to teach; their inclusion of various types of warmers for topic elicitation and ice-breaking; and their attitudes to methodological receptivity in the profession.

However, as the present study focuses exclusively on the domain of TBLT, such data were not presented and discussed in this chapter.

The next chapter will provide detailed discussions of the findings presented in this chapter by addressing directly the research questions placed in the beginning of this chapter, as well as relating this study to the literature of TBLT and teacher cognition research.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented the findings from the study. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the key findings with reference to each research question. The findings of this study will also be discussed in relation to previous studies in the area of teacher cognition, with special attention to those investigating TBLT issues. Each section that follows serves to address one of the research questions that this study investigated, in the same order as they were presented in the previous chapters.

### 7.1 Relevance of teachers' practices to TBLT

This section addresses the first research question, which is:

*What relevance, if any, do the identified characteristics of tasks have for the Vietnamese teachers in their planning for and practices of textbook activities?*

This question concerns the planning and practice that the teacher participants undertook. In general, the data from teachers' planning sessions and classroom teaching show very little relevance to the general principles of TBLT. Specifically, their choice of activities tended to diverge from the task characteristics identified in the literature, and their practices showed a considerable divergence from the principles of TBLT.

#### 7.1.1 Use of textbook activities in planning

The lesson planning data showed a general preference of the teachers for form-focused and predictable types of textbook activities. Most, if not all, TBLT proponents (e.g., Ellis, 2003b, 2009; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996,

2003; Willis & Willis, 2007; Willis, 1996) claim that to qualify as a task, the foremost characteristic is that it has to focus on meaning. In this sense, the way the teachers in the present study carried out their decision-making and teaching procedures seemed to contradict what is advised in the literature. The choice of predictable activities in terms of language use diverged from TBLT literature, where TBLT advocates suggest that, in carrying out tasks, learners should be allowed to use any linguistic resources available to them to express their ideas (e.g., Ellis, 2003b). With this respect, there was an observed distinction between what constitutes a task in the literature and the activities the teachers chose to use in their classrooms. While tasks proposed in the literature generate unpredictable language, or predict language use in an ‘unscripted’ manner (Bygate, 1999), the activities used by the teachers, to a large extent, were ‘scripted’. Tasks that are scriptedly predictable may provide a secure working environment in that the teacher can control what students may say, and at the same time, reduce any errors students might make. However, these types of tasks hinder students from the process of negotiation of meaning (Long, 1990). In other words, by choosing activities that are predictable in language use, the teachers in this study simply moved away from the suggestion that students be allowed to take risks in using the language for communicative purposes (Skehan, 1998).

Data from the lesson planning sessions also indicated the teachers’ preference for closed activities, i.e., activities that require single, correct answers. It is noted that closed tasks are potentially more useful than open tasks because they are claimed to stimulate more negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 2003b). In this sense, the choice of such activities might be understood as congruent with TBLT literature. However, a closer examination of the data indicated that most of such closed activities in the textbooks’ speaking and writing lessons, despite being labelled ‘tasks’, did not conform to the characteristics of a task in the literature. These activities were usually simple language exercises in the form of, for example, matching or ordering. Other closed activities in receptive skills lessons focused primarily on meaning, but they did not necessarily stimulate negotiation of meaning and were input-dependent (i.e., students had to rely on the texts to find answers). Furthermore, in order to complete such activities, students did not have to produce more language than simple utterances, because they were generally in

the form of, for example, T/F statements and multiple choice questions. The teachers' choice of closed activities may be understood to show their intention to keep their class in a disciplined manner (Carless, 2004, 2007), their preference for a didactic role in the class, and their wish to maintain a secure, error-free environment (see also 6.3 and 6.4 for related findings).

No previous research, it seems, has used recorded lesson planning sessions to investigate how teachers make use of textbook activities; however, regarding the teachers' general practices, the way the teachers in this study made decisions in the lesson planning data seemed to support findings in Canh (2011), Canh and Barnard (2009) and Loi (2011) in similar contexts in Vietnam, in that the teachers in these studies tended to provide students with activities that enhanced their declarative, rather than procedural, knowledge. Loi (2011), for example, found in his analysis of the teachers' written lesson plans and interviews that there was a focus on some target linguistic content that the teachers identified as the target productive output. The teachers in the present study, similarly, advocated types of activities that focused on some particular features, such as matching and gap-fill, and tended to remove the meaning-focused and spontaneous characteristics of communicative activities such as discussion and reasoning.

This finding seems to contrast with how the teachers used textbook activities in the classrooms in the study by Nguyen *et al.* (2011), although in this study the researchers investigated classroom practices, not lesson planning. This incongruence can be explained by referring to the research context and participants. In Nguyen *et al.*'s study, the teachers, working in a specialised upper secondary school, were generally highly qualified teachers, as compared with other schools in the country. Many of the teachers had MA degrees, some of which were obtained from overseas countries such as Australia. Presumably, the teachers were more confident in terms of lesson design and textbook adaptation. In such schools, students are usually talented and highly motivated, which may be a driving motive for the teachers to adapt lesson to suit their students. Furthermore, as indicated by Canh (2011), teachers in Vietnam generally learn from their colleagues to adopt a normative collective pedagogy, by which much of the teachers' practice was likely to reflect their common practice within the

school. Thus the teachers in Nguyen *et al.*'s study may have learnt from their colleagues in the process of using the textbooks in classroom teaching through peer observation and academic meetings. The present study, however, investigated the teachers who worked in standard schools, where students were not as highly motivated as those in the specialised schools. The teachers in this study had never been overseas, and they had undertaken little in terms of systematic professional development. Given this, it is likely that the way the teachers made decisions regarding activity retention, adaptation, and so on in their planning sessions relied on their own perceptions of their contexts, and their learning and teaching experiences, which contributed to the formation and development of what they believed about language learning and teaching.

The lesson planning data show that the teachers followed the textbooks relatively closely. Most of the changes decided by the teachers were at a micro level. There was no evidence to show that the teachers, for example, considered changing the topic of a lesson. Changes (e.g., adaptation and replacement) were only made to some specific activities within a lesson; and this was likely to occur when the teachers considered the activities linguistically impossible for students to complete (see 6.1.2 and 6.1.3). This finding adds to the statement made by Carless (2003) regarding the extent of impact the topics in the textbook had on the two teachers in his study regarding the implementation of TBLT. While planning for lessons, the teachers in the present study relied largely on the materials provided in the textbooks, and a sense of trying to "finish the textbook" (Ng, 1994, p. 82, cited in Carless, 2003) was evident. The textbooks, therefore, played a significant role in shaping teachers' practices, but not necessarily their underlying beliefs, which I will discuss later.

In brief, although the teachers in the present study were to some extent dependent on the textbooks, the lesson planning data showed that the way the teachers retained, adapted, added, and omitted textbook activities reflected a forms-focused, rather than a meaning-focused orientation advocated by CLT and TBLT proponents. Therefore, the characteristics of tasks identified in the TBLT literature had little relevance for them.

### 7.1.2 Teachers' classroom use of activities

Various divergences from what is recommended in the TBLT literature could be seen in the observation data. Firstly, the general trends of decision-making regarding the textbook activities (e.g., retention, adaptation, and adding) identified in the lesson planning sessions were confirmed in the patterns of classroom practice. As presented in 6.2.1, the teachers in general kept such linguistic-focused, predictable, and text-based textbook activities for teaching while they adapted, replaced or omitted communicative, spontaneous, productive textbook activities in their teaching. These patterns, again, reflected a considerable extent of forms-focused orientation in their classroom practices. Consistent with the lesson planning data, their practices showed the teachers' preference for linguistic-based activities that emphasised the teacher control and particular language features necessary for production.

Secondly, an examination of observation data shows that the teachers in the present study preferred to provide students with the language to be used in any productive activities. Given the speaking lesson taught by Teacher 8 (see 6.2.2), a corresponding question that arises from Andon and Eckerth's (2009) discussion is whether to teach language of agreeing and disagreeing and then use tasks to incorporate the target language in production, or to provide students tasks of agreeing and disagreeing with any language support along the way. Teacher 8, and other teachers teaching the productive skills lessons observed, chose the former option as their preferred practice. This choice of practice contradicts the TBLT assumption that language learners not only learn how to use language, but also use language in order to learn it (Norris, Bygate, & Van de Branden, 2009; Van de Branden, 2006). Ample evidence was found to indicate that the teachers in speaking and writing lessons had identified some language focus around which language production would be built, a trend similarly found with the Japanese teachers in Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and the Thai teachers in Segovia and Hardison (2009). For example, the observation data showed that in many of the observed speaking and writing lessons, the teachers spent a substantial amount of time on teaching grammar structures (see, for example, *Observation Extracts #1*, 2, and 5). Also, in receptive skills lessons, they used such language-focused



activities as word recognition (see, for example, *Observation Extract #8*), a type of language-focused learning activity identified by Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 57). Andon and Eckerth (2009) found that their teachers generally used tasks as vehicles for communication and negotiation in the students' own words, whereas the teachers in the present study used textbook activities as knowledge-building devices. The teachers' use of productive activities in this study was primarily intended to practise the language items presented earlier by the teachers. While the data did not focus on students, my research journal indicates that although in many lessons students were put into pairs and groups, they did not have the opportunity to negotiate meaning, either in English or their own language.

The analysis of observation data and the comments in my research journal indicated that there was no negotiation of meaning among students working in pairs and groups, or between teachers and students, especially when the teachers asked students to 'report' their work. The lack of negotiation of meaning was likely to have been due to several factors. First, the teachers' presentation and emphasis of the language items through conversation models restricted students to use the pre-determined language, thus preventing them from expanding ideas. In the present study, the teachers' behaviours regarding forms were evident in their presentation, explanation and correction; these might prompt students to attend to producing accurate language items, rather than to convey meaning in communicative situations. Secondly, as indicated in 6.2, the teachers generally provided little time for students to carry out particular activities. In most cases, students only had enough time to practise the conversation models before the teachers stopped the activities. This shows that the teachers wished to control both language and time. This pattern of practice does not resonate with one of the underlying assumptions of TBLT, which suggests that language learning is not a linear process, and thus cannot be tightly controlled, but rather facilitated, by the teachers (e.g., Skehan, 1998). Neither does it resonate with the underpinning SLA theories that support TBLT, which suggest negotiation of meaning promotes acquisition (e.g., Long, 1990). This finding, to some extent, supports the previous findings regarding teachers' classroom practices in Asian contexts (e.g., Carless, 2003; Deng & Carless, 2009; Hui, 2004; Li, 1998; Sakui, 2004).

The findings of this study indicated that in receptive skill lessons, one of the most salient patterns was that the teachers added vocabulary teaching as a separate activity where context-free new words were presented and practised. If vocabulary items are regarded as form (Ellis, 2003b), then this pattern of practice can be considered similar to the teachers' presentation and practice of language structures in the productive skills lessons discussed above. As presented in 6.1 and 6.2, therefore, the teachers' routine pattern of practice was to explicitly present specific forms before actually asking students to use these in the subsequent activities. This pattern of practice lends support to the previous findings in similar contexts, with regard to grammar teaching (Canh, 2011) and the role of language in input provision (Loi, 2011).

At this point, it may be useful to link the Vietnamese teachers' patterns of practice to the framework proposed by Littlewood (2004), in order to situate their practices in the forms-meaning continuum (see Figure 7.1). For the full framework, see Figure 3.2 in Chapter Three.

Focus on forms		←	→	Focus on meaning	
Non-communicative learning	<i>Pre-communicative learning</i>			Structured communication	Authentic communication
'Exercises'		←			'Tasks'
'Enabling tasks'		←			'Communicative tasks'

Figure 7.1: Vietnamese teachers' practices according to Littlewood's (2004) framework

My analysis of the teachers' pedagogic patterns in lesson planning and observation data indicated that the Vietnamese teachers, in line with the teacher in Deng and Carless's (2009) study, adopted a range of strategies that are situated between the second and third stages of the framework. As such, the way the textbook activities were retained, adapted, replaced, and added to in their planning sessions represented some form of pre-communicative learning. As presented in 6.1, most of the ultimately used activities prioritised form rather than meaning. In the same way, their classroom practices represented early stages of communicative language practice, where the teachers, depending on the types of

lessons, drew students' attention to some meaning, while the primary focus was on form. Although there were instances of activities considered non-communicative learning, these were minor in number; the majority of the activities carried out by the teachers included some meaning, at least peripheral (see, for example, *Observation Extract #1*), and a variety of working modes (groupwork, pairwork, teamwork and individual) were used. This is why their practices are considered representing pre-communicative learning and communicative language practice. This finding differs slightly from Loi's (2011) interpretation of the teachers' practices in his study, where he situated the teachers in the 'structured communication' stage. This is likely to be because that the teachers in Loi's study were teaching in a university context, where teachers have more freedom in choosing materials and designing their own activities rather than having to adhere to mandated textbooks. It is also relevant that his teachers, many of whom held MA degrees in language teaching, like those in Nguyen *et al.*'s (2011) study, were highly qualified and were likely to be more capable of designing tasks for more communicative learning. Loi also found that a range of conceptual and contextual constraints hindered the teachers from utilising fully communicative tasks, which, to some extent, reflects the findings in the present study. There was evidence that the teachers in the present study relied on their own conceptual knowledge and contextual factors to make decisions in their classroom practices. This will be discussed in detail in 7.3.

### **7.1.3 Corrective feedback**

The way the teachers gave corrective feedback also adds evidence of the teachers' forms-focused instructional strategies, and clearly represented a divergence from CLT and TBLT literature regarding corrective feedback. As reviewed in 3.1.2.2, it is suggested that corrective feedback in TBLT should be non-interruptive and implicit, so that such feedback does not interrupt the conveying of meaning (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004). The teachers in the current study, in contrast, used explicit strategies to correct students' errors (see 6.2.5). It may be argued that an aspect of the teachers' corrective feedback strategies aligns with that suggested in TBLT literature (e.g., Long, 2000, 2007), because their feedback was mainly incidental, i.e., resulting from unexpected errors generated by students. However,

the use of explicit corrective feedback strategies found in the present study might strongly affect the process of the conveying of meaning, because the teachers in most cases stopped students during their articulation to point out the errors. It is also noted that only Teacher 9 applied an intentional (i.e., planned) act of corrective feedback, in which she anticipated a particular mistake (i.e., the pronunciation of dates) and focused students' attention on it (see *Observation Extract #14*). However, she was not actually employing a type of focused communicative task (Ellis, 2003b), but rather she was trying to correct such mistakes during her presentation stage.

In general, however, the predominant trend in practice was that once the teachers spotted a mistake, they would implicitly correct it through the use of, for example, a recast, but further drew students' attention to the mistake by organising an additional activity exclusively for the purpose of correction. This additional activity, as stated, was explicit, because the teachers mainly used meta-linguistic clues (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2009) to point out the mistakes to their students' attention. Furthermore, given that the teachers focused on the mistake and asked their students to repeat the corrected item several times, such corrective acts were regarded as complex in terms of length, defined by Basturkmen *et al.* (2004) as more than five turns in corrective exchanges. There was no evidence of teachers using focused communicative tasks (Ellis, 2003b) to draw students' attention to some particular language features. This is due, in most cases, to the teachers' inability to design such tasks and their perceived commitment to cover the textbook lessons.

The teachers' comments about their responsibility to correct students' mistakes, in line with the findings in my preliminary study (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010), clearly indicate the teachers' frequent concerns about students' mistakes, especially in pronunciation. Although at this stage, generalisation about this pattern should be made with caution, this finding provides a picture of the teachers' attitudes and practices regarding corrective feedback in Vietnamese English classrooms. It is likely to be the case that the teachers perceived mistakes as a failure of the learning process. This finding lends support to that of Canh (2011) regarding grammar correction, where most of his teachers' corrective acts were found to be

explicit, and that of Basturkmen *et al.* (2004) where two of the three teachers in their study devoted most of their feedback to correcting code mistakes (i.e., linguistic). However, this finding contrasts with Basturkmen *et al.*'s (2004) finding, in that the teachers in the present study covered corrective feedback moves at greater length in terms of complexity, and they did so in a whole-class manner, which confirms Canh's (2011) results where the majority of corrective feedback episodes were carried out in a lock-step fashion. This can be explained in terms of the contextual factors that contributed to the attitudes to corrective feedback. It should be noted that, like the teachers in Canh's (2011) study, the teachers in the present study were not observed to correct students' mistakes in groups or pairs in such large classes. They may have felt that they did not have sufficient time to correct mistakes in pair or group interactions, and that teacher-whole class feedback helped students to focus on their mistakes so as to avoid such mistakes later, a point also made by Canh (2011) in the Vietnamese context.

In general, regarding practices both in lesson planning and classroom teaching, the findings from the present study lend support to results found in many previous studies concerning teachers' practices in general and TBLT practices in particular. Like those in Canh (2011), Farrell and Lim (2005), Sato and Kleinsasser (2004), among others, these Vietnamese teachers employed strategies to explicitly focus students on specific language features during the lessons. The findings in this study also add to Canh's regarding teacher presentation in grammar lessons. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the teachers in the context of Vietnam not only focus on explicit grammar presentation in grammar lessons, but they also do so in skills lessons.

In short, regarding the first research question of this study, the teachers' planning and practices had little relevance to the principles of TBLT in general and characteristics of tasks in particular. The only relevance, if it is, was that the teachers organised pairwork and groupwork in their classrooms to provide students with opportunity to interact with each other. However, such interaction was intended to be for the practice of language items, rather than as a transactional device by which students could communicate in a meaningful way. The extent of

TBLT in the participant teachers' planning and practices, therefore, was very limited.

## **7.2 Teachers' beliefs and TBLT**

This section deals with the second research question:

*In what ways do the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning converge with, or diverge from, the principles of TBLT?*

This question concerns the teachers' views of language, language learning, and language teaching. Accordingly, the following sections discuss what the participant teachers believed about language and language learning, their teaching approaches, and their beliefs about the role of accuracy and memorisation. These are discussed with reference to assumptions about CLT and TBLT, as well as teacher cognition research in the relevant literature.

### **7.2.1 Beliefs about language and language learning**

The teachers' beliefs about language and language learning evident in the data were found to be divergent from the principles of TBLT in the relevant literature. First, in contrast with foundation theorists who view language as a means of communication (Hymes, 1972) and a set of functions associated with meaning (Halliday, 1975), and CLT advocates (e.g., Savignon, 1993, 1997), the teachers in the present study seemed to believe that language comprised a set of grammar structures and lexical items which represented 'accumulating entities' (Rutherford, 1987) that could be learned through a process of transmission and practice. This belief was evident in the way the teachers talked about their desire to teach individual structures and to enrich students' vocabulary repertoire on a "day by day" basis, in Teacher 2's words. The teachers' views of language and language learning in the present study, to a large extent, were similar to the findings in Loi (2011), where his teachers viewed the presentation of grammar and lexical items as essential components of language input.

Secondly, the view the teachers had about language resulted in their view of how language should be learned. As was evident in stimulated recall and focus group data, the foreign language was believed by the teachers to be treated as a 'subject', where knowledge transmission was regarded as very important in the context. The teachers generally believed that the subject should have content to focus on. Such content was identified by the teachers as language items. Therefore, the teachers were likely to believe that language learning could benefit from presentation of language items, followed by thorough practice, before such items could be used in communication. This belief contradicts the TBLT learning assumption which states that on-line performance enables learners to deploy language items (Bygate, 1999). Believing in such a transmission approach, the teachers in the present study advocated the didactic role of the teacher in class, seeing this as crucial in the process of student learning. This role is, in various ways, contradictory to the ones in CLT and TBLT classrooms suggested in the literature (e.g., Breen & Candlin, 1980; Meijer, 1999; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Breen and Candlin (1980), for example, identified two main roles (within which there are secondary roles) of the teacher in the communicative language classroom: a facilitator of the communication process and an interdependent participant within the teaching-learning group. The participant teachers' belief about how language should be learned discussed above implies knowledge transmitter as the prominent role. Therefore, what the participant teachers believed about language learning and the role of the teacher had no relevance to the corresponding CLT and TBLT literature.

The data of the present study suggest the teachers believed that, in order for students to produce the language, relevant language structures should be provided to them. Similarly, to understand texts, students needed to be pre-taught vocabulary unknown to them in the texts. In this way, the teachers tended to believe that language learning worked as a bottom-up process, where discrete items of language were accumulatively learnt and memorised to allow for comprehension and/or production. For example, the teachers' view of language comprehension shows there was a dissonance between how the teachers viewed the process of comprehension and the research evidence in the literature. In TBLT, it is claimed that language learning, and in this case comprehension,

should be regarded as a holistic activity (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) where learners make use of various different sub-areas of language to make holistic sense of texts, and not just by understanding particular lexical items. Although in their vocabulary teaching the teachers were to some extent trying to teach /elicit word meaning (for example, by decontextualised translation or synonyms), this focus could be regarded as being on semantic meaning, rather than on pragmatic meaning suggested by Ellis (2003b).

The way the teachers in the present study viewed language learning can be regarded as being divergent with all the four principles of TBLT outlined in 3.1.2.2. Firstly, their beliefs in the role of the presentation of language items reflect a structure-based approach which prioritises an explicit focus on forms, instead of meaning. Ample evidence is found in the data to show that the teachers not only wanted to provide students with language items, but they also wanted to do so explicitly. This orientation necessarily creates the opportunity for the students to pay primary attention to the presented language items, which results in them displaying declarative knowledge (Ellis, 2003a, 2003b), a situation consensually rejected by TBLT advocates. Secondly, while TBLT promotes non-linguistic outcomes as an important principle, the teachers in the present study did not seem to advocate a clear outcome for the activities they used in the class. Lesson planning and stimulated recall data show that the teachers expressed their intention to present and practise language items; thus, it is likely to be the case that the possible outcome might be students having practised the models in pairs or groups. This outcome is linguistic, rather than non-linguistic (Nunan, 2004). Thirdly, the teachers' belief that students should use the language items previously presented contradicts another TBLT principle which suggests that learners should be allowed to mobilise any language resources to complete the task (Ellis, 2003b). This principle was not likely to be applied in this context, because students might not be able to do so when the teacher restricted language use to the specific items. Finally, the way the teachers in this study viewed the process of learning indicated a lack of orientation to the way that TBLT literature suggests that form be treated. TBLT advocates generally suggest that if form is attended to before and during task completion, such a focus should be implicit (e.g., Long, 2000), and that an explicit focus on forms should be delayed until the



post-task stage by which learners have noticed some new language features after using them (e.g., Willis, 1996). In contrast, the teachers in the present study believed in presentation of language forms *before* activities were performed. It is also noted that the way the teachers believed about where to place a focus on form also differed from that in Nunan (2004) and Skehan (1998). These authors, in spite of advocating a place for form in the pre-task stage, maintain that such a focus on form occurs *after* learners have been exposed to meaningful language input. The teachers in the present study, in contrast, tended to believe that language forms should be taught first in any activity.

The teachers' beliefs about language and language learning in the present study lend support to the findings in Canh (2011), Carless (2004) and Loi (2011) regarding how their teachers viewed language and language learning. The discussion above has shown that the participant teachers believed that language comprised a set of grammatical and lexical items. They also believed that these items should be presented and practised so that learners could use them in activity completion. This way of thinking, as discussed, represents a considerable divergence from the principles suggested by TBLT advocates.

### **7.2.2 Beliefs about language teaching**

As presented in 6.3, the teachers in the current study held a structure-based approach to teaching skills and a memorisation approach to teaching vocabulary in which accuracy was emphasised. The participant teachers believed that in productive skills lessons, it was important to identify some linguistic focus upon which activities could be built. This was evident in the way many of the teachers, in the stimulated recall sessions, confirmed their intention to get students to use particular language features they had presented prior to carrying out activities. In this way, it is possible to suggest that their approach to language teaching was in line with task-supported, rather than task-based, teaching (Ellis, 2003b). The teachers believed that in order to use language, students needed explicit instruction of relevant language items they were supposed to use during particular activities. The teachers' intentions to teach language items as expressed in the lesson planning sessions, their presentation of such items in classrooms, and their supporting rationales on forms-focused classroom episodes altogether show that

the teachers in the present study were not likely to believe that unstructured communication promotes language learning. This explains why they strongly advocated the presentation and the emphasis of grammatical structures and vocabulary items. The finding lends support to various studies in Asian contexts (e.g., Andrews, 2003; Canh, 2011; Farell & Lim, 2005) regarding the teachers' beliefs about grammar and grammar teaching. This belief in the primary role of forms may even be stronger in the context of Vietnam, where the impact of examinations is clearly visible. Even if the teachers had been more communication-oriented, similar to the teachers in Pan and Block (2011) in the context of China, they would still have faced the dilemma between their beliefs and the reality of examination-based systems. However, the data from the present study show that it was not the case for the participant teachers. Rather, regardless of their comments about communicative teaching (see 6.3), their underlying beliefs about teaching remained divergent from a communicative approach. In this way, such contextual factors as examinations served as the reinforcing factors that contributed to the beliefs that the teachers had already established.

The teachers' rationales for forms-focussed strategies in classroom practices show that the teachers' current approach to language teaching was compatible with a version of the PPP approach, where language items were first presented and drilled, to fit the belief that such explicit presentation and practice would enable the language items to become proceduralised, i.e., could be put in use. This approach to language teaching, instead of the TBLT methodology claimed by the textbook writers, was taken up by the teachers, probably because such an approach is compatible with the traditional grammar-translation method, with which the teachers had been familiar through the use of the previous set of textbooks. Unlike the teachers in Canh's (2011) study, who believed that grammar should not be integrated into skills lessons, and that grammar lessons should be taught separately, the teachers in this study believed, and actually put into practice, that grammar items should be incorporated in skills lessons, as provision of language data for students to be able to use. This was further evident in the focus group data, where teachers talked about the need for explicit grammar instruction in language skills work, and why they wanted to present grammar items in skills lessons (see 6.4.1).

