A Study of the Extent to Which University English Education Fulfills Workplace Requirements for Vietnamese Graduates and of the Extent to Which Action Research Can Lead to Improvements in University English Education

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Abstract

This study focuses on possible approaches that can be undertaken at university to prepare undergraduate students with English language communicative competence required at the workplace. In exploring how English is taught at a university and whether English education met the needs of business, the main concern of this study is how materials design and teacher education can support learners to develop the skills to communicate effectively in the Vietnamese workplace.

The purpose of the study was to (1) learn about the reality of English in the workplace to see what graduates’ needs at the workplace are, (2) undertake observational study at a university to see how needs were being met and (3) explore how minor interventions influence teachers and their English teaching practice.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology. The data collection methods employed were observations and interviews and a survey was undertaken. This is also to provide the basis for the reliability of studies and the validation of findings in terms of their accuracy, checking for bias in research methods and the development of research instruments. The data from these three resources was analysed through discourse analysis in order to address the analytic issues and the concern for an ‘in-depth’ focus on people’s activities of a qualitative research.

There were two main stages of research in the study. In the companies stage, the results reveal that meaningful conversations that required graduates at the workplace are often absent in language classroom and teaching materials. This raises the importance of achieving balance between transactional and relational talk in language teaching materials. It also raises the importance of communicative language teaching at university that can support in various aspects of discourse. In the university stage of the research, the findings disclose that this was not an environment necessarily conducive to supplying the workplace with suitably communicatively competent graduates. There were various problems identified concerning teacher’s contextual realization, their questioning and their use of CLT activities that did not stimulate communication. By contrast, traditional teaching methods were noted, including the patterns of teacher fronted, form focused practice, with few student-student interactions.

Importantly, the analyses of the results indicate that action research can help to bring improvement of teachers’ teaching practice. Though limited in number, considerable positive changes made by
the teachers were identified. These changes were primarily in terms of materials adaptation and
the number of classroom interactions. The other significant finding was that teachers
understanding of the study’s interventions had a positive impact on their practice. They also
showed their positive attitude towards the changes and were pleased to engage more students
through adopting these changes.

Based on the findings of the study, major issues are identified. The study’s findings have
implications for materials development, teacher development and school management. The
research also reveals the importance of conducting a needs analysis for stakeholders. Finally, the
study’s limitations, together with recommendations for further research based on authentic
transcripts/materials of workplace talk, or further interventions, observations and feedback in
terms of teachers’ process in engaging action research, are discussed.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<td>ELF</td>
<td>English as a lingua franca</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English language teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>English for Specific Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Face threatening acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCMC</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBLT</td>
<td>Task-based language teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VNU</td>
<td>Vietnam National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>UIT</td>
<td>University of Information Technology</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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This study focuses on possible approaches that can be done at university to prepare undergraduate students with English language communicative competence required at the workplace. In an attempt to explore how English was taught at a university and whether English education met the needs of business, the main concern of this study is how materials design and teacher education can support learners to develop the skills to communicate effectively in the Vietnamese workplace.

1.1 Study Background

The research is set in the context of globalisation which is defined as a stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers, so that events, decisions and activities in one part of the world affect people in distant places (Held et al, 2007). In this way, globalisation fosters faster connectivity and cooperation among countries all over the world. As a result, a community of communication involving more people communicating over more language boundaries needs to be established (Wright, 2000). Some consider that a common language shared among people is required to fulfil this need (e.g Erling, 2004). English is increasingly used to communicate across international boundaries. English has become an international language, a *lingua franca* (ELF) in a general consensus of not being under the domain of a specific country (e.g. British or American); but being appropriate English for the local use (Kachru, 1996; Jenkins, 2006) and taking into account the local Englishes’ social historical development and sociocultural contexts (Selinker, 1992; Modiano, 1999).

As globalisation is fuelled by economic interest (i.e. the increasing number of companies and organisations conducting their business internationally and transnationally, using English for contacts between speakers from different language backgrounds), there is a perceived need to be able to communicate in English for business purposes (Pennycook, 1994). This has been reflected in English language teaching (ELT) worldwide: there is a realization that it is no longer simply teaching a language, but helping learners to achieve English skills relating to communicative competence - the knowledge of when and how to say what to whom (Freeman, 2011) that businesses require. These include making appointments, confirming plans, negotiating and effective meetings skills (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Gatehouse, 2001).

It is therefore necessary that English language education in university be prioritised to meet the needs of both learners and employers. This concerns curriculum design and instructional development relating to authentic materials and teacher support at university. Authentic materials would help to meet the needs of real communication of the language, and the purposefulness and meaningfulness of
tasks for language learning (Clarke, 1989; Trabelsi, 2010). Teacher support for teacher’s professional development (e.g. designing materials, enhancing perception and practical knowledge of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) would help to stimulate opportunities for learners to achieve communicative competence that they need (Nunan, 1990; Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999; Mangubhai et al., 2004). This study will examine the issues discussed above in a Vietnamese context.

1.1.1 Research questions

My study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does English education at university fulfill the workplace requirements for Vietnamese graduates?
   The two sub-questions of the first research questions are as follows:
   - To what extent do graduates seem able to communicate in English to fulfill their work-related tasks?
   - To what extent does English education at university provide the support they need?

2. To what extent is action research able to improve English education at a university in some way?

My research questions stem from the following hypotheses relating to the situation discussed above: there was a gap between English education at university and English requirement of graduates at the workplace (Vietnam National University, 2008; Vo, 2004, 2007). A number of difficulties in using English communicatively have challenged graduates at the workplace (Vietnam Business Associate, 2008). English education at university, though with some efforts to shift from traditional to communicative teaching methods, seemed not to support enough learner’s needs. I consider that investigations into the reality of English in the workplace and how English is being taught at university would support efforts to identify the gap that needs to be filled for Vietnamese graduates to meet the workplace requirements. Furthermore, I judge that assisting teachers to be reflective on their teaching practice by doing action research may help to solve the problem. I now will address the raised issues in detail below.

1.2 A Historical Overview of English Teaching in Vietnam

Vietnam is one of 6 Southeast-Asian countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) where English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Ho, 2006). EFL is defined as English use in the countries which have no colonial links with England or the United States and where English is not a mother tongue (Kachru, 1992). This links to the concept of English being used as an international language, an ELF in different varieties: in one sense, we can look at English as an international model as in Kachru’s outer circle (pp.356-7) (e.g British English or American English) for use. Some people,
however, need to use English as a tool for intercultural communication across national and linguistic boundaries (Jenkins, 2006; Verleysen, 2010). In this sense, English is used as ELF interactions, and also concerns local linguistic repertoire (e.g. lexis, phonology) for use in local communicative contexts. In Vietnam, English is used for communication among foreigners from different countries and with local people. The models are British English in the North and American English in the South. However, these models are unlike standard varieties of English in some contexts (e.g. Singapore), but rather ELF for communication between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a national culture coming to Vietnam for their business (Vietnamese Business Associate and VNU-HCM, 2004).

At the very early stage of development, in the post-Vietnam war of the 1980s, English was first taught in secondary schools. At that time, English was considered as one of the foreign languages taught in the school curriculum. Russian and French were the other two foreign languages in schools which interested learners more due to their wide use before the war (Vietnamese Ministry of Education, 1990).

This lasted until the late 1990s when English started to be viewed as more important, as an international language. During this period, Vietnam first opened its doors to the western world, the need for speaking and writing in English (in many areas such as education, business and politics) increased as the Vietnamese government policy emphasized English and accelerated internationalization (Vietnam Ministry of Education, 1990). Russian and French, as well as Chinese, and Korean companies now all use English for their business in Vietnam. This new role of English as EFL has caused the number of English learners in Vietnam to increase (Ha, 2004; Hiep, 2005).

Since the late 20th century, with economic growth and expansion, the number of joint venture companies has been increasing (Vietnam Business Associate, 2004). The majority of these businesses have required language proficiency with which employees could speak and write the language in culturally appropriate ways for specific business purposes (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Gatehouse, 2001). This expectation of employers concerning employees’ soft business-related skills indicates that an employee is able to work as part of a team, come up with ideas and express the ideas using communication skills (e.g. report-writing, telephoning and presentation skills (Andrews and Higson, 2008). These skills are considered as important factors shaping graduate employability.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The recognition of the importance of English communication as discussed above generated a need for Vietnamese authorities to reconsider how English was taught in schools and whether English
education met the needs of business. For this purpose, several research projects were carried out by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and some educational researchers worked on English teaching and learning throughout the country, particularly in big cities. Data collected shows that:

- In both secondary and high schools, English was taught by grammar-translation based on grammatical analysis and the translation of sentences (Tran, 1991; Ho, 2006); English teaching was mostly for the purpose of passing exams (Vu, 2006; Nguyen, 2007).

- Many students entering universities have limited English language proficiency, particularly in terms of listening and speaking skills; university students learn with an English program similar to that of high schools, focused on reading comprehension and grammar (Vo, 2004).

- Many graduates who complete English courses in universities are still limited English users who can probably read materials in English in some fields, but cannot cope with overall meaning in most situations, and are rarely able to handle basic communication (Vo, 2004, 2007; Nguyen Thu, 2007, Dieu Thuy, 2005).

- 37.8% of 12,214 graduates had limited English proficiency, creating difficulties for employers with vacancies to fill (Ha, 2007).

The above situation led to Vietnamese educators’ view that university graduates did not yet ‘know’ English well enough to use it effectively in the real life. Knowing a language, as Hymes (1972) proposed, involves more than simply knowing a set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules. In order to use the language effectively, learners need to develop communicative competence – the ability to use the language they are learning appropriately in a given social encounter. Furthermore, communicative competence should be conceived as intercultural communicative competence – the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. It should be acknowledged in relation to learners’ social identities and cultural competence (Bryam, 1997). In the case of the situation in Vietnam, it is clear that Vietnamese learners need to emphasise communicative competence in their English learning (Tran, 1991).

In order to respond to that need, it requires approaches in ELT which concern principles for effective teaching methods and authentic materials such as emphasizing communication through meaningful interaction among learners; linking classroom language learning to real life outside the classroom; and communicative classroom activities (Richards and Rogers, 2011). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach covers the above characteristics (Nunan, 1999; Richards 2006). Because of
this, the latter teaching approach has become a dominant theoretical model in Vietnam since the 1990s, with the goal of developing communicative competence for learners (Hiep, 2005).

However, when CLT comes into classroom practice, some problematic issues arise. As some authors indicate, CLT may be impractical or ineffective in EFL countries because of significant socioeconomic and cultural differences (e.g. Holliday, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). In particular, these following issues would be considered as discussed below:

1.3.1 EFL setting

In Vietnam, English is used as a foreign language (EFL) where English “is taught as a subject in schools but not used as a medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992, p.123-124). English as a second language (ESL), on the other hand, is defined as “the role of English for immigrant and other minority groups in English-speaking countries” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992, p.124). The key difference is that in ESL settings English is used both inside and outside the classroom, whilst in EFL contexts, students have fewer chances to practice English outside the classroom. The role of English in EFL settings is defined by Richards (1985) as “It may be an important school subject and it may be necessary to pass an examination in English to enter a university. It may be the language of certain courses at a university, or at least of a large percentage of the students’ textbooks” (p.2-4). Some authors (e.g. Ellis, 1994) state that it is necessary to take into consideration the distinction between ESL and EFL settings in terms of teaching and learning English, because the differences have an influence in what and how English is learnt in English training. In particular, Nam (2005, p.19) discusses these impacts implied in her study context in Korea, which has many similarities to this study set in the Vietnamese context. These include:

- The purposes for learning EFL and ESL are different: in EFL situations, English is perceived as one of the most important academic subjects, rather than as a tool for survival as in business and education, which is often the case with ESL (Liu, 1999). Students in my study learnt English as an academic subject at school.
- ESL teachers are usually native speakers of English while EFL teachers are usually non-native speakers of English, having less proficiency in the target language than native English-speaking teachers though they can use the same native language as their learners for their teaching.
- In EFL, English teaching materials are usually provided in textbooks prescribed by the government or policy administrators, ESL teachers often have more freedom to choose or develop materials.
- Students in EFL settings have fewer chances to apply what they learn to communicative situations, especially with native speakers of English.
1.3.2 Teachers

The Vietnamese teachers in the current study teaching in a public school, like in many other areas in the world, have heavy workloads and are affected by all contextual factors as discussed above. While facing such difficulties, many teachers would rather use more traditional methods in English classes which require them less time and effort. Vu (2004) conducted quantitative research to explore the effectiveness of English training in higher education level at universities including CLT implementation. According to her data, although Vietnamese EFL teachers showed positive attitudes toward CLT, there were some differences between their beliefs about CLT and their actual practices of CLT in the classroom practice due to a number of obstacles:

...large class size, lack of authentic materials, little support for chances to experience language in English-speaking countries, lack of school facilities for using audio-visual materials, too little time to teach assigned textbook context, and exams in university focused mainly on reading skills (Vu, 2004, p.15).

The research data also indicate that teachers need support not only in terms of knowledge and skills (professional development) but also in terms of being allowed time and freedom to do their work (the support from their institutions). English teachers in Vietnamese universities have been encouraged to participate in several professional workshops delivered by Vietnam National University every year. In these workshops the teachers had been trained and encouraged to base their teaching on the principles of communicative language teaching. However, there is a little of the application of principles promoted during their training after the workshops that could be seen. This can be blamed for contextual factors as discussed above.

Besides the findings above, another constraint was teacher’s attitude toward change. Some teachers of English who adhere to the traditional ways of teaching do not want to change and argue against CLT (Nguyen, 2004; Vo, 2007). With these teachers, the grammatical knowledge rather than communicative competence in English is still emphasized, and this holds back the progress of English education innovation in Vietnam. This raises the need of studies to investigate into teachers’ awareness of CLT and their actual CLT implementation in practice.
1.3.3 Learners

Vietnamese learners of English learn English in an EFL context, the majority of Vietnamese enter university with low English proficiency, and particularly poor communication skills (Vo, 2004; Nguyen, 2004). With these characteristics, they deal with the difficulties which obstruct the engagement in learning: failure to cope with the demanding level of English used in most global English textbooks; may not find the purposes for communication learning with the topics which are not culturally familiar to them in global textbooks; and the need for some types of activities that promote verbal skills (Dat, 2008). Participants in this study were IT students who study in English with no desire to come to a native-speaking community (Vo, 2007), and may respond more enthusiastically to authentic materials than textbook material (p.107, Gilmore, 2007). This suggests that it is necessary to develop materials and appropriate teaching methods which are coherent and facilitate English learning for Vietnamese learners.

Vietnamese students’ reticence is often considered as a major constraint for successful CLT (Dat, 2007). In Vietnamese culture, learners have little opportunity to speak in class. Even with some encouragement from teachers who insist on more communicative methods, according to learners’ supposition, the best learning method is to listen carefully and take notes thoroughly to get a good score on an exam. This is partly caused by exams in university mainly focusing on reading and writing skills (Vo, 2007). Furthermore, Vietnamese learners do not feel free to talk in class, unless asked. This could be due to the strong influence of Confucianism that Vietnamese people who are younger and at lower social positions often are supposed to show politeness and respect to people who are older and in higher social positions (Nguyen Chi, 2012). A number of Vietnamese learners, therefore, may wish to show their respect to their teacher by listening silently when the teacher talks and rarely raise their voice. Accordingly, this may lead to challenges to the new language teaching approach or methods where the role of learners is expected to be as ‘negotiators’, participating within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities.

1.3.4 Inauthentic teaching materials

In Vietnam, most of language teaching materials are global course books which may be authentic to native speakers of English, but might not be authentic to Vietnamese learners (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996); Vietnamese learners, in EFL setting, rarely find the real need to use English to communicate in and outside classroom (Hiep, 2005). In this situation, learners need to see more evidence of how the English they learn can operate in the real-world (Dat, 2008). Therefore, materials that can provide opportunities for learners to use English meaningfully for a real communicative purpose are very necessary (Hiep, 2005; Dat, 2006), particularly as communicative competence has chiefly been
required due to employers’ recent need of candidates who can use English to communicate successfully in the workplace (Le, 2008; Vo, 2008).

Furthermore, some scholars suggest that teaching approaches from Western contexts are hardly accepted without question for non-Western contexts (Holliday, 1994; Sullivan 2000). Teachers, learners and teaching situations in Vietnam are completely different from some other places in the world in terms of socio-cultural aspects. This increasingly requires materials designed in the way that is authentic to expose learners to language in use in relation to the communicative needs in learners’ context. For example, topics about motorbikes and hot weather are more appropriate to Vietnam than those about cars and snow. In this way, the learners will have opportunities to use English to achieve communication purpose learning with materials that are designed to cater for more diverse behaviours, viewpoints and personalities (Dat, 2006). Thus, learners can relate to their context and feel engaged with the materials through communicative language learning.

1.4 Innovations at the university of Information Technology (UIT) to which I contributed and preliminary evaluation

Since the year 2000, I became concerned about the above discussed problem while working as a research associate and an English teacher for the Institute of Education Research and some universities. With more than 6 year experience doing research and teaching English at universities, I was aware of all the issues discussed above. My research work gave me a chance to see that high school students entering universities had no motivation and preparation to learn English listening and speaking. Pronunciation was the big weakness of the majority of students. The reason was that the English curriculum in high schools was taught mainly with grammar and vocabulary and there was almost no practice for listening and speaking (Vo, 2004, Nguyen Thu, 2007). After that, while teaching English at some different universities, I had an opportunity to carry out another study looking at how students continued to be taught English at universities. The findings of the study shaped my view that the English program at most universities focused on teaching reading textbooks and doing grammar exercises. English teaching materials were out-of-date with the same materials used for about 10 years without any changes and inadequate to help learners develop listening and speaking skills (Vo 2007, To 2007).

Also in 2007, I was invited to be an examining viva for a research project for one of the experienced researchers in the field. It was the project of evaluating the effectiveness of English training in higher education at universities in Ho Chi Minh city by Vu (2004). Vu’s research results showed that English
training in higher education was inefficient and could not meet the need of the industry. The findings supported statistics gathered by Department of Information and Communication (cited in Le, 2008) that many graduates who finished English courses in universities still had limited English proficiency and that 77% of businesses had to retrain their applicants in some skills including English language skills. The research results suggested that some innovations should be done soon for English training at universities to improve the situation. I kept this in mind until I had the opportunity to put it into practice when appointed to the position of manager of the school English program at the University of Information Technology (UIT) in Vietnam.

UIT is one of the schools of Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Though the university was founded in 2006, it operated as a centre of education including the department of English language several years earlier. A short time later, I took the responsibility for the curriculum design and implementation. Now in the position of a curriculum manager, I had an opportunity to put into practice the desire I kept through years of teaching and researching to develop an effective English training program for the purpose of helping learners to meet the market’s needs. In designing this curriculum, I shadowed an experienced curriculum manager and also attempted to draw upon my own experience. I was lucky to have a group of 3 other teachers who shared my concern and my work. The innovations – or what we did to ‘refresh’ English language curriculum at UIT - were in relation to materials design and teacher support, as presented below.

1.4.1 Curriculum innovations
As one of UIT English programme managers, I tried to revise the curriculum of the regular university English courses into something more communicative by emphasizing the teaching of practical English. Therefore, the university English curriculum, though still General English courses, aimed to provide balanced coverage of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Its overall goal was to attempt to help learners use English language rather than grammatical and comprehensive reading skills. Specifically, UIT students are required to take a total of eight-credits English courses: four courses (English 1- English 4) worth two credits each from freshman to junior year, and to pass each course in order to graduate from the university. There was much more time for English subject at UIT, comparing with other universities, which can be considered an innovation when compared to other universities. The four English courses are offered over four years for all freshmen through juniors at the university depending on student’ scores on the placement test at the beginning of the university English program (UIT, English Department, 2006-2009). The lower levels of English students had, the more English courses they had to take. Seventy-five per-cent of students of students at UIT had an
elementary level in English when they entered the university which made the goal of the English program became challenging.

In order to achieve the English program’s goal, I encouraged English teachers at UIT to adapt materials and implement appropriate methods in their classes. Though the textbooks at UIT were selected to support the aims of the program to develop communicative skills for learners, I was aware that these materials, like many other textbooks, catered to an international audience (Mishan, 2005). Therefore, part of the work for materials design I encouraged the teachers to do was: adding some materials to textbooks, adapting and contextualizing the lessons in the books to motivate their learners. The teachers were also invited to give ideas of what parts of the course book should be edited such as identifying those areas to be omitted because they were not appropriate to the Vietnamese context. Also, in summer time, UIT English teachers were invited to contribute in a team to compile and write materials to update and support the current English program. The designed materials included supplementary materials for pronunciation and grammar practice. The work was done with the hope that it would help students with low level in English get better preparation to start learning with the English course atUIT and gradually better their listening comprehension and speaking. Accordingly, more communicative teaching methods appropriate to convey adapted materials were also employed. In particular, the use of a topical syllabus, rather than a traditional structural model, was encouraged. This could facilitate the use of authentic materials and flexible teaching methods such as flexible or more communicative teaching approach for the implementation of conversational English courses.

1.4.2 Preliminary evaluation

Despite some anecdotal positive feedback from teachers and students, the above innovations can be evaluated based on the situation rather than research. This is explained in detail as below.

Firstly, materials design. Pronunciation practice books took my priority because I thought that pronunciation would be essential for communicating successfully in English (the most important key for UIT curriculum’s objectives) insofar as the majority of students find it really hard to pronounce English words or utter even short sentences. Two main reasons for my assumption were: First, many students (even with some students who have pre-intermediate levels in English) said though they could manage some grammar and reading exercises, they were often scared to speak and listen in English; they also found that English pronunciation was the most difficult thing for them in learning English. Second, pronunciation exercises in the course books used are inappropriate since the students share the same native language and do not make certain errors as predicted by the exercises (Vo, 2004). Furthermore, many learners (who formed the majority of freshmen in universities) lacked lexis
and grammar as well, which also acted as a barrier to speaking or writing. Therefore, supplementary material in terms of lexis and grammar was also designed, aimed at supporting reading and writing insofar as the curriculum aimed to cover the four skills.

Secondly, teaching with these materials. Teachers were supported with the designed materials, encouraged to teach using the aid of CDs to illustrate movements of speech apparatus for students to make individual sounds and encouraged to use activities including DIY designed tasks, games, group works. It was anticipated this would provide students with reasons and chances to communicate in English in the classroom.

It is recognised, however, that my approach to the above innovations was influenced by my intuitive perception of the problem and of how communicative competence is developed. It was an intuitive understanding because I did not have opportunities to conduct research at that time. For example, I did not have a chance to go to a real-life context such as a pilot study I did on Vietnamese workers using English at several restaurants in the U.K or a workplace to see how graduates use English they learnt from the program or the materials; whether the kinds of English language required at the workplace are represented in language teaching materials at university. Such experience could provide me with useful evidence to be based on for the innovation evaluation. I could hardly have known for sure how efficient the innovations were unless I had undertaken this Doctoral research.