The belief the participant teachers held about the role of explicit grammar instruction is similar to the Hong Kong secondary school teachers in Carless's (2007) study. As such, all the teachers in the present study seemed to believe that grammar instruction and practice was necessary for the development of communicative competence. This explains why very few of them provided sufficient time for the completion the later activities in the observed lessons, which were, as exemplified in 5.2, meaning-focused and spontaneous. It might be that, as the teachers said, the textbook lessons were too lengthy (i.e., packed with too much content) for them to cover, but it is more likely that they downplayed such communicative-like activities. This is because, evident in the data, the teachers did not feel secure with the type of activity that requires spontaneous language production (see, for example, 6.1); and they felt more comfortable with the conventional forms-focused activities. In this sense, it is likely that the teachers in the present study considered grammar items very important in English classes. This was evident when the teachers talked about the need for direct grammar, and the constraints they faced using the new textbooks (see 6.3.1 and 6.4.1). For example, the teachers in School B said that such textbooks as *Streamline* and *Headway*, which represent a weak version of CLT and more-or-less PPP approaches, were much more suitable than their present textbooks, because they contained some 'focus', i.e., grammar points, and that the new textbooks were 'diluting' any grammar focus. Teacher 10 concluded that using the old textbooks might be better, because such textbooks presented grammar points in a systematic order. Although the teachers did not specifically mention the term PPP, the data provide ample evidence that the teachers' underlying beliefs about how language should be taught were based on grammar and vocabulary instruction, a representation of the PPP approach to language teaching. According to Ellis (2003b), Long and Crookes (1992; 1993), and other TBLT advocates, TBLT has evolved in response to the identified limitations of the PPP approach; and it assumes that language learning is a process of communication and social interaction. The teachers in this study, therefore, seemed to hold an approach that greatly diverged from TBLT assumptions.

### **7.2.3 Beliefs about the role of memorisation and accuracy**

The teachers' comments on the role of memorisation add to the findings of how the teachers in the present study viewed language learning and teaching. As such, the teachers believed that learning a language included as much memorisation of language items as possible. This can be explained in the light of the Vietnamese educational context (see 2.1) where memorisation has long been regarded as the most effective way to gain knowledge (Huyen, 2002), and a common practice in teaching most subjects in schools where lessons conventionally begin with a 'theory' presentation, including rules and clear-cut knowledge, followed by students using such theories to solve particular problems (Nguyen, 2005; Pham, 2000). Also, their students' primary learning objective (i.e., passing examinations) may lead the teachers to believe that memorisation was the best strategy (Canh, 2011) for students to accumulate knowledge so as to perform successfully in examinations. Their belief about the role of memorisation was evident in the way the teachers talked about their strategies of teaching vocabulary and their expectations that students revised the lessons at home (see 6.3.2). For example, Teacher 1 said that providing students with vocabulary items without explaining and drilling was like how "water goes off the kumara leaf". He also said that he frequently made sure that students had learned new words at home by checking these words at the beginning of his lessons. This belief of the teachers in the present study, again, lends support to the teachers' belief about grammar memorisation in Canh's (2011) study. The teachers in the present study, however, emphasised not only the need for grammar memorisation, but also stressed the importance of memorisation in other forms, in particular lexical items and pronunciation. This suggests that the participant teachers may have perceived the importance of memorisation following teachers from various disciplines in the context of Vietnam (see, for example, Nguyen, 2005; Tuong, 2002).

The way memorisation was advocated by the teachers in the present study had little relevance with how language features are assumed to be retained in TBLT literature. Language features are claimed to be up-taken through the process of comprehending input, negotiation of meaning, and 'pushed' output (see 3.1.1.3). Through these meaning-making processes, learners notice features that are new to

them; understand them through context and negotiation; and reinforce the attention through output in order to retain the features in their memory. Indeed, research has indicated that, for example, retention of unfamiliar words is subject to the amount of involvement in processing the words in task conditions (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Newton, 2001). The teachers in the present study, in contrast, seemed to advocate the memorisation approach manifest in the conventional rote-memory strategies inherent in Confucian educational ideology, which views learning as a process of knowledge accumulation and reading books (Huyen, 2002; Rao, 1996). Explicit presentation, choral repetition and correction found in the present study may be regarded as among such strategies. Therefore, the way the teachers thought about the role of memorisation did not seem to resonate with the way language items are retained in learners' memory system according to TBLT research.

The teachers' belief in the importance of accuracy provides further evidence of a forms-focused approach to teaching. In the main, the teachers believed that language produced by both teachers and students in the classroom should be as accurate as possible. This belief, again, reflected a Confucian ideology about education (see 2.1), in that knowledge should be accurately provided by the teachers and memorised by the learners so that no errors may occur when this knowledge has to be 'returned', such as in examinations (Canh, 2011). This view about accuracy also reflected hierarchical assumptions of teachers' role in the classroom and their relationship with 'important others' in their profession. On the one hand, teachers' perceived that their production of language, both in oral and written form, in the classroom should be accurate, so as to provide students with error-free models. This may imply that if the teacher were to 'take it easy' in making mistakes, students might as well do so. On the other hand, the data revealed that the teachers confronted the fact that they were criticised and evaluated by inspectors and colleagues based not only on how they organised their lesson, but also the number of mistakes they might make, underlying an assumption that 'knowledge' was always accurate, and that it was the teacher's job to keep such knowledge as it was. A conventional idea in the context was that inaccuracies made by students could be seen by inspectors and colleagues as reflecting negatively the teachers' own accuracy. This, among others, could be

regarded as a major contextual factor contributing to why teachers thought the way discussed above. Language knowledge, therefore, was believed by the teachers to consist of somewhat static, rule-driven items that could not be challenged.

Although some TBLT advocates (e.g., Skehan, 1996) propose a balance between fluency and accuracy in task development, the principles and characteristics outlined in 3.1.2 indicate that TBLT favours fluency over accuracy. The participant teachers' belief in the importance of accuracy in the present study adds another divergence in their belief system from TBLT principles.

#### **7.2.4 Knowledge of current pedagogical methodologies**

My preliminary study (Nguyen & Bygate, 2012) indicates that the teachers in the same geographical context, including five of the teachers participating in the present study, had a positive attitude towards CLT. The teachers in this study, on various occasions, also mentioned that they wanted to promote communication in their teaching. However, the observation and stimulated recall data show that their conceptualisation of CLT was not the same as that defined in the relevant literature. Specifically, they believed that simply putting students in pairs, groups, or teachers asking students questions were forms of communicative ways of working (see, for example, how Teacher 2 viewed communication in 6.3.3). In other words, they believed that communicative teaching involved helping learners to master language features through memorisation and manipulation. No evidence is found in the data in which teachers mentioned using language for transactional purposes, i.e., getting their students to use language to reach the outcome of a particular task. Their understanding of CLT, to some extent, lends support to the findings in Karavas-Doukas (1995), Li (1998), Sakui (2004), and Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) regarding the misconceptions of CLT; however, it is different from the findings from the studies by Lewis and McCook (2002), Nishino (2008; 2009), Pham (2007), and Phan (2004). This difference is implicated in the way the data were elicited. It is important that understanding, as well as beliefs, is not simply uncovered by asking the teachers explicitly in interviews and questionnaires (e.g., the studies by Nishino; Pham; and Phan), or by asking them about espoused beliefs shortly after input workshops (e.g., Lewis & McCook). Rather,

it should be investigated with reference to particular aspects of their work (e.g., the textbooks, and classroom events) in order to gain insights into their core belief systems within which understanding is situated.. The teachers in the present study, like the teachers in Liao (2003) and Karavas-Doukas (1995), had expressed positive attitudes towards CLT. However, the way they interpreted CLT indicated that their knowledge of this pedagogical approach was very limited. This could be explained, drawing on Basturkmen *et al.* (2004), by suggesting that teachers are likely to espouse particular theories of teaching, but do not actually understand them in detail. My experience with the teachers and the setting suggested that the teachers are likely to have been told about such approaches as CLT, but the concepts are limited to the surface level of understanding, which resulted in the teachers' misconceptualisation of CLT in the present study.

Like their understanding about CLT in general, the teachers' understanding of the specific concept of task in the present study was found to be very limited, which aligns with the findings of Carless (2003) and Hui (2004). However, unlike most studies reviewed in 3.3.2, the Vietnamese teachers in this study could not conceptualise their own task definition, and could not problematise their limited understanding. This suggests that, like the teachers in several previous studies, they had very limited opportunities to receive theoretical input from training (Hui, 2004) or support from academic and methodological experts (Canh, 2011). Importantly, no teachers in this study ever mentioned concepts relating to task characteristics or to current SLA concepts identified in the literature. Indeed, there was a noticeable lack of technical terminology in any of their discourse. Apart from limited training opportunities discussed above, it is likely to be the case that the teachers had a limited degree of reflection on their mandated materials, given that these new concepts were available in the curriculum, the teachers' manuals, and the textbooks (see 2.3.2). Yet, as indicated in 4.4.3.1, the teachers in the present study had been experienced in using these materials for several years. Although this study anticipated this lack of technical terms, and thus intentionally investigated the teachers' beliefs using an implicit approach, the limitation of TBLT-related terminology in their discourse can be quite surprising.

### 7.3 Factors that facilitate, or hinder, TBLT implementation

This section discusses the third research question:

*What factors contribute to the facilitation, or hindrance, of the implementation of TBLT in the Vietnamese context?*

#### 7.3.1 Facilitative factors

The discussion of the two research questions above has revealed that the teachers in the present study were, by and large, not ready to implement TBLT in their classroom. This does not necessarily mean that there were no elements of teachers' beliefs and practices that might facilitate its implementation. Although the findings indicate that the implementation of TBLT was not a common phenomenon in the observed English lessons, some characteristics of the teachers evident in the data were facilitative. Firstly, the data suggest that the teachers were making some changes as a result of using the textbooks. The teachers were observed to use the methodological procedures embedded in the textbooks such as pairwork and groupwork. This reflects the idea that textbooks can act as agents of change (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) (though, as I shall discuss in the next section, this change was observed to happen only on a *surface* level). Secondly, the stimulated recall and focus group data indicated that the teachers showed some positive attitudes towards communicative teaching. Although the way the teachers interpreted CLT was different from the CLT literature, there was some extent of willingness to make their classroom more interactive. Some teachers, such as Teachers 1 and 2, like the teachers in Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), claimed that their practices were actually communicative. This indicates that the teachers were, to some extent, interested in the idea of using communicative teaching in their classroom practices. Thirdly, the teachers in the present study expressed their willingness to learn about language teaching methodologies when they agreed to participate in the study. In fact, one of the reasons the teachers gave as to why they chose to participate was to 'learn something new about teaching methodology'. Teachers who are willing to learn are likely to be able to evaluate their stage of professional development, which in turn triggers changes in their teaching practices (Richards & Lockhart, 1996).



However, the central argument I would like to put forward as a result of this study is that the participant teachers were not TBLT-oriented, and this is due to a range of more important, hindering factors, which will be discussed below.

### **7.3.2 Hindering factors**

The findings have provided evidence that the teachers have not, at least for the moment, aligned themselves with TBLT, and this was due to a number of hindrances and constraints. Below, I present these constraints from more ‘internal’ factors to ‘external’ factors including those that were explicitly revealed by the teachers and those that were inferred from the data and my understanding of the context.

#### **7.3.2.1 Teachers’ core beliefs**

The first constraint found in the data was the dissonance between the teachers’ existing beliefs and the principles of TBLT (see 7.2.1). In other words, the teachers’ general beliefs about language teaching and learning seemed to prevent them from being receptive to new approaches that are inconsistent with their existing belief system. This tends to confirm the strong influence beliefs have on teachers’ interpretation of new information (Pajares, 1992) and their instructional practices (Crawley & Salyer, 1995). It is noted that many of the previous studies which identified constraints of TBLT implementation, particularly those which collected self-report data from questionnaires and/or interviews, revealed constraints from the teachers’ point of view (i.e., peripheral beliefs expressed in what they say) and seemed to ignore one of the most influential factors that contributes to failure of TBLT implementation—teachers’ underlying beliefs. The analysis of both classroom practices and their underlying rationales allowed me to identify that their core beliefs, which were divergent from TBLT assumptions, were the most hindering factor.

It is evident in the present study that the participant teachers could not implement TBLT as it is supposed to be implemented, because there was a significant gap between TBLT assumptions and their belief systems. Believing in a more conventional approach to language and language teaching, which emphasises the

role of grammar instruction, memorisation and accuracy, the teachers were unlikely to easily transition to a TBLT approach just by using the textbooks that advocate TBLT. Research has indicated that beliefs are stable and difficult to change (Borg, 2006, 2012). In the present study, although the teachers had used a set of more or less communicative textbooks for several years, it seemed that the textbooks did not contribute much in changing their *core* beliefs about language teaching and learning (although in the previous section I discussed that their *practices* manifest some change). The core beliefs in this study were identified by triangulation of the teachers' planning, classroom practices and follow-up rationalisations. The findings of the present study indicate that although teachers had made some change to accommodate the textbooks, their underlying (core) beliefs remained forms-oriented with a focus on memorisation and accuracy. For example, the findings from the lesson planning data show that the teachers generally identified, and planned to introduce, some grammatical focus in productive lessons, which was consistent with their presentation of language structures and models in the classroom. The stimulated recall data show that the teachers emphasised the importance of such provision, revealing that this belief represents their core, underlying thinking about the way language forms are learned.

Given that core beliefs found in this study were stable and more powerful (Phipps & Borg, 2009) than such peripheral beliefs as the attitudes to communication, having such strong beliefs about explicit instruction of language items, memorisation and accuracy is likely to hinder the teachers in moving towards a more communicative way of teaching and utilising such task characteristics as offered in the textbooks (see 5.2). The power of their core beliefs explains why the teachers, in spite of having used a communicative curriculum and textbooks for some time, still held approaches dating back to their schooling experiences as language learners. In short, the way the teachers viewed language, language learning and teaching seemed to be a major hindrance for the implementation of TBLT in the Vietnamese context.

### 7.3.2.2 Subjective norms

The teachers' sets of subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b, 2005) are found to contribute considerably to the failure of TBLT implementation. The subjective norms found in the present study included the influential factors the teachers perceived from the significant others in their work (see 3.2.4). Firstly, it could be inferred that the teachers always had to be very careful to avoid criticism from their colleagues and inspectors. This is evident when the teachers talked about how careful they have to be in producing accurate English and making sure students did not make many mistakes in class, especially when their lessons were observed by colleagues and inspectors. The criticism from inspectors and colleagues not only contributed to the devaluing of their professional stance, but was also used as accumulative evidence for semester-based and annual teacher ranking (see 2.1). Therefore, the teachers were likely to believe that making linguistic mistakes in their teaching devalued their professionalism, which, to a large extent, reflects the general unwillingness to take risks in their pedagogical practices.

Secondly, the teachers in the present study wished to conform to the values of their immediate colleagues, and this concurs with the point made by Canh (2011) about how the teachers in his study justified themselves as fitting into the collective normative pedagogy. Evidence of common practices and beliefs were found, when the teachers made reference to their colleagues' beliefs and practices. For example, they tended to use teaching techniques that were used by other teachers in the same school (see, for example, 6.2.3). In many stimulated recall sessions, the teachers also rationalised certain decisions they made with reference to their observation of their colleagues' practices. In short, the teachers tended to avoid being atypical in their community of practice. A "culture of sameness" (Phelan *et al.*, 2006, p. 176) can be inferred here, in that the teachers were trying to follow a common standard conventionally perceived by the community. This, again, may be another factor that hindered the teachers from being individually innovative in terms of teaching methodology.

Thirdly, their perception of the role of the teacher in the classroom reflecting a Confucian ideology may have caused the teachers to believe that students would

expect the teacher to be ‘a storehouse of knowledge’, who acted as a knowledge transmitter, rather than a resource whom students could consult when necessary. In various stimulated recall sessions, the teachers mentioned the need for them to have substantial knowledge of English so as to successfully explain language rules and consistently correct students’ mistakes. Also, according to Confucian educational philosophy, the teacher should also be a moral exemplar, in that the way the teacher behaves in the classroom is regarded as a paragon. Although the teachers in this study did not radically follow such philosophies in their teaching, the way they behaved in the classroom, to a certain extent, reflected such ideologies. This is evident in the way the teachers organised the chalkboard neatly, and perceived this as an example for students on how to keep their notebooks, and in the way they corrected students’ behaviour in the class, such as reminding students to stand up when talking to the teacher (see 6.2.5). The perception of the teacher’ roles may contribute to the temporary unlikelihood of TBLT implementation in the context of Vietnam, simply because such conventional roles contradict those identified in TBLT and CLT literature such as participant, counsellor, facilitator and organiser (e.g., Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The data provided ample evidence that the teachers wished to maintain traditional teacher-centred roles.

### **7.3.2.3 Lack of theoretical understanding**

The third factor that contributes to the hindrance for TBLT implementation in the present study was the teachers’ understanding of the notion of task. Deng and Carless (2010) found that the teacher who had a better understanding of TBLT frequently used communicative activities in teaching. This implies a positive relationship between understanding and implementation. The teachers in this study, specifically, had a very limited understanding of what constitutes a task in terms of TBLT. This finding is different from those of several previous studies (e.g., Carless; 2009; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011) which revealed that the teachers had a basic understanding of TBLT. This difference may be explained as due to the way teachers’ understanding was elicited. In the present study, it was done by referring to the textbook activities and specific lessons rather than asking them directly about TBLT and tasks; in this way, the

way the data were elicited was similar to that of Andon and Eckerth (2009). The focus group data indicated that when the teachers talked about the textbooks, they were unable to exemplify any task-based characteristics that could refer to their understanding associated with TBLT. It may be the case that the teachers were not exposed to theoretical input about TBLT; but, more importantly, they would not have seen TBLT practised in their own community of practice. This is evident in the stimulated recall and focus group data, in which the teachers talked with reference to the teachers' manual, the textbooks, and their colleagues' practices without mentioning, either explicitly or implicitly, any task characteristics. Therefore, they would be unaware of the existence of such task characteristics as were embedded in the textbooks. This lack of awareness inhibited the teachers from exploring what a task meant and how it could be conducted in the classroom. This can be explained by the teachers' limited opportunities for professional development and their unwillingness to take up theoretical points (if any) delivered during workshops (see 2.4). After all, the way the teachers in this study understood the notion of 'task' reflected what they believed about language teaching. In this sense, again, such a notion is filtered by their belief system (Pajares, 1992; Woods & Çakır, 2011). In other words, the way they viewed language teaching and learning influenced the way they understood the notion of 'task'. Reflecting the finding in Deng and Carless (2009), it is likely that if the teachers had a sound understanding of TBLT, they might well have considered carrying out task-based activities and reflected on them. Their lack of understanding of TBLT concepts and task characteristics, therefore, can be considered a factor hindering TBLT.

#### **7.3.2.4 Public examinations**

Like many other previous studies that investigated constraints to CLT and TBLT implementation (e.g., Carless, 2007; Li, 1998; Nishino, 2008; Sakui, 2004; Yim, 2009), the data in this study indicated that the public examinations, including the general education graduation and university entrance examinations, significantly diminished any disposition towards TBLT implementation. In this study, public examinations were not only regarded as tensions which inhibited the teachers' implementation of TBLT (e.g., Adams & Newton, 2009; Hu, 2002; Littlewood,

2007) or communicative teaching, but also as one of the factors that contributed to the forms-focused approach to language teaching that they employed.

Although Carless (2007) has argued that in his study “it may be teacher beliefs and school practicalities rather than examinations that are a more significant barrier to task-based approaches” (p. 605), the teachers still believed that traditional approaches were more appropriate. In the present study, the examinations seemed to play a key role as to whether the teachers would consider teaching communicatively. This is most evident in focus group data, in which teachers repeatedly talk about the mismatch between the textbooks and examinations (see 6.4.1). Unlike the contextual issue in Carless’s (2007) study, where task-based exams were observed to be operationalised, the high-stake examinations in Vietnam were highly grammar-based (see Appendix L). The sense of pressure regarding the importance of examinations was always evident whenever the teachers had the opportunity to talk about the issue, especially regarding teaching Year 12 students. This contextual constraint, in turn, acted as a factor reinforcing the existing beliefs held by the teachers, which were manifest in their classroom decision-making.

### **7.3.2.5 Perception of students’ proficiency and motivation**

Another constraint was the teachers’ perception of their students’ motivation and language proficiency. As presented in 6.4.1, while talking about the textbooks in relation to students’ motivation, the teachers revealed that their students were not enthusiastic about (i.e. unmotivated in) engaging in interactive communication. Their explanation was that students were not interested in working with the books in terms of practising language skills, but rather in those language items that were tested in the public examinations. The teachers were likely to perceive that students found the textbooks and the way the teachers taught in the class as irrelevant to their learning objective, i.e., passing the exams. It may also be the case that the methods that the teachers used in the class were not interesting to them, an important factor which demotivated students (Trang & Baldauf, 2007) in other Vietnamese contexts. As indicated in the data, the teachers’ general perception of students’ lack of motivation to participate in communicative-like activity was solely due to their interpretation of the activities in the textbooks as

being irrelevant to the students' learning objectives. This interpretation resulted in their decisions to move away from the communicative features of the textbook activities.

Furthermore, similar to the findings in previous studies such as Carless (2003) and Yim (2009), the teachers in the present study felt that their students were not proficient enough to complete textbook activities in a spontaneous fashion (i.e., without structural framing). In other words, they believed that completing such communicative activities was too difficult for students, unless language items were provided to them. In this sense, most, if not all, of the 'difficulty' issues they talked about were associated with linguistic knowledge. Interestingly, the teachers did not, implicitly or explicitly, touch any dimensions of difficulty that relate to cognitive complexity (Robinson, 2003), an element principally associated with the meaning principle of TBLT. In fact, when the teachers talked about their students' insufficient levels of proficiency, they meant the repertoire of language structures and vocabulary items that students possessed in their memory, rather than communicative competence defined by applied linguists such as Canale and Swain (1980) and Hymes (1972).

#### **7.3.2.6 Discipline, physical setting, and textbook content**

Interestingly, the teachers in the present study rarely mentioned other popular constraints or challenges identified by previous studies, such as classroom discipline (Carless, 2004, 2007), time (Carless, 2003; Yim, 2009), teachers' ability (Carless, 2007; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011; Yim, 2009), use of mother tongue (Carless, 2004, 2008), and class size (Cheng & Moses, 2011; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Yim, 2009), among others. This can be explained by the fact that the teachers in this study were not directly asked about constraints in association with TBLT implementation, and also by the inference that it is likely that the teachers did not consider TBLT or CLT as alternative ways of teaching, and therefore did not perceive such issues as problems. It is also likely these issues were taken for granted, and thus the teachers were not explicitly aware that the issues existed. However, given the general principles of TBLT and characteristics of tasks, and the understanding of the context where this study was situated, a number of such issues may reasonably be inferred. Firstly, similarly to

the teachers in the Hong Kong context in Carless's studies, where classroom discipline is valued, the Vietnamese teachers would have found maintaining classroom discipline a constraint implementing communicative activities. This was evident, for example, when the teachers talked about letting students play games. On several occasions some teachers (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 8) mentioned that having students play games in the class created noise and thus affected other classrooms. This suggests that the teachers in the present study were not ready, and perhaps unable, to hand over control to their students in classroom practice.

Secondly, the physical arrangement of the classroom may be another constraint. As noted in 2.5, the classrooms in the schools were equipped with long benches fixed to the desks, which made it extremely difficult for students to move around. Given the interactive nature of TBLT, this characteristic of the classroom could be one of the constraints if TBLT was to be implemented. Although the teachers attempted to organise students into some groupwork and pairwork activities, it was observed that this setting of the classroom, together with class size (i.e., number of students), caused much difficulty and took a considerable amount of time for the teachers to organise. In the lessons that were observed, groupwork was organised on the basis of the available arrangement; for example, all the students sitting at one desk were organised into a group. This arrangement made it difficult, if not impossible, for students to communicate in an interactive fashion.

A further constraint inferred from the study was the textbooks the teachers were using. Some of the textbooks' content tended to support the teachers' beliefs in forms-focused instruction. Particularly, the emphasised language features (printed in bold or italics) available in productive skills lessons were likely to catch the teachers' attention and thus contribute to their decisions to take a further step towards forms-focused teaching (see 6.3.1). Given that the teachers rarely had access to other materials and the culture of textbook-based teaching (McGrath, 2002) found in the way the teachers planned their lessons, it is possible that some features of the textbooks contributed to the way the teachers acted out their lessons. The perceived authority of the textbooks, manifest in their planning and classroom practices, may be considered hindering the teachers from being flexible and risk-taking, an orientation towards more task-based teaching.



As mentioned in 5.3, the textbook unit analysed does not entirely conform to the principles of TBLT, although many of pedagogic characteristics found in the activities have been identified to be favourable. As stated, two points of reference regarding the textbooks can be seen as hindering. The fact that most of the activities failed to meet the ‘non-linguistic outcome’ criterion may hinder teachers from distinguishing, albeit implicitly, between tasks and general activities. Thus, the textbook activities might be seen as good examples for practice, especially in a context where teachers tended to follow the textbooks closely. Also, the fact that there is no obvious link between the textbook activities may be of concern to the teachers, which possibly leads them to believe that each activity served to practise one or more particular language features. This belief, which was derived from their individual and collective reflections on the textbook, ultimately led the participant teachers to introduce grammar and lexical items prior to each ‘task’, commonly found in the data of the present study.