In other words, doing research would help me to know what kind of English language required at the workplace. From that view of language as discourse (i.e. workplace discourse), as McCarthy and Carter (1994) indicate, it would enable me to be a better and more efficient evaluator of the things I have done including the usefulness of the materials in developing learner’s communicative competence. I therefore carried out a research which reflected the reality of what I had been doing. I (1) went to the companies to learn about the reality of English in the workplace – what graduates’ needs at the workplace are, (2) observed at the university to see how needs were being met and (3) intervened in a minor way to influence teachers and their English teaching practice.

1.5 Research design and ethical issues

1.5.1 Research design

The study is mainly based on features of qualitative research. Qualitative/ interpretive research was useful to the current study when the goal was “to explore new linkages and causal relationships, external and internal influences, and internal priorities inherent in a particular social context” (Dornyei 2001, p.193). Moreover, this research design was appropriate to the study because qualitative research in second languages (L2) relies on field data such as observations recorded in field notes,
interviews recorded on audio or video cassette and authentic documents (e.g. recorded speech samples, written texts) of communicative behaviour (Dornyei, 2001). In this context, the processes of data collection were done through the methods of observations and interviews and survey. This is also to provide the basis for the reliability of studies and the validation of findings in terms of their accuracy, checking for bias in research methods and the development of research instruments (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Holliday, 2002). Seeking to combine observation with interview meant that I worked with ‘naturally occurring’ data – the data collected from situations which seem to exist independently of the researcher (Silverman, 2001). In order to inform the analysis of these data for addressing the analytic issues and the concern for an ‘in-depth’ focus on people’s activities of a qualitative research (Silverman, 2005), I conducted discourse analysis. As Potter (1997) states, discourse analysis “has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as texts and talk in social practices ...the focus is... on language as...the medium for interaction; analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis of what people do” (p.146).The concepts of ‘stake’-“way of discounting the significance of an action and reworking its nature” (Potter, 2004, p. 210) and ‘scripts’ – the way in which participants construct events (Edwards, 1997 cited in Silverman, 2005) in discourse analysis help me to build up a picture of what kind of person the participant is and understand the significance of his/her action. In my research, texts (e.g. email documents, transcripts of discussions, interviews) were recognized as rich data and were analysed through narrative analysis (Silverman, 2005). This approach was chosen to illuminate my analysis of texts because it can support the processes through which texts “depict reality rather than with whether such texts contain true or false statements” (Silverman, 2001, p.128).

1.5.2 My roles as an insider and the consideration of ethical issues

In my study, I was an ideologically committed insider conducting the research (Holliday, 2002), which I attempted to be honest and trustworthy at all my research stages. An insider research/ an action research, as Zeni (2001, p. xiv) defines, is a “qualitative research conducted by insiders in educational settings to improve their own practice”. As an insider, I involved mentoring to help teachers to be flexible in using materials and activities to focus on adaptation of these elements to meet learners’ interests and needs. My role as an insider in the action research included providing teachers a number of workshops and conducting non-participant supervisions basing on Gebhard’s (1984) supervision models. I hope it could bring about changes in teachers’ awareness, attitudes (Freeman, 1989) towards CLT to improve their practice (1.3, above). Due to the limited scope of the study’s intervention, my role as an ‘agent of change’ (Kennedy, 1996), as Wyatt (2008) discusses, is relatively minor. However, I believed that my commitment to this role is worthy. If the desirable changes can
take place through the interventions I did, the outcomes of the study can be ‘validated’ (Kvale, 1996; Wyatt, 2008).

The ethical issue that I had to handle conducting an insider research was how to manage my dual roles of researcher and mentor. I considered the importance of the accuracy and the clearness in collecting reliable data and writing up a qualitative research (Holliday, 2002). The reliability of the data is a central concern of any research. For Silverman (2005), this relates to those patterns which already existed throughout the data, rather than the reporting influenced by the researcher’s personal perspectives. Seen in this light, I realized that I had a challenge to gather such data: In university context, I was an insider. Working as a program manager in UIT for 5 years before coming to the UK for my PhD study, I had the advantage of building up a trusting relationship with the majority of teachers which might have reduced the threat of reactivity (Holliday, 2002). Despite this, there was a challenge insofar as when I returned to perform classroom observations at UIT – teachers might consider classroom observations as directive supervision in which the role of the supervisor is to direct and evaluate teachers’ teaching behaviors. This may threaten to cause teachers to act defensively (Gebhard, 1990). The teachers therefore would feel reluctant to express and clarify the ideas, which could undermine the validity of the data I wish to achieve for the research. In the stage of company research, I was an outsider, which may cause the challenge that the interviewees may not reveal the information worrying how the data is used (Myers & Newman, 2007). It is thus key that the participants joined the research programme voluntarily and with a complete assurance of confidentiality. In order for this, I read some authors (e.g. Holliday, 2002; Wyatt, 2008) and reflected on the possible motives for volunteering such as positive orientation towards the researcher or a progressive attitude towards change and personal growth. I also had to pay careful attention to my position as an action researcher (e.g. as a mentor), trying to ensure, as much as possible, a balanced and neutral standpoint in my research. My aim was to recognise that, whilst change I wished to see might colour my analysis, this would not create bias.

While conducting observations in the stages of my research (at the companies and the university), I also recognised that I need to consider the conflict in values of group work from western view as those placed by individuality, freedom and choice and the ones from Asian countries such as Vietnam (Sullivan, 2000). Vietnamese people emphasize mutual obligation among members of a group - collectivism (one’s face represents the faces of one group) rather than individualism due to the Confucianism underlying values of Vietnamese society (Nguyen Chi, 2012; Scollon & Scollon, 1994; Sullivan, 2000). This differs from the purpose of grouping (e.g. group work in CLT or teamwork at the workplace) which is to allow members to express their own opinions in western or English speaking
countries (Sullivan, 2000). In particular, I recognized that I should be reflexive in terms of my understanding of the context as an insider and being aware of the cultural values. The key point of the research is that of cultures influenced the way that I collected and analysed the data. This consideration assisted me to work with my participants through the process of the research.

1.6 Definitions of terms

The following terms have been defined to clarify their use in the current study:

*Communicative competence* is a competence that a language learner needs to achieve to be able to communicate effectively in the target language (Hymes, 1972). It involves linguistic competence - knowledge of building blocks of sentences (e.g. tenses, sentence patterns) and pragmatic competence - the realization of speech acts like requests and apologies and how to use these in different cultural contexts (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Richards & Rogers, 2001). Furthermore, researchers (e.g. McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Gilmore, 2007) argue that sentence-based grammars and pragmatic models in textbooks which lack naturalness and authenticity are inadequate to support learners at discourse levels. This requires another element of communicative competence which is called ‘discourse competence’. Discourse competence is considered as a critical component of learners’ communicative competence because it is concerned with the dynamic and interactive nature of language for learners to be proficient users in conversation management (Gilmore, 2007).

Communicative competence can be supported through learning with authentic materials which focus on learning aims of the learners (Mishan, 2005; Gilmore, 2007).

*Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) refers to a language teaching methodology which “covers a variety of approaches that all focus on helping learners to communicate meaningfully in a target language” (Nunan, 1999, p.303). CLT should be viewed from wider perspectives such as an approach allowing different procedures and in the continuity with past methods (Hunter & Smith, 2012) and attention to how teachers understand and implement CLT, e.g. hybrid beliefs that include CLT and non-CLT features (Mangubhai et al., 2004).

*Task-based language teaching* (TBLT) is defined as an approach which is based on the use of tasks as the core for planning and instruction in language teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2011). Tasks in this approach can be employed as a means of promoting communication and authentic language use in classrooms (Nunan, 1989; Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1996).

*Authentic materials* involve real-life language use by providing meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used. This aims to engage and motivate learners to help them develop a range of
communicative competences (Mishan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2012). The basis for a judgement of the authenticity should be ‘fitness for purpose’ (Hutchinson & Waters, 1978; McGrath, 2013). Therefore, authentic materials are particularly relevant to prepare learners for English-for-Specific-Purposes (ESP) contexts where learners need to communicate effectively in a specific work or study situation (Hall, 2011; Robinson, 2004).

*Workplace discourse* involves ‘spoken and written interaction occurring in a workplace setting’ (Koester, 2010, p.3).

*Transactional aspect* of the workplace refers to behaviours at the workplace which aim at getting things done and achieving outcomes (Schnurr, 2013, p.9).

*Relational aspect* of the workplace refers to behaviors that aim at enhancing interpersonal relationships and creating a positive working atmosphere (Schnurr, 2013, p.9). It is evident that relational language can be used to achieve transactional goals or ‘identity work’ as transactional conversations do (Handford, 2010; Koester, 2010).

1.7 The structure of the study
This thesis consists of 5 sections. The first section includes the introduction chapter presenting the background of the study, a close look at the context of English education in higher education in Vietnam and the research questions of the study. The next three sections provide the main analysis for the study. It consists of chapters of literature review, research methods and data analysis in each of these sections. Section 2 involves the understanding of English required at the workplace. In this section, the English that is required in the workplace, is examined, together with the factors that may cause the breakdown of a conversation. The third section examines English education relating to the use of materials and teaching methods at a university to see how effectively students seemed to be prepared to communicate with English in the workplace. Section 4 presents the interventions as a means to help teachers to be self-aware of their teaching in order to improve their teaching practice. In this section, the investigation into whether any changes after the interventions took place is also presented. The final section of the study consists of two chapters. The first discusses the findings of the study whilst the second deals with the contribution of the study.
SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING WHAT ENGLISH IS REQUIRED AT THE WORKPLACE

This section includes three chapters which serve the purpose of the section: understanding what English is required at the workplace. Chapter 2 reviews the previous studies on various aspects of English language used at the workplace. Chapter 3 presents the research methods which I used for the data collection at the companies. In chapter 4, the findings of the section are presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - WORKPLACE DISCOURSE

This chapter starts with the notions of genre in workplace communication followed by the central themes that support aspects of the analysis of workplace discourse which involve “interactions occurring across a whole range of occupational settings”, primarily to get things done (Koester, 2010, p.3). These themes have been the transactional and relational aspects of workplace interactions, directives and politeness strategies at work, relational talk and humour with regard to relationship building and identity work, and gender and leadership at work. Finally, the analysis of how these themes of workplace discourse are lacking in teaching materials and English education is also presented in the summary of the section.

2.1 Workplace genres

2.1.1 The notion of genres

Among the various definitions of genres, Bargiela-Chappini and Nickerson’s (1999) is considered one of the most comprehensive: genres are “relatively stable forms of communication which develop in the course of production and reproduction of communicative practices and which are recognized by the members of that community” (p.8). The notion of genre was identified as a systematic way of describing a variety of professional discourse (Schnurr, 2013, p.53). Bhatia (2004, p.22) attempts to bring together the main approaches to genre in one definition:

Genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic and professional settings, whether defined in terms of typification of rhetorical action, as in Miller (1984), Bazerman (1994) and Berkenkotter and Hukin (1995), regularities of stages, goal-oriented processes, as in Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987), or consistency of communicative purposes, as in Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993).

The main approaches to genre which are included in the above definition are: The rhetorical approach, following Swales’ definition, emphasizes privileging communicative purpose in identifying
genre; the Hallidayan approach considers structure as key in genre identification; and social-constructionist approach tends to examine how a discourse community uses genres and how these genres are related to each other (Koester, 2010).

Genres in the workplace were developed from eight communicative genres proposed by Muller (2006) and were grouped into three different macro genres by Koester (2006) in her corpus of American and British office talk (ABOT): unidirectional genres, collaborative genres and non-transactional genres. Unidirectional genres include procedural and directive discourse, briefing, service encounter reporting and requesting. Collaborative genres contain decision-making, arrangements, discussing and evaluating. These two genres are transactional which means ‘work-oriented’, the interactions where the participants go straight to work. Non-transactional genres including the two specific genres of small talk and office gossip, on the other hand, concern topics outside work and ‘off-task’ talk about work (Koester, 2010, p.25). In a similar vein, McCathy (2000) distinguishes the four types of talk: phatic exchanges (i.e. greeting, partings); relational talk (i.e. small talk, anecdotes, wider topics of mutual interest); transactional-plus-relational talk (i.e. non-obligatory task evaluations and other comments) and transactional talk (i.e. requests, requires, instructions).

The genre that takes place most frequently in the ABOT corpus is decision making or forms of communication in the context of the meetings. Despite that, Koester (2010, p.28) does not classify meetings as a genre because a variety of purposes, for example planning, reporting, problem-solving, the events may have. Other researchers, including Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) and Handford (2010) classify meetings as a genre because of the similarities in terms of structural features and practices and strategies shared by all meetings.

Genres of professional discourse have changed as a result of the dramatic changes in organisational reality (i.e. the emergence of computer-mediated communication). This has led to the emergence of new genres, such as email and fax. Email, for example, is becoming more and more important – or perhaps even the most common means of communication in the workplace (Koester, 2010; Schnurr, 2013) – although some authors (such as Yates and Orlikowski, 1992) identify email as a medium, not a genre and some other authors (such as Flowerdew and Wang, 2006) state that faxes and letters still play an important role in certain forms of workplace communication.

Although the boundaries between different genres remain vague and there are different ways in which specific genres can be realized, the kinds of genre, as Koester (2006) and Schnurr (2013)
propose, to be typically used to perform specific functions, may vary considerably among workplaces and even among departments or groups in the same workplace. The two most commonly discussed types of interaction are now considered in more detail. They are meetings and email which involve various aspects of English communication at the workplace represented in the current study.

2.1.2 Meeting

Meetings are defined as “the very stuff of work” (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003, p.56) and are analyzed as a typical aspect of many workplaces (Schnurr, 2013). However, the question ‘what is a meeting?’ is rather complex because it depends on the diversity in form and purpose of what people tend to refer to as meetings. Along with various purposes listed above, meetings have different forms and sizes: they could be formal staff meetings and informal briefing meetings or other types of meetings, for example external meetings with clients or potential partners from some other companies and public meetings, such as among some government committees (Schnurr, 2013). Besides conference rooms, meetings may take place in different locations such as corridors, by the water cooler and coffee machines, on the way to or from offices, in airport lounges, at lunch, or in coffee shops (Scollon & Scollon, 2002).

In previous research on the genre of the business meeting, three-stage meeting structures have been proposed including as the following order: opening the meeting, the discussion of the agenda and the closing of the meeting (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Handford (2010) proposes a broader framework for meetings in which these above stages are obligatory elements, added to the preceding stages called pre-1 (meeting preparation) and pre-2 (pre-meeting) and the post-meeting effects (Handford, 2010, p.69).

Handford (2010) states that the structure of meetings can seem messy because participants do far more than simply perform the structural stages mentioned above: in order to achieve their personal and corporate goals, speakers activate various practices that go along with the language that constitutes them. This actualizes the specific elements of the genres, such as different ways of closing the meeting. Because of the tactics of many practices, Handford’s analysis of the six-stage structure draws on the work of McCarthy (1998) involving the four strands of linguistic behavior. They (which are found in spontaneous spoken genre) include expectations (e.g. setting the agenda, opening the meeting), formulations (e.g. summarizing progress, summarizing information, seeking clarification), recollections (e.g. orienting to past events, orienting related events) and instantiations (e.g. operationalizing topic shift, bringing discussion ‘on track’, taking discussion ‘off track’, reaching a
decision). Among these four practices of meeting, instantiations are concurrently the most difficult to identify and the most important in the creation of genres. They may be transactionally or relationally oriented, or both (Handford, 2010, p.77).

Handford (2010) also notes that the natures of “probabilistic” genres and their linguistic realization should be mentioned (p.89). In business meetings, including both external and internal meetings, which are not intended to be seen as separate but parts of the holistic meeting genre, certain lexico-grammatical features and various practices are frequently found. For instance, an extract of a meeting could include several discursive practices: the end of one instantiation and the beginning of another involving the relational sequence in which the speaker (the managing director) takes it back “on track” through the silence and keyword discourse marker okay along with we; or a formulation with the use of the imperative get which might be a bald directive or clustering of interpersonal features such as repetitions, hesitations, the modal verbs need and can, the vague stuff and the hedges I mean, you know can be read as ellipsis (ibid, pp.79, 80). As Handford (2010) also points out, though it should not be concluded that certain lexico-grammatical features will always be found in a particular type of meeting, many frequent, key lexico-grammatical units can be classified in terms of their discursive practice. The chunks in other words and so I think, which are used to summarize, provide two examples for this. Summarising is an example of the practice of formulations, an important part of the genre of the meeting, therefore also gives strong evidence for participants actively doing the genre.

2.1.3 Email

Now email, the other aspect of communication at the workplace is presented. Over the past 20 years, computer-mediated communication (CMC) - the discourse produced when human beings use computers to interact-has become an enormous field of research. CMC focus on different forms of computer-mediated communication, primarily text-based CMC such as computer games, instant messages, discussion groups and email (Skovholt, 2009). From the research, the two different theories emerged about the origins of email: (1) email has developed from the genre of written memos with the proviso that email may be also used for some types of messages which are similar to other genres such as voice mail (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992); (2) email is derived from telephone conversations due to a new need in the business environment, such as the requirement to communicate across time zones (Gimenez, 2000). There seems to be in most studies a general agreement that email is influenced by both written and spoken genres (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992).
Gimenez (2006) describes email with the phenomenon of “embedded” emails – a chain of contextually connected messages being sent back and forth – which seem to fulfil a particular need in globalized business environment, as a tool “when the complexity of the topic being discussed by a geographically dispersed team calls for team decision-making” (Gimenez, 2006, p.162). Other key features of email are the facilities (the carbon copy and forward) which allow messages to be sent and passed to different levels of participants of the recipients – whether actively involved or as “witnesses” of the process. This empowers a multiple participation in the decision-making process (Gimenez, 2006). Despite the controversy of whether it is a genre or not, email represents two important aspects of genres in today’s business environment: the rapid development of the genres that are used and the cumulative hybridity of many genres (Koester, 2006).

Organizational studies on email indicate some features of email: first, email is regarded as a medium facilitating more open and informal communication, for example, email makes it far easier to contact higher level managers, who previously could be difficult to get access to, by copying them into an email (Skovholt & Svenevig, 2006 cited in Skovholt, 2009). On the other hand, email also enables managers to manage their employees at a distance by accessing to the employees’ email accounts or the email system to control the ongoing working process. This “highlights the power of email and facilitates individual acts of self-control and discipline” (Brigham & Corbett, 1997, p.31 as cited in Skovholt, 2009). The implication of email in organizational communication has led to the change in replacing telephone calls and face-to-face meetings with the use of written communication. This shift has given the managers the possibility of exercising more power: Storing and ordering emails into archives which represents the organization’s collective memory, a practical resource for managers to control their people. The shift towards using emails has also had enormous influence on the way organizations are able to document operational processes. That is, emails may also function as documentation when they are made active in another context which is impossible with verbal communication (Skovholt, 2009).

Furthermore, according to Skovholt (2009), email makes it possible to organize their work in virtual teams which provide organizations the possibility that otherwise would not be available, such as collaborating among across time zones and institutional and geographical distances. However, it also brings some challenges compared to traditional meetings in terms of how to create and establish a shared common ground.
The different views on email which are presented above will be compared with the findings of English language use at the workplace in the current study. The following parts, which examine additional aspects of workplace discourse will provide further insights into the genres used at work.

2.2 Transactional and relational aspects

Transactional aspects of an interaction are defined as “behaviours that (more or less explicitly) aim at getting done and achieving outcomes” whereas relational aspects refer to “behaviours that aim at enhancing interpersonal relationships and creating a positive working atmosphere” (Schnurr, 2013, p.9). The distinction between transactional talk and relational talk in the workplace are controversial (Holmes 2000, McCarthy, 2000, Koester, 2006), as I will now explain.

Handford (2010) discusses that the relational/transactional distinction which is often clear in terms of topic and language is more problematic at level of goals. For example, the most transactional of professional speech events can feature relational talk (Boden, 1994 as cited in Handford, 2010); speakers in business meetings appear to be purposely using what is, on one level, relational language, keep transactional goals in mind (McCarthy, 2000). As Koester (2004) states, speakers engaging in casual conversation have goals, but these goals are largely relational and not transactional. However, there is not always a firm correlation between casual conversation and relational goals, so the care about inappropriately conflating language and goals also needs to be taken (Handford, 2010). The discussion of this distinction comes to the position discussed by Handford (2010): “relational language (for example, talking about football) can be used to achieve transactional goals such as encouraging the client to remain as such and to buy more from the company” (p.29). This supports the ideas of Koester (2006), who said that relational talk can be seen as a means for identity negotiation at the workplace. For example, small talk in which jokes are exchanged by contrasting one’s institutional identity can build up a relationship with other interlocutors (Koester, 2010). As Koester discusses, when the plate maker introduce a joke saying ‘I’m not really a plate supplier, I’m a joke supplier’, he provides an opportunity for jokes being exchanged and makes a relationship with his interlocutors go well beyond that of purely transactional conversations. Small talk can also be a useful way to deal with a problematic situation when the institutional relationship is ‘asymmetrical’ (e.g. manager-subordinate). By slipping into a joking frame, for example, the manager can set himself on a more equal foot with his employees to enable him to back down from the ‘authoritarian’ identity, and thus probably mitigate any face-threat implied. In some other cases, small talk can help a manager to invoke an identity as a responsible manager by expressing concern for the employee such as ‘alright, but you are sort of getting the drift of it yeah’ (ibid, p.102-3). The discussion is also
relevant to other different business contexts when, for example, some companies have far more relational culture in practice, such as spending time with individual customers and avoiding the use of automated answering machines (Handford, 2010).

McCathy (2000) notes that even in transactional talks, participants still “reinforce the relational context” (p.104). Relational talks often occur at the beginning of the meetings which arguably is the most transactional. Moreover, even the business meeting can feature relational talks at some levels (Boden, 2004 as cited in Handford, 2010). Studies indicate that both transactional talk and relational talk are important and can be analysed as ‘identity work’; this means having work done by bringing into focus professional identities which can be negotiated through non-task talk. In many cases, relational language can be used to achieve transactional goals such as encouraging the customer to continue to buy more or the relational-transactional topic shift could put the interlocutors at ease (Handford, 2010). Therefore, a consideration for both transactional and relational talk being able to be analysed in terms of identity work could be a more rewarding attempt than trying to distinguish the two kinds of talk (Koester, 2010).

2.3 Directives in transactional aspects

In transactional aspects of the business environment, if decision making is the most important collaborative task, procedural discourse (instructions and explanations) is the most prominent activity in most workplace contexts. Procedural discourse involves ‘a discursively dominant speaker telling an addressee how to do something or what to do’ (Koester, 2006, p.43). Two procedural sub-genres defined in ABOT corpus are general instructions or explanations of procedures and directives or instructions relating to a specific instance. Directives are identified to have an important role within encounters involving instructions and procedures and also occur within other genres, such as decision-making (Koester 2006, 2010).