In summary, this section has discussed facilitating and hindering factors associated with TBLT implementation in the context of the study. Hindrances have been identified as more significant than facilitating factors, which revealed that TBLT implementation was not readily preferred, or even feasible, in this context. It has been identified that the most influential constraint was the teachers’ core beliefs about language learning and teaching, and that such beliefs were reinforced by other sociocultural and contextual factors, all of which contributed to the hindrance of TBLT in this particular context.

## **7.4 Nature of teachers’ beliefs, and their relationship with practices**

This section will discuss the nature of teachers’ beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices. More precisely, it seeks to address the fourth research question:

*What can this study contribute to an academic understanding of the nature of the Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices?*

### 7.4.1 Resistance to change

Consistent with Borg's (2006) and Pajares's (1992) conclusion, the analysis of the data shows that teachers' beliefs are stable and less dynamic than, for example, knowledge about the language. The data strongly suggest that although the Vietnamese teachers had been using the new textbooks and curriculum for several years, their beliefs about language teaching and learning remained almost unchanged. This finding is also in line with Prawat's (1992) point that getting teachers to change their beliefs is a difficult process. Knowledge about TBLT and CLT might have been available to the teachers in teachers' manuals, workshop materials, and implicitly embedded in the textbooks (see 2.3.2). However, there is little evidence to indicate that their beliefs were changing towards a more task-oriented approach. This confirms the implication in Woods and Çakır (2011) that theoretical knowledge is reinterpreted through the filter of contextual and academic experience. In other words, if teachers are informed with particular theoretical knowledge (e.g., TBLT), their understanding of such knowledge is reconstructed through the lens of socio-cultural factors inherent in the *beliefs* that they hold.

Although the body of research to date has provided mixed findings regarding the impact in-service training programmes have on teachers' beliefs (see, for example, Borg, 2011; Freeman, 1993; Lamie, 2004; Scott & Rodgers, 1995, for positive impacts; and Lamb, 1995; Phipps, 2007, for negative impacts), the data in this study suggest that in-service workshops had little impact on teachers' underlying beliefs. As noted, it may be the case that the content delivered in such workshops may be incompatible with the teachers' existing beliefs, and also that the teachers were only exposed to theoretical input without opportunities to reflect on such theory in their teaching practice. Moreover, the in-service workshops available to the participant teachers were short, few and far between (see 4.4.4). This suggests that the teachers had few opportunities to absorb new ideas and to reflect on them. Within such a context, it is also unlikely that their beliefs were challenged, a fundamental condition for beliefs to change.

Although it has been claimed in the literature that teachers are active thinkers and decision-makers (Borg, 2006), some beliefs, drawing on the claim made by

Pajares (1992) and Rokeach (1968), are core and thus difficult to change. This may be reasonably evident regarding the extent to which the participant teachers reflected on the TBLT workshops provided to them. In this research, five teachers attended the workshops that I delivered approximately two months before the data collection started, and yet no reflection on the content of the workshops was identified in any sources of the data. Although in the TBLT workshops, there were sessions in which teachers had the opportunity to see how to change, for example, an activity into a task, the observation of the five workshop participants did not show any evidence of uptake of such application. It is likely to be the case that their core beliefs were more powerful than their receptivity to ideas delivered at workshops.

Advocates of curriculum innovation have also indicated that, in order to implement an innovation, new textbooks can act as the agent of change (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). However, the data from the present study indicated that this was not the case regarding these teachers' beliefs. Although the teachers planned and taught their lessons based on the textbooks, and they had positive attitudes towards the textbooks, close examination of the data suggests that the textbooks, in spite of being, to some extent, communicative, did not change the teachers' core beliefs about language teaching. Observation data indicated that although the teachers actually used classroom management techniques such as pairwork and groupwork, their emphasis on linguistic content and their justifications in stimulated recall sessions confirm that their beliefs remained forms-focused and teacher-centred. It may be the case that the teachers had to use such techniques as groupwork and pairwork because they were instructed to do so in the textbooks. This does not mean that the teachers valued pairwork and groupwork, but rather it reflects their inability to design and modify textbook activities to fit their beliefs. The textbooks, therefore, have some influence on the practices of the teachers on a surface level, but not necessarily on the teachers' core beliefs about language teaching and learning.

The discussion above does not mean that beliefs are impossible to change. In fact, it is possible to change teachers' beliefs (Nation & Macalister, 2010) as long as comprehensive procedures are taken into account (This will be discussed in 8.3.3).

The data from the present study show that merely providing the teachers with the textbooks, and a very limited extent of orientation in training workshops, was not sufficient for beliefs to change. The resistance-to-change nature of teachers' beliefs can be used to explain why changes did not happen as a result of using the textbooks and take-up did not occur as a result of attending workshops in the present study.

#### **7.4.2 Situated nature of teachers' beliefs**

The discussion above leads to the situated nature of teachers' beliefs (Clancey, 1997). The data suggest that the teachers largely formed their beliefs through interaction with their colleagues, students, contextual constraints, and materials. The 'culture of sameness' (Phelan *et al.*, 2006) was evident in the data when the teachers explained their own practices with reference to those of their colleagues. Close examination of the data revealed that teachers in the same school tended to employ similar strategies of teaching, a phenomenon Breen *et al.* (2001) refer to as 'collective pedagogy'. The teachers also referred to their students' objectives, motivation and expectations when they had the opportunities to articulate their classroom decisions in their lesson planning and stimulated recall sessions. Evidence was also found to indicate that no matter what input the teachers might have received in earlier formal training, their beliefs about language teaching are situated within the contexts of teaching where their work was currently experienced, reflected and shared through the local community of practice. Perhaps one of the most surprising findings in the present study was that the effect of pre- and in-service training was diminished by the prominence of highly context-sensitive beliefs. This was most evident in the case of Teacher 11, who was the newest graduate among the group, but who seemed to advocate forms-focused approaches more than the other teachers in the study. Although she said that she was taught to teach communicatively during her university teacher training programme, what she revealed in stimulated recall sessions and focus groups suggests she strongly believed that teachers should focus on grammar and insisted on the need for more grammar instruction in the textbooks (see 6.4.1).

This example illustrates that pedagogical knowledge, no matter whether delivered in teacher education programmes or in-service training workshops, is not

necessarily transferred into teachers' belief systems. Instead, when more novice teachers such as Teacher 11 encountered the realities of their working contexts, as noted by Borg (2006), they tended to put aside their ideals about language teaching, and to gradually develop their own set of beliefs that fit the sociocultural context in which they work. As such, the pedagogical knowledge that teachers receive in teacher education may be blurred and replaced by emerging experiential beliefs. This explanation suggests that the teachers in the present study largely formed their beliefs through such processes as object-regulation and other-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987). Unlike the case of children's learning, teachers' learning can be regarded as more complex, especially when it comes to learning to teach. Object-regulation, for example, may be specifically referred to as the way the teachers shaped their beliefs in the overall education system in Vietnam. This process was demonstrated by the influence of such cultural artefacts as the examinations on the teachers' beliefs and their practices. However, although the teachers' practices might be partially explained according to object-regulation, their beliefs were mainly influenced by certain artefacts. For example, the examination system seemed to be more significant than the textbooks. Ample evidence was found in planning and observation data to indicate that the teachers tended to identify linguistic items that were available in particular lessons to focus students' attention on, although the textbook lessons did not require them to do so. Analysis of stimulated recall and focus group data also show that their underlying beliefs about language learning and teaching are, to a large extent, inclined towards a forms-focused approach. This suggests that only a few objects contribute to teacher's learning. The role of the textbooks in this study, as the findings indicate, is likely to have shaped the teachers' surface practices and influenced their peripheral belief system. Their core beliefs, therefore, were not considerably influenced by the existence of the mandated textbooks. In this sense, the role of textbooks as the agent of change (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) is not applicable to the particular teachers in the present study.

As discussed above regarding the role of the setting where teachers worked, the other-regulation was evident in this study in how the teachers developed their beliefs. Teachers' beliefs are socially constructed (Pajares, 1992). The example of Teacher 11 above illustrates that the teachers relied on interaction with their

colleagues, students, and other stakeholders, as well as their understanding of contexts, in order to form their belief system. Given that, in this study, the teachers regularly observed other teachers and discussed their lessons in weekly meetings, it is likely that these teachers' beliefs were distributed among individuals (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Zeng & Murphy, 2007), but bounded within the context where they worked, i.e., their particular school. One example of other-regulation found in this study was the teachers sharing of 'collective language pedagogy' (Breen *et al.*, 2001), which has been confirmed by Canh (2011) in a similar Vietnamese context. In short, before becoming self-regulating in forming core, deeper beliefs about language learning and teaching, the teachers in this study may have gone through the cumulative process of both object-regulation and other-regulation.

### **7.4.3 Theoretical relationship between beliefs and practices**

Regarding the relationship between beliefs and practices, the data from the present study can be understood in the light of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b, 2005, 2006). To a large extent, the data confirm that the teachers' beliefs and practices reflect elements in the model (see Figure 3.5, reproduced and modified in Figure 7.2 below). Firstly, as discussed above, teachers' behaviours were likely to have resulted from their core beliefs about the elements contributing to the formation of the respective intentions. With regard to presenting language forms in speaking lessons, for example, the data strongly suggest that the teachers in the present study believed that students would not be able to produce language unless specific language items were explicitly provided. This belief was expressed in lesson planning sessions and consistently observed in classroom practices. In this case, this behavioural belief (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b) can be regarded as among the repertoire of their core beliefs.

Although in various stimulated recall sessions, and in my preliminary study, the teachers showed positive attitudes toward communicative teaching, the observation data did not capture characteristics of meaningful communication. Therefore, the attitudes seemed to result from the peripheral beliefs that the teachers held, and thus did not contribute to the formation of intention to engage in communicative teaching. In this sense, this finding lends support to the claim

made by Phipps and Borg (2009) that peripheral beliefs are unlikely to contribute to teachers' decision-making in the classroom. Thus, the core belief regarding providing students with accurate language models is likely to outweigh the peripheral beliefs about, for example, the value of communication. At the same time, this belief was likely to interact with the normative beliefs (which result in subjective norms) that the teachers held. In particular, the data in this study suggest that the teachers on various occasions referred to students' objectives and expectations as principal rationales for particular forms-focused teaching behaviours (see 6.4.1). The teachers also referred to the presence of language inspectors and their colleagues when they provided explanation for their classroom behaviour. These perceptions were related to the fact that in such speaking lessons, many language models had already been provided in the textbooks; and the teachers in this study, to a large extent, followed the conventional idea that it was the teacher's job to cover everything in a lesson. This may lead them to perceive that their work would not have been completed if such models were not presented and used by students. Subjective norms, therefore, were manifest in this study as the perceived expectations of students, inspectors, and significant colleagues. It is important to note that in such a hierarchical society as Vietnam, normative beliefs may be even stronger than in other contexts, because teachers tend to adopt a perception that their superiors' ideas were right and therefore should not be questioned. Such a perception was found to be realised in lesson planning sessions and focus groups where the chairpersons of the department and more experienced teachers seemed to play a predominant role in discussion about, and decisions of, for example, how to carry out an activity (see, for example, *Lesson Planning Extract #3*, section 6.1.1).

The intention to provide students with language models was further supported by perceived behavioural control (PBC) aspects. PBC was manifest in the form of teachers' abilities to carry out such activities. On the whole, the teachers seemed to be very confident in dealing with presentation and drilling of the models. In other words, the teachers were likely to have a great degree of control over such teaching strategies. In contrast, they might perceive that they would have little control in getting students to, for example, carry out an activity without provision of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Furthermore, regarding external PBC,

as suggested by Kennedy and Kennedy (1996), examinations seemed to be the most facilitative factor in forming the intention to provide students with such language items.

The application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour helps to explain the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices in this study. The data of the present study suggest that the teachers' decision-making in planning and classroom teaching tended to fit their justification in stimulated recall and focus group data. Unlike previous work that investigates this relationship (e.g., Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Phipps & Borg, 2009), in the present study what the teachers articulated strongly aligned with what they did in their classrooms. This implies a methodological issue that, given teachers' beliefs are often tacit and unconscious, in order to bring teachers' beliefs to the surface, it is necessary to apply techniques that allow such processes to happen. Richardson *et al.* (1991), for example, used what they call 'belief interviews' – a set of questions inviting teachers to talk about specific students ('private beliefs'), to address this issue. Similarly, Andon and Eckerth (2009) investigated teachers' principles of language teaching with reference to TBLT in indirect ways, i.e., not directly mentioning TBLT in, for example, interviews. Woods and Çakır (2011) make a clear distinction between theoretical knowledge that is explicit and thus can be verbally articulated, and knowledge that is implicit and is often reflected in practice. The former can be regarded as technical knowledge or 'espoused theories' (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004), while the latter, being more experiential and personal (Woods & Çakır, 2011), should be considered beliefs. Thus, teachers' beliefs are one of the major sources informing teachers' practices, although in transforming beliefs into practice, teachers often encounter challenges and tensions (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

Following ideas by Green (1971), Phipps and Borg (2009), and Rokeach (1968) on the distinction between core and peripheral beliefs, at this point I would like to put forward an argument that the very powerful explanation for the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices suggested in the data is that most of the beliefs elicited are core, rather than peripheral. As defined in 3.2.2, core beliefs are those that are realised in teaching behaviours, the particular strategy of



eliciting beliefs in the present study was through comments and rationales based on behaviours realised in the classroom practices and the specific textbooks the teachers were mandated to use. Teaching behaviours are most likely to derive from teachers' core beliefs, which are mediated in the forms of behavioural attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls.

The analysis of the data in the present study suggests that pedagogical knowledge, no matter how it is presented to the teachers, plays only a limited role in teachers' classroom practices. In social psychology where the TPB is rooted, it has been proved that knowledge about a subject matter (e.g., about breast cancer) has no correlation to the intention to carry out the corresponding behaviour (e.g., intention to carry out breast examinations) (Ajzen, Joyce, Sheikh, & Cote, 2011). However, in the field of language teaching, especially when dealing with professionals like teachers, things might be different. After all, professionals need knowledge of some kind to carry out their professional activities. Likewise, language teachers will need a wide range of knowledge in order to teach the language they are supposed to teach. The question is, of course, whether such knowledge is compatible with their existing beliefs. Although this study does not directly address the role of formal and pedagogical knowledge on teachers' practices, evidence from the data suggests that new knowledge, such as TBLT, is not ready to be transferred into teachers' beliefs systems unless they have the opportunity to see it in practice, experience it, and reflect on it in the context of their work. By experiencing and reflecting a new language teaching innovation such as TBLT, it may be possible to mediate such knowledge through their core beliefs, which are manifest in the three TPB elements, based on which teachers will decide whether, or to what extent, they should use the innovation.

However, reflecting on the TPB with the findings of the present study, although I acknowledge that the theory provides a rigid framework in which the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices could be understood, there are issues to address in using this theory for future research.

Firstly, as mentioned above, there is a need to distinguish between core and peripheral beliefs in the theory model. The beliefs that contribute to the intention to carry out the behaviour are likely to be the core beliefs that teachers hold. It is

evident in the data that these beliefs were consistent with related classroom behaviours. These core beliefs are distinguished from peripheral beliefs, including such constructs as attitudes to CLT, which, although espoused, do not substantially contribute to the formation of intentions to carry out particular behaviours. This will be further discussed in 8.3.3.

Secondly, although this theory can be used to predict behaviours, such a process can be seen as rather linear and behaviourist (Haney & McArthur, 2002), in that it does not address the complexity of teachers' thinking. Teachers' beliefs have long been considered to interact bi-directionally with experience (Richardson, 1996), in that while beliefs are claimed to influence practices, practices, in turn, contribute to forming and re-forming of beliefs. Following this argument and evidence from the data of this study, it can be argued that not only do beliefs contribute to the formation of intentions and behaviours, but the behaviours have a strong influence on belief development. Evidence from the data suggests that the teachers in the present study largely relied on their experiences as learners and teachers to build up their belief system. In other words, reflection on behaviour has a powerful impact on shaping teachers' core beliefs. This additional point is consistent with the situated nature of teachers' beliefs discussed in the previous section. Therefore, I propose that there is a need to establish a cybernetic, rather than linear, relationship between teachers' behaviours and their beliefs within the TPB (see the modified diagram in Figure 7.2).

Thirdly, in line with critiques of the theory in social psychology (see Ajzen, 2011), the intentions and the behaviours the teachers undertake may not result from the three given elements only. Although this is not the focus of the present study, examination of the data revealed several belief-related dimensions of cultural, personal and emotional factors that may play a role in shaping teachers' behaviours. There is a need for further justification of the theory, particularly in language teacher cognition research, and this justification should be supported by empirical data to take into account of such aforementioned constructs.

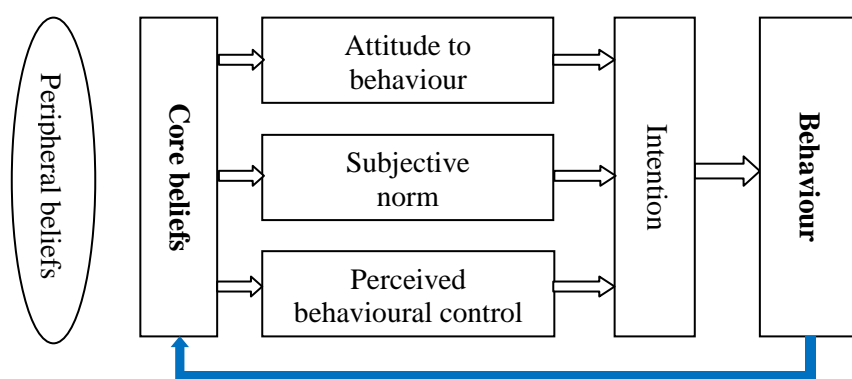


Figure 7.2: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Modified)

## 7.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings from the multiple sources of data with reference to the each of the research questions. Section 7.1 dealt with the first research question “*What relevance, if any, do the identified characteristics of tasks have for the Vietnamese teachers in their planning and practices of textbook activities?*” Discussion of the results with reference to identified task characteristics and TBLT principles showed that the teachers in the present study tended to hold patterns of practices that were of little relevance to those discussed in TBLT literature. These patterns of practices were different from those of teachers working in developed countries, such as discussed in Andon and Eckerth (2009), but more or less in line with Asian teachers in such studies as Carless (2003). Although there were elements of communication observed in the Vietnamese teachers’ practices, such as the use of pairwork and groupwork, an in-depth analysis of the teachers’ work revealed that their patterns of decision-making and teaching largely relied on forms-focused practices, where discrete grammar and vocabulary learning were emphasised. Investigating such patterns of teachers’ work in the light of TBLT literature provided a useful avenue of inquiry in investigating teachers’ beliefs in the present study.

The second question “*In what ways do the Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning converge with, or diverge from, the principles of TBLT?*” attempted to address teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning in relation to TBLT assumptions through implicit procedures, i.e.,

referring to specific events and contextualised materials (i.e., textbook activities), rather than asking teachers directly about abstract concepts of TBLT. Interpretation of stimulated recall and focus group data indicated that the teachers employed a structure-based approach to skills teaching which emphasised grammar teaching, vocabulary memorisation and formal accuracy. These results were aligned with their patterns of practices revealed in lesson planning and classroom observation data, which suggest that these represent their core beliefs. Teachers' practices, together with their rationales, also indicated that teachers viewed language as a set of accumulating items which could be learnt one at a time. Furthermore, the teachers' strong views on the roles of memorisation and accuracy in language learning added to the understanding of their belief in a forms-focused approach in language teaching. Put together, the general findings regarding this question were that the teachers' beliefs about language, language teaching and learning diverged greatly from the principles of TBLT identified in the literature.

The third research question, "*What factors contribute to the facilitation, or hindrance, of TBLT implementation in the Vietnamese context?*" concerns the extent of feasibility of TBLT in the Vietnamese context. As discussed, the few and unsupported facilitating factors seemed to be outweighed by the hindering factors. The most hindering factor seemed to be their core beliefs, in that their existing beliefs about how language should be taught, given their relationship with practices, tended to guide the teachers into forms-focused patterns of practices. Other cognitive, contextual and cultural factors have also been identified, such as their limited understanding of the notion of task, the role of high-stakes public examinations, their perceptions of students' motivation and proficiency, and cultural and educational values inherent in a Confucian-heritage society. It is, therefore, argued that unless there is a holistic professional development programme that addresses the issues relating to teachers' beliefs, the implementation of TBLT in the context seems to be in vain.

The fourth research question, "*What can this study contribute to an academic understanding of the nature of the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and their relationship with classroom practices?*" looked beyond the issue of TBLT to

address understanding of teachers' beliefs in this particular context. This section revealed that these teachers' beliefs, evident in the data, are resistant to change and are firmly situated in the context where they work. I have discussed that although new knowledge and beliefs might have been presented to the teachers, their core beliefs remained unchanged due to the powerful connectedness with their experiences, values, and contextual realities. Also, I discussed how cultural values, educational ideologies and contextual factors played significant roles in the development of teachers' beliefs, much more than input from teacher education and in-service training. This discussion confirms the nature of teachers' beliefs in the light of Sociocultural Theory. Furthermore, derived from the findings, in the light of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study identified that there is a theoretical relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. As such, teaching behaviours are likely to result from a combination of different contributing factors, among which the teachers' core, rather than peripheral, beliefs play a leading role. This section also offered a modification of the TPB model to indicate the influence behaviours have on the development of teachers' beliefs.

The next chapter, Conclusion, will summarise key findings of the present study, acknowledge its limitations, and discuss the implications for theory, research and teacher education and professional development.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the key findings of the study with specific reference to each research question of this thesis. This chapter will conclude the thesis with a brief summary of the whole project and an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study. It will then suggest implications for theory, research and pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development, and lastly suggest future research avenues in investigating teachers' beliefs and practices, with particular reference to researching teachers' beliefs in Vietnam, and in relatable contexts.

#### **8.1 Summary of key points**

This study set out to investigate the extent of orientation in the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and practices towards the implementation of TBLT. The topic arose from the fact that recently the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training introduced a new curriculum and an accompanying set of textbooks for secondary school levels which claimed to use TBLT as the principal method of teaching. A review of the relevant literature indicates that TBLT has faced many challenges in Asian contexts, and also suggests that teachers' beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping their practices in specific contexts. Despite this, many curricular innovations have been introduced without taking such factors into account. Although many studies have investigated teachers' beliefs about different aspects of TBLT in such contexts as China and Hong Kong (e.g., Carless, 2003; 2007; Deng & Carless, 2009) and teachers' beliefs about other aspects of language teaching than TBLT in Vietnam (e.g., Canh, 2011; Loi, 2011), no research has been carried out in Vietnam to investigate the extent to which upper

secondary school teachers are ready to implement TBLT in their language teaching contexts.

This study takes a sociocultural perspective in terms of approach to data collection and analysis (Cross, 2010). As such, data collection and analysis are based on the assumption that to understand teachers' beliefs, it is crucial to seek a holistic understanding of their contextual, cultural and historical backgrounds. Therefore, the study adopted a multi-method approach of data collection: lesson planning sessions, observation, stimulated recall, focus groups, and a reflective research journal. The data analysis was subject to an inductive grounded theory approach to allow themes and categories to emerge. Also, given that teachers' beliefs are usually implicit, teachers' beliefs in this study were understood mainly through interpretation of what the teachers said about particular classroom events and textbook sections, and triangulated with their classroom practices and my research journal entries, as well as my insights into the context and participants.

In order to gain a better understanding of the teachers' work, an analysis of one unit of the current textbook series was carried out in the light of task characteristics. This analysis revealed that, although not all the activities in the skills lessons qualified as tasks as defined in the literature, the majority of the activities in the four lessons, especially in listening and reading, were intended to focus primarily on meaning. This analysis also indicated that many of the textbook activities were intended to be spontaneous in terms of language production and closed in terms of solution type. In the main, the analysis suggested that although the textbooks are not entirely task-based, they had many activities that carry favourable characteristics identified by advocates of TBLT.

The data from the teachers' lesson planning sessions indicated a general retention of textbook activities that diverged from the characteristics suggested as favourable in TBLT literature. At the same time, the teachers showed their intention to adapt, replace or omit activities that required meaningful and spontaneous production of language. The lesson planning data also revealed the teachers' intention to focus on particular language structures and lexical items for teacher presentation. Consistent with the lesson planning data, observation data showed that the way the teachers made use of the textbook activities in their

actual teaching was in line with their intentions discussed in the audio-recorded lesson planning sessions, in that they kept forms-focused, predictable activities for teaching, while they either omitted the activities that were meaningfully communicative or required language production; or adapted them in such a way as to make them more forms-focused and less spontaneous. The observation data also revealed that what happened in the classroom was commonly non-genuine in terms of communication; for example, teachers largely conducted language practice activities by using model sentences and dialogues as templates written on the board, and paid little attention to the meaning students were supposed to convey. Furthermore, although most of the teachers' corrective feedback was identified as incidental, which is in line with TBLT, the feedback was in general explicit and focused on forms, rather than on content.

The stimulated recall data show that the teachers believed in a structure-based approach to language and language teaching, a memorisation approach to vocabulary, and an emphasis on accuracy. These were identified as their core beliefs, given that they were consistent across all sources of data. Believing in a structural view of language, the teachers considered that grammatical structures and vocabulary items should be introduced and practised thoroughly before students would be able to use them. They also believed that language items should be memorised so that they would be retrieved when necessary. Divergent from TBLT approaches, the teachers thought that language production should be kept as accurate as possible, which resulted in their employment of explicit, forms-based correction strategies.

A number of hindrances for the implementation of TBLT were identified from the data. The teachers' existing beliefs about language, language learning, and language teaching was identified as the most important factor, because the teachers in the present study relied on their beliefs for identification not only of their teaching approaches, but also of other related hindrances. These hindrances included: the teachers' understanding of tasks, the washback from the public examinations, the teachers' perceptions of their students' language proficiency and motivation, the contextual constraints such as classroom size and physical



arrangements, and some features of the textbooks the teachers were mandated to use.

This study has uncovered part of the nature of the teachers' beliefs. It was found that teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices were, to a large extent, convergent. The extent of convergence allows a distinction to be made between core and peripheral beliefs. Drawing on the data, the present study claims the teachers' core beliefs were situated and resistant to change. These characteristics of teachers' beliefs were discussed in the light of Sociocultural Theory to illuminate the roles of experiences and contextual factors in the shaping of the teachers' beliefs in the present study. It is argued that beliefs are likely to form through a process of interacting with the context within their community of practice.

The relationship between the teachers' beliefs and practices were further understood through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. As such, the findings of the current study theoretically lent support to the theory, when elements of the theory were found and discussed. It was found that the teachers' core (behavioural) beliefs, their perceptions about the beliefs of significant others (subjective norms), and educational artefacts such as examinations (perceived behavioural control) were key elements that contributed to the forms-focused teaching the teachers employed. However, to further understand teachers' beliefs and their relationship with the classroom practices, this study argues for the need to identify the role of behavioural practices on shaping and reshaping teachers' beliefs.

## **8.2 Limitations of the present study**

Although the present study has sought to contribute to the academic understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices in a previously under-researched context, its inevitable limitations should be acknowledged. In terms of research methodology, the present study is restricted to a case study; thus, in line with all research of the same type, it is not possible to generalise outside the bounded context. Although I have claimed that transferability may be possible, in that the

teachers in the present study were to some extent typical of English language teachers in upper secondary schools in Vietnam, the research findings are only applicable for the researched teachers and the specific context.

The study is also limited in terms of procedures, resulting in limitations of quality and quantity of the data. Firstly, as mentioned in 4.4.6.1, my initial intention was to ask the teachers to plan their lessons and then to observe such lessons in actual classrooms; however, due to the teachers' time constraints to arrange planning sessions, this was not carried out as consistently as intended. Given that the main strategy of eliciting teachers' beliefs and practices in this study is to do so with reference to specific planning and classroom behaviours, it might be more useful to obtain data in such a systematic way that any connections between their planning intentions and actual classroom decisions could be more precisely identified and understood. However, it may be that such systematicity might lead to artificiality in the planning and/or execution of lessons. Secondly, although the available data showed consistent trends in the teachers' patterns of practices, more lesson planning sessions (and observations) could have been investigated to provide confident evidence for the findings. Thirdly, although many of the stimulated recall sessions were conducted in a way that the teachers could provide insightful comments on any behaviour during a particular lesson, some stimulated recall sessions relied on my notes during the observation. This was because the teachers could usually allocate only an hour for such a session before they had to teach another lesson. In such situations, I had to fast-forward the video to the particular scenario to ask questions, and thus might have missed some data that might have been interesting if the videos had been played from beginning to end. In this respect, the study is also limited in that those sessions contained responses to questions asked by myself, rather than comments initiated by the teacher. Fourthly, as mentioned in 4.4.6, except for the observations, most of the data sources in the study were in Vietnamese. Collecting data in the participants' own language allowed for richer insights; however, despite I attempted to get another Vietnamese scholar to check translated extracts, with such an amount of data, translation inaccuracies are inevitable.

Another limitation is with regard to myself as the researcher. Being a friend to some of the teacher participants, and being known as a teacher trainer to some others, I had the advantage of winning their trust and collaboration. However, there are some limitations in being so close to the group. On the one hand, these teachers regarded me as more expert than themselves, thus there might be dangers of teachers trying to speak about the ideals, rather than what they actually thought and did (and this was why I chose not to use direct one-to-one interviews with explicit questions). On the other hand, being familiar with the context and the participants also means that I could not wholly take the stance of an outsider in making the familiar strange during the analysis and interpretation.

## **8.3 Implications**

### **8.3.1 Implications for theory**

In terms of terminology, this study has revealed that language teachers' beliefs are a complex construct, and, as Borg (2006) and Woods (1996), among others, have argued, to a large extent, are indistinguishable from other related constructs such as attitudes, knowledge, assumptions, conceptions, and so on. A major implication of the present study is that there is a need for a theoretical model which distinguishes such concepts so that focus on teacher cognition becomes less blurred. At this point, it seems that studying teachers' beliefs necessarily involves studying some other mental aspects that derive from, contribute to, and result in their beliefs. However, this study demonstrated the potential for distinguishing core, underlying beliefs from peripheral beliefs.

One of the most significant findings in this study was that although the teachers had been involved for some time in teaching communicative materials, their language teaching beliefs remained consistent with more traditional ways of teaching with the earlier sets of textbooks. It is, then, possible to argue that the teachers' beliefs in this study were resistant to change. The idea that the textbooks serve as the agent of change (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) is only applicable on the surface level of practice; but this does not apply to the core beliefs that inform the underlying characteristics of their teaching. In the present study, cognitive

changes were subject to a number of important factors such as significant others and examinations, rather than such artefacts as the textbooks. In this sense, although Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) could be used to explain the situated nature of how teachers form their beliefs, it does not encompass the phenomenon of resistance to change. Within the three stages of SCT, when applied to teacher cognition research, there should be a component which helps explain why learning does not occur, given that such a factor as the textbooks seemed to be connected: the teachers were likely to use them in both thinking and practices in a daily basis.

This study also highlighted that it is teachers' beliefs that have the most influence on teachers' practices. Specifically, it shows that the teachers interpreted the innovation reified in the textbooks in the light of their current beliefs about language teaching, and accordingly implemented such innovation to suit their beliefs and contextual realities. As noted above, the situated nature of teacher beliefs could be understood in the light of Sociocultural Theory. The present study illuminated the power of context on the way teachers developed their beliefs about aspects of their work. But as discussed above, there must be *salient* aspects of contexts which teachers selected and cognitively manipulated in order to form their core beliefs. In the present study, although it was not intended to compare the strengths among aspects that affected teachers' beliefs, there was evidence to suggest that some aspects were more salient than others. In this sense, SCT does not help to clearly identify the extent to which individual contextual factors have impact on the development of particular beliefs within the processes of object- and other-regulation. What is more, as a theory of mind, SCT does not address how beliefs (and other mental constructs) contribute to the forming of intentions and actions. In investigating teachers' beliefs, especially with regard to pedagogical changes and curriculum innovations, this understanding has considerable implications on research and pedagogy alike. In this regard, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) might assist in illuminating the interconnection.

In terms of the nature of teachers' beliefs and their corresponding practices, the teachers' beliefs and practices illuminated in this study can be understood with

reference to TPB (Ajzen, 1991a, 1991b), which indicates that actions (or practices) result from attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural control. All these three aspects are claimed to derive from the beliefs that the individuals hold. This theory implies that attitudes alone do not influence actions, but rather such attitudes must be facilitated by subjective norms and behavioural control. In this study, although the teachers had positive attitudes to some aspects of CLT, such expressed opinions were interpreted as part of their espoused (peripheral), rather than behavioural, beliefs. Behavioural beliefs can be regarded as core beliefs, because, as the findings of this study showed, they had very close correspondence with actions. The teachers' practices were also determined by subjective norms, which were identified in this study as perceived expectations from significant others, namely inspectors, their colleagues, and their own students. Behavioural control was identified in this study as the role of the public examinations, class size, classroom arrangements (external), the teachers' understanding of the innovation and their ability to carry it out (internal). All of these elements, I argue, are rooted in the underlying beliefs the teachers held about teaching and learning and their role as the teachers in classrooms.

However, although TPB has been usefully applied to explain the relationship between what teachers believe and what they do, in line with Haney and McArthur (2002), the theory necessarily neglects fundamental affective aspects of teachers' lives and work, such as emotions and anxiety. Although the present study does not focus on such aspects, the data collected provided some evidence of personal constructs other than attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. For example, emotional factors can be amply inferred when the teachers talked about their students' lack of motivation to learn in class (see, for example, 6.4.1). A question that arises is where such personal constructs could be situated within the theoretical model. Another implication the present study has for the theory is that there is a need to indicate the strength of the influence behaviour has on teachers' beliefs, rather than a simple cause-effect relationship. Drawing on the teacher cognition literature, and also evident in the data, beliefs and practices strongly inform each other in the process of teaching (Richardson, 1996); it may be necessary to emphasise the role of classroom behaviours on the

formation of new beliefs and/or belief changes on the part of teachers (see Figure 7.2).

### **8.3.2 Implications for research**

Teachers' beliefs are a complex construct, and to a large extent, are implicit. This is borne out in this study concerning investigation of the teachers' beliefs regarding such a methodological innovation as TBLT. The teachers in this study, like other upper-secondary school teachers in Vietnam (see, for example, Canh, 2011, 2012; Canh & Barnard, 2009), were not fully aware of concepts currently used in SLA and TBLT literature, evident in the absence of technical language when they had to provide rationales for particular behaviours in their teaching. In other words, the teachers did not seem to have the opportunity to relate their implicit theories and practices to theoretical SLA and ELT development. In such a context as Vietnam, as Canh (2011) suggests, the teachers' beliefs became "routinised into taken-for-granted instructional behaviours and personal theories for practice" (p.227). The challenge for the teacher cognition researcher is, therefore, to make such implicit beliefs explicit so that they can be fully understood. To do so, a combination of theoretical lenses (e.g., SCT and TPB) through which data are interpreted is necessary to allow researchers to investigate in greater detail and make sense of what teachers say in relation to what they do in their work.

In terms of research methodology for investigating teachers' beliefs, along with emphasising a holistic sociocultural perspective to inquiry, the present study has provided further evidence of the value of using multi-method qualitative case studies. A holistic approach to inquiry allows the researcher to explore beliefs and practices in relation to other sociocultural factors in order to understand them in fuller detail. For example, analysis of teachers' statements in relation to their classroom behaviours may be supported by understandings of the social and contextual settings where teachers live and work. This understanding is not possible if only self-report instruments, such as interviews and questionnaires, are used to collect data. On the one hand, self-report instruments fail to capture important aspects of realities that may well be found in, for example, observation. On the other hand, the use of self-report instruments only may result in

untrustworthy data because such data generally reflect teachers' ideals, rather than realities (Borg, 2006). Investigating teachers' beliefs using multiple sources of data also allows for data triangulation, especially when the core beliefs need to be identified. With multiple sources of data, it is possible to interpret teachers' beliefs from different angles. This process usefully contributes to the overall coherence of research findings.

This study also contributes to the teacher cognition research methodology in that it has used an innovative method of data collection which has been proved to be useful in investigating teachers' beliefs and practices – the audio recording of group lesson planning sessions. Although it seems that group lesson planning has been used in the form of teacher study groups in some action research as a way of co-constructing knowledge among teachers for the purpose of teacher development (e.g., Clair, 1998), collaborative lesson planning as a data collection instrument, so far as I know, has not been reported in research. The findings from group lesson planning data in the present study illustrate that it is possible to investigate teachers' beliefs using this tool. Although it is the case that the teachers in this study were not familiar with this type of practice, somewhat to my surprise, they sounded extremely natural in their discussion, particularly after the first sessions. Also, this tool is a valid way of data collection because the data collected reflect more reality-oriented beliefs, rather than the ideal-oriented ones (Borg, 2006) that are usually found in, for example, interview data. I therefore recommend other researchers to make use of this tool in future research, with any adjustments possible to suit researched contexts and to avoid procedural limitations I have found in using it (see 8.2).

### **8.3.3 Implications for teacher education, teacher development, and language policy makers**

Research has indicated that teacher education programmes, no matter whether short courses or four-year-long teacher training programmes, have had limited impact on changing trainees' beliefs about aspects of language and language teaching (e.g., da Silva, 2005; MacDonald *et al.*, 2001; Peacock, 2001). Some studies mentioned reported behavioural changes; however, this is not usually the

case in terms of cognitive changes. By and large, teachers' core beliefs about various aspects of language and language teaching seem to emerge prior to their training (Pajares, 1992) and these tended to subsequently be developed and reinforced experientially.

In the context of Vietnam, as indicated in 2.4, language teacher education generally takes a non-compatible view of training (Richards, 1998), assuming that with the knowledge and skills of the language, together with theoretical input of how to teach the language, student teachers would be able to go out and teach the language in the recommended manner. Drawing on the findings of various research studies regarding teacher education, it may be the case that such trainee teachers may act accordingly in their practicum; however, when they start to work as language teachers, they will be likely to carry out their teaching according to their own core beliefs and those of significant others in their community of practice. It is important, therefore, to include a component in teacher training programmes where trainees' implicit beliefs can be articulated and compared with explicit theories of language learning and teaching. In doing so, trainees can be made aware of their own beliefs before any cognitive change could be attempted. In addition, given the situation in Vietnam where secondary school teachers have to use the textbooks mandated by the MOET, language teacher education should consider providing support for teacher trainees to apply methodological innovations such as TBLT in the implementation of the specific textbooks. During this process, they should have opportunities to reflect on theoretical input received during the teacher education programmes in relation to any specific materials they are supposed to use in their targeted jobs. In the same way, in-service teachers' beliefs should also be elicited if changes are desired. Nation and Macalister (2010) suggest that to introduce change to teachers, it is important to gain understanding of the teachers' existing beliefs. Otherwise, they will be likely to interpret the innovative changes embedded in textbooks only in light of their existing beliefs, and therefore create a gap between curriculum intentions and classroom practices (Sakui, 2004).

In-service teachers in Vietnam seem to have few opportunities to make major cognitive changes. On the one hand, insufficient attention has been paid to



providing teachers with knowledge of, and practical experience of applying, up-to-date developments in language teaching methodologies. On the other hand, teachers are so busy in catching up with heavy workloads both within their schools and outside that they do not seem to have free time to take up and apply new ideas and theories to improve their teaching.

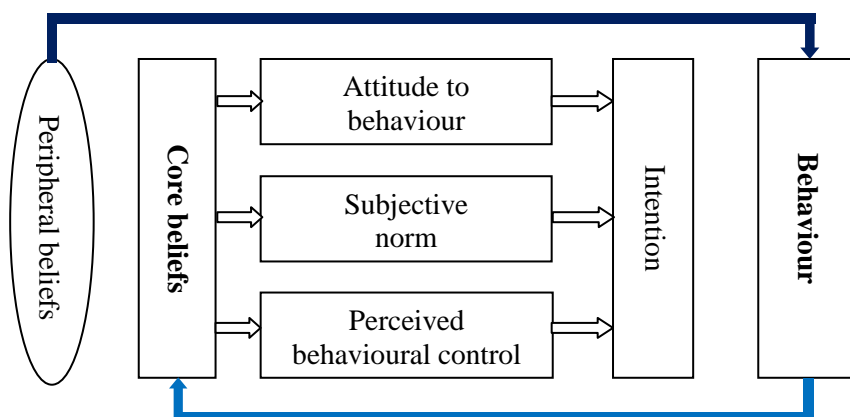


Figure 8.1: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Revisited)

These claims seem true regarding the findings in the present study. The pivotal issue, considering that beliefs are resistant to change, is how to make cognitive changes regarding TBLT in in-service teachers. In other words, based on the discussion of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the previous chapter (7.4.3), the issue is how to transfer peripheral beliefs into core beliefs, considering the peripheral beliefs such as attitudes to communication are desired in the context. Given evidence of successful TBLT implementation which is often institutionally initiated in small-scale projects (e.g., McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007), if TBLT is desired in the context of Vietnam, teachers as the most local agents of innovation implementation (Gorsuch, 2000), should be engaged in the process of design and introduction of the innovation. More importantly, for these ideas to become established in their core belief system, teachers should be given the opportunity to carry out the innovatory methods and reflect on them. My argument is, therefore, that those peripheral beliefs would not simply become core beliefs and be implemented in classroom practice as a result of a top-down policy.

Instead, teachers' core beliefs should be considered situated within the context where experiences and reflection play substantial roles in shaping and reshaping pedagogical beliefs and knowledge. As can be seen in Figure 8.1, if peripheral beliefs are to be transferred into core beliefs, it is necessary to engage teachers in trying out the ideas before they can be successfully established as core beliefs. Also, teachers should not be regarded merely as the implementers of innovation, but they should also act as knowledge makers (Allwright, 2006) who could contribute to the development of any innovation based on their substantial experience. Again, to enhance the possibility for cognitive change, bottom-up strategies are needed.

Given that core beliefs are resistant to change and take time and proactive efforts to be transformed, a context-responsive approach (Bax, 2003) to innovations like TBLT is needed to address the issues found in this study. Such a context-responsive approach may be compatible with what Carless (2007, p. 604) calls 'situated task-based approaches', where task-based instruction is operationalised in line with grammar instruction and a PPP approach. In the present study, it has been shown that the teachers' practices largely relied on patterns found to be similar to the PPP model. However, at the same time, they paid little attention to, or did not feel secure with, the third 'P' in the sequence. Similarly to the context of Hong Kong, where teachers' instructional roles and educational ideologies reflect Confucian-heritage societies, there is a need to develop a situated version of TBLT that suits the Vietnamese context, and particularly the teachers' existing beliefs. Drawing on research findings of Canh (2011) and the present study that the teachers believed that structural approach where explicit instruction of language items and the role of teachers are needed; and that the provision of the final P (production stage) was little observed in their practices, it may be suggested that the first possible change is the enhancement of the communicative tasks in the final P stage of lessons. In doing this, teachers should be made aware of the importance of this stage and be encouraged to spend more time on it. Expert support should be provided in this initial stage of trying more communicative tasks in teachers' lesson sequences. In this stage, the teachers should also have the opportunity to reflect on the experience they have in providing students with such

communicative tasks, as a starting point to challenge the teachers' existing beliefs about, for example, the role of explicit instruction.

This study also implies suggestions for authorities of different levels regarding English language teaching. The data strongly suggest that although the teachers tended to follow the textbooks in teaching, the way they enacted the textbook lessons represents a considerable gap between their current beliefs and TBLT principles. My view here is that providing teachers with textbooks and hoping that they would change teachers' beliefs and practices in accordance to TBLT is naïve. Rather, it is necessary to support teachers in comprehensive ways, such as following teachers throughout task-based material realisation and providing them with academic support when required (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). It may also be important in this context for the important others to understand and provide teachers with authoritative and academic support. Finally, since the data show that the public examinations were identified as one of the key constraints to TBLT implementation, there is a need to review the existing the national examination system and to make it more in line with the curriculum and textbooks.

Drawing on the present study's findings and relevant literature, this section has presented implications for pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher professional development, and policy makers in the context of Vietnam. The next section will suggest avenues for future research on teachers' beliefs and practices, particularly in Vietnam.

#### **8.4 Suggestions for further research**

Given the limitations of this research study mentioned earlier, some suggestions for future research should be outlined. First, given that this is a case study investigating the beliefs and practices of the teachers in a specific context, there should be further similar research in other geographical and institutional settings so that these findings can be compared in order to gain a fuller picture of teachers' beliefs and practices in Vietnam. Also, to order to observe changes teachers make during the process of curriculum implementation, a longitudinal research design is

needed. Furthermore, as suggested in 8.3.3 concerning a bottom-up approach to change, a series of action research project designs is recommended to elicit and foster changes in both beliefs and practices from local levels so that such changes are further understood by researchers and participants alike. By involving school-based teachers in an action research project, it may be possible to observe the ontogenetic process of change made by the teachers, and at the same time, help them to develop a situated version of TBLT that fits both teachers' beliefs and contextual issues.

It can be seen that the present study looked at teachers' beliefs and practices regarding TBLT orientation in its broad sense, rather than any specific aspects within TBLT. If a small-scale study is to be carried out, it may be useful, therefore, for more in-depth understanding, to narrow the focus of a particular study into a specific element of TBLT (e.g., the use of closed tasks), so that such an element is investigated in more depth. Furthermore, as I have discussed in 7.4.3, the data from this study revealed that the teachers' beliefs were likely to be influenced by their actual teaching behaviours, there is a need to investigate how new behaviours can contribute to changes in beliefs. This is important regarding the introduction of innovations such as TBLT, because this study has shown that introducing TBLT through mandated textbooks was not likely to be successful.

As a concluding remark, I would like to suggest, when innovations are intended, that investigating language teachers' beliefs should be considered one of the pivotal research inquiries in Vietnam. This research has confirmed that "ignoring teachers' beliefs in implementing change could lead to disappointing results" (Richardson *et al.*, 1991, p. 560). As a language teacher trainer and an emerging researcher, I have hereby committed myself to this challenging but interesting area of research, in search of more understanding of teachers' beliefs, not only with this particular topic but also with various others within second language teacher cognition.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Letter of Research Information

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Appendix A: Letter of Research Information  
(*English translation*)

Dear .....

Thank you for being interested in participating in my PhD project. As you may know, I am undertaking doctoral studies at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. I am interested in exploring teacher cognition about TBLT in Vietnam and how it is being implemented. My aim is obtain insights into what you think about the method as well as its real status in Vietnam. I believe your cooperation will be very useful for my research and I hope, in return, we will have an opportunity to share ideas and develop skills and knowledge, not just in TBLT but also in other issues in teaching English.

If you agree to participate, I will invite you to be involved in the following activities:

- Narrative frame: At the end of the workshop, you will be requested to complete a narrative, which comprises two parts. You will be given instructions for this task in the workshop.
- Lesson planning: You will be requested to sit in a group of three to plan a lesson that you will be teaching the following week. The planning session will take place on Sundays, at a time of your convenience. You will be asked to attend three lesson planning sessions. The sessions will be audio-taped. You will be asked to produce a joint lesson plan, a copy of which will be kept by the researcher.
- Observation: Following the lesson planning, you will be asked to use the lesson plan you develop to teach in one of your class. The class will be observed and video-taped. You are encouraged to teach the lesson the way you usually do. You will be observed and video-taped three times.
- Stimulated Recall: After the lesson observation, within 48 hours, you will be invited to watch the lesson and give comments on actions / events that happened in class. You will be asked to stop the video any time you want to comment, without the interviewer's cues. If you are unable to give any comments, the interviewer will pause the video from time to time to ask you questions. The conversation will be audio-taped. You will be interviewed three times.
- Focus group interviews: When all observations and SRs have been completed, you will be invited to take part in a group interview. The interviewer will ask you a number of questions about you beliefs and you practices with reference to the textbooks you are using. You are encouraged to talk as much as you want on any question. The interview will be audio-taped.

I should like to assure you that the study will strictly adhere to the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Regulations, 2008. Your rights to privacy and anonymity will be highly respected during and after the research process. No real names will be used, and the data gathered will be kept confidential, in a lockable cupboard (for hard copies) or in password-protected files (electronic). The data will only be accessed by myself or my supervisors, and will be kept safe for a minimum of 5 years, after which all the data will be destroyed.

I should also like to assure you that the data collection activities will minimize the risks of interfering your teaching practice routines, and that no harms will be anticipated, both physically and emotionally.

I should also be assure you that you have the right to withdraw at any time, and do not need to give any reason in so doing.

Should you have any further questions, I shall be happy to discuss with you by phone 0916 01 38 30 (or 6.250 230) or in persons. You can also contact my supervisors by email: Dr Roger Barnard [rbarnard@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rbarnard@waikato.ac.nz) or Dr James Mclellan [mclellan@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:mclellan@waikato.ac.nz).

Thank you for your cooperation

Best regards,

Nguyen Gia Viet



## Appendix B: Teacher Informed Consent

*(English translation)*

### TEACHER PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

[This document includes two copies, each of which is kept by either party]

<b>Researcher: Nguyễn Gia Việt</b> <b>Email: <a href="mailto:vn12@waikato.ac.nz">vn12@waikato.ac.nz</a></b> <b>Phone: +84 39 3 693 896</b> <b>Mobile: 0916 01 38 30</b> <b>Add: Department of Foreign Languages, Ha Tinh University</b>	<b>Supervisors:</b> <b>1. Dr Roger Barnard, email: <a href="mailto:rbarnard@waikato.ac.nz">rbarnard@waikato.ac.nz</a></b> <b>2. Dr James McLellan, email <a href="mailto:mclellan@waikato.ac.nz">mclellan@waikato.ac.nz</a></b> <b>Add: Department of General and Applied Linguistics, University of Waikato, New Zealand</b>
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Please tick [✓] in the boxes below, if you agree with the statement on the left.

Statements	Agree
I understand that I DO NOT have to participant in this study	
I understand that I can withdraw from participation at any point of time, or withdraw any information provided to the researcher within two weeks of provision	
I agree to meet with two other teachers to plan lessons at two separate times with the presence of the researcher, and allow the planning sessions to be audio-recorded	
I allow the researcher to have a copy of the lesson plan once it is completed	
I agree to discuss with the research prior to any observation he will make	
I allow the researcher to observe three lessons in the classes that I am teaching, with my arrangements	
I understand that the observed lessons will be audio-recorded	
I allow the researcher to video-record the lessons	
I am willing to participate in a follow-up discussion with the researcher after each observed lesson	
I understand that the follow-up discussions will be audio-recorded	
I agree to discuss with other teachers in my department with the presence of the researcher in a focus group session	
I understand that I have the right to see the results of the study in written forms	
I understand that only the researcher and his supervisors are allowed to access the information that I provide	
I understand that the information I provide will be presented in summaries and my identity will be kept confidential	
I understand that by signing below, I agree to participate in the research study	

Teacher Participants: .....