Studies of directives such as Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Vine (2004), Bilbow (1997) show that there are a variety of realizations for directives from imperatives, to models of obligation (e.g., ‘have to’, ‘need to’, through to more indirect requests (e.g., using epistemic modals, such as ‘would’ and ‘could’). The studies also show that a range of factors can influence the form of a directive or request, including the institutional context, mode (routine or non-routine task), and social, ethnic and cultural factors. Among these factors, power (the institutional relationship) and politeness (for relational goals) are considered as two major factors that influence the choice of communication strategies in the workplace (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Harries, 2003).
According to politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p.78), any certain communicative act can threaten the “positive” or “negative” face of a speaker or an interlocutor. “Positive face” refers to “an individual’s positive self-image and feeling of self-worth” and “negative face” concerns “self-determination and freedom of action”. It is therefore necessary for speakers to choose to use politeness strategies to avoid a face-threatening act. For example, an email to an academic to ask for information of a course at a university would require the language such as ‘Dear’, ‘I’d like…’ rather than ‘Hi’ and ‘I want…’. It is to avoid threatening the addressee’s face needs. Powerful speakers, for example, as many studies agree, use politeness strategies because they want to build and foster a good relationship with other interlocutors (Pufahl Bax, 1986; Vine, 2004). In Vine’s (2004) study, “control acts” (directives, direct and advice) are defined to be mitigated either “internally” or “externally”. Internal mitigation occurs through the actual form chosen for the directive, for example, using a modal verb rather than an imperative, whereas external mitigation may happen through discourse moves that occur before or after the directive or request (ibid.,p.93-120). The findings of the ABOT corpus (Koester, 2006) indicate that lexico-grammatical choices (e.g. model verbs or adverbial hedges) which are significantly influenced by genre, play a major role in giving directives. The following “interpersonal markers” were compared across all the genres in the corpus: modal verbs, vague language, hedges and intensifiers and idioms.

According to the results of the corpus analysis (Koester, 2006), modal verbs occurred with the most frequency in procedural discourse. The modal verbs for a stronger obligation or necessity (‘need to’ and ‘have to’) were least frequent, while the modal verb ‘want to’ expressing desire or inclination, rather than obligation, took place the most frequently. Other more frequent interpersonal markers in procedural discourse were hedges (e.g. ‘just’, ‘like’) and vague language (e.g. ‘things’, ‘stuff’ or ‘something’). The corpus analysis also shows that interactions involving directives and instructions seem to avoid direct forms and preferred more indirect or mitigated alternatives.

Directives and/or requests occur frequently in procedural discourse and in decision-making as well, which is also the other most frequently occurring genres in the corpus (Koester, 2010). The two discourses, as mentioned in workplace genres section, are transactional: procedural discourse is a unidirectional genre, where one of the participants is dominant, whereas decision making is collaborative, with speakers taking more or less equal roles. In procedural discourse, deontic modals were all used with above average frequency, but less forceful modals (‘have to’, ‘need to’, ‘should’) used comparing with those in decision-making, while ‘want to’ was used more frequently. Hedges
and vague language were very infrequent in both procedural discourse and in the corpus as the whole.

According to Koester (2006, 2010), requesting action is another unidirectional genre which was examined together with directives because requests also have the purpose of getting the addressee to perform an action. Requests occur in requesting encounters and directives in procedural encounters. In the ABOT corpus, directives and requests took a range- from most to least forceful- of forms from imperatives to various modals. They are: imperatives (i.e. bald imperative + ‘you’ imperative, e.g. ‘ask her’, ‘you do’; ‘just’ + imperative, e.g. ‘just email me the names’); modals (i.e. mustn’t, have (got) to, need (to), should, ought to, supposed to, want to, can, could, would, might) and let’s, let me (Koester 2010, p.78).

The analysis of directives above also emphasizes the importance of politeness to mitigate face-threat in procedural discourse. It relates to politeness and solidarity strategies employed in the workplace which will be explored a bit more in the next section.

2.4 Politeness strategies in the workplace

Brown and Levinson’s 1987 theory of politeness, one of the most comprehensive and most influential theories (Schnurr, 2013), have two types of face: positive face and negative face as mentioned in the previous section. These different types of face are often threatened by “face-threatening acts” (FTAs) in speech acts. In order to minimize the threat, according to Brown and Levinson, interlocutors may choose a wide range of politeness strategies. In particular, certain speech acts such as disapproval, contempt, criticism, accusations, insults, disagreements and complaints are believed to threaten the addressee’s positive face. Expressions of requests, orders, threats and warnings are described as threatening the receiver’s negative face. The utterances of admitting to some kinds of own fault, such as apologies (threatening one own positive image) is also included in the FTAs that threaten the speaker’s positive face; the expressions of thanks and acceptances of offers and apologies (imposing on one own freedom of action) are included in the FTAs that threaten the speaker’s negative face.

It is clear from the above explanations that different politeness strategies are often employed by speakers in order to avoid the face-threat of FTAs (Schnurr, 2013, p.94). These various strategies are summarized as various options speakers have when it comes to performing FTAs. First, the speakers can decide whether they do or avoid performing the FTA. Once they have decided to do the FTA, they have options of doing it “on record” or “off record”: utter it implicitly (e.g. “It is cold in here” rather
than “Can you please shut the window?”) or actually utter it. In the latter case, speakers have two further choices: they can either utter the FTA baldly (e.g. “You need to write the report again”) or they can employ positive and/or negative politeness strategies to minimise the face-threat of their FTA. Positive politeness which is understood as the attention to speakers’ positive face needs often involves an expression of solidarity. It is generally “approach-based”: speakers need to do something in order to be positively polite and the desire of one’s own self-image is appreciated and approved of by others. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is likely to be “avoidance-based”: interlocutors avoid doing something in order not to impose on each other and to maintain their freedom of action (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.60).

However, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has received a lot of criticism in terms of having a Western bias and not capturing Asian meanings of the concept (e.g Fraser, 2005). Many studies on politeness in Asian contexts challenge different aspects of the politeness theory, especially the concept of negative face. For example, when a Chinese delegation felt offended because of not being appreciated sufficiently by the chairman of a British company (for not sufficiently emphasizing ‘their importance to the company’ (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2000 as cited in Schnurr, 2013), one could argue that they felt threatened in their positive face. However, this explanation does not account for the fact that they felt unacknowledged and treated unfairly in the role their company had played. That means, they felt not appreciated as a group, rather than feeling personally offended. In other words, the notions of negative and positive face in western countries could not adequately be applied in Asian countries without a consideration of cultural difference (Schnurr, 2013). Furthermore, in Asian contexts (e.g, Vietnam) where individualism is less preferred and group spirit is generally considered as being a central aspect of societal relations, the notion of negative face need seem to be much less an issue. Other aspects that have criticism on the politeness theory include the use of honorifics in some languages (e.g. cac anh chi – you in plural form and chung ta – we in Vietnamese (Nguyen Chi, 2012), which is seen as an acknowledgement of interlocutors’ sociocultural relationships rather than an expression of negative politeness.

Two politeness systems can be seen common among Vietnamese participants in a conversation are hierarchy and solidarity (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Hierarchical politeness, as Scollon and Scollon put it, involves a system in which “the participants recognize and respect the social differences that place one in a superordinate position and the other in a subordinate position” (p.45). Solidarity can be referred to as positive politeness where participants tend to intensify their interest and approval to each other (Holmes, 2001).
2.5 Relational talk and humour

Koester (2004, 2006) proposes four levels of relational talk:

Non-transactional conversations: office gossip and small talk
Phatic communion: small talk at the beginning or end of transactional encounters.
Relational episode: small talk or office gossip occurring during the performance of a transactional talk.
Relational sequences and turns: non-obligatory task-related talk with a relational focus.

Many studies agree that work can be done through relational talk, for example, small talk is used in workplace contexts to perform a variety of types of face work (Holmes, 2000; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003); “solidarity” and “politeness” functions (Koester, 2010) and “do collegiality” as well as “do power” (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Two specific functions of relational talk are mainly discussed by studies are relationship building and identity work.

Relationship building can be seen particularly clearly in the phatic communion that reveals “the cumulative consensus about the relationship reached as the result or repeated encounters between the two participants” and this “constitutes the essence of that relationship” (Koester, 2006, pp.57-58). Relational talk can be also seen to be used for identity work such as identity negotiation or institutional identities. One example for this is the example in 2.2 in which the plate supplier can employ relational talk by producing a joke (‘I’m a joke supplier’) to provide an opportunity for building a relationship with his partner which goes well further than that of a purely transactional one. Another example involves interactions where the institutional relationship is “asymmetrical” (e.g. manager-subordinate), more “symmetrical” identities may be negotiated by creating some metaphors (e.g. “clogged orders”) which are treated humorously. By this way, it can incur laughter and repetition which in some way may lighten the tone of the meeting that could begin in an almost threatening manner (e.g. “Haven’t seen much in the way of sales the last half of the week”) (Koester, 2010, p.66,102).

Holmes (2006) makes a similar point when she discusses that small talk at work serves the function of instituting and fostering workplace relationships. It is used for creating a team which brings “opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, and facilitating productive interaction” (p.87). In terms of how people actually put relational language into practice at the workplace, the term “relational practice” is used to refer to “the ability to work effectively with others, understanding the
emotional context in which work get done” (Fletcher, 1999 as cited in Holmes, 2006). In its original conception, relational practice is firmly presented as feminine or associated with women (Fletcher, 1999; Fishman, 1977). Holmes argues that both men and women engage in relational practice at work. She also suggests that relational practice may be “expressed using more normatively masculine styles of interaction” and considers evidence of more masculine ways of expressing small-talk and humour in the workplace (p.93).

As examined in a number of studies, much relational talk in the workplace concerns the use of humour (Collinson, 1988; Holmes 2000, 2006; Holmes and Marra, 2002). A wide range of humour in social and workplace settings including personal anecdotes, word-play and punning, teasing, joking about an absent other and self-denigration has been examined in studies. Two different types and styles of humour are distinguished by Holmes and Marra (2002) and Holmes (2006) as follows:

- **Type of humour:** supportive versus contestive (i.e. agree with or elaborates on previous contribution versus disagrees with or challenges earlier propositions).
- **Style of humour:** collaboratively constructed humour versus competitive humour (i.e. tightly integrated contributions versus loosely linked one-off quips).

A range of functions of humour has been found to overlap to a great extent with those of relational talk, they are solidarity, relationship-building, identity functions and power (Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2000). The role of humour in gender in workplace settings has been also examined in researches and some differences using humour between men and women have been identified. For instance, Coates (1996) and Holmes (2006) demonstrate that women tend to use supportive humour which support and confirm each other’s content and that collaborative styles of humour has been associated with women’s discourse. On the other hand, contestive humour is considered to be employed more by men for interaction in the workplace. Exploring the point of what have been discussed further, the next section considers gender and leadership talk at work.

### 2.6 Gender and leadership talk at work

Researches in some countries (e.g. New Zealand, U.K) has demonstrated gender as “important aspect of workplace realities which impacts on professional communication in a variety of different ways” (Schnurr, 2013, p.148); gender norms are always “covertly relevant influences on how people behave, and on how their behaviour is interpreted” (Holmes, 2006, p.650). Two specific ways that gender impact on interactions in workplace contexts are the use of gendered speech styles and the existence of certain gendered discourses.
In Holmes’ 2000 summary of features often associated with feminine and masculine interactional styles, a masculine speech style is identified as direct, aggressive and confrontational aspects (Schnurr, 2013, p.136). These are outcome-oriented rather than relationally oriented (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, Holmes, 2006) and expressed linguistically in some different ways, such as the “use of competitive and confrontational devices” (Case, 1988, p.56), and frequent interruptions (Case, 1988). A feminine interactional style, on the other hand, primarily focuses on process-oriented aspects and is normally related to indirectness, collaboration and supportive feedback (Coates, 1996; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Linguistically, this feminine orientation is expressed in collaborative construction of the floor (Coates 1996) and frequent use of negative and positive politeness features (Coates, 1993 as cited in Holmes, 2006).

In particular, Holmes (2006) classifies linguistic forms such as imperatives (e.g. check that out, ring the applicants and say, go right through this, send them back to us) and need statements (e.g. I need these by ten, I need to see that file, you need to get that to me soon) as indexes to a normatively masculine style of giving instructions. By contrast, normatively feminine ways of getting people to do something involve the use of less direct discourses. These include interrogative form rather than imperative forms (e.g. “I wonder if you could find that number for me”, “I think it needs revising, don’t you”), modal verbs such as may, might, could, would (e.g. “We might need some more help, what we might need to do is send down a confirmation note”) and hedges, such as perhaps, probably, and sort of (e.g. “Perhaps you could bring me that file now”).

Gendered discourses refer to what people make assumptions about men and women and what composes gender appropriate ways of behaving and talking (Schnurr, 2013). Mullany (2007) identifies a range of gendered discourses in workplace contexts including discourse of gender difference, discourses of female emotionality and discourse of femininities. For example, her analysis of these discourses of male and female managers in a retail company and a manufacturing company indicated that women managers were “judged and evaluated differently from their male counterparts” (p.205); male employees may prefer to work for men than women because women “tend to be a bit more emotional” and exploit their femininity sometimes, whereas men “can be pretty hard but probably straighter” (p.186). The other researcher, Koller (Koller, 2004 as cited in Schnurr, 2013) found that gendered discourses are particularly relevant to metaphors. For example, in a study of UK and US business magazines, she found that ‘business is war’ is often used by male business people. She argues that using metaphors contributes to “creating and maintaining the business world as a
masculine domain, and reflects and reinforces the hegemonic masculinity of business discourse” (Shnurr, 2013, p.141).

Leadership is a gendered concept (Holmes, 2006), a complex concept which is “inherently gendered” and which has “a male bias in most professional contexts” (Schnurr, 2013, p.149). It is because gender is one of the most pervasive social factors which influences leadership performance and masculine nature of workplace is reflected in a number of researches (e.g. Schurr’s (2009) study about company S in New Zealand). In my context, I would argue the issue from the other view that there is an overlap and a negotiation between masculine and feminine structures and discourses that characterise the daily workplace activities in which people are involved. From this point of view, I now focus on leadership discourse and the ways in which leadership is performed through language.

Leadership is defined in multiple ways including those in terms of “traits, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupation of an administrative position” (Yukl 2002, p.3) as the result of an on-going debate among scholars as to meaning and definition for leadership (Schnurr, 2013). However, most researchers agree that in order to define the “complex and multifunctional” nature of leadership, it is useful to view it “a process or an activity rather than a position of authority or as a personal characteristic” (Heifertz, 1998, p.347). In this view, the activities in which leaders normally engage involve both transactional objective achievement and relationally oriented behaviour performance. These are two essential aspects of the leadership process and often go together. In other words, leaders often skilfully combine transactional and relational objectives in their discourse. In terms of the language role of achieving these transactional and relational goals, according to Schnurr (2013), leadership can be seen as discursive performance, which influences other people to achieve the goals of an organisation (transactional behaviour) while also maintaining coordination within the group (relational behaviour).

Means of communicating leadership varies according to the specific context in which leadership occurs. The contextual factors identified in previous leadership literature are the leaders’ working group (involving the discursive norms that characterise their working groups: through their performance in interactions with other group members—whether in formal meetings, in one-to-one interactions, via emails, internal memos, on the phone or via skype—and the norms of acceptable and expected behaviours), the culture of the leader’s workplace, the wider culture in which the workplace is placed, and the ways gender is enacted in the leaders’ workplace (Hichman, 1998; Ford, 2005, Schnurr, 2009).
Holmes (2006) makes some similar points with Schnurr (2013) when she suggests that a particular way of expressing a directive as a gendered depends very much on contextual factors. She analyzed that in formal contexts such as meetings, imperatives used are more likely to be authoritative and masculine leadership styles than imperatives used in informal context where participants know each other well. But more interestingly, these authors suggest that the direct imperative forms and need statements may be used without any effect of a masculine, authoritative style. This happens when these imperative direct forms are modified by preceding or following surrounding utterances (reasons or explanations) which have the effect of softening them.

2.7 Summary

In summary, the analyses for the current study have been informed by various studies on the aspects of workplace discourse. This chapter explores different communicative genres (transactional and non-transactional) at work including two most frequent and powerful types of interactions in the workplace: meeting and email. Decision-making and procedural discourse which are included in the transactional genres are the two most frequent genres occurring across most workplace contexts. They are therefore examined more broadly along with the role of directives within them. Directives involving instructions or explanations of procedures relating to present, future or even past activities (Koester, 2010) are frequently employed by people at most business environment from subordinates to managers. Politeness strategies also take an important role in procedural discourse. Moreover, although workplace discourse is primarily about getting things done, relationship-building is a major concern for people who work together. Relational talk and the use of humour are therefore also highlighted in terms of the important role in relationship building and identity work. The final important aspect of workplace realities which have a significant impact on interactions in workplace contexts in different ways discussed here are gender and leadership. In particular, the chapter explores how participants in the workplace are influenced by their gender identity and the leadership (if they are leaders) and use discourse in their everyday interactions with their colleagues or subordinates.

Equal importantly, research in workplace discourse also provides the insights into the nature of language and communication at the workplace, which unfortunately is different with what is often taught in textbooks (Koester, 2010). A number of studies have pointed out the discrepancies between teaching material and actual workplace discourse. For example, William (1988) found that only seven of 135 exponents mentioned in the textbook were used in actual meetings. This finding is in
agreement with Cheng and Warren’s (2005) findings which show that strategies for agreement and disagreement in meetings tended to be more indirect than those taught in textbooks. Some other studies (e.g. Charles & Charles, 1999 as cited in Koester, 2010) suggest language teaching and teaching materials to be based on real meetings for specific business communication skills such as openings, closings and politeness strategies in meetings of international cooperation. The research findings show how important elements (i.e. workplace genres, interpersonal skills) required in workplace discourse have largely neglected in teaching materials. As Koester (2010) indicates, research in workplace discourse can make suggestions for teaching and material development that written as well as spoken communication, the various forms of computer-mediates interaction and intercultural communication needs to be given attention (p.159).

From the discussion above, I wish to refer back to the hypothesis (in chapter 1) on a gap between English education at university and the English requirement of graduates at the Vietnamese workplace. I assumed that English education at university could not meet English requirement of Vietnamese graduates at the workplace. In particular, the nature of language and communication at the workplace including important elements for successful workplace interactions (e.g. relational talk and politeness strategies) could be absent or different with what was often taught in the textbooks at the university. This raises a need of an insight into the reality of English at the workplace. In other words, I need to look at how Vietnamese graduates seemed able to communicate in English to fulfill their work-related tasks at the companies and whether they were provided enough support from English education at university. The issues will be analysed in the next chapters of this section.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS OF THE RESEARCH AT THE COMPANIES

The methods and procedures for the data collection in the companies are presented in this chapter as below:

3.1 Involving the companies in the research

With the aim of the study of looking at how IT graduates communicate in English at the workplace, I made a careful plan to invite the participant companies. First, I asked for help from the university managers including heads of departments to know about the companies who had regular contacts with the university for their recruitment. Then I focused on the companies who were joint-venture companies where English is required of employees for business communication. In these companies, English language was used to communicate between Vietnamese colleagues and foreign colleagues and in some companies, among Vietnamese colleagues. Having a list of 13 companies, I contacted each of the companies to request an introductory session where I introduced myself, informed them of the goals and methods of the project. The ethical form (appendix 1) including the guarantee of anonymity and the participant's right to withdraw at any time was also provided to the companies in this session. Equally important, the induction was employed as a face-to-face discussion to gain some understanding of the companies about me (the researcher) and my research. In this way, I reflected on the possible motive for volunteering in terms of ‘positive orientation towards the researcher’, as some authors (e.g. Holliday, 2002; Wyatt, 2008) propose. Eight companies volunteered from the 13 to participate in the research. I found later that one of the eight worked mainly on sales rather than IT, so the final number of the participant companies I got for my study was seven. Also in the introduction meetings, I gained the permission of the seven participant companies to use their data.

My hard work to gain the companies’ cooperation was worthwhile. All participant companies offered me the participant individuals I wished to invite for the study. In particular, each company arranged to have two managers who were directly responsible for resources development including the needs of the workforce and two employees who were former students at UIT join in my study. The numbers of participants and their positions in the companies were really benefitted to my research, this is discussed further in 3.3.

3.2 Research methods

In this study, more than one method was used. They included interviews, observations and survey. As Mathison (1988) argues, “the use of any single method, just like the view of any single individual, will
necessary be subjective and therefore biased” (p.14). She values meaningful explanations from multiple data resources, which is important in exploring beliefs, practices, and constraints (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). The use of multiple resources therefore is employed for the study. For this section of the study, the two research methods which were used were interviews and observations. The discussion on the two methods, including challenging aspects of using these in this current context will follow.

3.2.1 Interviews

According to Denscombe (2007), interviews provide a suitable method for the purpose of exploring in depth and in detail the thoughts, feelings and reasoning of the informants (e.g. human resource managers and graduates within companies). Because this study is a small-scale research (around five to 13 for each type of informant), semi-structured interviews with the common form of one researcher-to-one informant meetings for the purpose of easy arrangement and control (Denscombe, 2007) are used. Despite being considered as a powerful gathering data technique, it is necessary to be aware of the disadvantages of the interview method (Myers & Newman, 2007). Some weaknesses of this method, as Myers and Newman indicate, include: Artificiality of the interview – asking someone who often a complete stranger for information under time pressure; Lack of trust – because the interviewer is a stranger, the interviewee may choose not to reveal information that s/he considers to be “sensitive” and Lack of time- because it’s under time pressure, the data gathering is incomplete or more data are gathered but are not entirely reliable.

In scheduling the interviews, a quiet meeting room provided by the companies to be used only by me (the interviewer) and the interviewees (the company managers or the employees) facilitated the confidentiality for the interviews. I also believe that the introduction of my research from the university (UIT) and the induction sessions I conducted in the companies beforehand helped my interviewees to trust me. In other words, I hoped the inductions could help the company participants not to consider me as ‘a complete stranger’ while answering my questions. However, I also had to face some challenges due to the companies’ very busy schedules and work patterns. Despite having explained about the necessity of having the interviews with employers and employees separately for the confidentiality, several companies asked me if I could conduct one interview for all participants instead. One company explained that their employees were quite busy with a new project at the moment while in the other company, it was likely that the employers would like to attend the interview with their employees. For the former case, I managed to have the interview with the employees outside of working hours. For the other case, I discussed with them more the
confidentiality for the study and the involved outcomes of the study being provided to the company. I eventually got their agreement to have two interviews separately.