Researcher: Nguyễn Gia Việt

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Lesson Planning Guidelines

### **Guidelines for the researcher:**

#### ***Preparation:***

- Digital voice recorder – check battery
- Allocate a speaking lesson that teachers will be teaching
- Lesson plan format

#### ***Instructions for teachers:***

You will be planning a skills lesson that you are teaching in the next few days (e.g., next week). In your group, please choose a *skills* lesson and discuss with your colleagues how you are going to teach the lesson. This may include, for example, the objectives of the lesson, the language items you want to teach, as well as detail procedures and instructions. While you are doing so, one of you should note down a lesson plan that records what you have discussed and agreed on. Please refer to the format provided. You should say aloud what you think is appropriate because your discussion will be audio-recorded. Note that there is no right or wrong idea.

I will sit at the back during your discussion, but I will not participate in the process of planning.

#### ***Lesson plan format:***

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Objectives:

Preparation / Materials:

Procedures:

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
- Etc.

## Appendix D: Stimulated Recall Guidelines

### Guidelines for the researchers:

#### *Preparation:*

- Watch videos beforehand to generate questions, in case teachers are unable to initiate comments.
- Video and player
- Digital voice recorder (check battery)

### Instructions for teachers:

*You will be watching the lesson that I have recently observed and videoed. This interview aims to stimulate you to remember what you were thinking during this lesson. What you have to do is try to relive the events while you are watching the video. Don't explain why you do this and that, just say out what was "in your mind" at that time. So during your comments, I will check to make sure it is what you were thinking and ask further questions related to the issue we are discussing. You are welcomed to ask any questions during the playing. To do so, just stop the video.*

*When you see something you remember thinking, stop the video and talk what you were thinking. You can stop the video yourself or you can tell me to stop it for you. I will sit here and listen but will not interrupt your thoughts. Many teachers cannot recall what they were thinking because they are paying too much attention to their own lesson and forget to report. If this happens, and you let the video go for 10 minutes without saying anything, I will stop the video and ask you if you can recall anything. If you can't you should say so, then we will start the video again, and I will ask some short questions.*

*This interview is not to judge whether the lesson is good or bad. My interest is what was in your mind during the lessons, what you were thinking. No evaluation. What you say will be known by you and me only. No other people will have access to this recording.*

*Do you have any questions?*

(Adapted from Meijer, 1999, p.67)

## Appendix E: Focus Group Guidelines

### ***Instructions for teachers:***

*These are the questions that you are likely to deal with in the session. Please have a good look at these and think about them before the meeting. Thank you.*

### ***Questions***

1. What do you think of the curriculum and the textbooks you are using?
2. How can you compare the new and the old textbooks?
3. What do you think about the tasks provided? How do you think they facilitate/hinder student learning?
4. If you want to change the tasks/lessons, which and how would you do it? What is your 'ideal' lesson?
5. How closely do you teach the textbooks? What changes have you done with regard to using the new textbooks?
6. What is the essential thing that you pay attention to when you teach this particular lesson (refer to a skills lesson)
7. According to your experience, how do your students respond to the textbooks and the tasks in particular?
8. What difficulties do you think you have in using the new textbooks?
9. What aspects of the textbooks do you like?
10. What do you think about the grammar provided in the textbooks?
11. The books include many 'tasks'. According to you, what is a task?
12. Which of the textbook tasks do you think are effective for learning English?  
Please refer to the textbooks for examples.

Appendix F: Snapshot of initial open coding process in Nvivo

- NVivo

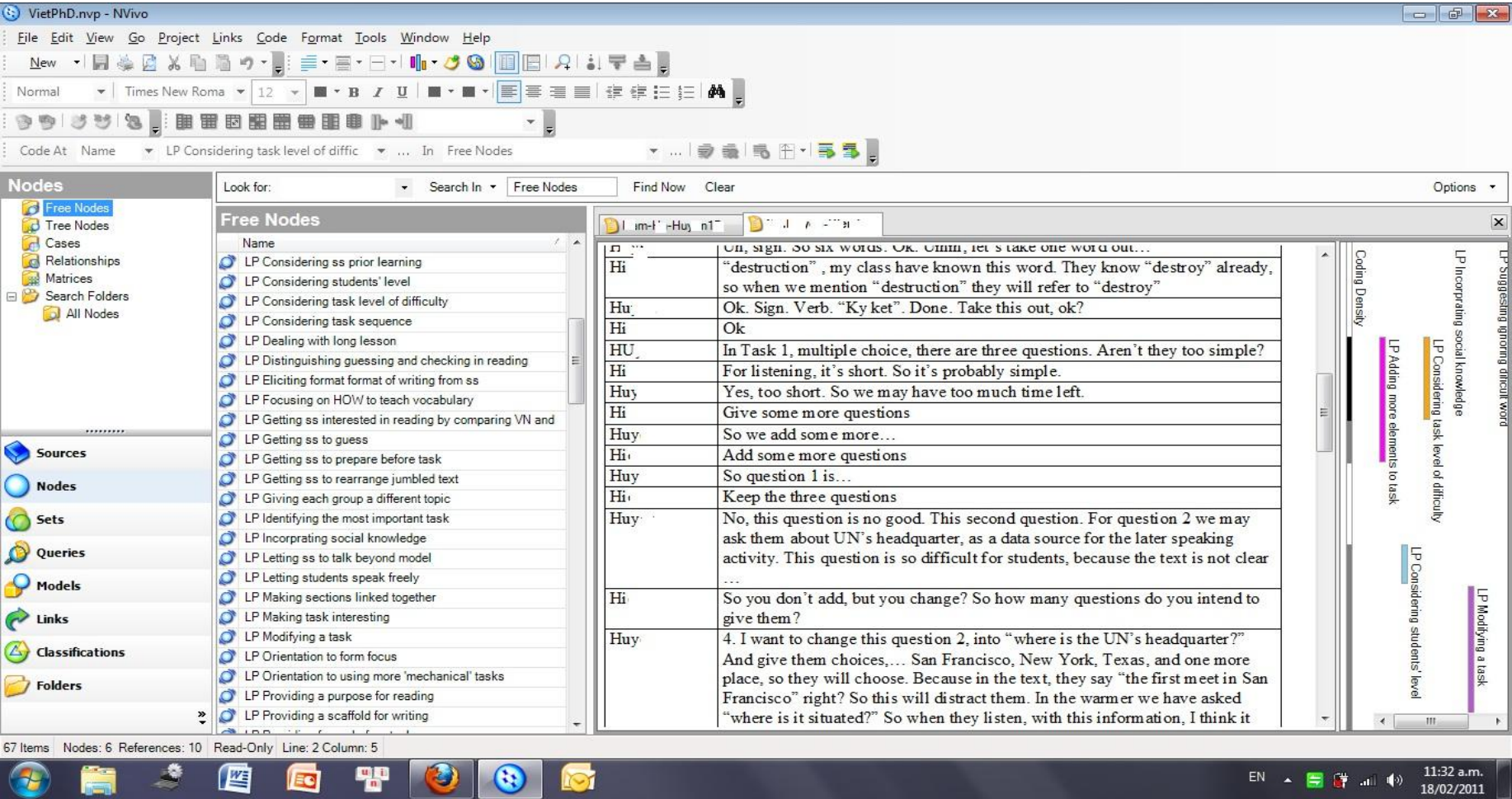
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Appendix G: Snapshot of the interactive data analysis in Nvivo

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## Appendix H: Data Sample: Lesson Planning

### Group 1

### Session 2

### Year 10, Unit 11, Writing

*(English translation)*

T1	Let's consider the Writing lesson of Unit 11
T3	Let's see. Accepting and refusing invitations. Actually all we need to do is to give out questions. Nothing more.
T2	Nothing more
T3	Yeah, that's it.
T1	Ok. Let's go through it [long silence] What do you think? It seems that we cannot change, doesn't it?
T3	We can't change because it has been specific and clear
T1	So no need to change?
T3	Mostly it's very clear and understandable
T1	Yes, I think the way it is designed is fine for students
T3	So I think we should provide them some ways of accepting and refusing. If you want to add anything, you can, but everything is there already
T1	Should we add some more?
T3	Add to this one? Or which? ... Possibly we may add some more to make it diverse
T1	"It sounds interesting" [reads from the book]
T2	Let's start with the objectives...
T3	Yes. Students will be able to write the form of... a, write a letter
T2	... of acceptance or refusal
T3	What next? Objective done. Next?
T1	Let's see. We should discuss Task 1, to see if we could add anything to it, ways of accepting and refusing. Do we need to do so? Or these are enough?
	"It sounds great. It sounds interesting." [reads from book] Anything for refusing?
T2	What about the reasons? "But..."
T3	Actually I think this lesson has everything in it
T1	Everything, yes. So we can say we don't want to change anything, right?
T2	This part... we could mix the expressions up, ways of accepting and ways of refusing, on the board so that students will pick these out to put them in correct categories. Of course we must ask students to close the books
T3	That sounds fine
T2	I mean we have a poster on the board
T3	I see. We can make two columns. These sides are empty. Ways of accepting, ways of refusing. Then we mix them up, then ask students to pick them to put into the two sides... fine.
T1	Yes, rearrange. Yeah, it could be a good start
	How about a warmer before then?
T2	Make it short
T3	We could ask students to name types of letters, letters of invitation, letters of refusals, letters of acceptance... and get students to write out ... [thinking silence] May be we should not mention "formal" and "informal" letters. They won't know these. If, in Unit 10, you talked



	about these, they may have known. But we certainly could ask them to name kinds of letters
T2	There may be too few kinds of letters ...
T3	Or maybe we show them an envelope, ask them what it is, then gradually elicit the types out. We may ask "Have you ever written a letter?" Yes. "Then how do you write it? For what purpose?"
T2	Or we may ask students to guess words?
T1	How?
T2	We can give out some questions or explanations and gets students to guess
T1	Or provide students with a jumbled letter, ok? We give these out, asking students to rearrange them
T2	But we need them to tell the words "acceptance", "refusals". We need to introduce these words
T1	But we don't know how to introduce them. How should we elicit the words? Guessing words?
T2	Crosswords will take long
T1	It's too time-consuming. Impossible. Both "accepting" and "refusing" will take a lot of time
T2	May be Jumbled Words?
T3	Ok. But this way is not interesting, ... boring
T1	If we can't find a better way, let's make it that simple.
T3	So Warmer?
T1	That's it. Jumbled Words. Three words: "Invitation", "Accept"..
T2	"Invitation". "Acceptance". "Refusals"
T1	Ok. Now the main lesson. Should we say something before starting the main lesson? Should we ask something? To start?
T2	We say: "Now we will learn how to write..."
T1	Should we ask something?
T3	Ask: "Have you ever written a letter of accepting or refusing?"
T1	If we ask them to rearrange, we may want to add another step. If we ask them to write expressions on the board, I think they can do well...
T3	Ask: "When you write a letter of refusing, what expressions do you use?"
T1	Yes. Then they can add ideas from outside the book
T2	Write on the board: "Ways of accepting, Ways of refusing"
T3	Then we ask students to answer?
T1	We need to ask a correct question... "How do you.."
T3	"How do you express ways of accepting and refusing?"
T1	The question must be coherent so that students know what to answer
T3	Yes, they need to understand the question, they may not understand at all when we speak...
T1	"How do you express..." or "How do you say.."
T3	Use "say", "say" is fine
T1	"How do you say when you want to refuse or accept an invitation"
T3	Just ask: "How do you say to accept or refuse an invitation"
T2	Or "How do you express acceptance or refusals"?
T1	Refuse what? An invitation or a comment?
T3	Invitation? Right?
T1	Let's make the question specific and clear first
T2	"How do you accept or refuse an invitation?"
T3	Ok. Done. Will we write students' answers on the board, or get them to write?



T1	May be we get students to speak the answers and we write on the board
T2	Yes, teacher writes on the board
T1	Teacher writes on the board
T2	.... Ok. Should we add some more ideas?
T1	While we elicit if they could add anything we just write on board, may be from the book may be from elsewhere, or we may want to add some more ourselves, if they can't ...
	What about Task 1? May be ...
T2	Just get students to finish these three letters, then demo..
T3	Rearrange
T1	Rearrange the letter
T2	But we need to demo first. For example this is the demo of
T3	But it's informal
T2	Yes, informal. Beginning we have "Dear ..." and "Thank you for..." Then we have ways of acceptance and refusals, then making arrangements, as for meeting if any, if accepting there should be arrangements for meeting, then ending the letter
T1	What's the purpose of Task 2? They provide the form of an invitation letter...
T2	I think we may give them a simple letter and look at the form. Then we divide them in groups, one group writes invitation to a picnic, one for a party etc.
T1	This is still Pre-writing right?
T3	Pre- or while-?
T2	Still Pre-
T1	Pre-, while- is in Task 3
T2	The next task is complete the letter
T1	Then we give out the form
T2	I mean, get students to read the letters and ask them to give out the form
T3	I remember we have already given them a form of letter, some time at the beginning of the semester
T2	Forms are different; each kind of letters has its own form. In this case, if you invite, there must be "thank-you", then arrangements
T1	Uh, the thank-you
T2	Then refusing or accepting, then arrangement if accepting, then ending, signature
T3	We don't need to write date in this type of informal letter, right?
T2	The form is general. But the body ... the middle part is the body of the letter; the body is different in each kind. For example, in this invitation letter, there is a reason for invitation, then the invitation, then ending
T3	Then move to Task 2, ok? Teacher gives the form of the letter
T2	Ask students to give the form
T3	Ask students for the form
	In this lesson, in the guide book they give out instructions of ways of expressing, then they provide some models .... For students to distinguish which is informal [and] which is formal. They give the two forms informal and formal
T1	Then we keep Task 2 unchanged?
T2	We must write the form on the board then
T1	Yeah, done
T2	"Dear..."
T3	"Dear...", reasons, ah thank-you first, then accepting or not, arranging to meet

T2	Accepting or not
T3	Accepting or refusing, right?... Done. Then if yes, making arrangements
T2	Making arrangements, if accept
T3	If accept, at the end, signature, ok?
T2	Anything else?
T1	Still, if refuse...
T2	Yeah, if refuse what do we give?
T3	Reason, if refuse we provide a reason
T2	Reason for...No this is in that section, section 3, giving reason for refusing
T3	Done?
T2	Giving reason for refusals
T3	Done
T2	May be the next section is closing, right? "I'm sure we will have a good time together" closing. And another part is signature
T3	The last one is signature
T1	Add making arrangements
T2	Making arrangements
T1	Appointment
T3	Either is fine. Ok. Possibly appointment. We usually use appointment.... Ok. Now Task 2. Task 2 we keep unchanged?
T2	Rearranging ...
T3	... the following sentences
T1	... into a letter
T2	Write on board: answer the question
T3	Finally we let them choose a topic
T2	Then we divide them into groups, 2 tables, 1 table face back, then they write on posters
T3	Not necessarily in Boston, but we may ask them to write about something around here, such as HT town or Vu Quang
T2	In groups, this part in groups
T3	Is this the Post-? Post-writing
T2	In 6 groups, each group two tables
T3	Then the topics, ...we may give each group one topic, this group go to Vu Quang and other groups... Or just one topic for everybody?
T2	According to Task 3's model
T1	Anywhere is the same, they follow the same model
T2	Make it different..
	Let's say go to Thien Cam beach, Cuc Phuong National Park
T3	No, don't go to Cuc Phuong, let's go to our Vu Quang, which is near
T1	The topic is the same, picnic. The thing is, how they reply...
T3	I mean, write a reply letter
T2	Or invite to dinner in a restaurant...
T3	Yeah, whatever topic is fine. Important is ...
T2	But give each group a different topic
T3	Yes, 6 groups 6 different topics, this group go to beach, that group go to forest, what about Thach Xuan water falls?
T2	One group invited to dinner, one group to the cinema, right? Then students write letters of acceptance or refusals – write on posters
T3	Now we give out topics for them, Task 3 teacher gives some topics, 6, to write: for example, go for a picnic to VU Quang National Park, go to a birthday
T2	Come to a birthday

T3	Let me write ...My writing is awful. Ok. Go for a picnic. Come to a birthday party. Go to the cinema. Oh, students now like Avatar.
T2	What is Avatar?
T3	It's the most attracting film now then
T2	Ok. Then we collect posters, hang on board and correct mistakes
T1	Do we need to ask them to exchange their posters?
T2	The post- is exchange writing
T3	Then post- teacher correct, just it?
T2	Exchange writing, the groups exchange their posters
T3	Post-? Ok. Then?
T2	Then teacher choose two or three posters to display on board, and get students to correct mistakes
T3	Done
T2	That's it. Homework
T1	What's for homework?
T2	Complete the letter, according to the group. And prepare for the next lesson
T1	(to V) This lesson is quite easy. In this lesson we ask students to write letters of acceptance or refusals. Mostly we follow things in the book, just adding some more details, make it clear for students on how to write this particular types of letters
T3	We just want to elicit if students know anything more about how to accept or refuse
T1	The stuff in the book is quite specific, we just follow the book
T3	Ok then?
T1,T2	Ok
	END

## Appendix I: Data Sample: Observation

### TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

#1, #2	number of extract
01, 02	speaker turn
T	teacher
Ss	More than one student speaking
S1, S2	Unknown students
[...]	Interpretive/narrative comments
F[i]nal	Speaker actual pronunciation
/, //, ///	Pauses (in seconds)
<...>	Overlapping speech
(xxx)	Unintelligible speech
<b>Bold</b>	Emphasis made by the speaker
<i>Italics</i>	<i>English translation</i> of Vietnamese speech
Question mark (?)	Raising intonation, not necessarily a question
Period (.)	Falling intonation
Ellipses (...)	Unfinished speech
Foot-ball-play-er	T speaks and writes at the same time

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Date: 28.1.2010 PM

Teacher 2

Unit 10: Conservation. Speaking

Class: Year 10. No of ss: 56

T	Who is absent today? Nào <i>Come on</i> ? Who is absent today?
S1	Nobody absent.
T	Thank you. What the date today? [ss saying unintelligible messages, T starts writing date on the top right corner of board, T then is about writing title of lesson, when she finds that the board has not been properly cleaned, she asks a student to clean it] Now, how are you today? [higher voice] How are you today?
Ss	I'm fine <fine, so so, tired>
T	Ok. May I introduce Mr Gia Viet. He's a lecturer at HT University
Ss	Wow
T	Today he's come to our class and attend the lesson. Welcome from our class, yes? [claps hands]
Ss	Yes [clap hands]
T	What have you learned last period? What have you learned?//
S2	[translate T's words] Chúng ta đã học cái gì? <i>What have we learned?</i>
T	Did you learn about...?
Ss	Conservation
T	Ah, conservation. Good. Conservation. What have you learned, vocabulary and, the main ideas from reading text. Các em đã học phần từ vựng và phần gì? / Ý chính. <i>You have learn some vocabulary and what?/ The main ideas.// Some vocabulary?/ Some vocabulary?// what about, what?</i>
S3	Foster

T	Foster. Foster. What else?
Ss	Eliminate, eliminate <Intercommunication>
T	Intercommunication. Right.
Ss	Eliminate
T	Constant. Right. What about “cung cấp nước liên tục”?
Ss	Constant suppl[i] water water.
T	Constant supply of <ss: water> water. Right. Như vậy chúng ta học từ như constant, thì chúng ta biết, ít nhất không biết được cả câu thì cũng là cụm từ, đúng không? Cung cấp nước liên tục. <i>As we have learned such words as ‘constant’, you know, you may not be able to know the whole sentence, but at least you should have known the phrase [that contains the word], right? Constant supply of water</i> Constant supply of water. What else? Đập thủy điện?
Ss	H[i]dro, <h[i]dro electric dam>
T	Hydroelectric dam <ss: dam> Right. What else?// what? Erosion. Erosion. Yes. Right. What else? What? [ss mumble some other words] Right. What about the main ideas from the reading passage?/ Three main ideas [holds up three fingers] Yeah, the first [holds 1 finger] Paragraph A. // what?/ Now, paragraph A? what’s the main idea?/ Ý chính của đoạn A là gì? <i>What the main idea of paragraph A?</i> / [ss mumble: Rừng bị phá hủy <i>Forest destroyed</i> ] Forests can give us / what? Forests can give us...
Ss	A lot
T	Yes, a lot of valuable things. Forests can give us a lot of valuable things. Rừng có thể mang lại cho chúng ta nhiều, nhiều thứ quý giá <i>Forests can give us a lot of valuable things</i> . Yes. Paragraph B. paragraph B? what?/ Raise your hands, please! Where your hands? Nào Duc <i>Come on Duc?</i> Paragraph B? [Duc shakes head] No idea. Other? / Paragraph B. Main idea. Ngoc.
Ngoc	(xxx)
T	Yes. Vegetation can help conserve water. Thực vật có thể giúp bảo tồn... <i>Vegetation can help conserve ...</i>
Ss	Nước. <i>Water</i>
T	Nước <i>water</i> . And paragraph C. what? Paragraph C? Phong.
Phong	(xxx)
T	Yes. Right. Man can do something to save the earth. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Mọi người có thể làm gì đó để cứu trái đất <i>Everybody can do something to save the earth</i> . Now, what have you done, or what can you do to save the earth? Chúng ta có thể làm cái gì? Chúng ta làm gì để cứu trái đất? <i>What can we do? What can we do to save the earth?</i> / For example, read more about wild life? Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Use water...? Use water...? Sparingly. Yes. Others? / Use water sparingly./ You please./ We can plant trees, yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Right. Others? / Clean what? Clean what?/ Clean...? // We can...? What? We can clean beach, yes or no? [nods] Clean beach. Others?/// What? We do not pollute water, right? We do not pollute water. Right. What else?/ Huong?
Huong	Thưa cô là, <i>Dear Teacher</i> learn about animals
T	Yes. We can learn all about animals. Right? Yeah. A lot of things we can do to save the earth, yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. So you can pay attention. Continue. [writes lesson title on board] Lesson-two-speaking. What are you going to speak today? / whole class, you have studied the lesson at home?/ What are you going to speak about? About...? What?/ what? About

	animals?
Ss	Zoo
T	Ah, about the zoo. What, what kind of zoo?
Ss	Animals?
T	The zoo. What kind of zoo?/ The new kind of, of zoo. Yes or no? <s: yes> The new kind of zoo?/ what?// what? The zoo of new kind what? About the zoo of new kind [writes] The zoo of new kind? What does it mean?
Ss	(xxx)
T	Vườn thú kiểu mới <i>Zoo of new kind</i> . Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Now Task 1 please [writes] Now look at the two paragraphs on page / 106 and 107 [writes] Now paragraph A and B. Read paragraph A and B. Five minutes please. [during ss' reading, T goes round urging students to read, saying such as "read quickly", "any new words?", and translating meaning for some students- this last 4 minutes 17 secs] Now stop reading./ Now whole class, look at paragraph A please. / Now some new words. [reads aloud a sentence from text] Image? [this word is from the sentence]
Ss	Hình ảnh, hình ảnh <i>Image image</i>
T	[nods, reads a sentence from text, which contains "imprison"] Imprison?
Ss	Tù, giam hãm <i>Prison, imprison</i>
T	Tù, giam hãm. What about "will"?
Ss	Ý chí <i>Will</i>
T	Correct. [continues to read text] Develop?
Ss	Phát triển <i>develop</i>
T	Ok. [continues to read] So, what's paragraph A about? [ss murmur] About what? Kieu Oanh?
Oanh	Thưa cô là, do đâu mà vườn thú kiểu mới được thực hiện <i>Dear Teacher, why the zoo of new kind is established</i>
T	It's the reason. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes [laugh]
T	Yes. [writes] Pur-pose. You know purpose? What?
Ss	Mục đích <i>purpose</i>
T	Yes. Reason or purpose. So, what is the purpose?/ Lý do mà chúng ta nói, mục đích là gì? <i>The reasons we were talking, [in other words] what's the purpose? / What? Hanh.</i>
Hanh	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , They want to reconstruct animals the natural env[i]ronment
T	They want to reconstruct animals the natural environment. Thank you. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. What else? Hong?
Hong	(xxx)
T	Loudly! Loudly!
Hong	They want to help endangered species develop
T	Thanks. They want to help endangered species develop. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Right. [writes] To develop. To-help-endangered-species-develop. Right. Giúp những loài có nguy cơ tuyệt chủng phát triển <i>Help endangered species develop</i> /// Now, paragraph B. Paragraph B. [reads aloud text] What about "breed"? Breed?
Ss	Nhân giống <i>breed</i>

T	Nhân giống <i>breed</i> . Yeah. And, “reintroduce”?
Ss	Giới thiệu <i>introduce</i>
T	Yes. Giới thiệu lại <i>reintroduce</i> . [continues to read text] What about “provide as natural an environment as possible”?
Ss	Cung cấp môi trường tự nhiên có thể <i>provide natural environment if possible</i>
T	Cung cấp môi trường càng tự nhiên càng tốt <i>provide as natural an environment as possible</i> . As natural as possible. Càng tự nhiên càng tốt <i>as natural as possible</i> . Yes. For the animals. [continues to read text] “At times”? “At times”?
Ss	Thỉnh thoảng <i>at times</i>
T	Sometimes. So, what about paragraph B about?/ what is it about? About what?/what? / <b>About</b> the zoo of new kind. About what?/
S1	About...
T	[interrupts] Vườn thú kiểu mới thì nói về cái gì? <i>What are they supposed to talk about the zoo of new kind?</i>
S1	(xxx)
T	About...the features. Alright. [writes] Main-features. About the main features. Features?
Ss	Đặc điểm <i>features</i>
T	Yes. What about the main features? What? Huong?
Huong	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , animals can live in their natural environment
T	Animals can live in...
Huong	In their...
T	In their...?
Huong	Natural environment
T	In their natural environment. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. It means, provide [writes] provide-, provide...? Natural-environment-for?
Ss	Animals
T	Yes, for-animals./ And <b>as</b> natural as possible. Càng giống với tự nhiên càng tốt <i>As nature-like as possible</i> . what else? What main features else? Có đặc điểm chính gì nữa không? <i>Any other main features?</i> / What? Tuan Anh?
Anh	Thưa cô <i>dear teacher</i> , the zoo has largest gorillas
T	Yes. The zoo has largest gorillas, largest gorillas. There are some rare animals, yes or no? Rare animals, a lot of rare animals. Nhiều động vật quý hiếm <i>Many rare animals</i> Yes or no?
Ss	Yes.
T	Yes. What else?/ What about keepers? What about keepers?/// Bao?
Bao	(xxx)
T	Humm, What does it mean? It means it’s dangerous [writes] it’s-dangerous-what?
Bao	Những con thú đã bị thương hoặc đã bị.... <i>Those animals that are injured or...</i>
T	[interrupts] Yeah, yeah [waves sit down, Bao still stays though] It means its’ dangerous for...?
Bao	For keepers
T	For keepers [writes] Right. For-keepers. Nguy hiểm với gì? Nguy hiểm đối với...? <i>Dangerous for what? Dangerous for ....?</i>
Ss	Người giữ thú <i>Zoo keepers</i>
T	Người giữ thú <i>Zoo keepers</i> . Yes. So, two paragraphs about the <b>zoo</b> of new kind, with the purpose and the main features. So, a lot of things. Thank you. Now [writes “zoo of new kind” on board, circled round, like a network] Zoo-of-new-kind. What? The zoo of new kind. What do you think relate to the zoo? What do you think relate to the zoo of new kind, or new standard?/ Cái gì có liên quan đến vườn thú kiểu mới <i>what relates to the zoo of new kind?</i> / What?

	For example... [writes] –animals. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. First, animals. Is it, rare animals? Rare animals./ Very, very large animals. Right? Động vật lớn, động vật quý hiếm <i>large animals, rare animals</i> . What else? /Ah, food [writes] Food of animals. Others. Kieu Oanh?
Oanh	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , animals may develop
T	Yes [waves sit down, seems not happy with the answer] what else? Dat?
Dat	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , environment.
T	Environment [writes] Right. –Environment. Environment. Right? Living conditions? Living conditions. Điều kiện sống <i>living conditions</i> . Anh?
Anh	Water
T	Uh, water [writes] –water. What else?/ what else? Huong?
Huong	Some keepers
T	Some keepers. Yeah. [writes] –keepers. What, what relates to keepers? [points to features written]
Ss	Dangerous
T	Ah, dangerous. What else? Hang?
Hang	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , climate a.
T	What?
Hang	Climate
T	Nói lại nào? <i>Repeat</i>
Ss	Climate
T	Climate. Thank you. Environment. [points] Cong Anh?/ what?
Anh	Conservation
T	Ah, conservation [writes] –conservation. Right. What else?/ what else? What about disease? Disease. [writes] Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Bệnh tật <i>disease</i> . Yes. Animals may suffer from dangerous disease. What else?/ Dat?
Dat	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , ve[ge]tation.
T	Vegetation. Ok. [points] Food. Ar Huyen?/
Huyen	(xxx)
T	What?
Huyen	Breed
T	Breed. Ah, breeding. Yes. Sự nuôi dưỡng nhân giống <i>breeding</i> . Yes. Right. So a lot of things. A lot of things relate to the zoo of new kind. Now... // Như vậy, có rất nhiều vấn đề liên quan đến vườn thú kiểu mới <i>so there are many things relating to the zoo of new kind</i> Erm, something such as.../ money [writes] money-to-construct
Ss	Tiền để xây dựng <i>money for construction</i>
T	Yes. A lot of money. Right? Now/, now discuss. Discuss. [writes title] Now you give your idea by saying...[writes] –animals, animals-may- have, animals may have –(xxx). In the zoo of new kind, animals may have (xxx). / Or other way, I think [writes] I-think, what? I think what? Kieu Oanh
Oanh	Thưa cô <i>dear teacher</i> , I think animals may develop
T	Yeah. May or will. [writes] I think animals- <b>will</b> -develop. Right? Or you can say, I don't think [writes] I-don't –think. Yes or no? I think, or I don't think. Or other way, [writes] in-my-opinion. Yes. In my opinion. Right. Now discuss. Bây giờ chúng ta sẽ làm việc theo nhóm và chúng ta sẽ đưa ra ý kiến <i>now we will work in groups and will give ideas...</i> Một người trong nhóm sẽ nói và các bạn khác cùng nghe <i>one group member will talk and the rest will listen</i> . Yes. Sau đó đại diện nhóm sẽ nói <i>eventually a group representative will talk</i> . Now, in group of four or three. Group of three [points to one group] One table is a group. Yes. Chúng ta làm việc theo nhóm, theo bàn <i>we work in groups</i> ,



	<i>according to tables.</i> <s2: Mỗi bàn là 1 nhóm <i>a table is one group</i> > Yes. One table is a group. /// Now suggestion, in Task 2 and Task 3. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. Chúng ta sẽ dùng gợi ý ở trong Task 2 và Task 3 ở trong sách giáo khoa <i>we will use the suggestions in Task 2 and Task 3 in the textbook.</i> [T goes round helping ss, giving models – Ss discuss in group, noting down info, but they mostly use Vietnamese in their discussion – this lasts 5 mins 7 secs] Now, that's all. Some ideas please? Some ideas. Hanh?
Hanh	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> ,...
T	No, speak. Don't read./ Look at the board. <ss: nhìn lên bảng <i>look at the board</i> >
Hanh	I think er we need a lot money to construct
T	I think we need a lot of money to construct. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Hang?
Hang	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , I don't think er animals er, I don't think animals may do er er what what they er do want er do want
T	Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Yes. You?
S3	I think er animals have er clean water
T	Again
S3	I think animals to clean water
T	I think animals will have clean water. Yes or no? clean water? Yes. Good idea. Minh Hong?
Hong	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , I think animals er will develop.
T	Will develop. Yes. Thuy?
Thuy	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , I think animals will er have have better environment.
T	Yes or no?/ have a better environment. Yes or no? Yes. Er Dat?
Dat	Er, I think animals will may er feel happy
T	Cả "will" cả "may" <i>both "will" and "may"</i> ? No no no. Er, yes again.
Ss	Lại lại lại <i>again again again</i>
Dat	I don't think animals will may feel happy
T	"Will may". Not "will may".
Ss	Will. Will.
T	Will. I think use "will"
Dat	(xxx)... feel happy.
T	Again
S4	I don't think...
Dat	I don't think er animals er will er will feel happy
T	Ah, yes. I don't think animals will feel happy. Yes. Huyen?
Huyen	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , I don't think animals will have better food
T	Yes or no? have better food?
Ss	Yes
T	Others? Huong?
Huong	Thưa cô là <i>dear teacher</i> , I think animals will danger (xxx)
T	[apparently notices mistake] I think it will be, it will be dangerous for <Huong: animals> Ok. Thanks. Others. Hong please.
Hong	(xxx)
T	Now, animals will be protected. Yes or no? yes. Good idea. Now Hao, your idea please
Hao	(xxx)

T	I think ...”will” I don’t think “will” Ok. Again
Hao	(xxx)
T	Yes. Alright. Hoang nao?
Hoang	I think, I don’t think animals er will be er risky
T	Hum. Yes or no? It is risky for... risky for?/ for keepers. Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Risky for keepers. Thanks. So, there are some advantage and...? Disadvantage./ Yes or no?
Ss	Yes
T	Như vậy là vườn thú kiểu mới này cũng có thuận lợi và cũng có gì? <i>So this zoo of new kind has advantages and also what?</i>
Ss	Khó khăn <i>disadvantages</i>
T	Khó khăn <i>disadvantages</i> // Một số thuận lợi <i>some advantages</i> , yes, as you said như các bạn đã đưa ra <i>as you have provided</i> Now, write a paragraph of about 50 or 60 words about zoo of new kind. / Write a paragraph of about 60, er 50 or 60 words,/ about zoo of new kind/// Năm mươi, viết 1 đoạn văn năm mươi đến sáu mươi từ về gì <i>fifty, write a paragraph of fifty to sixty words about what?</i>
Ss	(xxx)
T	Ah, vườn thú kiểu mới <i>the zoo of new kind</i> . Yes./// Now write please. Let’s write. [45 secs] You may begin with “In the zoo of new kind, animals... may..” // But they may suffer from dangerous disease [23 secs] Đưa ra những ý kiến về gì <i>give ideas about what?</i> / Vườn thú kiểu mới <i>zoo of new kind</i> // Tốt hơn hay không tốt hơn <i>pros and cons</i> Tùy ý kiến các bạn đưa ra <i>it’s up to your ideas</i> . Những căn bệnh nguy hiểm này <i>for example the dangerous diseases</i> . Có thể làm hay không thể làm những gì chúng muốn này <i>for example they may or may not do what they want./ May or may not.///</i> Tốn rất nhiều tiền để xây dựng vườn thú kiểu mới này <i>for example it costs a large amount of money to construct a zoo of new kind</i> /// Đôi khi rất nguy hiểm với gì <i>sometimes dangerous for what?/</i> Người coi thú <i>zoo keepers</i> . [the teacher lets students work for 3 mins] Now some main ideas. Some main ideas. Who can combine the main ideas? Combine the main ideas? Ai có thể giới thiệu lại, tổng kết lại những ý chính <i>who can summarise the main ideas?</i> Come here and speak please. Come here and speak and I will give you marks. / who can?//// You, you will look more beautiful if you stand here? More beautiful. More handsome. Yes or no?
S5	No
T	No? right. Now, come here. You will look more beautiful more handsome// who can? And you can get good marks. Bao? Bao?
Ss	Wow. Handsome
T	Now, look at him and listen to him please, if he can combine the main ideas. Now listen to him please. Bao, now, speak [Bao takes a piece of chalk and about to write]
Ss	Speak speak. Nói nói <i>speak speak</i> [laugh]
T	Now look at him please
Bao	In my opinion, in the... the zoo of er new kind the animals can have er better food er they er will er the // they will er /er they will er //// they will have er / they will develop and er erm // and the er they will have the ere r better condition er //// but they don’t er f[e]l happy because er the life conditional for animals er is the er wildlife // in the /// <T: quickly> er in the er in the zoo animals er will be er may er [drum goes off]
T	Yes thanks

## Appendix J: Data Sample: Stimulated Recall

### Teacher 2: Observation 1 (Speaking)

Year 10

Stimulated recall carried out: 29.1.2010 (Next day)

Length: 42:29

*(English translation)*

R	This is the way we are doing for the next 45 minutes. We will together watch the lesson. All you need to do is to recall what you were thinking at any particular events of the lesson. If you want to have comments, explanations and the like, you are free to do so, by clicking the pause symbol here, then we will discuss. You can also make any questions you like. I have started the voice-recorder. I hope we can make it in 40 minutes so that you can have a rest before the next lesson. That's the way we will do. Any questions?
T2	No
R	Ok. Clear. Let's go [video starts] Do you remember what you were doing here?
T2	Using Vietnamese.
R	Ok. I mean, what were you doing?
T2	Ah, I was asking students to revise the previous lesson, what they learned
R	Uh huh
T2	I always have this kind of check-up at the beginning of a lesson
R	Always?
T2	No. Just with lessons that have many new words. But I always check the main ideas of previous lessons, though.
R	I noticed this because other teachers start out differently: some get students to the board to write down words, some start new lessons right away. I saw you spent quite a time, approximately 10 mins, to do this. That's why I asked you about this. May be it was not something new to you, but it was to me.
T2	Students can feel more comfortable to have this
R	Uh huh [video continues]
T2	[pauses] This starter activity, you know, I usually do this. I only use games sometimes. Games take away time and students become very noisy. Of course they are fun, but if games are to be use, they should be short. Still, this revising activity is important, firstly because this will create a comfortable environment, rather than "go to the board and write new words", which students are frightened of. Yeah. On some necessary occasions, I also give them marks. But I mostly give them marks based on their speaking
R	Yeah. I think it's important. Because games are just for fun, and we don't have much time for them. Revising like this only gives you information from students, but also you did some other thing, you remember? You elicited solutions for keeping the environment clean. I didn't know you had talked about those earlier, but I saw that they had new ideas. Are they in the previous reading text?
T2	They are not in the reading. I just asked them to think about what to do, and what they had done to protect the earth
R	I remember them saying things such as planting more trees...

T2	...Using water sparingly
R	... or learning about animals. I mean, a lot of information was elicited in this activity. You do this regularly?
T2	Yes, I do it regularly. I focus on speaking skill – communication. I want to make them get used to communication, and feel comfortable in communication
R	Uh huh [video cont] Do you notice students are having a bit of difficulty in expressing the main ideas of the reading text?
T2	This part had not been thoroughly done previously, because, you know, I am the master teacher of this class, we had had something else to do the previous lesson, admin things. So we had only finished two tasks: one from my own, and the T/F task. Other tasks had not been covered. That's why they seemed to hesitate.
R	So you thought you should do it a bit more carefully?
T2	Yes
R	After this you elicited ways of saving the environment. Ok. Let's skip this.
T2	[pauses] In this activity, does having students read for 5 mins sound alright?
R	Erm... I saw that the text was short. There were some difficult words, but to understand...
T2	They needed to read as to understand. I stopped at some words and explained in Vietnamese, not all in Vietnamese. Some unfamiliar words.
R	I noticed from the very beginning you mostly use English. Do you think the majority of students could understand what you said?
T2	They could. As usual.
R	So you use English in usual lessons?
T2	Yes. In usual lessons.
R	Students are good at listening
T2	They can do it
R	I was impressed
T2	But there must be some, say 7 or seven, in weaker classes, who can't understand what I say, the way I said today.
R	Uh huh
T2	Because many of them are really weak in English
R	Ok. What was your purpose of your making students to read this text, including paras A and B?
T2	To get them understand about this new kind of zoo. Para A was about the purpose, and para B included its features
R	How was the information they read used later on?
T2	Once they have had information about this kind of zoo, they would be able to talk about it. They will base on the information to talk.
R	Uh huh. Let's move on to later scenes [video cont] This moment, you were...
T2	I was reading the text again for students
R	Reading again, and stopping at several words
T2	Yes. I was stopping at several words. My purpose was to stop at the words and explain them. It was not important to read the text, but it was to explain the words
R	Why did you want to explain the words?
T2	My constant wish is that I want students to develop their vocabulary repertoire. My constant wish is that students should take every chance to develop their vocabulary repertoire. This was such a chance; and in this case those are the words students had not known
R	You thought that they had not known?

T2	I thought they had not known
R	So there were quite a lot that they hadn't known, in this text [video cont']
T2	[pauses] Let me ask you a question at this point. Here there were two tasks: one is to use "May" to talk about possibilities to animals in the zoo of new kind, and Task 3 is to talk about advantages and disadvantages of this zoo. I combined these two tasks into one, to get them talk about this kind of zoo. I got them to kind of brainstorm, and they generated different things such as keepers, food, environment and conservation. Should it be alright to combine like this?
R	I saw it was interesting. When I looked into the book, I questioned myself whether you were following the book or not. Now I know that you wanted students to concentrate on that kind of activity you were conducting
T2	I was combining two tasks into one. Afterwards I made a summary which drew some advantages and disadvantages. I wanted students to get attracted with their own ideas by brainstorming. Otherwise, if we kept the way it was organized in the textbook, it would be difficult for students
R	Had you taught this lesson before in another class?
T2	Yes. I had. But I didn't make it this way; I just followed the book. Then I noticed some difficulty. Firstly I think the two tasks are not really connected, and that students found it hard to complete them. So I think it may be better to put these two together. I only tried this in this lesson, not earlier ones.
R	Let's move [video cont'] What were you doing here?
T2	I was giving them model sentences
R	Huh...
T2	Usually I elicit them in Vietnamese, and they say it in Vietnamese, then I give the model sentence in English. But in this lesson I gave them myself
R	Apparently, this one is related to this one. And the model sentences, three of them, weren't they? "I think...", "I don't think..."
T2	"In my opinions..."
R	Yeah, "in my opinions". Did you think students would use the models you gave them, or they would use any other things they wanted?
T2	I just wanted to use the model because this would make it easier for them. They could use them because they were there
R	Was there a requirement to use any specific grammar structures in the lesson?
T2	Yes, there was. For example, in task 2, they had to use "may". This was kind of basic requirement, which asked them to use this to agree or to disagree. Just kind of giving opinions. At first, I intended to get students to respond to what others say. Like this: one student gives an opinion, another tries to give a counter-argument. This is a bit of a higher level, which they will have in year 11. In this lesson, they were talking about the zoo of new kind, so they didn't have to debate. I had thought about it, but then I realized that it was too much, too difficult for students
R	So in task 3, it says you must use "may"?
T2	Yes. To use "may". And I just gave them "I think" and "I don't think" as additional items, for them to give opinions
R	In some occasions I saw you use "will", instead of "may"...
T2	Yes. In the starters such as "I think...", I modelled as using "will". It's not because I forgot, I did it on purpose.
R	Ok. [video cont']
T2	[pauses] All the classes that I teach, I always ask them to prepare ahead. They must study at home, finding out what the next lesson is, what it is about. So, for example, in a speaking lesson, I often ask them questions like

	“what topic are we going to talk about today?”. I assume they all should have known these before class. Except for some very weak students, about 3 or 4 in each class
R	What do they do at home specifically?
T2	I ask them to read. I check if they have read by, you know in the new lesson, there will always be some new words. I focus on them: what the words are and how they are used. How to use the words may be difficult, but I require them to know the meaning. Even if they don't look up the words at home, they should also ask their friends in class. Most of them write the meaning next to the words in the book, but some don't. These students have a separate notebook to copy down new words
R	Ok [video cont] Here, I can see that students were discussing quite actively. I wonder whether they were using English or Vietnamese
T2	The number of students using English was small, I believe. Because I have a kind of regulations in class that if I catch somebody using Vietnamese when they are supposed to use English, they should be in trouble. Bad marks, for example. In speaking lessons, they have to speak English. Except when they have difficulty, and they need to ask for my help or their mates, they can use Vietnamese. In such circumstances, I allow them to use Vietnamese. But these are rare, you know.
R	If so, did you notice they had any difficulty in this lesson, in this particular task, for example?
T2	I think, when they were working in groups, they were more comfortable. No problems. The ones that stood up and spoke were confident ones. The others, as I said, 8-10 people in each class always have difficulty in speaking, especially pronunciation. These people should have problems, of course. With these people, I often encourage them to speak simple things, which should be easy for them. I try to avoid having them stand up being ashamed of speaking ability. [video cont]
R	[pauses] I remember in this scene, you were telling this girl not to read
T2	Yes. Not to read. You see, at first she had the book in her hand. And I told her to put it away.
R	Why did you?
T2	Because it was a speaking lesson. They were supposed to develop their speaking skill. So I didn't allow them to read from the book
R	Ok. I noticed the group near me, while discussing, wrote sentences down. I think it might be important to tell them not to read from those, because they are not restricted to any particular structures...
T2	Students often have problems finding structures to express their ideas, but I believe they don't with words. I can guarantee that. Because, at the beginning of every lesson, I always have a revising activity. I am telling students that they must ask right away if they don't know a word. So I think their vocabulary are quite alright
R	One thing that I noticed was that almost the whole lesson, students sometimes make mistakes, sometimes with pronunciation, sometimes with structures, but you didn't seem to care about correcting them. Er..
T2	Yeah. Often, I only correct major mistakes. Either in the beginning or at the end of a lesson, when getting students to talk, I may ask “any mistakes?” Beginning or at the end. When I need to focus their attention on the mistakes. During their speaking task, I just allow them to speak comfortably. In writing lesson, though, I correct students' mistakes very carefully. Speaking lessons are freer. As long as they speak. [video cont']
R	Here, this boy...

T2	I was asking him to combine ideas...
R	At first he thought that you asked him to come to the board and write, but then you told him to speak, not to write. Do you usually ask students to report this nature?
T2	Very usually. To give them marks, and to correct mistakes. That is, after the person finishes speaking, the class comment his speech, such as whether it is loud enough, fluently, clearly, and then I ask the whole class to spot mistakes. So they spot out grammar and pronunciation mistakes. You know, it is like a wrap-up activity
R	I saw that this boy was good, at first he was not so confident, but then he could say something
T2	This boy is quite good, but he's not so good at expressing ideas in sentences
R	Ok. Now last question. You know, very often, in a classroom, we have something like a "product" after each task, such as a piece of writing, or a solution to a problem. In this speaking lesson, for example, in this discussion task, had you thought about what kind of "product" students should be able to achieve?
T2	After the discussion, students must combine their ideas and present in front of the class. So they could focus on something.
R	I know what you mean: your aims were: students must speak; they must put ideas together and so on. What if they couldn't remember ideas because of long activity? Usually, I have seen many people, before asking students to discuss; they give them a table, like this. This side is "Dos" and this side "Don'ts". What they should do and what they shouldn't. Like this. And after discussion, they can report their ideas basing on the table they have outlined. This is the "product" that I meant earlier. Because in your lesson, I didn't see you setting a kind of clear outcome for them to go for. Setting up like this, students could have more freedom to talk, without caring about what structures to use. All they have to do is talk and note down ideas only, not sentences. I think may be if they had that kind of "product" they might be more interested, who knows!
T2	Yes
R	Anything else to say?
T2	No
R	Well thanks very much for this

## Appendix K: Data Sample: Focus Groups

### School B

Date: 26 May 2010

Length: 38 mins 26 secs

*(English translation)*

R	Thanks everybody for joining this discussion. What we are doing today is based on the questions on this sheet. But on some occasions I might extend the discussion based on your views. Please feel free to give your opinions and ideas. It's important to note that there is no right or wrong answer in our discussion. Do you have any questions? [Ts shake heads] Ok then, firstly what do you think of the curriculum and the textbooks you are using?
T6	I think the new textbooks are ok, in general. But there are issues that need to be address...
T7	According to me, the textbooks we are using... it depends on the lessons... Some of the lessons have been designed appropriately, but some are very difficult. For example, for grade 10 students, in reading for example ... like this reading lesson, it is easy, because they have provided words and cues, and laid out tasks that are easy for students to follow. But for others, such as this, students are required to do it on their own... it's difficult
R	Like summarising?
T9	Yes, getting them to summarise. For example, this... this is ok, they can speak. Some lessons ask them to summarise with few suggestions, which make students unable to do. Like this, this lesson, this task asks students to stand up and summarise the whole reading text. On no, this is gap-filling, which is ok; they can do it.... In my opinions, it should be good if every reading lesson was designed like this: at the end of the lesson, there should be a task like this - gap-filling like this. It should contain a summary of the text and gaps for students to fill in. This would be easier for them. Some of the lessons at the end students are asked to summarise the text themselves, which I think is extremely difficult.
R	[T7], did you use to use the old textbooks?
T7	Yes, I did.
R	[T11] possibly not, what about [T10]?
T10	Yes, already
R	How do you compare the two sets of textbooks?
T6	In the old book, everything was very simple. The reading text, for example, consisted of four or five sentences. It was really easy for students to understand the text. In most cases, we just needed to translate the text for them. The texts in the new books, however, are far lengthier, thus it is impossible to do the old ways. Then we have to carefully select sufficient new words [to teach] for students to read and understand the text
T7	I think in the old textbook, firstly grammar was lighter, second the vocabulary was lighter, and the reading texts were shorter. Coming to these new textbooks, there are too many new words. We as teachers and students are heavily under pressure about vocabulary. Also, in the old textbook, grammar items were laid out in a clear way, so we knew what we had taught and what we had not. In



	this new set of textbooks, grammar is presented in a confusing order, and more importantly, everything is lengthy.
R	Lengthy. So when you teach, can you manage the time?
T8	No
T10	We can't complete all the stuff in a lesson. Plus, the new textbooks are far more difficult...
T7	Of course these new textbooks are far more difficult for students than the old ones, because they contain longer texts, and far more vocabulary items, and a listening lesson in each unit. The lessons are lengthier, so we have to make use of our time effectively to cover the whole lesson. In many lessons, we have to give students the left-over for homework
T6	Mostly we can't make it to the end, leaving behind the later parts - the post-phase
R	I have seen it in many observations.
T8	I think with these new books, it is difficult to teach vocabulary. It might be possible to translate for students, but teaching them the new ways [using eliciting techniques] is difficult. So sometimes in observation people will choose words that are 'teachable' and just neglect the difficult ones. Some of them are just impossible to teach
T9	That's for observation lessons, but in normal lessons...
T7	Normally we translate them
T11	Yes translate them
T9	In the old textbooks, words are easy to teach. Also we used to use the old techniques of teaching, then it was easy for us
T10	And the reading texts were a-paragraph short, or just a piece of dialogue
T7	I observe that in these new books, in terms of words, it can be complicated in that, for example, with this one meaning, in this lesson they have one word, in another lesson they have another word
T11	In these new books, in speaking for example, it's ok to have the controlled activities, but when it comes to the free tasks, when students have to speak for their own, they can't do it. And as for listening, to be honest, it is difficult for us teachers, let alone students! The listening lessons should be re-designed in some way; if leaving them like this, students won't be able to listen
T7	As for listening, the earlier tasks can be fine, like these: true/false, you know guessing, they are fine; or filling the gaps
T8	T/Fs and fill the gaps are ok, but "Answer the questions" are impossible.
T7	So in here gapped answers should be made
R	You think that those questions are long ... and incomprehensible?
T7	Exactly. But I think if questions are to be put here, they should provide questions in Y/N forms, then with luck students should be able to make it. Keeping it like this even gives challenges for us teachers!
T10	In listening lessons, there are also the post-listening tasks. These ask students to "tell story about ..." [Recall what you hear], you know, asking them to tell what they have heard... Or talk about...
T8	Our students are usually terrified of listening. They can't possibly do it. So they don't want to listen; they prefer grammar, you know, something direct and easy to remember
T6	Usually they ask students to base on the listening text to speak about something; in reading, information is all already there for them...
T8	Like this, it doesn't work [points to textbook task] Too 'heavy' [difficult]
T6	True/false should be ok
T9	So I think it's appropriate to have true/false tasks; but these tasks may be too short; so maybe they could provide a more complex type of task such as filling the gaps, with gapped information such as years, or numbers...