The two sets of questions were designed for the interviews with the companies (see appendix 2): one for human resource managers and the other for the employee participants. Apart from the first section of background questions, a number of specific questions in the second section of the two sets were similar. They included what area of English employees needed to use English most (e.g. email, meeting, chat pages); what might cause the breakdown of the conversations when employees used English (e.g. linguistics skills, communication strategies) and what difficulties employees often met using English at the workplace. The similarity of the specific questions among the two sets allowed the comparison between the two kinds of participants which was done in the data analysis. These questions were further developed with some open-ended questions such as ‘what are some of English expressions to write/speak the most at the workplace’, ‘how do employees deal with difficulties they meet when they try to communicate in English’ and ‘what is their opinion about whether English graduates learnt from school support the current use of English for work’. Other questions were also designed to explore the employer’s evaluations of their employees’ use of English and also some other factors which might affect the workplace communications (e.g. cultural factors). These questions were on the basis of the themes discussed in the previous chapter in terms of factors (i.e. politeness strategies, relational talk) that constitute the success of a workplace conversation.

3.2.2 Observations

Because interviews are based on “what people say rather than what they do” (Denscombe, 2007, p.203) together with weaknesses as mentioned above, they will be used along with observations which are best to observe what actually happens (Croll, 1986). Observations are often used together with interviews for descriptions of participants’ behaviors to compare with the cognitions elicited beforehand (Borg, 2006). Observations for this research stage aimed to explore what English the employees actually use in practice (e.g. emailing, answering phones, attending meetings and making presentations). Non-participant observations, therefore, were chosen to increase reliability which could not be entirely achieved if using the interview method alone due to the weaknesses of the interview method as discussed in 3.2.1. In other words, observation method was used to complement the interviews in the study.

My observations at the companies provided information about employees’ behaviours at the workplace. The companies also generously allowed me to collect their emails after the observations.
In reality, the emails were provided to me by both the company employers and employees. These data sources supported the interview data to help understand the comparison of participants’ cognitions elicited beforehand and subsequently. In order to achieve this purpose, note-taking, audio-recording of the companies were used.

3.3 The company participants

(1) The employees
The participant employees introduced by the selected companies to participate the study were former students at UIT, the university where the study was carried out (3.1). Because the first graduation at UIT was two years before the time this study was carried out, these engineers had been working for 1-2 years at the companies. They mainly worked on maintaining or fixing issues relating to the software, designing modules for operating systems or porting games on prototype phones. All employee participants were males. Males being generally employed in such roles may be caused by the nature of their job as software or hardware engineers or programmers. These employees who worked in IT with different projects might have different partners rather than specific partners which could result in project changes (Schnurr, 2013).

(2) The employers
As mentioned in 3.1, the managers in the companies invited to participate were human resource managers, project managers and training leads. These employers managed recruitment, employee development, needs assessment and training. This is advantageous to my research because they are the right people who would provide the information about the requirement of employees I wish to gain. Although one manager from each company was expected for the study, there were 13 participant managers instead of seven. This was due to the number of project managers and training leads (besides the human resource managers) who were also willing to participate. It is beneficial for the research to be examined from different managers’ points of view.

The table below is the summary of company participants, including their participation in the two data collection strategies. Pseudonyms are used for the companies throughout the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Countries to work/communicate with</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2 software engineers</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 HR manager &amp; 1 engineering project manager &amp; 1 training lead</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japan, China</td>
<td>1 software engineer &amp; 1 hardware engineer</td>
<td>yes with the software engineer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 HR manager &amp; 1 training lead</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan, Korea, Thailand, Canada &amp; European countries</td>
<td>2 software engineers</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 HR manager &amp; 1 business development manager</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Africa, U.S, Australia</td>
<td>2 associate software engineers</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 HR manager &amp; 1 senior engineering manager</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Australia, USA</td>
<td>1 business analyst</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 managing director</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1 mobile programmer &amp; 1 developer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 training manager &amp; 1 studio lead programmer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Taiwan, China &amp; USA</td>
<td>1 programmer &amp; 1 software engineer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1 vice president</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Company participants in the study, including their participation in the two data collection strategies.

The participant managers had 6-13 years of management experience. Though they shared the view that communicative strategies were essential for employees to use English effectively either in speaking or writing English at the workplace, they had different tastes of English learning. For example, while some of them said speaking skill and listening skill were more important for employees to learn for using English effectively, the other managers believed that their employees needed all four skills. It is important for the researcher to know about the managers’ tastes of English learning because their tastes would influence how open they are to take the recommendations suggested from the research in terms of English training for their employees.
3.4 Procedures

In this stage of the research, in order for an attempt to determine what kind of English language competences business truly requires of candidates, there were interviews with managers and employees in the IT company participants. Two an-hour interviews were carried out in each participant company, one with the managers and one with the employees. A set of open-ended interview questions designed for each kind of participant (as described above) was used accordingly. Apart from the researcher’s notes, the audio-recording was used in the interviews to provide a source for cross-checking in-depth interview data (Mangubhai et al., 2004). Besides some challenges as mentioned in 3.2.1, one company requested not to be audio-recorded, but provided more time for the researcher taking notes. Each interview lasted for 45-60 minutes. Since the researcher shared the native language of the company participants, it would also be an advantage to help establish supportive interchange in face-to-face interviews between the participants and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and to obtain richer data (Fetterman, 1989).

The interviews with the employees were preceded by the observations of employee behaviors in the companies. There was an hour observation with each employee participant at the work place to see how they actually used English for their work. In reality, the time of observation could be longer depending on the contexts. If there were some unexpected interruptions during the process of observation (e.g. the participants had to leave the place for some other tasks), the observation could last for longer than an hour or be delayed to another day. In the companies observed, the employee participants often worked in large groups of 7-10 or small groups of 2-4. The groups shared an office of 40-50 people. Most of the time, members in a group were Vietnamese sitting close together in the office. They interacted in English with their colleagues mainly through texting online or email. The researcher was arranged to sit at the corner of the room or an unpreoccupied cubicle where she could have a non-participant observation to the employee participant with a good view.

3.5 Data analysis

My data analysis for this research stage relied on qualitative analysis and followed the approach used by a number of authors (e.g. Mangubhai et al, 2007; Wyatt, 2009). It includes: I first listened to audio-recordings of interviews and took notes according to prior objectives. In addition, I re-read all my observation notes. I also translated and transcribed large sections of interviews in order to have the data “in all its richness, breadth and depth” to use (Chenail, 1995, para. 10 cited in Wyatt, 2009). Second, I carried out discourse analysis in the light of workplace discourse as I drew on for my study (chapter 2). The extracts from my notes were selected and united according to themes that emerged
from the discourse analysis of workplace conversations. I selected elements of the interview transcripts as these relate to “a particular point in the discourse embodying a single idea being expressed by the interviewee” (Mangubhai et al, 2007, p.8).

In the process of writing, I related the two data resources to each other by comparing the interviewees’ ideas through interview data with interviewees' behaviors from observation data. This approach, as Wyatt (2009, p.7) discusses, involve the triangulation to deepen the interpretations for my analysis and enhance the credibility for my study. Observational data and analysis of emails complemented each other in the way that ‘what I can see’ from the observations (Silverman, 2005) provided sufficient detail for my discourse analysis of the email texts (1.4). In particular, during the observations at the companies, I noted how the employees interacted with each other and whether the working environment comfortable and supportive. I noted down how long the employees spent on an email, why that email took them longer or shorter time, whether they asked for help from their peers or team leader when they meet some difficulties in writing an email. All these data were useful for my analysis of emails as it will be provided in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: WHAT KIND OF ENGLISH IS REQUIRED AT THE WORKPLACE

The analysis of the two data resources collected from the interviews and observations at the seven company participants is now presented in this chapter. Interviews with managers were carried out with the following foci to discuss:

- Who they communicate with and the kind of English they expect the employees use.
- The areas which the employees need to most use English in.
- What causes the breakdown of the conversations of employees’ use of English (e.g. linguistic skills, communication strategies, cultural factors).
- Their evaluation of the employees using English including whether they have to retrain the employees in terms of English skills and their idea about English education at university to meet the companies requirements for graduates.

The observations at the companies were carried out as noted above. In the companies observed, the employees interacted in English with the other English speakers (e.g. their colleague, direct boss or other superiors) mainly through texting online or email. Using English among Vietnamese employees through email was also required by most of the companies. Through the observations, I could see that the time the employees spent on writing informal emails was less than on formal emails. As for formal emails, they often asked their group leader to have a look for them before sending to the receivers. I could also see the employees felt most comfortable with online texting when they did not have to use formal greetings or endings, and knew the other speaker quite well.

The observations with the employees followed by the interviews with open questions on:

- The people with whom they need to communicate in English
- Which area of English they find the most difficult and would most like to improve (linguistic skills or communication skills).
- What they find difficult when communicating in English at their workplace.
- Whether English learnt from school supports their current use of English for work.

The collected data serve the analysis presented below for the two main themes: what English is required at the workplace and what factors may cause the breakdowns of a conversation.
4.1 What English is required at the workplace?

Two types of communication in the workplace observed were online texting and email (informal and formal). One other kind of communication was a meeting which occurred sometimes (once every three weeks or a month) in some companies observed for the study. These kinds of communication can be seen most frequently in the two communicative genres: directives and requesting, which take a variety of forms from imperatives to different models. These genres are grouped under unidirectional discourse which is transactional – work-oriented (Koester, 2010). Some non-transactional genres were also identified in the study like some small talk or relational interaction. The role of relational language in workplace discourse (McCarthy 2000, Koester 2006), which occurs sequentially during transactional conversations, was also be analysed. Furthermore, gender, because of its role as an important aspect of workplace realities which influence professional communication in a variety of different ways (Schnurr, 2013), is also investigated in this section.

4.1.1 Instant messaging

This type of communication seems to be popular in the working environment nowadays because of its advantages: a strong obligation for quick response and the discussion group’s interaction (Laursen, 2005; Baym, 1996 as cited in Skovholt, 2009). I am now looking at what workplace genres and communication strategies (Koester, 2010S; Schnurr, 2013) that were used in the following examples.

In the following two interactions, these employees were sitting in their cubicles and working with their computers. When they had some problems with their work and wanted to ask for help, they were chatting with their colleagues in India or Japan. These employees work in groups of 10.

Example 4.1

| Hien: software engineer, Vietnamese |
| Kushendra Kumar: software engineer, Indian |

Hien[6:06 PM]: Hi Kushendra
Kushendra Kumar [6:06 PM]: hi
Hien[6:06 PM]: Could you able to reproduce issue?
Kushendra Kumar [6:07 PM]: now I will try was bit busy in one doc, give me 10 mins
Hien[6:07 PM]: it’s ok Kushendra :). Take your time
Kushendra Kumar [6:17 PM]: Yes Hien its reproducible
Hien6:18 PM : ( how can you reproduce it?
Kushendra Kumar [6:18 PM]: Can I show you?
Hien[6:18 PM]: yes
Kushendra Kumar [6:18 PM]: in my simulator I have SCF that has all 12 ANTL MOs after testers executed 1-4 steps, you can create that, right?
now see, can u see, now I will uncheck those antenna that he is saying 2G is not using as per step 5
Example 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quoc: software engineer, Vietnamese</th>
<th>Hena M: software engineer, Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quoc [5:17 PM]: Hi Hena,</td>
<td>Hena M[5:17 PM]: Hi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoc [5:17 PM]: I'm facing some issues relative to clearcase, <strong>could you help me?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hena M [5:17 PM]: <strong>Let me chk hv u sent any email</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoc [5:18 PM]: yes, I've just sent to you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hena M [5:20 PM]: k...am on some other users desktop let me chk n will see hw can help u <strong>gv me 5 min</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoc [5:21 PM]: k, <strong>thanks in advance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order for the work done, the communication strategies were applied. These strategies are: asking requests (Could you able to reproduce issue?, I'm facing some issues relative to clearcase, could you help me?), asking for explanations (How can you reproduce it?), expressing the negotiation (Take your time, Thanks in advance) and using functional expressions (e.g. saying ‘hi’ for greetings and ‘thanks’ for expressing gratitude). Working in quite big groups, the engineers tend to use transactional language. They go straight to the work; that is probably because of the loose relationship among colleagues working in big groups (Koerster, 2010).

Directives and requests occurred frequently among the interlocutors in the above conversations. The modal verb ‘can’ and bald imperative (e.g. ‘give me 5 minutes’, ‘let me check’) were more frequent form chosen by the Indian employees. Vietnamese colleagues used ‘could’ more. Both two Vietnamese employees employed “Could you...” to make requests to their colleagues though it was in a quite informal interaction. It is probably due to Vietnamese people often present the attitude that is regarded as positive politeness: being kind and making the addressee feel good (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In contrast, their Indian colleagues were more direct to use “Can you” and “Can I” and “Let me” as directives or requests.

In smaller groups, the interactions were more relational. This finding was consistent with that of observational data which indicates that there was a relaxed environment among participants in this case. The following conversations happened in the two different companies, the employees worked in groups of 2 or 3. In one company, the employee observed was working in the group of 3. He was sitting next to a Vietnamese teammate and was messaging online for work with the other member named Rich in Australia.
Example 4.3

| Thuan: software engineer, Vietnamese  |
| Rich: software engineer, Australian  |
| Thuan: Hi, Rich. How are you?        |
| Rich: Hi Thuan. I’m OK. It’s cold here. |
| Thuan: Really? It’s hot here and I also bring hot news to you :-) |
| Rich: Great.                          |
| Thuan: Yes, I have solved our big issue. Can I send you by 5 p.m today? |
| Rich: Ok                             |

In the other company, messaging on Skype was also often used by the two colleagues through a long distance, Vietnam-American. Tran worked in customer support department in the company in Vietnam. He was messaging to Jonathan in America.

Example 4.4

| Tran: How are you? Have you had your plan/trip to Vietnam yet? |
| Jonathan: No firm dates yet...... |
| Jonathan: Andy - Happy Birthday!! |
| Tran: Thanks Jonathan :-) |
| Tran: Have you seen the quote for Sienna from (name)? |
| Jonathan: Yes I did, but I think must be a mistake, it’s almost as kuch as (name) and yet is much smaller?! The last (name) quote was $44.50 and is twice as big; the (name) cannot be $40, that’s hopeless?!! |
| Tran: I will check with Thuy. I guess she know we move this product from (name) to her and quote from (name) is normally much higher compare with others. I will again but yes it is smaller mean less materials but same labor cost :-) Anyway, let me check and let you know what we can do... |
| Jonathan: Yes but it is almost 1/2 the size!! At $40 it is simply far too expensive, we only asked (name) to look at it on basis would be much cheaper than (name), but based on this, is more expensive!! |

In these interactions, the interlocutors have relational interactions before coming to their work. But it is evident that relational conversations can function as identity work as transactional conversations do (Koester, 2010). In the former extract, it is likely that Thuan and Rich were all making relational talk when they discussed the weather. As some studies (Holmes 2000, Holmes and Marra, 2002) state, relational talk often involves the use of humour, Thuan also created a humour “It’s hot here and I also bring hot news to you”. In the latter extract, Tran asked Jonathan about his trip to Vietnam and Jonathan congratulated Tran on his birthday. It was about off-task relational, but it still served an important task goal: a useful way of informing about the job or dealing with a problematic situation.
In this way, Thuan reported “Yes, I have solved our big issue” and used procedural discourse “Can I send you by 5 p.m today?”, Tran and Jonathan discussed the issue of whether it should be to choose another delivery company for cheaper prices. These conversations were likely more direct and open. Less forceful, indirect modals ‘can’, ‘would’ were used. There was no stronger modals ‘have to’, ‘should’ which may carry face threat in procedural or requesting discourse (Schnurr, 2013). “Could” for politeness often used by Vietnamese employees was also not found here though the interactions still went through without the risk of face-frightening.“I will”, “we” and “I think” were often used as a way to express the sympathy on hearing the other and the harmony in group he would like to have with the other colleague.

4.1.2 Email

As Chapman (2007) states, one of the advantages of emails is that they are quick and direct. Taylor & Tang (2003) as cited in Skovholt (2009) found that people tend to use emails for their work and mostly favor quick responses of this means of communication. This contributes to the outcome of the data that most of the emails collected for the study, either informal or formal, were more transactional, that is work-oriented.

4.1.2.1 Less formal email

The below extract presents how Quang, a software developer who is in charge of designing, coding and testing programs uses email to interact with his colleagues. He works in a group of 4 and often contacts the producer who is French through email. When getting the requests from the producer, he emailed the other teammates to have the work done and asked the producer for some requests or declarations if necessary. It could be observed that Quang spent more time than Thuan and Quang in examples 4.3 and 4.4 above to reply to his email, he also spent some time discussing with his teammates and sometimes asked his peers for a word/phrase to use in his email. The environment seemed to be a little tense comparing with the ones in the above examples.

Example 4.5

Subject: LG Billing Issues on A20 again - 3/31

On 5/29/2013 5:06 PM, Haky wrote:
Hello JAJ and John,

LG reported billing issues as attached on both DIT2 & Cannon Rats.
These were all same issues already raised on Q30 so please look into this and LG strongly requested this should be fixed before 12pm (KR time) on the 31st of March. Their final QA round will be kicked off on 1st April. [...] 

Please let me have this to be fully fixed and hope you could meet the deadline. Let’s keep up the good work here!
Thank you.
Haky.

On 5/29/2013 5:10 PM, John wrote:
Hello Quang,
Please check the IAP issues below for Cannon Rats of LG A20 and give ETA to send new version (we need ASAP).
Best Regards,
John Banvard
HEP Producer

On 5/29/2013 5:30 PM, Quang wrote:
Hello Team,
Please help me fix this bug.
You can see attachment to more information.
Thanks

On 5/29/2013 5:46 PM, Quang wrote:
Hello John,
About the bug: Umniah – The wap push message not received
I see in LGSI Comment: Screenshot attached. For orange operator also same issue observed, linceits not listed in OEM coverage list. We are not asking vendor to check it.
Could you please give us this Screenshot?
Thank you,
Quang

On 5/29/2013 5:50 PM, John wrote:
Hello Quang,
Here is attachment. Take a look and email me if you have further questions.
Best Regards,
John
HEP Producer

On 5/29/2013 6:33 PM, Quang wrote:
Hello John,
Wrapper team need Video step by step to reproduce this bug, could you please request it ?
Thanks

As we can see from the extract, the emails used were quite informal when the users used “Hello” for greeting. They are all transactional being direct to the work “About the bug: Umniah – The wap push message not received” or “Here is attachment”. In this interaction, bald imperatives were also more frequently employed by the two foreigner partners than the Vietnamese for the procedural discourse and requesting.
The norms of communication in this email interaction can be interpreted as collectivism (one’s face represents the faces of one group) for Quang and individualism (the concept of the self is focused more on an individual) for Haky and John (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p.133). Quang started his email by “Hello team” and in-group identify makers such as “we” and “wrapper team” were frequently used by him. For Quang, working in his group and cooperating is the norm and he represented his group. On the contrary, John and Haky emphasized independence and autonomy in their words. They employed more bald imperatives which make the language more direct. Accordingly, “Let’s” and “we” can be interpreted as being more a request to have the issues fixed on time than a suggestion.

The modal verb “could you” again was used more by Quang which shows politeness. It could be said that negative politeness (Schnurr, 2013) was adopted because Quang would like to reduce to threaten the addressee’s negative face when he made a request of giving them the Screenshot.

Emails become more informal and relational in the workplace where the participants are all Vietnamese and work together quite long time in small groups for a project. In this case, the emails were employed just like online texting when they did not include a greeting, as shown in example 4.6 below. Similar with the finding of observation data of online texting above, a relaxed environment among these participants was also seen.

Example 4.6
Context: Emails sent among Vietnamese software engineers working in a group of 5 for a project with American partners.

| Dear Van, |
| It’s seem so long that we haven’t met again after that night ; - ) |
| Have you finished with the figures? Can you send to us by Thursday? |
| We miss you so much especially your promise about party next month. |
| Hope to see your party invitation soon ^^! |

Thanks and Best Regards,  
VINH TRAN

Dear brothers!  
I hope I will send you the figures by Thursday.  
About the party, I always remember, but at the moment, there has a lot of bad things for me. I have to pay for military task, about 5 million, I have just failed 1 course in MBA, so I have to pay 12 million for this course. I have to loan from my family. Finally, at the moment I cannot, we will see later :) Please sympathize for me :)  
Best Regards  
Van

Don’t worry about this, Dang. I think we will go and share with you ^__^! I hope I can meet all of you early!
Do you need any help with the figures?
Tu Nguyen

**I think you should** relax a little bit for refreshing. I have some invitation tickets and I wonder how can I send it to you?? hehe
Regards,
MINH THANH LE

you guys should hang out together
We share your sorrow, we share the money too.
Unfortunately, I goona go back to my hometown this weekend.
Let’s see who want to delay the party to next week =))
Best regards,
Tinh Huy Nguyen
Associate Software Engineer

The example above illustrates how emails become more informal and relational among participants who were all Vietnamese. This email interaction started with relational language that the participants had not met each other for long and about the party. Relational conversation then went through the interaction when Van told about his difficulties (eg. he had to pay a lot for a course he failed in his MBA program, and paid some money for military task – a compulsory course for university students). However, the work was still done, Van replied the issue raised by his colleague about the figures that he hoped to send it on time. The interaction also shows the teamwork satisfaction among the members. Responding to Van’s personal difficulties, the other members offered to help with the figures (the work) and share paying money to have the party done. The use of ‘I think’ and ‘you should’ in this case is the hearer/receiver taking benefits than the speaker/sender (Koester, 2010). The pronoun ‘we’ in “we will” conveys the meaning of the willingness to support and encourage the member to overcome the hard time to continue his task within the group. Group work among Vietnamese IT workers, as interpreted from the email communication, could contribute to performance improvement of each member (Le and Truong, 2007).

### 4.1.2.2 More formal email

Emails were more transactional and formal when they were sent by managers to employees as the following two emails sent by a team lead and an engineering manager.

**Example 4.7**

**Dear All**

**I hope you all are having a nice working day today.**
As you may know, there is a request from USA that all Oracle cert holders must have their OPN profile with CSC email address (other email such as google and yahoo are all not accepted). As many of Oracle exam takers have registered the exam with Testing Agencies
(Providers) using your personal email address and it will cause you a lot of technical troubles when you have to request Oracle to change your profile to CSC email. **From now please we’ll** only use CSC email when registering Oracle exam. Thanks.

Regards,
Lam
Professional, Learning and Development, Vietnam Team Lead
Learning Development & Delivery | Talent & Diversity CoE

Example 4.8

Hi all,

**We** just received yesterday a great news that on shore team want to growth up our team immediately 50% which means 10 more people (50%/50% in JAVA/COBOL positions) to be added. RMO and HR works hardly to help us to achieve this ASAP. This email to encourage if you know or have any reference/friendship for these positions, please recommend them to the HR. This help is really appreciate to help **us** achieve this request. You then get of course a Thank-You bonus from HR for reference if successful passed.