R	When you find the tasks difficult, such as the answering questions tasks, do you do anything to adapt the tasks, or just skip them?
T8	We usually let students listen with the easier tasks; if we still have time, we usually 'insert' grammar of the unit into this.
T11	"Answer the questions" tasks are usually skipped
T8	Like this task, we often ask students to self-study at home, no never they can do that, and this task also. We just say so [like paying slip of mouth] Then that's it. Then...
T7	It's difficult for teachers let alone students
T8	Then we have a look at the language focus to see if there is anything we could pick up and put in this time slot. Writing lessons also...
T9	Writing lessons are better than listening and reading, especially the post-tasks
T8	Uh huh. I mean, the reading and speaking lessons can be adapted, but listening and writing ones have problems
T7	Vocabulary is too 'heavy'
T10	As for the language focus, I think these lesson should contain more
T6	As for language focus lesson, we usually teach like this: this task [pronunciation] is moved into listening lesson, so that firstly we don't have to borrow cassette player next time, secondly having to teach all these stuff before getting students to do the exercises will take a lot of time ... because there are many sections, a lot of new words...and grammar; we cannot cover all these. So we moved this [pronunciation] section to the listening lesson
R	How many periods do you use for the language focus lesson?
T6	One period. Because it says in the allocation
T11	But to cover all these, we have to cut off listening tasks to fit these grammar stuff in
T7	There is so much to teach in terms of grammar, so sometimes we can't find time to make it done
T11	I find it not so hard for the vocabulary - but grammar is the one that worries me most
T8	It depends on the students - our students are so weak
T11	Some lessons contain much knowledge about grammar; for example, the "direct-indirect" sentences can't be taught in one lesson
T8	Impossible
T11	And such as "conditional sentences" - too difficult to cover in one lesson
T7	There are still exercises. We are not only teaching, but he have also to get them to do exercises on the structures. There is too little time allocated to grammar, while the knowledge of grammar needed to teach is huge
T11	It's fortunate we still have afternoon classes where we can teach them grammar. If there are just class times, students will never be taught enough grammar
R	I know that planning lesson for you now is like a routine, everyday, so most of the time we don't notice. But, when you plan a lesson, for example, you are teaching a lesson tomorrow, and when you look at it, what do you usually look for first?
T9	What skill is it?
R	Ok
T9	For example, if it is reading, we should think about the requirement we set for students. At the end, students should understand the main ideas of the text, for example. As for listening, students should be able to speak up a number of structures, which have been provided here. For students, it's enough that they memorise those structures. And listening... difficult, right! [all laugh]
T10	It depends also. For example, like this lesson, we have to insert grammar into it. Like the lesson on "third type conditionals", we have to put grammar into

	the speaking lesson; This structure ought to be taught at the end [the language focus lesson], but we have to bring it to the speaking lesson
T8	There are many expressions and phrases that they don't know in the lessons. And you have to insert these into the lesson sequences
R	How do you do it?
T6	For example, I have done it. What I did was put these two sentences on the board, and got them to put corporate them together; because they had not learnt this structure before, they could guess; then I asked them what type of sentences these were, then I told them they were type-three conditionals. Then I explained to them how to use the structure. They had not learnt this structure before, because this was just the speaking lesson, and the grammar lesson was lagged in two more lessons away. I had to teach them; otherwise they wouldn't know how to connect these [parts of] sentences together, because here they ask students to do so, to make sentences. How ironic! While the grammar lesson is ways later
T8	In my reading lessons, T spot a structure that is unknown to students then ask students to underline the sentence, then copy it onto the board, draw out structure, so that in the future when they come across the structure they can deal with it, otherwise how can they deal with all this new knowledge?
T7	Like this speaking lesson, we have to teach this structure, because it's new to the students
R	They haven't met the structure anywhere before, such as in reading lesson?
T7	No. so in this lesson, I had to teach grammar. First, set the scene, then so on...
T11	Yeah sometimes in speaking lessons we have to teach grammar
R	I saw some teachers had a section on the board which say "useful language" on the board, what's your view of this?
T11	That's good. Doing that is good because students will make use of the language items the teachers give on the board. We must have them on the board then students will be able to use them
R	Let's come back to [T6]'s point about the organisation of the textbook. What do you think about the way the lessons are organised in every unit?
T7	The way they are organised is weird. In most common English language textbooks, usually grammar should be the starting point, while in the textbooks grammar is placed at the end of each unit
T8	Yeah, for that I think those textbooks used in language centres like <i>Streamline</i> and <i>Headway</i> are much better
R	What do you mean?
T8	They are clearly sequenced. We know exactly the grammar points to teach... and the activities relating to them afterwards
R	How do you guys think about the tasks in these books? Do they really develop skills, for example reading skill? Do you see an overall objective of the whole book such as at the end students will be able to achieve something?
T8	It's difficult. I think to develop skills, it may be better to use other textbooks such as those used in language centres, like <i>Headway</i> and <i>Streamline</i> . Because they are simpler. With these new textbooks, to say that they will develop students' skills is difficult. Such books as <i>Streamline</i> and <i>Headway</i> are much better
T7	Yeah, such books are interesting
T9	They tend to develop knowledge and skills gradually, and the activities in them are much more interesting
R	Do you see any gradual changes in difficulty from lesson to lesson?
T9	No, they all seem similar
T6	Yes. But students are not aware of that. For example, at first they are supposed to learn vocabulary, then answer the questions, and at last they summarize the

	text - you know, they are sequenced
T9	Ah, you mean in one lesson
T6	But it all depends. In some lessons they are sequenced like this, but in others they are not...
R	According to you, what changes have you made with regard to using the new textbooks?
T6	There certainly are...
T11	We have to work harder
T7	There are more vocabulary items and listening lessons, so we have to spend time preparing for the lesson
R	Have you changed in terms of teaching methods?
T8	Yes, of course, we have to use the tasks that are provided. And we have applied more techniques that we learnt from workshops, which we could not use for the old textbooks
T9	The classroom must also be different. There are a lot of groupwork and pairwork. We now play more games and speaking
R	What's the main reason for such a change?
T6	The materials
T11	The textbooks
R	Are you meaning that you change because you are trying to follow the textbooks?
T8	Exactly. I think the way we teach now has changed due to the change in the books that we are using. The lessons are much more communicative, and we feel that we have become more active in class using these books. It's been hard though
T10	Yes, in most cases, we teach following the books. But sometimes we have to change something to suit our students
R	Such as?
T10	For example to insert grammar into a lesson, or just make a task that is too difficult easier for them to carry out
T9	Like what we talked earlier
R	Ok. In your practices, not in observations, do you think that the tasks in these books create opportunities for students to use language? Such as in speaking?
T6	It depends on the lessons
T8	Students do not seem interested in speaking
T7	In lessons where there are questions available, then when they have answered the questions, they can make it, by putting questions and answers together
T8	If the topic is related to their life they may like to speak; but with topics that are distant from them such as wild animals they may not
T6	For example, this lesson is possible. They can do it. Because in this lesson, the information is already provided here, and before that they have a number of questions. So it's easy for them, they can stand up and put the information to the questions and make a speech; But if we just ask them to make questions, and find the answers themselves, they can't do it.
R	So students will base on the information here, with the questions, and put them together, and that's all they have to do?
T7	Yeah
T8	Speaking mechanically
R	Do students like this kind of tasks?
T7	They don't understand
T10	If we want them to understand, we have to teach them thoroughly
T9	We have to provide them with model sentences
R	But I feel that what they have to do is mechanical, I mean, what they have to do is replacing bits of information, then make full sentences

T11	The thing is, if we want something freer, then we have task 3. I mean, the lesson will go from controlled to free; but to tell you the truth, they can't do it in the free task [laughs]
T8	They can manage with some simple free tasks though
T11	But in some lessons they have awkward sequences, for example task 3 is difficult but then task 5 is very easy..
T9	Some of the topics are not familiar with students, such as the Undersea World, some others are fine
R	In general you have been saying that students are having a number of difficulties with these new materials?
T9	Yes. For example difficult topics. But I think they should do something about that - for example, the Undersea world, they may not want to put it here in Book 10, but wait until 11 or 12... Some topics are good - they are related to real life, but others such as Reservation
T10	I think it might be better to use the old textbooks, at least about grammar - they provided systematic knowledge of grammar, which could at least give a firm basis of grammar knowledge. With these new books, everything is "diluted". At the end students might not master much
R	Do you think that there are too many new words, such as in reading texts?
T11	Tell me about it
R	That's a disadvantage of the books?
T9	They say that with these new books, to study for the general exam, still it's like "watching followers while riding on a horseback" - You learn one way, but you are tested another. Exams focus on language, grammar only - which the language focus lesson serve - but learning focuses on all skills - NOT like any other subjects!
T6	Even when we have tried our best in teaching, both in official and afternoon classes, but when students are given a test which is standardised, they cannot do it. Yet when we teach, they do understand, but they forget everything after a few days
T8	The problem is, the textbooks made students' mind "dilute"
T7	My students usually say: "Teacher, when you teach us, we do understand everything, but when we come back to it a few days after, we can't understand it any more. Why is this?"
T8	If we teach the whole book, they won't be able to do tests unless they go to the afternoon classes
T11	The basic thing is, we test grammar, but there is only one grammar lesson in every unit...
T8	This curriculum is not working...
R	Have you ever thought of testing students skills, not just reading and writing, but at times let's say a listening or speaking test?
T11	To organize a listening test should be ok, but doing so for a speaking test would be impossible, because to ask 45 students to speak in a lesson...
T10	We test speaking for the "speaking" marks only, but to make it official is ...[laughs]
T6	I usually test speaking like this: In a lesson, there is usually a structure, so I make a sentence in Vietnamese, asking students to translate it into English in speaking - that's one way of my testing speaking. Then students ask, "why are you asking such a difficult thing?", but in many other [lesson starters], I ask them to write new words on the board
R	Do you include a reading text for a test?
T6	Yes, we do. We usually have a reading text with multiple choice questions
T11	Usually in a test we have grammar, reading and writing
T7	I have listening sometimes

R	To summarise, what you have said: in these textbooks are are several problems: too much vocabulary, too lengthy reading texts, too many tasks to cover in one lesson, too little knowledge of grammar
T7	Grammar is already there... but the in one unit, there are many issues in grammar that with one lesson it is impossible to deal with all
T11	There is too little time for grammar
R	That means, there is much knowledge of grammar while there is not enough time
T11	Yeah
R	Do you tend to insert grammar into skills? For example, when you are teaching, you realise that there is a certain structure that might need explaining, ...
T9	Yes, there might be some expressions that they don't know, then we have to present them for students
T7	For example in this writing lesson we have to teach grammar first
T9	Many expressions or phrases that they don't know
T7	For example this writing lesson [Unit 10], we have to teach grammar for them before they write, such as "let's + bare verb". In this whole lesson there are eight structures, we have to teach them before they really do the writing
R	Those are structures that are in the book already. But put in other way, for example reading, while you teach, you realise that this structure is unknown to students, then you say "you students must notice this structure etc.
T8	Yes, we usually do. Like, asking students to underline the sentence, then copy it onto the board, draw out structure. They must memorise the structure for future use
T11	I have this feeling: We have to simplify the lesson as much as we can, so that students can remember something when they go out of the class. Because if we teach like this [as in the book], if we present something, we also want to present another, because we feel that everything is important. So, it's crucial to simplify it, so that students could master the idea of the lesson, and learn some new words. That's it.
T10	We usually teach vocabulary separately, so students use them to translate the text, but when they come across something new, such as why this verb has -ing ending, but not to + verb, for example, then we have to explain why it is that way, and in which situations it goes as infinitive.
T11	I mean, some students may have questions... but generally students are not willing to remember, even we present them something interesting and important, those things for exams, but they don't care - about 5-7 of them in a class do
T8	There are also other things: at the end of the semester, when exams are near, they started to ask: "teacher, please now teach grammar for exams; these things are not necessary"
R	Does that apply for year 10?
T8	Yes, for semester exam. In my class, when I had just written new words on the board and made myself ready for the reading text, they started to ask, "teacher, please that's enough. Please teach grammar for us to sit for the exam." I knew they were asking for real. For example, for example, at the end of next week they have to sit for the semester exam, although they have 3 lessons for revision next week for this, this week we still have to teach lessons in the textbook. No wonder students are burned with impatience. They have to face with the skills while they have to think about the exam that is completely different
T11	They become bored
T8	They want to be given many exercises; they don't care about any other

	information about the world given in the textbook
T7	It's very important that they can achieve some good marks, then skills are something they don't care.
T10	Actually, students have never been aware of the importance of the skills. Never.
T8	What are the skills for? All they have to do is to satisfy the teacher's requirements, and get good marks. Teaching Grade 12 is a challenge too. Students don't want to practise skills anymore; all they want is the relevant knowledge and test practices that prepare them for the exams. My students for example do not want to move into groups and pairs. They constantly ask me to teach them about the exams [laughs] <i>Researcher's notes: Here the teachers might talk about their experience of teaching Year 12 students prior to joining School B. At this time, there were no Year 12 students in School B</i>
R	This reminds me of a story [T5] in [School A] told me when I asked to observe one of her lesson in her Grade 12 class. She said "I think you shouldn't observe this class. If you really want to come, I will teach it for you, but as a 'display'. Because my students now do not care about skills anymore."
T8	Teaching 12s, to tell the truth, what I really cover are reading, a bit of speaking, then all other three lessons are for grammar - all exercises
T7	But Textbook 12 is very difficult. English 10 is difficult, but English 12 is even more...
T8	It's not because it's difficult, but the core problem is that students do not want to take in
R	They don't want to take in- is it because of the exam?
T8	Because learning this way does not meet their learning objective - the exam. For example many students find bank of exam papers and realise that there is nothing to do with what they are learning and what they have to do in exams
R	What about the topics
T11	The topics are ok
T8	The topics are good though - but the main point is their objective. Maybe it would be better if we keep these topics in Grades 10 and 11, but then in 12 more grammar should be focused
R	So I can see a picture: at the beginning of the semester, students would be happy with the way it present in the textbook, but by the end of the semester, they start to refuse learning that way, and demand more grammar exercises
T9,10, 11	Yes
T8	It's different here. But in [the nearby province], for example, my friend is teaching there. In [the nearby province], it is not as strict as here where inspection delegations come very often. There, they do not follow the textbook. For example, they can teach quickly this reading lesson, and all others are for grammar
T11	We also do that, don't we?
T8	We do that due to the teacher's own feeling, or convention within the division, without disclosing in speech to outsiders.
T9	That means we do not do it publicly
T8	Yeah, we do not make it public - I think do it that way is good for students. So my friend for example only teaches things that are relevant to the exams, then speaking and listening and writing are all skipped, leaving time for grammar
R	That means, the objective of these books is not implemented?
T8	No. Only the reading part
T11	Generally I think only the reading text and speaking are useful, others I think we should skip

R	So grammar can be seen as very important
T10	Yeah, basically because the exams are on grammar
T8	If they design tests in skills there may be chances they learn the skills
R	How important do you think it is for students to memorise and explain grammar rules?
T11	I think it's very important
T9	Because in test practices for example, although they choose A, B, C or D, they have to explain why they do that. They have to understand the nature of the issue. For example, in a test question, if they give the first clause of a conditional sentence in the question, and second clause of it in the choices, students have to work out which one is correct. Only by understanding the rule can they work out such a thing. They have to memorise rules when they learn for that.
T11	According to me, if we really want to teach skills, it might be better to teach it the way children learn language. But as to grammar, we have to explain thoroughly. To master grammar properly, they have to understand the nature of grammar rules. They might not need this in reading, but in speaking they have to understand the rules to speak correctly. For example, if the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural etc. Understanding such a thing will result in saying the sentences correctly. In speaking lesson, they may apply 'rote' learning - you know remembering the sentences and saying them out loud, but then they come to grammar lesson, they start to realise the nature of such a thing. In summary, in grammar lessons, they have to learn the nature of grammar structures, but in skills lessons, they may apply 'rote' learning – you know remembering the sentences and saying them out loud. By this, when they come to learn grammar, they explore the nature of grammar structures they said before
R	[T6], [T7], any other ideas?
T6, 7	No, that's all
R	Ok. According to you, do we need to change anything in these tasks to make them better?
T7	According to me, it depends on the lesson. For example this lesson [Unit 10, Grade 10] isn't appropriate. For example this task [task 1] is designed to teach vocabulary, you see? But usually we have to teach a list of vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson, before reading the text, then when we come to this task, it overlaps with the vocabulary teaching. If we don't teach vocabulary at the first place, and follow these, students won't understand the text. So we often teach a list of vocabulary first, then sometimes we skip this task. The second task [task 2] is fine with T/F, ok. Task 3 is also fine, but in some other lessons, there are too many questions that students do not always manage with the limited time. And sometimes at the end, there is sort of summary text, which is extremely difficult, they can't do it.
R	What characteristics do you think a reading lesson should have in order to develop students' reading skill?
T6	I think the T/F statements are necessary for students to develop reading skills. Such tasks as matching are just guessing tasks, which does not help them do the reading. But T/F tasks require them to really read the text and find out
T8	I think T/F tasks are ok. There should be fewer comprehension questions. And there should be more multiple choice questions. If they can do the multiple choice questions, they have understood the text. Gap-filling doesn't help, either. Such a task is usually completed mechanically
R	What about speaking? What do you think we need for speaking tasks? For example, I can see this lesson [unit 14] is quite mechanical with this pre-given dialogue...



T11	But that makes it possible. It is the model that helps them speak. If it is more difficult [no models], it should be for tertiary students
T7	In every speaking lesson, there is usually a model for every task, and these make the task possible for students
T8	For speaking, I think we should ask short simple questions, so that they can base on the structure of the question to speak correctly
T11	I think the speaking tasks in these books are ok
R	In these tasks, they usually instruct such things as ‘work in pairs, work in groups’, when you teach, do you follow these things?
T9	Work in pairs, yes. Most of reading lessons we have students work in pairs. But working in groups is not often very effective. Some students do not work at all in groups. But those who really want to work, they do work in groups
T10	Like my writing lesson that you saw, only some students worked, others sat doing nothing - that the reality of working in groups
T8	Working in pairs is most effective, for example one asks one answers
R	In speaking?
T8	Yes, in speaking
R	Ok now, another question As you see in your textbook, every lesson contains tasks. What is your understanding of a task?
T6	Just a name
R	What do you mean
T6	Like an activity – something students have to do in class
T7	Like an activity, yeah
R	[to T11] What do you think, [T11]?
T11	[shakes head – silent]
R	Does a task necessarily include grammar learning?
T6	No. Tasks are not for grammar. Like, you see, in Language Focus lessons, we don’t have tasks – we have exercises. I think tasks are for skills
R	Uh huh...
T10	But I think grammar is important for tasks. I mean, we need to provide students with grammar structures to support them in tasks
T9	I think so too
R	So which tasks in this textbook do you consider a good task?
T6	Like this [Task 2 – T/F, Reading, Unit 3, Year 10]. This kind of task is always good to teach because it forces students to read to find out which statements are wrong. They have to read to find out. And it’s interesting
T9	I like this task [Task 2-Multiple choice, Reading, Unit 4, Year 10] it’s simple but also it requires hard work. I think generally this type of task covers everything in a text, so if students can answer these questions, they will understand the text
T8	Yes, as long as they [students] don’t have to answer the questions and discuss... These types of tasks are too difficult for our students. They are far beyond the students’ level
R	Any other ideas?
Ts	[Silent]
R	Well then, thanks very much for your participation. END

Appendix L: Sample of University Entrance Examination papers

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO  
TẠO**

**ĐỀ THI TUYỂN SINH ĐẠI HỌC NĂM 2011  
Môn: TIẾNG ANH; Khối D**

**ĐỀ CHÍNH  
THỨC**

*Thời gian làm bài: 90 phút, không kể thời gian phát đề*

*(Đề thi có 07 trang)*

**Họ, tên thí sinh: .....Số báo danh: .....**

**ĐỀ THI GỒM 80 CÂU (TỪ QUESTION 1 ĐẾN QUESTION 80)**

**Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the word or phrase that is closest in meaning to the underlined part in each of the following questions.**

**Question 1:** His new work has enjoyed a very good review from critics and readers.

- A. viewing                      B. regard                      C. opinion                      D. look

**Question 2:** Such problems as haste and inexperience are a universal feature of youth.

- A. marked                      B. separated                      C. shared                      D. hidden

**Question 3:** We have lived there for years and grown fond of the surroundings. That is why we do not want to leave.

- A. possessed by the surroundings                      B. planted many trees in the surroundings  
C. loved the surroundings                      D. haunted by the surroundings

**Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the sentence that best combines each pair of sentences in the following questions.**

**Question 4:** Smoking is an extremely harmful habit. You should give it up immediately.

- A. As smoking is an extremely harmful habit, you should give it up immediately.  
B. You should give up smoking immediately and you will fall into an extremely harmful habit  
C. When you give up smoking immediately, you will affect your health with this harmful habit.  
D. Stop your smoking immediately so it will become one of your extremely harmful habits.

**Question 5:** His academic record at high school was poor. He failed to apply to that prestigious institution.

- A. His academic record at high school was poor as a result of his failure to apply to that prestigious institution.  
B. Failing to apply to that prestigious institution, his academic record at high school was poor.  
C. His academic record at high school was poor; as a result, he failed to apply to that prestigious institution.  
D. His academic record at high school was poor because he didn't apply to that prestigious institution.

**Question 6:** He cannot lend me the book now. He has not finished reading it yet.

- A. Having finished reading the book, he cannot lend it to me.  
B. He cannot lend me the book until he has finished reading it.  
C. As long as he cannot finish reading the book, he will lend it to me.  
D. Not having finished reading the book, he will lend it to me.

**Question 7:** He behaved in a very strange way. That surprised me a lot.

- A. His behaviour was a very strange thing, that surprised me most.  
B. He behaved very strangely, which surprised me very much.  
C. What almost surprised me was the strange way he behaved.  
D. I was almost not surprised by his strange behaviour.

**Question 8:** Crazianna is a big country. Unfortunately, it has never received respect from its neighbours.

- A. Though Crazianna is a big country, it has never received respect from its neighbours.  
B. It is Crazianna, a big country, that has never received respect from its neighbours.  
C. Crazianna has never received respect from its neighbours because it is a big country.  
D. Crazianna is such a big country that it has never received respect from its neighbours.

*Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the word that differs from the rest in the position of the main stress in each of the following questions.*

- Question 9:** A. represent      B. permanent      C. sentiment      D. continent  
**Question 10:** A. future      B. involve      C. prospect      D. guidance  
**Question 11:** A. accuracy      B. fabulous      C. immediate      D. optimist  
**Question 12:** A. facilitate      B. intimacy      C. participate      D. hydrology  
**Question 13:** A. reduction      B. popular      C. romantic      D. financial

*Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to show the underlined part that needs correction in each of the following questions.*

**Question 14:** A professor of economy and history at our university developed a new theory of the relationship between historical events and financial crises.

**Question 15:** During our tour of the refinery, it was seen that both propane and gasoline were produced in large volumes.

**Question 16:** Publishing in the UK, the book has won a number of awards in recent regional book fairs.

**Question 17:** Hardly did he enter the room when all the lights went out.

**Question 18:** The first important requirements for you to become a mountain climber are your strong passion and you have good health.

*Read the following passage adapted from Understanding Rural America - Info USA and mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the correct word for each of the blanks from 19 to 28.*

The well-being of America's rural people and places depends upon many things - the availability of good-paying jobs; (19)\_\_\_\_\_ to critical services such as education, health care, and communication; strong communities; and a healthy natural environment. And, (20)\_\_\_\_\_ urban America is equally dependent upon these things, the challenges to well-being look very different in rural areas than in urban areas. Small-scale, low-density settlement (21)\_\_\_\_\_ make it more costly for communities and businesses to provide critical services. Declining jobs and income in the natural resource-based industries that many rural areas depend on (22)\_\_\_\_\_ workers in those industries to find new ways to make a living. Low-skill, low-wage rural manufacturing industries must find new ways to challenge the increasing number of (23)\_\_\_\_\_ competitors. Distance and remoteness impede many rural areas from being connected to the urban centers of economic activity. Finally, changes in the availability and use of natural resources located in rural areas (24)\_\_\_\_\_ the people who earn a living from those resources and those who (25)\_\_\_\_\_ recreational and other benefits from them.