Thanks and best regards,
Hung T Nguyen, PMP
Senior Engineering Manager

The use of pronoun ‘we’ as second person carries less face threat and makes these emails be read as suggestions or advice which benefits the receivers as much as the senders. It also includes a communication strategy which Koester (2010) describes as ‘solidarity’: the manager could make effort to make “the one-way process of instruction-giving more interactive and interpersonal” (p.85).

In some cases, email seemed less formal when there was a combination of relational and transactional language. Together with example 4.7 above (The manager started the email of requirement by saying ‘I hope you all are having a nice working day today’), example 4.9 below also illustrates this combination.

Example 4.9

Dear all,

**How is your work today?**. **I'm writing to** collect your idea about our first happy hour party. As you known, we have worked on this project for more than 8 weeks. It's not a long time to enable us closer or more understanding each other to share our feeling about obstacles of the first assignments in this team. Therefore, I suggest that we should have a party that will have many kinds of food and drink so every team members can enjoy and share together soon. It's also a chance for you to talk with someone who have been your idol since you joined this team. :-)

Please access to U:name\HappyHourSurvey to vote your opinion about Where and When that is suitable for you. Please vote for this by 4:00PM April 3. If you don’t update the file, it means you will agree my suggestion so it will be counted as one.

Thanks and regards,
Hung, Engineering manager
Though the email starts in formal introduction “I’m writing to…”, it is likely not a formal email. The relational greeting “How is your work today?” makes it more interactive, not one-way transfer of information. Furthermore, the explanation about the party before asking for the action of selecting the time and place among the employees makes the email less directive. These relates to communication skills and politeness for an effective email.

4.1.3 Meeting
The follow extract observed for the study indicates that though transactional talk tends to take up most of the language in a business meeting (Handford, 2010), relational talk often occur at the beginning of the meeting. This conversation occurred just before the meeting actually started. The three participants had small talk which had some related to the job.

Example 4.10
| Hung: Senior Engineering Manager, group leader, Vietnamese |
| Tinh: Associate Software Engineer, Vietnamese |
| Xuan: Software Engineer, Vietnamese |

Hung: Afternoon, how’s thing going?
T: Afternoon
H: How’s your new work?
Toan: um.., yeah, not much
H: Huh?
T: Uh, because I, um because …it’s just my second day at the new project, so not things much.
H: Not things much?
T: Yeah,
H: Do you see a lot from Ms. Trang, right, Trang Kim, right?
T: Yeah, um, actually, Son Le…, Mr., Mr. Son Le will responsible, will be responsible for um, this.
H: Hmm,
T: He…takes the responsibility for supporting us.
H: Ok, I think you will go through with it soon. How are you, Xuan?
X: I’m OK. Thanks
H: Alright, I have sent you an email about the meeting today, it is a follow-up for the last meeting with Dave, to see if you met any difficulty. So should we start now.Toan, you want to say first?
T: Yes, he asked us to do some research on Java technology.
H: And difficult assignment also Java, all the time right?
T: Yes, but I understand normally 70-80 percent
X: Uh, I think, maybe in last meeting I have some problem with, may be with Indian language hehehe yes…in the voice not clearly so… I can’t catch it, but, uh …, the meeting with the trainees or trainers think, um, I think …not so difficult.
As we can see from the extract, ‘Right’ is the backchannel used by the group leader in this meeting, as an affective convergence of viewpoint (Carter, 2004 as cited in Handford, 2010). ‘Hmm’ was also found as a way to signal the subordinate to continue without any positive or negative evaluation, that tends to be used by the managers in meetings (Handford, 2010).

Hedging devices (I think, um…) were used by the two employees to signal their uncertainty in replying the questions. But more importantly, together with back-channeling (yeah, yes), they functioned as signs of attention and positive politeness. The two teammates always saying ‘yeah’ to their group leader could be interpreted that they wanted to make the addressee feel good and avoid threatening their positive face. They just express the disapprovals “Actually, Mr. Son Le will responsible...” or “but I understand normally 70-80 percent” after these back-channels.

Politeness shows its influences to many aspects of Vietnamese employees’ communication at the workplace. There was the other conversation that happened before this when Hung call Tinh up for the meeting.

Example 4.11

| Hung: can you come to MR2.4 now?   |
| Tinh: MR2.4 ETO1 sir?              |
| Hung: yes, you didn’t receive my email yesterday? |
| About the meeting with Ms. Thuy and Mr. Hai today |
| Tinh: Yes, but I though that it won’t come that soon. I haven prepare anything... |
| Hung: Nothing to prepare Toan, just come |
| Tinh: Ok, sir. |

“Sir” was definitely a sign of respect. In Vietnamese society, respect is key factor in the value system. Differences in ages separate people into two groups marked as “superordinate” and “subordinate”. Old people enjoy high respect from younger people, regardless of wealth, education and social position which is regarded as hierarchy politeness (Nguyen Chi, 2012). Together with this, people at lower positions in the workplace often show their respect to their managers. In this case, Tinh showed his respect to Hung who was older than him and also had higher position in his team. It is likely that Hung enjoyed this respect, he himself also used Ms. and Mr. for the two people he mentioned.

Interestingly, the two Vietnamese employees shared in the interview later that they also said “sir” to show their respect with their foreigner managers in a rare chance to meet with them. The group
leader who had more chance working with English speaking partners said he did use “sir” several times and then found that it was not common to the other English speaking partners.

Also in the interview, the two employees expressed the idea that small talk put them at ease. When working in groups like this, small talk bring them a comfortable atmosphere to go discussion to identify/ have work done. One of them told that a simple question ‘How’s your work?’ or ‘How’s thing going on?’ could make them feel closed among members in groups. They, therefore, could be more open to work together, whilst purely transactional one could make them feel difficult to deal with.

4.1.4 Gender, leadership and the use of humour
As mentioned earlier about the context of the study, the majority of employees in IT companies are male who constitute working groups in the fields of software engineering, hardware engineering or programming. Many of these male employees are at the equal levels in the companies but are carrying out different tasks (e.g. hardware or software engineers, programmers). There are very few or no female in these groups. Female employees often work as assistants in Human Resource and Training department where the leader is also a female. Some other departments or working groups in these companies where we can find some female workers are accountants and supporting teams (in supplying necessary required information and contacting among working groups). Though there are far less interactions involving female participation occurring in the study context, the concept of gender being demonstrated as an “important aspect of workplace realities which impacts on professional communication in a variety of different ways” and leadership as “inherently gendered” (Schnurr, 2013, p.148-149) gives an impulse to the analysis of the data in terms of gender. Interactions with a few female employees (one in a supporting team and one in a working group) and with some female managers are being exploited for the purpose.

First, the findings of the study indicate that male employees tend to be more direct than female employees. The use of bald imperatives and ‘can you’ requests are found frequently among men (e.g. Can you reproduce it?; Can I send you by 5 p.m today?), whereas, the use of ‘could you please’ and ‘please’ is common in women’s discourse. In the following example, the interaction gets more formal and with more politeness trackers when it is a female’s turn.
Example 4.12
Context: Kim, the female employee’s name, was responsible for supporting her colleague, Minh to solve the problem ‘bug IAP wrong cash amount’. For her job, she also contacted another male colleague in India via email.

Subject: Re: Need help to fix bug IAP wrong cash amount.

On 2013-05-07 1:57 PM, Minh wrote:
Hello Support team,
I’m working on Little Big City Freemium (using Android Wrapper), I have issue with bug ID 5845507. Please help me to fix it.
Thanks
Best regards,
Pham Minh, Mobile Game Programmer

On 5/7/2013 2:10 PM, Luu Thi Kim wrote
Hello Minh,
Please give us IGP code and the IAP feed link.
Thanks, Luu Thi Kim
IAP 2D Support Team

On 2013-05-07 2:17 PM, Minh wrote:
Hi chi Kim,
This is phone info:
IAP-GameCodeIGP: K291
IAP-PhoneModel: 7021
MIDLET-FULLVERSION-URL: (a web page)

On May 08, 2013 10:54AM, Luu Thi Kim wrote
Hello Mada,
Please help us link to update 2 and active dynamic amount for IGP code K291.
Thanks,

On 2013-05-08 2:57PM, Mada Istode wrote:
It’s done
Best regards,
Mada

On 5/8/2013 3:00PM, Luu Thi Kim wrote:
Thanks Mada.
@Minh: Could you please check again and let me know the result?
Thanks,

On 5/10/2013 10:00AM, Minh wrote:
Hi chi Kim,
The phone have code K291 now is ok, but I have another phone have code K304 is same issue.
So could you please help me fix it.
Thanks
As we can see from the above interaction, Minh went relatively direct to the work issue starting the interaction but tended to use more politeness trackers emailing to his female colleague. He drew on “Could you please” in his email to Kim and also showed his politeness to older people as they typed in his email’s greeting ‘Hi chi Kim’. ‘Chi’ was used because Kim was a woman who is older than him. Kim, in her turns, always showed her politeness either to Vietnamese or Indian colleagues. In addition, the politeness shown by Vietnamese co-workers can be counted for the participation of a foreign colleague in the interaction when Vietnamese often imply their polite behaviours more (Nguyen Chi, 2008).

The directness seems to be increasing when it occurs among people who know each other quite well, in a team of 3-4 for example, among Vietnamese co-workers and more man-dominated. Here, Minh became more direct when he interacted with his teammates in his own team where his colleagues (both male and female) were also very direct. For example, Minh wrote “Here is build Asphalt6 for Tron”, or “Fixed all issue in this version” while Tan, his male colleague wrote “Here is the result of this version of ASP6 - Samsung Tron”, as in the following example.

Example 4.13

On 5/31/2013 4:20PM, Minh wrote:
Hi,
Here is build Asphalt6 for Tron
Best regards, Pham Minh
Mobile Game Programmer

On 5/31/2013 5:25PM, Van Anh wrote:
Hello
The issue on ASP6 was fixed, but there are many issue with gamefile.
Please notice that these fields have wrong info in jad:
SMS-GameCodeIGP: F436
SMS-PhoneModel: 5411
IGP mix is also not correct
And the version must be 107 as HYD already sent 106 on 24-Jan
Van Anh

On 5/31/2013 07:19PM, Minh wrote:
Hi,
Fixed all issue in this version.

On 6/1/2013 2:05 PM, Nguyen Tan wrote:
Hello Minh,
Game can’t download. Text "Java error" was displayed when we tried to download the game.
Thanks,
Tan Nguyen

On 6/01/2013 02:47PM, Minh wrote:
Hi,
This issue caused by firmware, I try another firmware and it’s ok.

On 6/1/2013 3:01 PM, Nguyen Tan wrote:
Hello,
**Here is the result of this version of ASP6 - Samsung Tron:**
- Sound is play in IGP also Loading screen[...]
- All the map is locked.
**Thanks,**
Tan Nguyen

On 6/04/2013 09:54 AM, Minh wrote:
Hi,
all issues below have been fixed in this version 1.0.8

@ Tan: Hi, **Here is build was renamed**
Regards, Minh

Van Anh, the only female in the team was also quite straightforward interacting with her male colleagues when she wrote “The issue on ASP6 was fixed, but there are many issue with game file” and then gave more information in summary bullets. However, the relative directness of the emails could be mitigated to some extent by the directives and by some types of interactions such as face-to-face that typically precede the emails (Schnurr, 2013, p.155). Accordingly, Anh’s directness with her male colleagues which might be caused either because she worked closely with other team members or it was a follow-up on what they had discussed previously. Because they work closely together, it is also likely that Anh was employing a shared way of communicating among her team (which includes all males except her).

Second, the findings involve the leadership being influenced by gender identities. As Heifertz (1998) states, the activities in which leaders normally engage involve both transactional objectives achievement and relationally oriented behaviour performance. Leaders, either male or female, often skillfully combine transactional and relational objectives, two essential aspects of the leadership process in their discourse. Hung, the male engineering manager in example 9 greeted relationally “How is your work today?” and also explained before asking for the action of selecting the time and place among the employees for an associate party. In this way, he combined relational and transactional objectives: maintaining good relationship in team and encouraging everyone to participant the event.
Similarly, female managers (though rare comparing with male managers) also combined these two objectives: relational and transactional communicating with employees in the company. The follow example is an email sent by a female manager from the Human Resource department.

Example 4.14

Dear all,
How’s your weekend? I hope you all had a nice Sunday.
In recent times, there were some claims which were refused to reimburse by the insurer (GIC). The reason was that the date on the red invoice for drugs was different from the date of doctor visit.
In order to avoid this issue, please remember to make a copy of "Phiếu thu chi tiết" before you give it to the hospital pharmacy to get the red invoice and submit it including with the red invoice to the insurer.
Thanks for your attention.

In her email, she employed relational language asking the addressees about their weekend and hoping them all had a nice Sunday. This was likely to put the receivers at ease to reach to the goal of the email: the manager’s directive about submitting the invoice.

However, being more direct characterised male leader’s interactions via email in leadership practice more than female leader’s though either male or female leader aims at checking up on team members’ progress and ensuring targets are met. In particular, the use of mitigating constructions such as ‘Could you’, ‘Could you please’ or ‘please’ (e.g. Could you please check again in example 4.12); Please remember to make a copy), conventionalised politeness markers and to avoid face-threatening to addressee either in spoken interaction or email can be found more in messages or email sent by female than by male in the study.

In example 4.7, the manager (Lam is female) used the phrase ‘As you may know’ right at the beginning of her email to soften the requirement that she wanted to mention later on. She also gave clear explanation and politely used “From now please we’ll only use...” to come to decision-making.

Similarly, Pham-the Human Resource manager in one of the companies expressed her politeness when she started her email below to inform her staff about a continuing English programme with more benefits for the company’s employees. She wrote “I’m very pleased to inform you that...”. Then she gave explanations and declaration to support the idea of how better the programme is to help learners in using English in the workplace. She came to her goal of encouraging the companies’ employees to take the course at the end by giving some specific instructions and a boost “Enjoy learning”. We can read from this email feminine styles of leadership which are characterised by
nurturing and caring (Bass, 1998) and by orienting towards relationships rather than tasks (Fletcher, 1999; Holmes and Mara, 2004). These characteristics have been identified as ‘female advantage’ which bring benefits in some aspects of leadership (e.g. collaborative working environments) in organizations.

Example 4.15

Dear All,

I’m very pleased to inform you that CSC recently signed an enterprise contract with GlobalEnglish. This contract allows us more licenses and tools than ever before. This is a huge benefit that CSC brings to us. Everyone now can study GlobalEnglish with unlimited duration.

There are a variety of tools in GlobalEnglish that will help you develop your Business English communication skills, improve your Business English performance and productivity, and enable you to work more effectively in global teams.

....

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ms. Beth LaForme, or Ms. Chau Ho. For quick access, you may want to bookmark our C3 space: https://c3.csc.com/groups/globalenglish.

Enjoy learning.

Best Regards, Ms. PHAM, HR Manager

On the other hand, Haky, the male manager in example 4.5, was relatively direct to the work. He was straightforward and employed more imperatives starting his email and raising the requirements. This may give the addressees some face threats (e.g. they may feel to be blamed for not working hard enough to meet the deadline). Though at the end of his email, he used “Please let me have this...” which function as a conversational politeness marker and “let’s keep us with the good work here” as a boost, it could be read as his skills in leadership practice to push his employees and leave no option about complying. More illustration for the point can also be seen in the following example- an online chatting between an engineering manager (Hung) and an engineer (Nguyen) supervised by him.

Example 4.16

Hung: I saw you registered Oracle certificates, is it right?
Nguyen: Yes,
Hung: Why, why not COBOL or LOMA?
Nguyen: I think it easy to get
Hung: I think you do Oral later
Nguyen: Yes, I registered Loma as well.
Hung: Because we have mock test at our company, it take 3 days to get, you should register on what relates to project or your skills rather than because it’s easy.
Nguyen: Yes.
Hung: Because it brings no value to project.
Nguyen: Yes, I see
The male manager used many direct questions and requirements to his subordinate, such as “Is it right?”, “why, why not”, “you should”. It indicates a high level of directness in the conversation. The employee was also likely to be straight and freely express his opinion “I think it is easy to get”.

However, because both participants are Vietnamese, the cultural factor among people in which the manager is expected to express his power, the subordinate often shows his respect to his supervisor should be counted for. Face threatening, therefore, may not be the face issue between these two people. In other words, the wish of avoiding face threatening could be less than that of they often express to (and maybe expect from) their international colleagues.

Third, the use of humour in the workplace is also influenced by gender. As we know from the findings of some studies (Koester (2010, Holmes, 2006), men often use contestive humour which is challenging and non-collaborative. The majority of employees working in the IT environment in the current study are male, this enables contestive humour to occur commonly in their interactions. We can see such humour in example 4.3.

| Thuan: Hi, Rich. How are you?  
| Rich: Hi Thuan. I’m OK. It’s cold here.  
| Thuan: Really? It’s hot here and I also bring hot news to you :)  
| Rich: Great. |

This humour could be read as a contestive humour (Holmes, 2006) when Thuan took the point of ‘It’s cold here’ to make the joke by saying ‘it’s very hot here’. The joke he made here is that ‘hot’ meant not just about the temperature, but also hot in sense of new. By contradicting what has been said by his colleague, Thuan created a funny and comfortable environment in which they start the work. He then continued his humour using a metaphor “I also bring hot news to you”.

In the email (in example 4.6) sending among Vietnamese software engineers working in a group of 5, Vinh teases Van about his promise for a party that show somewhat a critical stance.

| Dear Van,  
| It’s seem so long that we haven’t met again after that night ; - )  
| Have you finished with the figures? Can you send to us by Thursday?  
| We miss you so much especially your promise about party next month.  
| Hope to see your party invitation soon ^^! |

Vinh reprimanded his colleague, Van for forgetting his promise by joking that they missed Van a lots especially the promise about the party. This joke indicates that they had waited for the party quite long and had not received any party invitation from Van yet. Vinh reminded his colleagues of this by his joke. Later on, the other colleague also contributed to tease Vinh saying “I have some invitation tickets and I wonder how can I send it to you?? Hehe”.
The use of such humour occurs in the interaction which is more relational and the participants are quite close together. Supportive humour (also collaborative humour) which is considered as a feminine style of humour where people contribute material which supports the proposition of previous speaker seems not to be seen here. This may result from the reality of more male than female in the current working environment. However, the function of humour as ‘collaborative’ and relation-building still can be found. First, a member (Vinh) mentioned the promise of the party to remind the event of meeting up for every member of the group, not only him and the addressee (Van). Second, solidarity was established through the participants later on when one of them wrote “we share your sorrow, we share money too”.

In summary, the analysis above provides a picture of what English is required at the workplace. This picture indicates that Vietnamese employees need to use communicative strategies (i.e. directives, requests and politeness strategies) for the kinds of communication at their workplace (e.g. online texting, emails and meetings). Especially, the findings stress the role of relational language in workplace discourse that can also be seen as ‘identity’ work as transactional language does. This corroborates the ideas of Koester (2010), who suggests that it is better not trying to distinguish between these two kinds of language.

4.2 What may cause the breakdowns of a conversation

With the aim of taking more insight into how the employees communicate with English at the workplace and more importantly, what obstacles the employees could meet, interviews with either employers or employees were carried out. The participants’ responses to the interviews about the importance of communication strategies in the workplace correlate with the observation data. The outcome of the interview about what the employers and employees think it could cause the breakdowns of the conversations was summarized by the numbers of these participants mentioning the possible causes as in the table below. The numbers in the table indicate how many participants agreed with reasons for the cause of a conversation’s breakdown. The higher the number is, the greater the incidence of cause selection. The analysis in more details will follow later on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication strategies</th>
<th>Managers (Total 13)</th>
<th>Employees (Total 13)</th>
<th>Linguistics skills</th>
<th>Managers (Total 13)</th>
<th>Employees (Total 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to open and end a conversation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making requests and negotiation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Listening skill</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for explanations</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to write a formal email effectively</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 Participants’ ideas on factors that could cause the breakdown of a conversation from the interview data.

4.2.1 Interviews with the employers

4.2.1.1 Communication strategies and linguistic skills

As we can see from the table, the managers shared the view that pronunciation and listening skill were very important especially for face to face conversations with English speakers. Some simple mistakes in pronunciation, the managers said, could fail the employees in the conversations. For instance, loss of final consonant, then ‘I like it’ was pronounced as “I lie it”; or missing linking sounds in some common expressions such as ‘I got it’, ‘Not at all’ or the mix up, e.g. between ‘I got a job’ and ‘I got the job’ might cause lack comprehension; it means it would be difficult for the listeners to pick up which was said. These simple mistakes could cause negative feelings from the other partner that they might think ‘you could not be the right person for the job’.

Poor pronunciation relates to bad listening skill closely. If you were not good at pronunciation, you could not recognize and catch what the other speakers were saying. One example for that was the employees did not recognize whether it was ‘a matter’ or ‘no matter’ in a meeting. This mistake could be solved if that employee felt free to ask the speaker for a declaration. But if the employee was afraid to ask which often occurred to people who are less confident with their English, it could lead to some serious mistakes in their job.

More importantly, communication strategies (e.g., how to open and end a conversation, making requests and negotiation and how to write an email effectively) are highly valued by the managers. The majority of managers mentioned this in the interviews. They also emphasize the requirement of intercommunicative competence to make a successful conversation in business either for spoken or written English. Lack of this, employees who could be very good in their majors but who were not good at English that they could not get promotion for higher positions in their career.

For emails, the most common means of communication by any employees in the companies, all managers agree that – whether informal or formal emails - “to be most effective, it is a good idea to give them a clear, logical structure” (Chapman, 2007). Therefore, the managers are concerned with how the employees can write an email effectively in this way. Many new employees, they said, could not write an email effectively because they did not know how to write as required of an effective email, particularly formal email. For some employees with more experience, it was still difficult for
them to write an effective email because they lacked cultural communicative skills to express their ideas effectively such as politeness to save the addressee’ face. It is worth here to get back with some emails collected for the data for illustration as follows.