Some rural areas have met these challenges successfully, achieved some level of prosperity, and are ready (26)\_\_\_\_\_ the challenges of the future. Others have neither met the current challenges nor positioned themselves for the future. Thus, concern for rural America is real. And, while rural America is a producer of critical goods and services, the (27)\_\_\_\_\_ goes beyond economics. Rural America is also home to a fifth of the Nation's people, keeper of natural amenities and national treasures, and safeguard of a/an (28)\_\_\_\_\_ part of American culture, tradition, and history.

- Question 19:** A. advantage      B. key      C. challenge      D. access  
**Question 20:** A. because      B. when      C. since      D. while  
**Question 21:** A. means      B. patterns      C. tools      D. styles  
**Question 22:** A. turn      B. make      C. offer      D. force  
**Question 23:** A. rural      B. lateral      C. abroad      D. foreign  
**Question 24:** A. effect      B. encourage      C. affect      D. stimulate

- Question 25:** A. involve                      B. evolve                      C. bring                      D. derive  
**Question 26:** A. in                      B. for                      C. with                      D. of  
**Question 27:** A. research                      B. stimulus                      C. concern                      D. impatience  
**Question 28:** A. unique                      B. incredible                      C. simple                      D. abnormal

*Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the sentence that is closest in meaning to each of the following questions.*

**Question 29:** “My company makes a large profit every year. Why don’t you invest more money in it?” my friend said to me.

- A. My friend persuaded me to invest more money in his company.
- B. My friend suggested his investing more money in his company.
- C. My friend instructed me how to put more money into his company.
- D. I was asked to invest more money in my friend’s company.

**Question 30:** “If you don’t pay the ransom, we’ll kill your boy,” the kidnappers told us.

- A. The kidnappers pledged to kill our boy if we did not pay the ransom.
- B. The kidnappers threatened to kill our boy if we refused to pay the ransom.
- C. The kidnappers ordered to kill our boy if we did not pay the ransom.
- D. The kidnappers promised to kill our boy if we refused to pay the ransom.

**Question 31:** “You shouldn’t have leaked our confidential report to the press, Frank!” said Jane.

- A. Jane suspected that Frank had leaked their confidential report to the press.
- B. Jane accused Frank of having cheated the press with their confidential report.
- C. Jane blamed Frank for having flattered the press with their confidential report.
- D. Jane criticized Frank for having disclosed their confidential report to the press.

**Question 32:** “Don’t forget to tidy up the final draft before submission,” the team leader told us.

- A. The team leader reminded us to tidy up the final draft before submission.
- B. The team leader asked us to tidy up the final draft before submission.
- C. The team leader ordered us to tidy up the final draft before submission.
- D. The team leader simply wanted us to tidy up the final draft before submission.

**Question 33:** “Mum, please don’t tell dad about my mistake,” the boy said.

- A. The mother was forced to keep her son’s mistake as a secret when he insisted.
- B. The boy earnestly insisted that his mother tell his father about his mistake.
- C. The boy requested his mother not to talk about his mistake any more.
- D. The boy begged his mother not to tell his father about his mistake.

*Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the word or phrase that is OPPOSITE in meaning to the underlined part in each of the following questions.*

**Question 34:** Fruit and vegetables grew in abundance on the island. The islanders even exported the surplus.

- A. excess                      B. sufficiency                      C. small quantity                      D. large quantity

**Question 35:** There is growing concern about the way man has destroyed the environment.

- A. ease                      B. attraction                      C. consideration                      D. speculation

*Read the following passage adapted from A. Briggs’ article on culture, Microsoft® Student 2008, and mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the correct answer to each of the questions from 36 to 45.*

**Culture** is a word in common use with complex meanings, and is derived, like the term *broadcasting*, from the treatment and care of the soil and of what grows on it. It is directly related to cultivation and the adjectives *cultural* and *cultured* are part of the same verbal complex. A person of culture has identifiable **attributes**, among them a knowledge of and interest in the arts, literature, and music. Yet the word *culture* does not refer solely to such knowledge and interest nor, indeed, to education. At least from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, under the influence of anthropologists and sociologists, the word *culture* has come to be used generally both in the singular and the plural (*cultures*) to refer to a whole way of life of people, including their customs, laws, conventions, and values.

Distinctions have consequently been drawn between primitive and advanced culture and cultures, between elite and popular culture, between popular and mass culture, and most recently between national and global cultures. Distinctions have been drawn too between *culture* and *civilization*; the latter is a word derived not, like culture or agriculture, from the soil, but from the

city. The two words are sometimes treated as synonymous. Yet this is misleading. While civilization and barbarism are pitted against each other in what seems to be a perpetual behavioural pattern, the use of the word *culture* has been strongly influenced by conceptions of evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cultures evolve or develop. They are not **static**. They have twists and turns. Styles change. So do fashions. There are cultural processes. What, for example, the word *cultured* means has changed substantially since the study of classical (that is, Greek and Roman) literature, philosophy, and history ceased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be central to school and university education. No single alternative focus emerged, although with computers has come electronic culture, affecting kinds of study, and most recently digital culture. As cultures express themselves in new forms not everything gets better or more civilized.

The multiplicity of meanings attached to the word made and will make it difficult to define. There is no single, unproblematic definition, although many attempts have been made to establish one. The only non-problematic definitions go back to agricultural meaning (for example, cereal culture or strawberry culture) and medical meaning (for example, bacterial culture or penicillin culture). Since in anthropology and sociology we also acknowledge culture clashes, culture shock, and counter-culture, the range of reference is extremely wide.

**Question 36:** According to the passage, the word *culture* \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. is related to the preparation and use of land for farming
- B. comes from a source that has not been identified
- C. develops from Greek and Roman literature and history
- D. derives from the same root as *civilization* does

**Question 37:** It is stated in paragraph 1 that a cultured person \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. has a job related to cultivation
- B. does a job relevant to education
- C. takes care of the soil and what grows on it
- D. has knowledge of arts, literature, and music

**Question 38:** The author remarks that *culture* and *civilization* are the two words that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. share the same word formation pattern
- B. have nearly the same meaning
- C. are both related to agriculture and cultivation
- D. do not develop from the same meaning

**Question 39:** It can be inferred from the passage that since the 20<sup>th</sup> century \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. schools and universities have not taught classical literature, philosophy, and history
- B. classical literature, philosophy, and history have been considered as core subjects
- C. classical literature, philosophy, and history have not been taught as compulsory subjects
- D. all schools and universities have taught classical literature, philosophy, and history

**Question 40:** The word “**attributes**” in paragraph 1 most likely means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. fields
- B. qualities
- C. aspects
- D. skills

**Question 41:** The word “**static**” in paragraph 2 could best be replaced by “\_\_\_\_\_”. A. unchanged B. balanced C. regular D. dense

**Question 42:** Which of the following is NOT stated in the passage?

- A. Anthropology and sociology have tried to limit the references to *culture*.
- B. Distinctions have been drawn between *culture* and *civilization*.
- C. The use of the word *culture* has been changed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- D. The word *culture* can be used to refer to a whole way of life of people.

**Question 43:** It is difficult to give the definitions of the word *culture* EXCEPT for its \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. agricultural and medical meanings
- B. philosophical and historical meanings
- C. historical and figurative meanings
- D. sociological and anthropological meanings

**Question 44:** Which of the following is NOT true about the word *culture*?

- A. It differs from the word *civilization*.
- B. It evolves from agriculture.
- C. Its use has been considerably changed.
- D. It is a word that cannot be defined.

**Question 45:** The passage mainly discusses \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the multiplicity of meanings of the word *culture*
- B. the distinction between *culture* and *civilization*
- C. the figurative meanings of the word *culture*
- D. the derivatives of the word *culture*

**Mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the correct answer to each of the following questions.**

**Question 46:** Our boss would rather \_\_\_\_\_ during the working hours.

- A. we didn't chat      B. we don't chat      C. us not chat      D. us not chatting
- Question 47:** Joan: "Our friends are coming. \_\_\_\_\_, Mike?"  
Mike: "I'm sorry, but I can't do it now."
- A. Shall you make some coffee, please      B. Would you mind making some coffee  
C. Why don't we cook some coffee      D. Shall I make you like some coffee
- Question 48:** "You \_\_\_\_\_ have cooked so many dishes. There are only three of us for lunch."
- A. wouldn't      B. oughtn't      C. needn't      D. couldn't
- Question 49:** Harry: "Are you ready, Kate? There's not much time left."  
Kate: "Yes, just a minute. \_\_\_\_\_!"
- A. No longer      B. I'm coming      C. I'd be OK      D. I won't finish
- Question 50:** "Why don't you sit down and \_\_\_\_\_?"
- A. make yourself at peace      B. make it your own home  
C. make yourself at home      D. make yourself at rest
- Question 51:** "You'll recognize Jenny when you see her. She \_\_\_\_\_ a red hat."
- A. will wear      B. will be wearing      C. wears      D. is wearing
- Question 52:** He never lets anything \_\_\_\_\_ him and his weekend fishing trip.
- A. come among      B. come between      C. come up      D. come on
- Question 53:** The Second World War \_\_\_\_\_ in 1939.
- A. turned up      B. took out      C. brought about      D. broke out
- Question 54:** The instructor blew his whistle and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. off the runners were running      B. off ran the runners  
C. off were running the runners      D. the runners run off
- Question 55:** Sue: "Can you help me with my essay?"  
Robert: "\_\_\_\_\_"
- A. I think that, too.      B. Yes, I'm afraid not.      C. Not completely.      D. Why not?
- Question 56:** Before I left for my summer camp, my mother told me to take warm clothes with me \_\_\_\_\_ it was cold.
- A. so that      B. despite      C. whereas      D. in case
- Question 57:** "Never be late for an interview, \_\_\_\_\_ you can't get the job."
- A. otherwise      B. if not      C. or so      D. unless
- Question 58:** \_\_\_\_\_ without animals and plants?
- A. What would life on earth be like      B. How would life on earth be for  
C. What will life on earth be like      D. How will life on earth be like
- Question 59:** This shirt is \_\_\_\_\_ that one.
- A. much far expensive than      B. as much expensive as  
C. a bit less expensive      D. not nearly as expensive as
- Question 60:** If it \_\_\_\_\_ for the heavy storm, the accident would not have happened.
- A. isn't      B. hadn't been      C. were      D. weren't
- Question 61:** "We'd better \_\_\_\_\_ if we want to get there in time."
- A. take up      B. put down      C. speed up      D. turn down
- Question 62:** I could not \_\_\_\_\_ the lecture at all. It was too difficult for me.
- A. make off      B. take in      C. get along      D. hold on
- Question 63:** The temperature \_\_\_\_\_ takes place varies widely from material to material.
- A. which melting      B. which they melt      C. at which melting      D. at which they melt
- Question 64:** The sign "NO TRESPASSING" tells you \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. not to approach      B. not to smoke      C. not to enter      D. not to photograph
- Question 65:** Alfonso: "I had a really good time. Thanks for the lovely evening."  
Maria: "\_\_\_\_\_."
- A. Yes, it's really good      B. No, it's very kind of you

- Read the following passage adapted from Cultural Guide - OALD, and mark the letter A, B, C, or D on your answer sheet to indicate the correct answer to each of the questions from 71 to 80.

Since then, the **gender gap** between the sexes has been reduced. The Equal Pay Act of 1970, for instance, made it illegal for women to be paid less than men for doing the same work, and in 1975 the Sex Discrimination Act aimed to prevent either sex having an unfair advantage when applying for jobs. In the same year the Equal Opportunities Commission was set up to help people claim their rights to equal treatment and to publish research and statistics to show where improvements in opportunities for women need to be made. Women now have much better employment opportunities, though they still tend to get less well-paid jobs than men, and very few are appointed to top jobs in industry.

In the US the movement that is often called the “first wave of feminism” began in the mid 1800s. Susan B. Anthony worked for the right to vote, Margaret Sanger wanted to provide women with the means of contraception so that they could decide whether or not to have children, and Elizabeth Blackwell, who had to fight for the chance to become a doctor, wanted women to have greater opportunities to study. Many feminists were interested in other social issues.

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s. Women like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem became associated with the fight to get equal rights and opportunities for women under the law. An important issue was the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was intended to change the Constitution. Although the ERA was not passed, there was progress in other areas. It became illegal for employers, schools, clubs, etc. to discriminate against women. But women still find it hard to advance beyond a certain point in their careers, the so-called **glass ceiling** that prevents them from having high-level jobs. Many women also face the problem of the second shift, i.e. the household chores.

In the 1980s, feminism became less popular in the US and there was less interest in solving the remaining problems, such as the fact that most women still earn much less than men. Although there is still discrimination, the principle that it should not exist is widely accepted.

- A.** British women did not have the right to vote in political elections  
**B.** most women did not wish to have equal status and equal rights  
**C.** British women did not complete their traditional supporting role  
**D.** suffragettes fought for the equal employment and equal pay

- A. the social distance between the two sexes  
B. the difference in status between men and women  
C. the visible space between men and women  
D. the social relationship between the two sexes

- A.** American women who had greater opportunities  
**B.** American women who were more successful than men

- C. pioneers in the fight for American women's rights
- D. American women with exceptional abilities

**Question 74:** The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. supported employers, schools and clubs
- B. was brought into force in the 1960s
- C. was not officially approved
- D. changed the US Constitution

**Question 75:** In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, some information about feminism in Britain was issued by \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the Equal Pay Act of 1970
- B. the Sex Discrimination Act
- C. the Equal Opportunities Commission
- D. the Equal Rights Amendment

**Question 76:** Which of the following is true according to the passage?

- A. The US movement of feminism became the most popular in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- B. The women's liberation movement in the world first began in Britain.
- C. The movement of feminism began in the US earlier than in Britain.
- D. The British government passed laws to support women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Question 77:** The phrase "glass ceiling" in paragraph 4 mostly means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. an overlooked problem
- B. a ceiling made of glass
- C. an imaginary barrier
- D. a transparent frame

**Question 78:** Which of the following is NOT mentioned in the passage?

- A. Many American women still face the problem of household chores.
- B. An American woman once had to fight for the chance to become a doctor.
- C. British women now have much better employment opportunities.
- D. There is now no sex discrimination in Britain and in the US.

**Question 79:** It can be inferred from the passage that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the belief that sex discrimination should not exist is not popular in the US
- B. women in Britain and the US still fight for their equal status and equal rights
- C. the British government did not approve of the women's liberation movement
- D. women do not have better employment opportunities despite their great efforts

**Question 80:** Which of the following would be the best title for the passage?

- A. Women and the Right to Vote
- B. Opportunities for Women Nowadays
- C. The Suffragettes in British Society
- D. Feminism in Britain and the US

----- THE END -----





## FILMS AND CINEMA

### A. READING

#### Before you read

*Work with a partner: Answer the questions.*


1. Do you want to see a film at the cinema or on TV? Why?
2. Can you name some of the films you have seen?
3. What kind of films do you like to see? Why?




### While you read

Read the passage, and then do the tasks that follow.

The history of what we call cinema today began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, scientists discovered that when a sequence of still pictures were set in motion, they could give the feeling of movement. In the first two decades of its existence, the cinema developed rapidly. In those early days, films were little more than moving photographs, usually about one minute in length. By 1905, however, films were about five or ten minutes long. They used changes of scene and camera positions to tell a story, with actors playing character parts. In the early 1910s, audiences were able to enjoy the first long films, but it was not until 1915 that the cinema really became an industry. From that time, film makers were prepared to make longer and better films and build special places where only films were shown. The cinema changed completely at the end of the 1920s. This was when sound was introduced. The change began in America and soon spread to the rest of the world. As the old silent films were being replaced by spoken ones on the screen, a new cinema form appeared, the musical cinema.


 **Task 1.** Find the word in the passage that can match with the definition on the right column.

1. _____	film-making industry
2. _____	series of related events or actions
3. _____	a period of ten years
4. _____	quickly and in a short time
5. _____	part of a film
6. _____	a person in a film

 **Task 2.** *Work in pairs.* Answer these questions.

1. When did the history of cinema begin?
2. What did scientists discover at that time?
3. Did films in the early days have sound?

4. When were audiences able to see long films?
5. When was sound introduced?
6. What form of films appeared as the old silent films were being replaced by spoken ones?

 **Task 3.** Decide which of the options below is the best title for the passage.


- A. The Story of a Film Maker
- B. A Brief History of Cinema
- C. The History of the Film Industry

### After you read


*Work in groups.* Talk about the passage, using the cues below.

19<sup>th</sup> century                      1910s                      1920s  
1905                                  1915

## B. SPEAKING

 **Task 1.** How much do you like each kind of film? Put a tick (✓) in the right column. Then compare your answers with a partner's.

kind of film	very much	not very much	not at all
science fiction			
cartoon			
horror			
detective			
thriller			

 **Task 2.** *Work in groups.* Find out what your friends feel about each kind of film. Use the words in the table below.


**Example:**

*A: What do you think of horror films?*

*B: Oh, I find them really **terrifying**.*

*C: I don't quite agree with you. I find them very **interesting**.*

detective film	interesting
science fiction films	moving
love story films	good fun
cartoon films	violent
war films	boring
thrillers	exciting
action films	terrifying


 **Task 3.** *Work with a partner.* Find out his/her preferences for films. Use the cues below.

**Example:**

*A: Which do you prefer, detective films or science fiction films?*

*B: Well, it's difficult to say. But I suppose **I prefer science fiction films to detective ones**.*

- thrillers or science fiction films
- horror films or detective films
- love story films or cartoon films
- cartoon films or science fiction films

 **Task 4.** *Work in groups.* Talk about a film you have seen. Use the suggestions below.

1. Where did you see it?
2. What kind of film is it?
3. What is it about?
4. Who is/are the main character(s)?
5. How do you feel about it?
6. Why do you prefer it to other films?



## C. LISTENING

### Before you listen

- How often do you do each of the following? Put a tick (✓) in the right column. Then compare your answers with a partner's.

	often	sometimes	never
go to the cinema			
watch TV			
listen to the radio			
go dancing			
chat on the Net			
listen to music			

- Listen and repeat.

Titanic

cinema


instead

suppose


guess

picnic


### While you listen

-  **Task 1.** Listen to the dialogue. What are Lan and Huong planning to do together?



 **Task 2.** Listen again. Write their plans for the next week on the calendar.

	Lan	Huong
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		<i>work and go to the singing club</i>
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		


 **Task 3.** Compare your answers with a partner's. On what day can they meet?

### After you listen

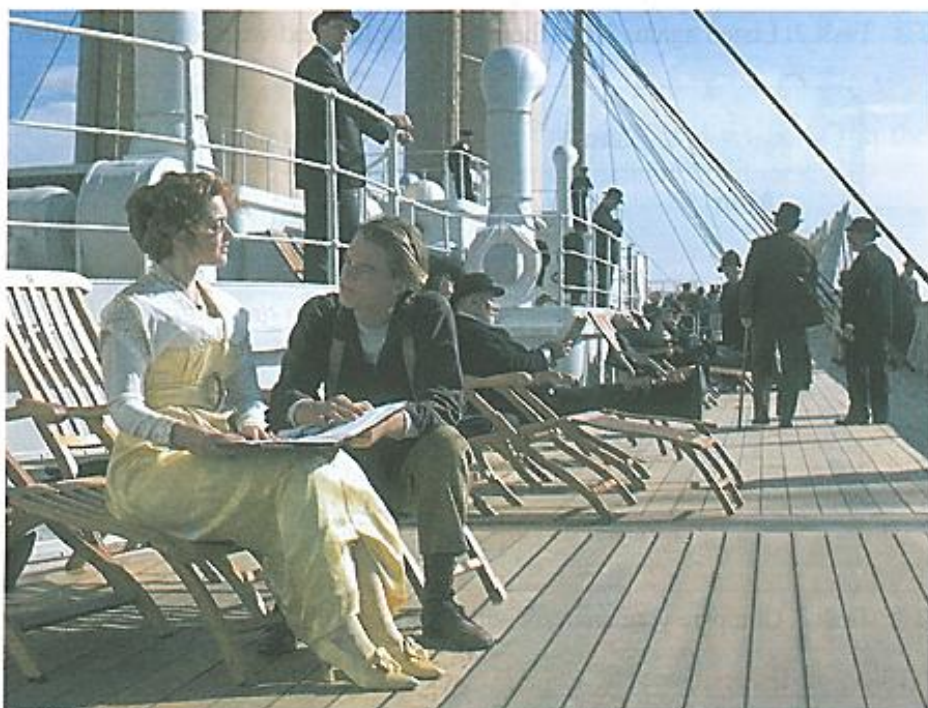
*Work in groups.* Talk about Lan and Huong's plans for the next week.  
 Use the information you have written on the calendar.

## D. WRITING


### Describing a film

 **Task 1.** Read the following description of the film *Titanic*, and then answer the questions below.

Of all the films I have seen, *Titanic* is the one I like best. *Titanic* is a tragic love story film. It is about the sinking of a luxury liner (ship) on its first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The film is made in America. It is based on the true story of the Titanic disaster that occurred in 1912. The main characters are Jack Dawson and Rose DeWitt Bukater. Jack Dawson is a young and generous adventurer. While on board, he saves Rose DeWitt Bukater from killing herself, and although she is already engaged, the two fall in love. The ship hits an iceberg and sinks rapidly. More than a thousand people die in the disaster, including Jack Dawson.



1. What is the name of the film?
2. What kind of film is *Titanic*?
3. What is it about?
4. Where is it made?
5. What is it based on?
6. Who is/are the main character(s)?
7. What do you know about the character(s)?
8. Does the film have a happy or a sad ending?

 **Task 2.** Write about a film you have seen. Use the description of *Titanic* and the questions above as suggestions.



## E. LANGUAGE FOCUS

● **Pronunciation:** / f / - / v /

● **Grammar and vocabulary:**

1. Adjectives of attitude

2. *It is / was not until ... that ...*

3. *a / an* and *the*

### Pronunciation

● Listen and repeat.

/ f /

fan      fiction  
first      photograph  
form      enough

/ v /

van      vote  
vine      Stephen  
view      leave

● Practise these sentences.

1. He feels happy enough.
2. I want a photograph for myself and my wife.
3. Would you prefer a full photograph or a profile?
4. Stephen is driving a van full of vines.
5. We used to live in a village in the valley.
6. They arrived in the village on a van.

### Grammar and vocabulary

**Exercise 1.** Write the adjectival forms of the verbs below.

**Example:** *interest      interesting*

- |              |       |               |       |
|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 1. fascinate | _____ | 6. bore       | _____ |
| 2. excite    | _____ | 7. surprise   | _____ |
| 3. terrify   | _____ | 8. amuse      | _____ |
| 4. irritate  | _____ | 9. embarrass  | _____ |
| 5. horrify   | _____ | 10. frustrate | _____ |



**Exercise 2.** Complete two sentences for each situation. Use an adjective ending *-ing* or *-ed* form of the verb in brackets to complete each sentence.

**Example:** The movie wasn't as good as we had expected. (disappoint)

a) The movie was *disappointing*.

b) We were *disappointed* with the movie.

1. It's been raining all day. I hate this weather. (depress)

a) The weather is \_\_\_\_\_.

b) This weather makes me \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Astronomy is one of Tan's main interests. (interest)

a) Tan is \_\_\_\_\_ in astronomy.

b) He finds astronomy very \_\_\_\_\_.

3. I turned off the television in the middle of the program. (bore)

a) The program was \_\_\_\_\_.

b) I was \_\_\_\_\_ with the program.

4. Lan is going to Singapore next month. She has never been there before. (excite)

a) Lan is really \_\_\_\_\_ about going to Singapore.

b) It will be an \_\_\_\_\_ experience for her.

5. Huong teaches small children. It's a hard job. (exhaust)

a) Huong often finds her job \_\_\_\_\_.

b) At the end of the day's work she is often \_\_\_\_\_.

**Exercise 3.** Rewrite the following sentences.

**Example:**

The cinema did not become an industry until 1915.

*It was not until 1915 that the cinema really became an industry.*

1. She didn't become a teacher until 1990.

*It was not until \_\_\_\_\_.*

2. He didn't know how to swim until he was 30.

*It was not until* \_\_\_\_\_.

3. They didn't begin to learn English until 1980.

*It was not until* \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The boy didn't do his homework until his father came home.

*It was not until* \_\_\_\_\_.

5. The football match didn't start until the lights were on.

*It was not until* \_\_\_\_\_.

**Exercise 4.** Put *a(n)* or *the* in the numbered blanks.

1. This morning I bought (0) a newspaper and (1) \_\_\_\_\_ magazine. (2) \_\_\_\_\_ newspaper is in my bag, but I don't know where I put (3) \_\_\_\_\_ magazine.

2. I saw (4) \_\_\_\_\_ accident this morning. (5) \_\_\_\_\_ car crashed into (6) \_\_\_\_\_ tree. (7) \_\_\_\_\_ driver of (8) \_\_\_\_\_ car wasn't hurt, but (9) \_\_\_\_\_ car was badly damaged.

3. There are two cars parked outside: (10) \_\_\_\_\_ blue one and (11) \_\_\_\_\_ grey one. (12) \_\_\_\_\_ blue one belongs to my neighbours; I don't know who (13) \_\_\_\_\_ owner of the grey car is.

4. My friends live in (14) \_\_\_\_\_ old house in (15) \_\_\_\_\_ small village. There is (16) \_\_\_\_\_ beautiful garden behind (17) \_\_\_\_\_ house. I would like to have (18) \_\_\_\_\_ garden like that.