Example 4.17
Context: Email sent from a Vietnamese software engineer to an Australian producer who has the authority as one of the employers for the working project.

```
Hi Rich,
Follow the SOW 1.1, you should give me all 12 sofa models and their descriptions + material compatibility by March 18. But now we only get 4 sofa models & 6 sofa description + material compatibility. So please send all the remaining item by tomorrow so we can update and testing. Otherwise, I'm not sure that we can complete the app by next Wednesday (only 1 week).
Thanks,
```

Example 4.18
Context: Email sent from a Vietnamese software engineer to his team leader, American. They work in group of 10. When members in the team have some questions to ask for their work, they email the group leader.

```
Hi Dave,
I'm working for Work Order detail function but I don't know how to get information (in database) for "Raise by", "Reported", "Planned down hour", "Nature of fault" in General section, and how to get look up data for fields: "Cause of fault", "Remedy" and "Status of fault". Can you help me?
```

The extracts indicate that grammar or lexis was not a matter here, but the matter of appropriateness or appropriate levels of politeness to have an effective email. The sender could express all the ideas he wanted without obstacle in lexis and grammar (despite some tiny errors), it could still annoy the receivers. What made the former email ineffective to the receiver was its inappropriateness in some ways. For example, the status difference between the sender (e.g. the engineer) and the receiver (e.g. the producer) should be considered for the politeness to write a formal email. The stronger modal “should” and the use of second person pronoun “you should” made it face-threatening. ‘You’ referred the addressee, not ‘you’ as general and the request ‘should’ was too direct. This conflicts the principle of making requests that it tends to be more indirect and hedged to avoid the thread to the addressee’s negative face (Koester, 2010).

For the latter email, it would be expected a brief description of how much he got the job done before talking about the problem. This is for the receiver to consider the request reasonable and feel good. And again, considering the status difference between the sender (a teammate) and the receiver (the
team leader), ‘Could you...’ was supposed to be used rather than “Can you”, as the receiver commented. It is regarded as making the requests less direct to be polite and avoid face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

4.2.1.2 Cultural factors were concerned by the employers

The followings are what the employers commented on their employees in term of cultural influence

- The employees could talk a lot (in Vietnamese) with his teammate, but they become shy when talking with their manager or team leader, either in Vietnamese or English.

- The employees rarely ask the other speakers, particularly who have higher positions than them, to explain or declare the issue for them.

- The employees did not discuss much in a meeting with some foreign partners though they know quite a lot about the issue or may talk a lot with other Vietnamese teammates.

- They just could like ‘keep face’ and avoid telling the idea.

The underlying values of Confucianism in Vietnam emphasize dependency and education rather than independence, hierarchy rather than equality and duty of members of a group rather than individualism (Bond and Hwang, 1986 cited in Sullivan, 2000). From the theory, two kinds of politeness could be worked out: Hierarchy politeness and solidarity politeness (Nguyen Chi, 2002).

The two kinds of politeness were discussed by the employers in the interview to cause the indirectness, the hesitation to voice one’s own idea or to ask for declaration or explanation among the employees.

Hierarchy politeness: Less senior persons often show their respects to the senior persons in several ways. For instance, being the younger and a lower status in the workplace, the employees often say “yes” to the older and higher status person. It is very common for Vietnamese people to say “yes” before embarking on their responses, particularly when they talk to a senior person (Nguyen Chi, 2012). They also do not initiate their ideas on the issue unless the senior start the discussion. In particular, the employees would keep silence until their manager start it and encouraged or asked them (individually) to join in. These points could address the two first concerns raised by the managers above.

As Ralson et al (1999) says, the high collectivism of the cultural values in Vietnam harmonizes with the preference for teamwork in organizations. There is a teamwork satisfaction among Vietnamese workers in the sense that they support each other and a senior person who is more experienced sponsor and guide other less senior people in the group work arrangement (Le & Truong, 2005).
However, on the other side, this affected the employees’ working attitude in the way that the employees often based on their team leaders or other team members to communicate with the other speakers in the meetings. The idea of politeness in this case could be the solidarity spirit where participants express their closeness together, “one face really represents the faces of the group” (Nguyen Chi, 2012). This could lead to the fact that an individual would not talk his own view, but base on the group thought instead. This which is different with the norm of work satisfaction analyzed in the previous section may not stimulate team members to launch innovative ideas or solutions. These points could meet the two last concerns of the employers raised above.

4.2.2 Interviews with the employees

What the employees reported correlates with the ideas of the employers. The majority of employee participants said the following expressions (which they had learnt through the communication with English for their work) were often used for their daily conversations with English in their workplace:

- Could you please (tell me how to implement it/explain me this?)
- Do you have any idea about...?
- I’m facing some issues. I need your help.
- I’m working on ....I’ll finish it by ... Can I send it to you by...?
- Please get this information for...
- What I am trying to say is/ My question is...
- Due to/ because/ since...
- Can you check whether...
- Sorry I can’t get you. Can you say it again?
- How can we/ Should we...
- Please ring me when you are back.
- Give me sometime/ Wait a minute.
- I got your point.
- Thank you for...

Looking at these above quotations, we can see that the need of communication bases mainly on asking for explanations, declarations, making requests. In other words, it belongs to communication strategies. Most of the employees admitted that they learnt about these strategies through their experience using English at their workplace rather than from school. English learnt from school support them more in term of grammar, lexis and little pronunciation.

The two linguistic skills that most concerned these engineers were pronunciation and vocabulary. This correlates with their managers’ comments that these linguistics skills often challenged their employees to make a successful conversation in English with their direct manager or customers. They reported that they often could not catch what the other speakers said. It was blamed for their poor
listening skill, pronunciation and lack of vocabulary. They also showed their worry about pronunciation more than vocabulary, as they said “We can learn more about vocabulary, even vocabulary for IT by reading or through work, but we do not have any chance to prepare for pronunciation except what we learnt from school”.

The employees who worked in companies that had non-native English speaking partners (companies 1, 2 and 3 – table 3.1) all reported that one of their big challenges they met was that they often could not respond to English spoken by Japanese, Indian, Chinese or Korean. In a TV conference, for example, these employees had to ask for repetition many times for the idea. They then had to write an email to confirm before carrying out the task. Here the employees showed their wish for English being prepared at school for learners as a language in lingua franca used in workplace and business interactions.

Most employee participants said that grammar was not their major difficulty when they started to work at the companies. They might write or speak in incorrect grammar but the receivers still could understand them. The examples shown in the section of online texting and some informal email above can illustrate this when there included many grammar errors but still got on quite well. However, good grammar and structures are required for formal emails and to write effective business emails, a point made by employers more than employees.

The majority of employee participants agreed with the idea that working in groups helps them to reduce uncertainty and confusion among members. However, they also admitted that they often relied on the group leader to sort out the problems when they met difficulties understanding in English. This correlates with what the employers comment on the same issue.

4.3 Summary
In summary, the data analysis implies that there are far more requirements for successful English use in the workplace than English that a graduate learns from university. Learners entering the companies to work need communicative competence in English use (e.g. communicative strategies such as how to make requests, directives or how to write a business email). The considerable points here mainly concern the reality of relational interactions being as much important as transactional interactions in their roles at the workplace. It can be said that an utterance or a text message which is correct at grammatical-lexical levels is not always enough for a successful interaction. Relational talks through which colleagues get understand each other’s cultural behaviours, build up and maintain relationships are necessary in business. It is because participants from different cultures are
influenced by their local cultural behaviours on the way getting to meet each other for an international communication. Vietnamese colleagues who show politeness frequently may find it difficult to cope with their foreign partners’ directness. The directness from other foreign speakers, on the other hand, could cause obstacles for Vietnamese co-workers. They have to reflect for some time whether they have behaved in an appropriate way. It could also take them time, e.g. six to twelve months, through their own experience to get familiar with the directness. Along with the indirectness, Vietnamese colleagues often prefer language use that avoids face-threatening. This conflicts the directness which may bring some face-threatening often seen by partners from some other cultures. These kinds of consideration for meaningful conversations are often absent in language classroom and teaching materials. It raises the importance of getting balance between transactional and relational talk in language teaching materials. It also raises the importance of communicative language teaching at university that would support learners a variety of workplace discourse aspects as analyzed in this chapter. The question of how English is actually taught which comes from the discussed issues will be explored in the next chapter.
SECTION 3: UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY

This section includes three chapters which aim to examine whether English education relating to the use of teaching materials and teaching methods at a university were meeting the needs of the workplace identified in section 2. The three chapters are: Chapter 5 reviews relevant studies on CLT and CLT implementation. Chapter 6 presents the research methods used for the stage of research at the university. In chapter 7, the findings of the section are presented.

CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW – ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

This chapter aims to review relevant studies and theories on CLT and CLT implementation in general and CLT aspects which are relevant to the study. It proceeds in 7 parts. The first and second parts present an overview of major English language instructional approaches and their implementation. This includes elements that constitute the development of communicative competence for learners such as authentic materials and understanding of CLT. The third part discusses a number of aspects of classroom methods that stimulate communicative English teaching in classroom practice, such as pair work and group work, questioning techniques and classroom interactions. In the fourth part, neglected aspects in CLT studies are discussed, which supports the wider perspectives of what makes the possibilities of CLT (Hunter & Smith, 2012; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). The previous studies related to teachers’ understanding of CLT and current English training in Vietnamese higher education were addressed in the last parts of the chapter.

5.1 Popular English language teaching methodology

In English language teaching literature, a variety of English language teaching methods have been created over years to meet the demand of foreign or second language acquisition. A shift in perspectives on the issue which shows in the change in major English instructional approaches has occurred. That is, a change from traditional teacher-centered, grammar-oriented instruction to student-centered, communicative approaches (Harmer, 2007). The major English instructional approaches and applications used widely and concerned in the current study context are briefly reviewed bellow.

5.1.1 Traditional English instruction

Grammar Translation method is usually preferred as one of the traditional English instructions. This method is defined as a way of studying a language that “approaches the language first through
detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language” (Richards & Rogers, 2011, p.5).

In Vietnam, Grammar Translation method has been common in English language learning classroom since the years of 1990s until recently (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 2008). In these classes, learners may obtain a lot of grammatical knowledge but lack communication skills of English. As Nunan (1989) discusses, because grammar is taught as a set of memorizing rules, it is hard for learners to apply the grammar they have learnt in real-life communication.

Another method also included in the traditional English instructions in this study is the audio-lingual method which emerged when behaviourist accounts of language learning became popular in the 1920s and 1930s (Harmer, 2007). As Harmer discusses, this method is used by some teachers as a result of the disadvantages of the grammar translation method. There are a number of Vietnamese teachers who also use this method as a replacement of the grammar translation method (Ha, 2004; Vu, 2004). The method focuses on structural drills, pattern memorization and mechanical habit formation (i.e. forming good habits by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes; the chances of producing mistakes are minimized by memorizing dialogues and performing pattern drills (Richards & Rogers, 2011). In other words, Audiolingualism relies heavily on drills and substitutions to form the habits through which it helps to shield from the possibility of making mistakes (Harmer, 2007). According to Richards and Rogers, the instructional principles of this method include: learners learn with analogy which involves the processes of generalization and discrimination (the rules are not given until learners have practiced a pattern in a variety of contexts); it is more effective to achieve language skills if the items to be learned are presented in spoken form before they are seen in written form; and the meaning of words can be learned only in linguistic and cultural context. This is more illustrated in Harmer (2007).

Harmer (2007) discusses that a variation on Audiolingualism involves the procedure most often referred to as PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production), also features in early CLT. In this procedure, first, the teacher introduces a situation which contextualizes the language to be taught and the language is presented. Second, students practise the language, using repetition techniques such as choral repetition (i.e. whole class repeat a word, phrase or sentence with the teacher ‘conducting’), individual repetition, and cue-response drills (i.e. teacher give a cue such as ‘a cinema’, nominates a student and that student makes the desired response, e.g. ‘Would you like to go to the cinema?’). Cue-response drills carry more meaning than a simple substitution drill in Audiolingualism because
they are contextualized by the situation that has been presented. Third, the final step is known as production where the students, using the new language, make sentences of their own (p.64).

In English classroom where traditional teaching methods are used, the IRF (Initiation – Response – Feedback) pattern often has its prominent status (Van Lier, 1996). The IRF structure, though “effective in maintaining order, regulating participation” (Van Lier, 1996, p.156), is criticized since it is probably the element that best symbolizes classroom interaction where the student’s responses are often under the teacher’s control which allows the teacher to lead the lesson to a planned direction and therefore reduces student’s opportunities to utilize or to influence the contents of classroom interaction (Van Lier, 1996; Mercer, 1998).

In IRF classroom interaction, according to Nassaji and Wells (2000), the questions teachers use most are display questions of which I say more below requiring the responses for information that the teacher already knows, and therefore, not providing much chance for students to answer in any unexpected way to the teacher’s planned feedback. This also contributes to the reason why the IRF pattern has been criticized as not providing the best possible opportunities for learning (Mercer, 1998). Teachers all over the world are advised to respond communicatively these days (Harmer, 2007; Richards & Rogers, 2011) with communicative based English instruction by education researchers. This will be discussed next.

5.1.2 Communicative based English instruction

5.1.2.1 Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as many authors (e.g. Nunan, 1989; Richards 2006, Richards & Rogers, 2011) discuss, concern principles for effective teaching methods and authentic materials such as emphasizing communication through meaningful interaction among learners, and communicative classroom activities. This method involves a fundamental dimension of language – ‘the functional and communicative potential of language’ (Richards & Rogers, 2011) that was inadequately addressed in approaches to language teaching at that time (the mid-1960s). CLT focuses on the process rather than the product in language learning, and the purpose of language is communication (Celce-Murcia, 1991). This language teaching method relates to the shift in emphasis from form to meaning, i.e. from language structures towards language functions and communication, and thus, express the real-world language use (Clarke, 1989). In particular, CLT emphasizes communicative competence, which refers to an ability to use the language for actual communication purposes (Hymes, 1972).
(1) Communicative competence

The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. Language teaching with this approach aims to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as “communicative competence”. The concept of “language as communication” has been centred and originated in Hymes’ (1972) notion of communicative competence that a learner learning a language needs to achieve. As many researchers (e.g. Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Richards & Rogers, 2001) illustrate, communicative competence is a competence that involves what a learner knows about language – the written form and classical notions of grammar (linguistic knowledge) and its culture and how well s/he is able to use language in particular social contexts (pragmatic knowledge) in order to get the desired outcome from the interaction. Communicative competence is argued to be applied to both written and spoken language at discourse levels (Gilmore, 2007). In particular, a number of researchers (e.g. McCarthy & Carter, 1995) indicate how linguistic competence (i.e. standard grammars) fails to represent noticable features in spoken discourse. For example, the word ‘like’, the morpheme –ish, and response tokens such as ‘right’ all play an important role in discourse but are rarely taught in classroom (Carter & McCathy, 2003 cited in Gilmore, 2007). It has also been criticized that there is a lack of pragmatic models which have relied on empirical data in textbooks. The models presented often focus on lexicogrammatical knowledge at the expense of pragmatics (Kasper, 2001) and lack naturalness and authenticity (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds, 1991). For learners to learn how to manage conversation effectively in the target language, researchers (e.g. Mc.Carthy & Carter, 1994; Brown & Yule, 1983) discuss that they need another competence which is a critical part of learners’ communicative competence. It is discourse competence – the ability to produce “unified, cohesive and coherent spoken or written texts” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 101). The development of this area of communicative competence needs the role of authentic language teaching materials to provide the models that are more interactional, non-goal oriented and used for relationship development (Gilmore, 2007, p.102).

Communicative competence also has a close link to SLA that stresses that language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through practicing language skills (Krashen, 1982; Littlewood, 1981; Johnson, 1982); Long’s Interaction hypothesis (1983) and Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) suggest that learners’ interaction in which input is made comprehensible through negotiating meaning by following a range of conversational modification strategies can lead to language acquisition.
In summary, the notion of communicative competence discussed above is the cornerstone of CLT which rejected strictly structural approaches to language teaching and “opened the way for authentic texts, texts which had been created for a genuine communicative purpose” (Mishan, 2005, p.1). Some researchers (e.g. Widdowson, 1998) argue that it hard for learners to cope with authentic materials due to the lack of contextual conditions in classroom for them to do so. However, some other researchers (e.g. Anderson & Lynch, 1988) believe that authentic materials can be utilized for all levels of learner if the texts and tasks are carefully selected (p.108).

In a CLT class, since the processes of communication is emphasized rather than the mastery of language forms, it leads to different roles of learners: as negotiator or interactor which is quite different from traditional student’s role as a learner, receiver, follower and listener. The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator of the communication process and an independent participant within the learning-teaching group (Breen & Candlin, 1980).

(2) Strong and weak versions of CLT
Some researchers (e.g. Howatt, 1984, p.279) distinguish between a “strong” and a “weak” version of CLT. According to Howatt, the weak version of CLT can be described as ‘learning to use English’, which ‘stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes’, whereas the stronger version of CLT entails ‘using English to use it’, which ‘advances the claim that language is acquired through communication’. Though there has been plenty of theoretical support (e.g. Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1996) that strong version of CLT has really been taken up by task-based language teaching (TBLT), there is limited evidence of teachers using such methodology in their classes. Weak version involving the PPP model of language teaching seems to dominate. It is because the weak version is easily incorporated by teachers who follow the PPP model to be able to fit the communicative activity into the production stage (Holliday, 1994). However, due to a shift in emphasizing to achieve communicative competence in CLT over time (Richards & Rogers, 2001, Smith 2012), weak CLT has started to go a little out of fashion though it is still seen in language teaching worldwide.

(3) Communicative syllabus design
Definitions and descriptions of CLT have varied since the late 1970s and early 1980s. This results in a variety of models for what a syllabus might look like in CLT. Richards and Rogers (2011) summarize Yalden (1983)’s classification of communicative syllabus types, with reference sources to each model. These models include Jupp and Hodlin’s (1975) functional; Wilkins’ (1976) structures plus functions; Widdowson’s (1979) interactional and Prabhu (1983)’s task-based. As Richards and Rogers (2011)
indicate, there are a range of attempts of syllabus designs following these models. For example, the
descriptions of interactional strategies such as the interaction of doctor and patients, and teacher
and student have been given by a number of researchers (e.g. Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Candlin,
Bruton & Leather, 1974 cited in Richards & Rogers, 2011). Despite interesting, these descriptions
were criticized to be restricted to “two-person interactions in which these exist reasonably rigid and
acknowledged superordinate-to-subordinate role relationships” (Richards & Rogers, 2011, p.164).

Some other authors have looked to task specification and task organization as the appropriate
criteria for communicative syllabus design. For example, Prabhu (1983) states that the only form of
syllabus which can assist CLT seems to be a purely procedural one with the types of tasks to be tried
and an order of complexity of these tasks to be suggested. Nunan (1988) and Mishan(2005) discuss
that CLT advocates a communicative syllabus in which real-world tasks and authentic materials are
implied to design language courses. In the current study, task-based syllabus is more addressed in
terms of the implementation of CLT than the other syllabi.

5.1.2.2 Task-based language teaching (TBLT)
Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is defined as an approach which is based on the use of tasks as
the core for planning and instruction in language teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2011). Some of its
promoters (e.g, Willis, 1996) consider TBLT as a coherent development of CLT because it draws on
several principles that constitute strong version of CLT. They are:

- Activities for real-life communication,
- Activities in which language is used for meaningful tasks,
- Meaningful language to support the learning process.

TBLT has received further support from some researchers in second language acquisition who find
the interest in tasks as SLA research tools. For example, Long and Crookes (1993) find that task-based
activities can provide a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused
activities, and hence eventually provide better opportunities for language learning to take place.

Task in TBLT is defined as activities that have meaning as their primary focus aiming to “involve
learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language” (Nunan,
1989, p.10), and “tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use” (Skehan, 1996,
p.20). Task-based instruction, as Skehan discusses, takes a fairly strong view of communicative
language teaching.
As a basis for task design and description, there have been some attempts to group tasks into categories. For example, Willis (1996) proposes six task types according to traditional knowledge hierarchies. They are listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences and creative tasks. Some other authors, (e.g. Pica, Kanagy & Palodun (1993) as cited in Richards & Rogers, 2011) categorize tasks according to the type of interaction that occurs in task accomplishment: jigsaw tasks, information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks and opinion exchange tasks.

In TBLT, according to Richards and Rogers (2011), some of the roles of learners can be seen as the general roles assumed for learners in CLT. Some other roles primarily focus on task completion. In primary, learner’s roles that are implied by task work are group participant, monitor, risk-taker and innovator. Similarly, teachers in TBL also have some additional roles such as selector and sequencer of tasks, preparing learners for tasks and consciousness-raising (i.e. learners need to attend to critical features of language they use or hear if they are to attain language through participating in tasks).

5.1.2.3 English for Specific purposes (ESP)

English for specific purposes (ESP) is identified as a specific branch of CLT, “an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need” (Hutchison & Waters, 1994, p.19). ESP focuses primarily on applications of English in specific fields (Robinson,1991; Widdowson, 1987) or professional satisfaction-learning English to communicate effectively in a specific work (Hutchison & Waters, 1994).

Clarke (1989) states that ESP even demands more real-life language use apparently than general English. Similarly, Johns and Price-Machado (2003) argue that all good language teaching should be adapted to the specific learning and the needs of identified groups of learners and also sensitive to socio-cultural contexts where these learners are using English. In other words, all good language teaching is for specific purposes in English and ESP is considered as a means for achieving the necessary communicative competence.

According to Flowerdew & Peacock (2001) cited in Nam (2005), the rationale for ESP is based upon four claims:

- Being focused on the learners’ needs, it wastes no time;
- It is relevant to the learner;
- It is successful in imparting learning;
• It is more cost effective than General English.

Though there are a number of ways to categorize ESP due to a diversity of ESP courses around the world and the adaptation of ESP programmes to the contexts, two main types of ESP can be seen common are: English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP) (Johns, 1991). For the purposes of the current study, EAP is focused because the language learners in this study were university students learning English related to specific academic areas at school. In the meantime, ESP is also concerned in terms of English for professional requirements (particularly in IT) of the graduates at the workplace.

5.2 CLT implementation

It is argued that appropriate teaching approaches and authentic materials can meet that demand of real-life language use by providing meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used, engage and motivate learners to help them develop a range of communicative competences (Mishan, 2005; Gilmore, 2007; Trabelsi, 2010; Tomlinson, 2012). For example, discourse-based approach to materials writing would be a possible approach as discussed below.

A number of studies (e.g Myers Scotton & Bernsten, 1988; Gilmore (2004 cited in 2007) have revealed that the authentic interactions had more complicated structures than the models presented to learners in the textbooks. In particular, Myers Scotton and Bernsten’s (1988) study showed that direction-giving in natural conversations included more elements than the standard three-step model (request for directions – direction giving – thanks) presented to students. They include an opening sequence (e.g. a repetition of the question), an orientation-checker and a pre-closing. Similarly, Gilmore (2004) compared textbook dialogs and their equivalent authentic interactions and found considerable differences in a variety of discourse features. They consist of length and turn-taking patterns, the frequency of false starts, repetition, pausing, terminal overlap, latching, hesitation devices and back-channel (Gilmore, 2007, p.103). These findings suggest discourse-based approach to materials writing. For example, authentic recordings of casual conversations were considered as the most likely source of useful models to illustrate how interlocutors manage conversation and build relationships effectively (Koester, 2010; Belton, 1988). Also, the process of transcribing speech is evaluated useful for utilization of spoken discourse in the classroom because it allows to “‘freeze’ the interaction and highlight the salient features for learners” (Gilmore, 2007, p.102). A number of researchers (e.g Brown & Yule, 1983; Willis & Willis, 1996) suggest that learners can practice communicative strategies (e.g. using reactive tokens to empathise or discourse markers to signal how
their turns relate to the ongoing conversation) using their own conversations by recording and transcribing their own discourse and comparing it with that of native speakers.

Considering the proposed approaches for successful CLT implication as discussed above, I am reflecting on these following principles that it is important to keep in mind for English teachers and school managers in my context.

5.2.1 Elements constitute communicative competence for learners

5.2.1.1 Understanding of learners’ needs and principles of language learning

This supports modern teaching methods in the post-Communicative era (e.g. CLT approaches) in which learners are centered and learning processes rather than learning product are the main focus (Richards & Rogers, 2011; Hall, 2011). As for learners-centredness, the understanding of learners’ needs (as individuals) is necessary. Learners’ needs include different complex needs such as learning needs, psychological needs, personality, gender, learning style, expectations, and needs relating real life communicative situations or professional satisfaction-learning English to communicate effectively in a specific work (ESP) (Bell & Gower, 1998; Rossner, 1988; Nunan, 1988 and Hutchison & Waters, 1987).

Understanding learning principles relates to what we know about the language learning process on the basis of second or foreign language acquisition (SLA). We know through SLA research about basic principles that most teachers agree about what contributes to successful learning such as learners being exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input of language in use, learners needing to be engaged both affectively and cognitively in the language experience, learners needing opportunities to use language for communicative purposes (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Tomlinson, 1998; Hall, 2011). These principles emphasize learners’ engagement, a willing investment of energy and attention in learning, which has been claimed as essential to successful learning (Harmer, 1996). As Mishan (2005) discusses, being engaged distracts learners from the basic objective (language acquisition), thereby reducing anxiety and allowing acquisition to happen (p.28). Understanding this will also contribute to materials development that suits learners in particular context.

5.2.1.2 Opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes for learner

A communicative purpose in ELT refers to not just a linguistic goal (Ellis, 1982) but that learners need to learn language in order to communicate (Littlewood, 2004). In order to achieve this purpose, many authors (Nunan, 1988; Guariento & Morley, 2001) state that authentic teaching materials could bring such opportunities because they can replicate the use of language in the real contexts.
Authentic materials involve authentic text (which will be discussed more details in 2.1.3) and task, a pedagogical model to achieve communicative purposes (Nunan, 1988; Richards & Rogers, 2011).

Sharing the same view of Nunan (1989) and Skehan (1996), Prabhu (1987) prefers a task as “mind-engagement”, aiming to achieve learner’s personal involvement; Willis (1996) discusses tasks in the sequence of stages keeping with learner needs, interests and language skill levels to use in. The view of the definitions reveals that tasks can be employed as means of promoting communication and authentic language use in classrooms. Mishan (2005) summarizes how authentic tasks would help: to reflect the original communicative purpose of the input text; to retain the learner’s cognitive reaction to - and engagement with - the text, to rehearse real-world activity; to activate the learner’s existing knowledge of the target knowledge and culture as well as awareness of the effect of learners’ native culture in implementing the task; and to obtain purposeful communication between learners in striving for the task goal.

5.2.1.3 Authentic materials

As researchers (e.g Gilmore, 2007; Mishan, 2005; Trabelsi, 2010) argue, the reason for trying to achieve authentic materials in classroom is to produce learners who are communicatively competent. In order to write such materials, materials developers have reported the need of principled criteria (Tomlinson, 2003). Together with what has been discussed above and proposed approaches for successful materials development in the literature, I reflect on these following principles for the materials writing process in my context:

(1) **Materials should be based on a thorough understanding of learners’ needs**

Along with this variety of needs discussed in 2.1.1, because learners are different in different regions in the world, materials designers should consider types of intercultural difficulties learners will have to cope with in order to behave appropriately with members of another culture. Therefore, they need to understand and take learner differences into account to adapt materials to meet learners’ needs. Conversely, as Richards (1995) comments, assumptions about teachers and learners may cause the failure of the materials.

(2) **Materials should be authentic, in terms of text and task**

As discussed above, while the potential for engagement relating to language acquisition should be the central in learning process for learners, it is shown that the use of authentic texts for language learning is beneficial for the stimulation of that affective engagement. Such researchers as Little et al (1994), Mishan (2005) and Trabelsi (2010) argue that authentic materials can motivate learners, enhance positive attitudes to the learning of a language. The
issue of authenticity has been raised in relation to learners’ culture (Trabelsi, ibid), in the way that materials can replicate the use in the real contexts (Nunan, 1988; Guariento & Morley, 2001), and is stressed as “basically a personal process of engagement” (Van Lier, 1996, p.128). The debates surrounding “authentic” language are even more relevant in ESP contexts where learners learn to discover and use the preferred language discourse used by members of the target group or profession (Hall, 2011). Mishan (2005) synthesizes the list of beneficial uses of authentic text which are considered to be suited to a consciousness-raising approach to learning and top-down processing, the use of the more holistic mode of language processing than bottom-up processing - 'piecemeal' process (Swaffar, 1985, p.17) to maximize the brain’s potential and open the way to deep learning (p.41). The authenticity of texts has been analysed by associating them with tasks due to the opportunities that tasks can create to achieve communicative purposes for learner as discussed in 5.2.2.2.

(3) **Materials should provide opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes.**

Teaching materials would help CLT for the purposes of supporting learners to reach communicative competence if they are authentic. As many authors in the early period of CLT (e.g. Swaffar, 1985; Lee, 1985) discuss, an authentic text has naturally tended to reflect the primacy of communicativeness: it is the one whose primary intent to communicate meaning or the one that has an intrinsically communicative value. As Tomlinson (2012) states, an authentic text is to communicate rather than to teach, and an authentic task engages learners in communication to obtain an outcome, rather than practice the language. This is also presented in Mishan’ s criteria for authentic texts, in particular original communicative purpose, socio-cultural function and context; activity or interactivity (p.14). The original communicative purpose of an authentic text necessarily implicates some level of involvement or engagement (implicating emotions and desire), that teachers and students work towards the materials (Van Lier, 1996). When a text is designed in the way that it can provoke readers’ engagement (relating to learners’ personal concerns and interest, socio-cultural attitudes (Tomlinson, 2003), the communicative purpose can be achieved. It involves Tomlinson’s (1998, 2010) text-driven approach which emphasizes the collection of texts which engage the learner in “such a way as to achieve interaction between the text and the senses, feelings, views and intuitions of the reader/listener” (Tomlinson, 2003,p.110).The collection of such effective texts is often left not only for materials designers but also teachers to know about materials evaluation (to select and adapt materials in their classroom practice) which is discussed next.
(4) Materials evaluation

Materials evaluation, as Tomlinson (1998) states, is the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them. The procedures of evaluation are suggested in literature such as the three levels of “what is there?”, “what is required of users?” and “what is implied?” (Littlejohn, 1998, pp.192-5); a procedure including materials analysis, first-glance evaluation, user feedback, evaluation using situation specific checklists and finally, selection (McGrath, 2002); a framework that caters for teacher needs and wants in materials evaluation (Masuhara, 1998). The principles of materials evaluation are also proposed to use in the evaluation frameworks. For example, McGrath (2002) suggests principled ways for choosing a coursebook and adapting and choosing the coursebook once selected; Tomlinson (2003) considers universal principles and local criteria (applicable to all language learning context or a particular learning context); McCullagh (2010) sets out the procedure used to evaluate materials for medical practitioners.

In the light of the literature and putting it back to my context, the teacher’s material adaptation at the current study could be suggested to follow the processes of materials evaluation proposed by researchers such as McGrath (2002) and McDonough and Shaw (1993). In particular, McGrath’s stages of materials evaluation which are objective and reliable basing briefly on systematic record-keeping and evidence-based reflection shed light on the suitability of the materials; McDonough and Shaw’s (1993) process of materials adaptation refers to teacher using techniques of adapting, deleting, modifying, simplifying and removing in order to relate materials closely to learners’ background and interests, introduce models of authentic language to use in particular educational context. This will be discussed more details next.

5.2.1.4 Materials adaptation

Materials adaptation is defined as a process that a teacher adapts the materials he uses, employing one or more of the techniques: “retaining, rejecting, re-ordering and modification” (Ellis, 1986, p.47) or “reducing, adding, omitting, modifying and supplementing” (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi). The purpose of the materials adaptation, as a number of researchers (McGrath, 2002;
McDonough & Shaw, 1993) put it, is to make the materials more suitable to the learners’ needs and interests and the teachers’ capabilities or to better suit particular circumstances.

McGrath (2002) discusses a number of main categories of adaptation. One of them is ‘adaptation as change’, which can be useful to the teachers in my study context. In this category, the principled approach involves these following questions that might be asked by one who is considering adaptation:

- What does the exercise actually get the learners to do?
- What do I want the learner to do?
- How can I get the exercise to do what I want to do it for the learner?

(Cunningsworth, 1984 cited in McGrath, 2002, p. 66)

McGrath (2002) adds one more question, which is for a description of the linguistic attention behind an activity or exercise.

- What is the objective of the activity?

From McDonough and Shaw’s description of the purpose adaptation as cited above, the two processes involved in adaptation which can be seen: first, the evaluation of materials on the basis of contextual criteria and then the tailoring of the materials to suit these criteria (McGrath, 2002).

The possible foci for this tailoring suggested by McGrath include:

- Language – the language of explanations, texts, exercises and the language that students are expected to produce;
- The contexts and content to which the language relates;
- Procedures and classroom management – who does what with whom and how this is organized.
- Restructuring – components are reorganized, which might be motivated by the teacher’s prioritization of learners’ need or to make the order ‘more logical’ (McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

(McGrath, 2002, p.74)

This kind of adaptation is based on a number of principles proposed by researchers (e.g. McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Tomlinson, 1998). They are:

- Localisation - the need for contextual relevance.
- Personalisation – the relevance of content in relation to learner’s interest and academic, educational or professional need.
• Individualisation – the learning styles of individuals and the members of a group working together.
• Modernisation – changing any language usage that seems out of date.
• Simplification – procedures to make thing easier for or accessible to learners

As we can see from the discussion above, materials adaptation is also to fill the gap of insufficiencies in teaching materials, such as out-of-dateness, lack of authenticity (Madsen & Bowen, 1978). This is important because when a teacher makes some changes to a course book to better suit particular purposes, he/she is trying to do something that can improve the effectiveness of the learning experience for learners (McGrath, 2002).

5.3 Aspects of CLT classroom methods

The overview of CLT approaches and CLT implementation has been provided in the parts above. This part looks at classroom methods which have been considered as vital part of language learning behaviour and of communicative approaches. These are relevant to my research. Asking students to work in groups or pairs, for example, has come to be taken as a natural, essential part of communicative methods (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). McDonough and Shaw describe the relationship between materials and methods in classroom as content and structure. By ‘content’ they mean the materials themselves—what language items selected for practice (e.g. whether structural or functional). ‘Structure’ is related to ‘how classes are managed’ or decisions on ‘various classroom options as to who work with whom and in what possible groupings” (p.194). Wright (1987) makes a distinction between ‘language data’ (e.g. topic), ‘method’ (e.g. practice) and ‘classroom organization’ (e.g. working in groups), that McDonough and Shaw (2003) put the last two together, ‘structure’ in their view, is procedural. Richards (1998) defines classroom management as “the ways in which student behaviour, movement and interaction during a lesson are organized and controlled by the teacher to enable teaching to take place most effectively” (p.10).

From the above review, here I discuss, first, the functions of group work and pair work in the classroom, then I consider different classroom practice for patterns of interaction between teachers and learners, and of learners together. These involve aspects of questioning techniques and classroom observation.

5.3.1 Group work and pair work

Pair work is described as a classroom activity that requires of the teacher rather little organization and can be activated in most classrooms by simply having students work with the person sitting next
to them. Group work, on the other hand, require greater role variation between persons as well as a certain amount of organization of the classroom (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

Pair work and group work can happen with all kinds of content such as dialogue practice, doing grammar drills, sharing opinions, reading aloud, comparing answers to questions, etc. There is a very large choice of possible tasks that pair work can carry out from fully communicative, ‘stimulated’, structure and vocabulary practice to those with the aim to set up cooperative working habits as we can see in Harmer (2007) and Littlewood (1981, 1992).

Group work and pair work are seen as a necessary connection between the organizational structure available to the teacher and a communicative methodology, functioned as a mere management device, or a means of developing real communicative competence (Brumfit, 1984). This involves the point we can take that a valid and important aim of group work and pair work is to achieve communicative purposes. Working in groups, students learn how to give and follow instructions in pairs for appropriate respondents in a typical range of practical social situations or involve the exchange of opinions within a small group. Task-based learning (TBL), a great deal of which is grounded on the use of pair work and group work points up even more sharply the methodological implications (see Nunan, 1989).

Richards and Rogers (2011) make similar points saying that many tasks in TBL are done in pairs or groups. A task takes a commonsensical understanding as an activity that has meaning as their primary focus. It depends on students who are more accustomed to whole-class or/and individual work to choose a proper task for learners. Tasks (e.g. making a telephone call, reading a map and give directions, finding a solution to a puzzle) can be carried out in groups or pairs. This application supports learners to negotiate meaning and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication, that makes part of purposes of CLT.

Harmer (2007) lists some advantages and disadvantages of pair work and group work which include Advantages:

- Increase the speaking time for individual student.
- Allow students to work and interact independently, provide chance of different opinions and varied contributions.
- Promote cooperation, helps the classroom to become a more relaxed and friendly place.
- Promote learner autonomy (i.e., learners are allowed to make their own decisions in group).
Disadvantages:
- Be frequently very noisy, teachers worry that they will lose control of their class.
- Have more chance for students to veer away from the point of an exercise (e.g. talking about something else, often in their first language).
- Not always popular with students; some students may be dominated in the group while some are passive.
- Take some time for organization.

(ibid, p.165-166)

5.3.2 Questioning techniques

As researchers (e.g. Stubbs & Delamont, 1976; Nunan, 1991) has discussed, questions a teacher asks can be very vital to support students to develop their communicative competence in learning language. Ralph (1999), cited in Dickson and Hargie (2006), showed “Many educational researchers and practitioners virtually all agree that teachers’ effective use of questioning promotes student learning” (p.286). Classroom questioning is considered as one of the key teaching methods that is student-oriented and gives motivation to communicative activities in English (Ma, 2008). Effective questions by the teacher could foster students’ ability of analysis and creation. Furthermore, questioning could be used as a learning tool to promote classroom interactions to deal with a common problem, a passive class where students often do not participate in class discussions and avoid interaction with the teacher (ibid, p.92).

According to Dickson and Hargie (2006), questions can be analysed in broad distinction in terms of three main linguistic levels: form (literal level), content (semantic level) and intent (pragmatic level). The most common subtypes of questions to be specified are: open, closed, wh-questions, leading, tag, process, multiple, and probing (p.127). Studies of questioning in classroom (Chaudron, 1988; Nunan, 1989) have proposed that questions can take a number of types, and serve a range of intended purposes. Their proposed types of questions include: closed, open, display, referential, procedural, convergent, rhetorical, interactive, instructional, conventional. The type of question asked have an influence on the extent to which functions of the question can be fulfilled. For instance, closed questions, frequently cited being the yes-no questions, have a short, fixed answer (e.g. “What day is it today?”) whereas open questions tend to unrestricting, leaving some free to answer the question in a number of possible ways and at length for the respondent (e.g. “What did you do yesterday?”)
Among all the types of questions, the distinction between display and referential questions takes an important role in terms of the focus on meaningful communication in the language classroom (Long & Sato, 1983; Ma, 2008). Display questions refer to the ones which ask the respondents to provide knowledge or to test the respondent’s knowledge already known by the questioner, while referential questions seek for the answer or information not known by the questioner (Brown, 1994). Also, Brock (1986) basing on Bloom’s (1956) research on the intellectual or cognitive level of question, defines that questions which call for factual recall or recognition (at low cognitive levels) are display questions, while questions asking for valuation or judgement are likely to be referential questions (p.48). As it can be seen obviously in real-life social communication, people often do not ask questions that they already know the answer. Furthermore, there is often a negotiation between the speaker and the hearer making the meaning of an utterance in the real life conversation (Ma, 2008).

However, ESL teachers ask considerably more display than referential questions in class (Long & Sato, 1983) and the negotiation of meaning is often absent in classroom and the teacher usually predetermine the meaning of the question and what constitute an appropriate answer (Ma, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to look at the advantages and disadvantages of display and referential questions. This also inspires studies on the effects of referential questions on the ESL classroom. Brock (1986), for example, found that referential questions could increase the amount of speaking learners do in classroom. In particular:

- Learner’s responses to referential questions were on average more than twice as long and more than twice as syntactically complex as their responses to display questions.
- Learners use a far greater number of connectives to make explicit the links between the propositions they expressed.
- Learners also took a significant greater number of speaking turns.

(Brock, 1986, p.55)

Despite positive functions that questioning can contribute to classroom interaction, many teachers are not fully aware of the effects and pay little attention to the strategies of questioning (Van Lier, 1996; Ma, 2008). As a result, the teachers’ questioning is “only a superficial form of classroom activity, lacking in the practical value” (Ma, 2008, p.94). Moreover, as mentioned before, the frequent use of display questions is often seen in the IRF pattern which allows the teacher to lead the lesson to a planned direction and to be able to control classroom interaction by handling all speaking turns (Van Lier, 1996). This form of questioning is considered to relate closely to the unequal division of knowledge (i.e. it elicits expected information that the teacher already knows) in the IRF pattern which is often regarded as resulting in teacher’s power. Therefore, it does not leave much opportunity for students to answer in any unpredicted way to the teacher’s elicitation or for creating
long or complex discourse actions. In other words, display question “reduces the student’s initiative, independent thinking, clarity of expression, the development of conversational skills (including turn taking, planning ahead, negotiating and arguing, and self-determination.” (Van Lier, 1996, p.156).

What is discussed above makes a reason for research on the skills of questioning that is necessary for teachers. In particular, some authors such as Morgan and Saxton (1991, 2006), Nunan (1989) and Norton (1989 as cited in Ma, 2008) propose some skills. They involve the sequence of questions, directing, probing, increasing waiting-time and encouraging student questions. The sequence includes four stages of questioning: preparation, asking (designing) question, controlling for questioning and teacher providing the feedback. To the extent to which the current study focuses on, some skills of questioning proposed by these authors are emphasized as follows:

(1) Skills of designing for questioning which refers to methods teacher choose to raise appropriate question include

• Increasing the number of referential questions which produces more classroom interaction (Brock, 1986), increase the amount of learner output (when producing one’s own messages, it may force the learner to pay attention to how to express successfully his/her intended meaning (Swain, 1985).

• Asking questions related to students such as questions for their personal idea about the phenomenon in the field of practice or about the information known by them. These questions could arouse the interest of students, and silent students in particular. The students then can participate in classroom interactions actively.

(2) Skills of controlling for questioning which include

• Probing - an important strategy to make students explore their initial response which may be superficial- is the use of further questions to get students more involved in critical analysis of their own and other students’ answers. It involves the use of follow-up or leading questions to help students to provide a more complete answer (Dickson & Hargie, 2004, 2006).

Morgan and Saxton (2006) list a number of types of questions that teachers can use for supporting learners’ development of thinking skills in the learning process as follows:

- Questions that draw upon knowledge - Remembering (e.g. who, what, where, when, how for the thinking skills of recalling, recognizing, defining, etc)
Questions that test comprehension - Understanding (e.g. ‘What is meant by?’, ‘Can you rephrase?’ ‘Can you describe?’ for the thinking skills of rewording, comparing, describing, explaining, illustrating, etc)

Questions that require application - Solving (e.g. ‘How can…?’ ‘What examples…?’ for the thinking skills of problem-solving, classifying, selecting, transferring, etc)

Questions that encourage analysis - Reasoning (e.g. ‘I wonder why?’, ‘I wonder what would happen?’ for the thinking skills of analysing, determining the evidence, drawing conclusions, etc)

Questions that promote evaluation - Judging (e.g. ‘Which might be better…?’, ‘What is your opinion…?’ for the thinking skills of summarizing, judging, defending, assessing, arguing, reasoning, etc)

(Morgan & Saxton, 2006, pp. 18-25)

• Increasing wait-time, that is, the length of time the teacher waits after asking the question before inviting a student to answer it. This is an important dimension of teacher’s questioning skill because it allows students a chance to respond and know the answer. But amazingly, as researchers (e.g. Morgan & Saxton, 2006) indicate, few teachers use it. It takes time to answer the questions, but students are rarely given sufficient time to formulate the answer. The average teacher’s wait-time, according to investigations in studies, is less than a second while it should be at least 2 to 4 seconds (Ma, 2008).

• Directing attention to all which refers to the method of distributing questions among students so that all have a chance to respond. It needs a questioning strategy: when asking a question, the teacher should present challenging and stimulating questions to all students, not just more confident or impulsive students (Morgan & Saxton, 2006).

(3) Skills of evaluating for questioning (or teacher giving feedback) are the ways in which the teacher handles student responses. They are important because they are closely connected with the effect of the interaction in classroom (Morgan & Saxton, 2006).

Harmer (2007) classifies teacher’s feedback into two categories: feedback during oral work and feedback on written work. The former feedback is more focused on in the study. As for this kind of feedback, the most important point is that the teacher has to make a clear difference between accuracy and fluency, ‘non-communicative’ and ‘communicative’ activities. The former are designed to ensure correctness while the latter are intended to improve language fluency (ibid, p.142). Harmer
states that we, teachers need to be extremely sensitive about the way to give feedback and the way to correct, or else it can raise stress levels or stop learner’s acquisition. For example, reacting to every mistake or immediately correcting all errors that a student makes can de-motivate that student (or removes student’s need to negotiate meaning (Lynch, 1997). It means we have to judge the right moment to correct and understand the preferences of an individual learner or of the group. In fluency activities, it is important to decide if and when to intervene and the best way to do it if we do.

In feedback during accuracy work, there are some techniques that teacher can use alternatively, as proposed by Harmer (2007, pp. 144-145). They are:

- Repeating (e.g. say ‘Again?’ to ask students to repeat what they have said to indicate that something is not clear)
- Echoing (i.e. repeating what the learner has said, emphasizing the part of utterance that was wrong, e.g. She SAID me?)
- Statement and question (e.g. ‘Good try, but that’s not quite right’ to say that something doesn’t quite work)
- Expression (i.e. when the teacher knows the class well, s/he can use a simple facial expression or a gesture, e.g. a wobbling hand, to indicate the errors)
- Hinting (i.e. giving a quiet hint, e.g. we could say ‘countable’ to make learners think about concord mistake)
- Reformulation - a correction technique which is used commonly for both accuracy and fluency work due to its benefits of not putting the student under pressure, but clearly pointing to future correctness. For example:
  
  Student: She said me I was late.
  
  Teacher: Oh, so she told you you were late, did she?
  
  Student: Oh yes, I mean she told me. So I was very unhappy and...

On the other hand, according to Harmer (2007), the focus in feedback during fluency work is mainly on the content - how well learners perform in fluency activities, not just to the language form. Therefore, gentle correction-teacher intervention hardly interrupts learner’s speech or the flow of the activity-is the key strategy for this feedback. A number of ways which can be offered for gentle correction are reformulation (see above example), echoing and expression (e.g. ‘I shouldn’t say X, say Y’, etc). Reformulation or suggestions may not only keep the flow of learners’ speech but also help them to learn something new.
Feedback on written work depends on the kind of writing task the students have done and the effect we wish to create. The most common technique for this kind of feedback is the use of correction codes, such as ‘S’ for ‘a spelling error’ or ‘WO’ for ‘a mistake in word order’. According to Harmer (2007), this makes correction “much neater and less threatening than random marks and comments” (p.149). Researchers (e.g. Muncie, 2000; Chan, 2001 as cited in Harmer, 2007) state that we can also involve students in giving feedback to each other, which encourages students to monitor each other and can bring a positive effect on group cohesion. For this, we can design a form as suggested by Chan (2001) to provide learners to complete such as ‘I like the part...’; ‘I’m not sure about...’, ‘The specific language errors I have noticed are...’, etc. We can also encourage students to write a checklist of things to look out for their own self-evaluation during the drafting process (Harmer, 2004).

5.3.3 Observing the language classroom

Classroom is commented as a place where occurs the numerous interactions embodying the combinations of elements of teacher-learner, learner-learner relationships (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Allwright and Bailey suggest that the interaction required in the classroom setting involves teacher and learners in dealing with many things at the same time, including who gets the chance to speak, what they speak about, what each participant does with the different chance to speak, and what kind of classroom environments created by the participants. For us as teachers, observing the classroom is important because it can tell the learning opportunities that students get (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, classroom is the place where the teaching and learning process takes place and there are a variety of classroom processes that we may wish to focus on. As McDonough and Shaw (2003) discuss, they could be very ‘macro’ (e.g. how a particular teacher or a group of learners use a textbook during a class) or very ‘micro’ (e.g. how a teacher draws out responses with a given class or how a particular learner or a small group of students set off turns in an oral skill class). We may also wish to categorize classroom observation into different areas of information such as that of the teacher, the interaction among learners, the interaction of learners in pairs and/or groups, or the interaction between a certain learner with the teacher.

The following criteria could be offered for observation if we wish to focus on the teacher:

- The amount of teacher talk time contrasted with student talking time during the course of a particular class
- The teacher’s questioning/elicitation techniques
• How the teacher gives feedback to learners
• The different roles a teacher takes on during the class (‘manager’, ‘facilitator’ etc.)
• The teacher’s use of encouragement and praise with learners
• The technical aids and materials a teacher uses to create learning contexts, and how the teacher involves the learners in these activities
  (McDonough & Shaw, 2003, p.227)

Nunan (1990) makes similar points in his reports on a teachers’ workshop where one of the groups of participant teachers offered the criteria as aspects of the class they would like to look at. They include wait time, questioning, ‘fun’, materials, student-teacher interaction, lesson objectives, student and teacher talk time, context for language practice, methods used, variety of activities, interaction between students, teacher language, eliciting techniques and so on.

These criteria, of course, are possible to be extended or combined in order to meet different goals of classroom observation. For example, we may wish to observe the language the same teacher use across a range of different classes or we may wish to observe how different teachers who teach the same class use a set of materials with that class (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

5.4 Neglected aspects in CLT studies
In addition to the above views of communicative competence and CLT, there seem to be a number of further areas that should have been given attention that they deserve. First, there has been an argument for the view of CLT being considered in the continuity with ‘pre-communicative’ methodology and the diversity within the communicative discussion. Hunter and Smith (2012), for example, were against the view of ELT history that tends to base on a ‘packaging up’ of complex and often contested past development. According to them, CLT has been viewed as a wholly ‘distinct, unitary, or classical CLT to be lightly superseded’ (p.430), which ignored the early communicative period. In order for an argument for a delabelling, unpackaging, demethodizing approach to the past, the two authors studied keywords (e.g. communicative, learner, task, activity, motivation) discussed by the writers themselves in ELTJ articles in the pre-communicative period. The study outcome indicated that it was possible to see the underlying continuity in ideas from a previous period. For example, the keyword ‘motivation’ which indicates a focus on the learner appears quite frequently in these articles from the earlier period. That means the issue had been discussed earlier than the ‘communicative era’ and quite independent of the communicative discussion by a number of authors since the mid-1970s (e.g. Elliott, 1974; Nation, 1975). The term ‘communicative’ maintained its
prominence and was used in the way that changed dramatically within the period that was most associated with the emergence of ‘the’ communicative approach. This seemed to contradict any notion of there having been a ‘unitary’ CLT, it is an advocate of CLT as an ‘approach’ allowing of different procedures, rather than a ‘prescriptive method’ (Hunter & Smith, 2012, p.438).

Richards and Rogers (2001) were also conscious of the problem of backward-looking oversimplification of CLT and concerned to have it in different procedures when they used ‘Current communicative approach’ as the heading of the conclusion chapter of the book, suggesting that we are still in a communicative era (Hunter & Smith, 2012).

Second, there are also different conceptualizations which offer possibilities of what CLT is. For example, Savignon (1997) included Canale and Swain’s (1980) four components (i.e. grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence) to suggest a classroom model of communicative competence. However, she did not rely on these as the only mediator of CLT, as she said:

> Whatever the relative importance of the various components at any level of overall proficiency, one must keep in mind the interactive nature of their relationships. The whole of communicative competence is always something other than the simple sum of its parts. (p.50)

Furthermore, Savignon (1991) even drew on more factors that influenced and challenged the promotion of CLT when she stated:

> CLT can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research. […]Central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and political issue. (p.265)

In terms of communicative competence and CLT, Richards and Rogers (1986, p.83) concluded that:

> Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. Thus although a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be discerned at the levels of language and learning theory, at the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit.

These different perspectives contribute to the likelihoods of what CLT is, together with the ideas of what can come out in a L2 classroom (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Furthermore, as Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) discussed, not all views of CLT are necessarily the domain of academicians, but national and state schemes can give an added view of CLT (e.g. the Australian Language Levels
project replied to the Senate (1984) and Lo Bianco (1987) policies on languages and developed curriculum ideas for the teaching of second language including the development of students’ communicative skills). Seen in this light, the investigation of CLT in the current study is viewed from wider perspectives of what makes the possibilities of CLT as reflected in the literature. In particular, they involve the notions of what characterize CLT with an application, by extension, to past methods and efficient attention to how teachers understand and implement CLT. This will be discussed in the next parts.

5.5 Studies of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, including about CLT

Teacher knowledge is “what teachers think, know and believe, and its relationship to teachers’ classroom practice” (Borg, 2006, p.3). Drawing on the insights provided by the approaches to investigating teacher knowledge by a number of authors (e.g. Schon, 1983; Elbaz, 1983, Lave, 1988, Shulman, 1987), Tsui (2003) summarizes the four aspects of teacher knowledge as follows:

- Teacher knowledge as evident in classroom practices is often an integrated whole that can not be separated into different knowledge domains.
- Teachers’ perceptions of teaching and learning, which are influenced by their personal life experiences, learning experience, teaching experience, academic background, the opportunities for professional development, play an important role in their management of teaching and learning.
- Teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), which is embodied in the act of teaching, can be seen mainly two interlinked dimensions, the management of learning and the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom. This is, in order for successful teaching, teachers’ subject matter is necessary, but insufficient. It requires teachers and is linked with the knowledge of learners, curriculum, context, and pedagogy for the transformation of subject matter knowledge into teachers’ presentation that are accessible to learners.
- Teachers’ knowledge and their practice relate to each other: when teachers respond to their contexts and reflect on their practices, they go to new understanding of teaching and learning. (Tsui, 2003, pp.65-66)

To date, though teachers of second language and foreign language in many countries have been encouraged to use CLT approaches, there are few studies of how well teachers understand and use CLT undertaken (Mangubhai et al, 2004). These few researches include: Mitchell (1988) investigated the understandings of communicative competence by 59 foreign language teachers which were reported in a wide range of understandings from one as a survival language, useful when travelling
abroad, to one that is similar to Canale and Swain’s (1980) conception of the term; Mangubhai et al. (1998, as cited in Mangubhai et al., 2004) identified understandings and beliefs about CLT of 39 LOTE (Language Other Than English) teachers and concluded that teacher’s understanding about some key characteristics of CLT differed from those of CLT in the literature; Sato and Kleinsasser’s (1999) study involved 10 teachers of Japanese in Queensland and found four types of teachers’ conceptions of CLT (i.e. be about learning to communicate in second language, uses mainly speaking and listening, involves little grammar instruction, and uses activities that are time consuming), but classroom observations in this study indicated that teachers tended to use a (didactic) fixed approach in which grammar plays a central role; Mangubhai et al. (2004) established the teacher’s practical theory as an combination of many features of CLT approaches and of general teaching: teacher’s understanding of CLT, from a CLT expert’s perspective, could be a ‘hybrid’ including CLT and non-CLT features- the features “that are not strictly CLT but are aspects of general teaching that are CLT-compatible” (p.308). The reasons for this are that teachers are unlikely to cease the use of good teaching practices when using a CLT approach; actual lessons involving CLT are not likely to be only grounded by CLT features, but incorporating non-CLT features as well (Mangubhai et al., 2004).

The outcomes of these studies can be summarized that there are noticeable differences between teachers’ and researchers’ conceptions of CLT. The studies also suggested, as Karavas-Doukas (1996) concluded, that communicative classroom was rare: “while most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches” (p.187). This closely related to Tsui (2003)’s question that whether studies of expertise in teaching captured the way teacher knowledge was held and developed.

The studies on teachers’ understanding of CLT also involve researchers’ argument about novice-expertise comparison in teaching (e.g. Tsui, 2003; Johnson, 2003). For example, Tsui summarized that most studies of teaching expertise provide valuable insight into the complexity of teaching and demonstrate expert teachers as having ‘more autonomy and flexibility in both planning and teaching’ than novice teachers and being able to respond to the student needs and the situation very quickly because of their large repertoire of routines to rely on. These characteristics are very much involved in teachers’ sophisticated knowledge and knowledge base (p.41). Tsui pointed out that expertise in teaching involved not only skills that might be performed with intuition and automaticity by non-expert teachers, but involved a great deal of effort in problematizing and accomplishing a teaching task. Furthermore, expertise could be characterized as ‘the development of expertise’ rather than ‘expert performance’, which involved the cognition of the place of conscious deliberation and theory. In other words, expertise could be characterized as the process of ‘how experts are able to attain
that high level of performance’ rather than ‘what happens when experts actually engage in performance’. In a similar vein, some other authors (e.g. Borg, 2006; Nunan, 1992; Richards, Li & Tang, 1998) argue that compared with novice teachers, experienced teachers have a deeper understanding of the subject matter, from the learner’s perspectives, and know how to present the content in more appropriate ways.

5.6 Studies on current CLT in Vietnam higher education

There have been a few studies on the uptake by teachers in Asia of CLT principles (Lewis & McCook, 2002). There is also a lack of studies in this field in Vietnam. Few authors (e.g. Ho, 2006) who wrote about how English language teaching was characterized through continuity and change in a number of the Southeast Asian countries (e.g. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao P.D.R, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) indicate that CLT has become a dominant theoretical model in Southeast Asian countries since the 1980s.

However, in reality, only few countries (e.g. Singapore) have had some changes to improve the teaching of English through curriculum revision (Ho, 2006). In other Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, as discussed in chapter 1, the implementation of CLT there are some obstacles to deal with: First, opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom for CLT can be failed by a number of factors, which mainly involve the limited possibilities for the use of Western methodology in CLT in Asian teaching contexts due to the different underlying cultural values of Asian (Sullivan, 2000; Ellis, 1996; Lamb, 1995) and inauthentic materials (Tran, 1991; Bao Dat, 2008). Second, there was a shortage of local teachers with the training to sharpen their understanding of CLT and enable an efficient CLT implementation. As a number of authors (Ho, 2006; Tran, 1991, Vu, 2007) discuss, though a number of teachers have realized the importance of developing the learners’ communicative and social competence in using a language, positive changes towards CLT would only come through an adequate support for a change of mind-set and putting things in practice. I now will discuss more the issue of getting to know how well Vietnamese teachers understand and use CLT.

Researchers who studied on Vietnamese teachers implementing CLT reported significant findings that Vietnamese teachers’ CLT practice is very much related to Vietnamese cultural values and traditional features valued in Vietnamese educational systems (Sullivan, 2000; Ellis, 1996; Lewis & McCook, 2002).
Sullivan (2000) argued that we should not be limited by the current definitions of CLT which focus on classroom practices such as group work, pair work, information gap activities and the use of authentic materials representing the values that underlie the practice of CLT in Western countries or North America. By examining playful learning in a second year university level English language classroom in Vietnam, Sullivan indicated that the discussion in a speaking class could not be carried out by having students discuss in groups and report back to the whole class, but in the way that the whole class participates in jointly forming playful narratives. The type of oral classroom interaction demonstrated in her study did not include features that had roots in 1970s and 1980s descriptions of CLT emphasizing communication through interaction among students such as incorporating individualism, collaboration on a task or information exchange. Rather, the activity supported answers in a spontaneous way and building up stories along with other students (e.g. a word is called out by a student, then picked up by the teacher and then repeated by multiple overlapping student voice). It was a lively practice which the ‘meaning’ did not come from personal exposure, but in the interaction between teachers and students, and between the students themselves when they worked as in a performance, for their own pleasure (e.g. imitation, repetition used to learning in wordplay or oral verse - a part of Vietnamese cultural heritage). Sullivan concluded that the examination of the use of CLT in Vietnam encourages to broaden the definition of CLT one that could include, for instance, teacher-led and playful narrative styles.

In her study, Sullivan (2000) also reported that, group work, at the first glance, seems to fit well with the Confucianism underlying values of Vietnamese society. Confucianism is identified to stress hierarchy rather than equality; dependence and nurture rather than independence. Therefore, it emphasizes mutual obligation among members of a group rather than individualism (Cheng, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 1994 as cited in Sullivan, 2000). In fact, it can conflict with values that are represented by CLT for group work from western view as those placed by individuality, freedom and choice. It can be seen that a group of Vietnamese students is made of people who are obliged to agree, no member in the group would want to destroy the atmosphere of group by disagreeing. This differs from the purpose of grouping which is to allow members to express their own opinions in western or English speaking countries (Sullivan, 2000).

In a similar vein, Ellis (1996), who had experience in Vietnam, suggested that Western teachers should look for commonalities between Vietnamese culture and CLT. This suggestion was to respond to the mismatch that there were limited possibilities for the use of Western methodology in CLT in Asian teaching contexts. As Lamb (1995) reported, ‘no uptake’, ‘confusion’, and ‘adaptation and rejection’ were common in teachers’ reports a year after the in-service course they took part for CLT.
in Indonesia (p.78). Ellis (1996)’s recommendation was similar to Holliday’s (1994) observation of current interpretation of CLT that innovation would succeed provided there was cultural continuity between CLT and more traditional forms. This view was taken by Lewis and McCook (2002) in their study examining the views of 14 Vietnamese high school teachers in terms of their beliefs and practices about language teaching and learning.

Lewis and McCook (2002) found out that Vietnamese teachers were obviously interested in applying the principles of CLT that they learnt during the workshop, and kept traditional aspects of language teaching at the same time. This was shown in teachers’ journal entries that teachers had both fluency (e.g. reading aloud and speaking spontaneously) and accuracy (e.g. modelling correct intonation) as a focus of their teaching. Other entries stressed language in context and knowledge about language: teachers reported creating local contexts for language use (e.g real examples in the local area) and explaining grammar as important traditional role of the teachers. In terms of continuing the balance between CLT and traditional methods, the teachers considered memorizing and understanding as being important. Memorizing included, e.g. dialogues being memorized and then recited individually or in chorus, which were sometimes successful that students made the conversation naturally without looking at the words on the board. Understanding included a successful lesson when students used their own words to summarize the text or the teachers’ explanations in English and some teachers then translated to Vietnamese for greater understanding (ibid, p.149). In summary, the ‘oppositions’ between traditional and communicative language teaching proposed by researchers (e.g. Hird, 1995) do not seem to be supported in the study. The Vietnamese teachers in the study, reflected from a quite different context, stated their roles in terms of both CLT and traditional language teaching principles.

There have been a number of studies conducted by Vietnamese researchers (e.g. Hiep, 2007; Ha, 2004) which indicated Vietnamese teachers’ attempts to implement CLT in their teaching contexts. For example, a number of Vietnamese teachers used tasks in classroom that involved learners’ engagement and deployed learners’ existing linguistic resources (e.g. bringing supplementary materials such as Vietnamese newspapers into their classroom as prompts for students’ discussions in English); they designed and arranged for their students communicative-oriented activities in relation to grammar structures for the goal of meaningful use of language for real communication, rather than simply providing learners grammatical knowledge (Hiep, 2007); they raised students’ awareness of the use of language within their daily needs by letting students express what they think and feel; encouraged students to explore and develop their own voice (e.g. learners learning English Literature) rather than imposed the ideas on them (Ha, 2004). In this way, they acted as “facilitators”
as well as perform their duty as “behavior educator” (i.e. initiate forms of cultural performance as Vietnamese teachers are expected). They took into consideration both the culture of the target language and the culture of the students in their context.

These findings indicate that considerable efforts in CLT implementation have been made by a number of Vietnamese teachers of English, who, as Dat (2006) stated, own a strong sense of self-improvement. Furthermore, it seems to show that not only weak versions but also stronger versions of CLT are applied here and there in Vietnamese classrooms despite the situation that weak forms of CLT, and particularly the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) framework, still dominates in course book design in the world (Allright & Hanks, 2009; Watkins, 2010). It is because there is a strong need of English skills in Vietnam when the country joins the world of international business, and along with that, teachers want to learn the best methods of teaching (Sullivan, 2000). However, there is a lack of studies on whether the teachers who included some forms of CLT in their teaching were influenced by the context and whether these efforts meet the requirement in terms of English skills at the workplace of the graduates. The work (e.g. adapting and designing pronunciation supplementary materials and supporting teachers) which I had done before in a university (1.3.1 above) was also to address the need discussed above. In the next part, I will discuss why pronunciation has been considered to play a role in achieving communicative competence for Vietnamese learners of English.

5.7 Pronunciation as Vietnamese learner need for communicative English use

In order for the need of communicative competence as stated earlier, Vietnamese learners would wish to be speakers of English in the way it is comprehensible and intelligible. This means the students should be able to pronounce clear enough to be always understood (Harmer, 2007). As a result, weak pronunciation could be one of the major impediments to the goal. For example, when interacting with each other in groups in a classroom, Vietnamese learners could enjoy the activities and the materials. However, in the workplace (e.g the findings of my pilot study on Vietnamese workers using English at several restaurants in the U.K), the following aspect might be seen: The students are reluctant to speak because their poor pronunciation fade their confidence away. The student themselves might be not aware that their pronunciation is creating communication problem. They need the teacher to point out these pronunciation problems, as follows:

5.7.1 Problems

As various researchers (e.g. Kenworthy, 1997; Honey, 1988) pointed out learners are influenced by their native language when learning the other language. Vietnamese is monosyllabic and non-inflecting, and possesses six tones, that make Vietnamese learners find English, which is dissimilar to Vietnamese, very difficult to learn (Honey, 1988). The differences in a number of aspects of
pronunciation between Vietnamese and English are briefly described by Honey (1988) and can be found in Harmer (2007). They pointed out that these dissimilarities cause particular problems in pronunciation teaching and learning in Vietnamese context as summarized below:

- **Vowels.** There are eleven pure vowels and many more diphthongs and triphongs in Vietnamese, most of which are positionally free. This can make learners wrongly perceive a pure vowel in English, for example, ‘lo’ (/o/ in Vietnamese) for ‘low’ /ləʊ/, ‘me’ (/e/ in Vietnamese) for ‘may’ /meɪ/. English diphthongs with different ways to distinguish could cause difficulties to Vietnamese learners, e.g. learners may not be able to distinguish /əʊ/ (e.g. know) from /au/ (e.g. now).

- **Consonants.** Vietnamese consonant system is very different to English. For example, there is no /f/ or /θ/ pronounced as fricatives in Vietnamese consonant system or final stops (e.g. /p/, /t/, /k/) are tended to pronounce unexploded in all contexts. Moreover, many English consonant clusters do not exist in Vietnamese, particularly two consonants that occur at the end of a word. This causes mistakes among Vietnamese learners of omission of inter-consonantal s (e.g. /abtrak/ for abstract /ˈæbstrækt/), final /s/ or final /t/ –ed (e.g. /pen/ for pens /penz/ or /lʊk/ for looked /lʊkt/).

- **Stress and intonation.** Different from English, Vietnamese syllable can only be recognisable if it is pronounced with its tonal pattern. Furthermore, each syllable holds its own distinctive tone in compound words containing two or more syllabic units. Vietnamese learners find it difficult over word stress in English and English intonation patterns (e.g. to identify the different patterns of raising and failing tones).

- **Linkage of sounds.** When Vietnamese people tend to speak they do not make the links between words like English speakers do (Honey, 1988). An example of linkage such as moving smoothly from the /t/ sound at the end of ‘not’ and ‘at’ to the vowel sounds at the beginning of ‘at’ and ‘all’ in ‘not at all’ does not happen in Vietnamese. Vietnamese learners, therefore, often pause between the words or miss the linkage of sounds when they speak English.

### 5.8 Summary

In summary, in this chapter relevant studies on CLT and CLT implementation and the extent CLT theories can be applied to Vietnamese context have been discussed. It indicates from the discussion
that elements such as teacher’s understanding of their role in CLT and materials adaptation (e.g. contextualization and pronunciation teaching) are important for the effective CLT implementation in Vietnam. Though there have been findings of considerable efforts in CLT implementation made by a number of teachers, studies on whether these efforts meet the need of business are very few. This suggests more studies like the present study for investigating the uptake of CLT by teachers in the context.
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODS OF THE RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY

6.1 The teacher participants

The research was conducted at a public university in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. A total of 5 different teachers teaching 5 different classes participated in the study. The classes of these teachers ranged in size from 33 to 45 students. The students’ English language proficiency, as measured by a placement test, ranged in elementary levels CEF A1 and CEF A2, the low level descriptions for English proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001 as cited in Taylor and Jones, 2007). The 5 teachers were non-native speakers of English. They were all females. This is because all of the teachers of English (a total of 8) working at the university at the time the study carried out were females. They held a variety of English-as-a-second language qualifications, such as a Bachelor of Arts in English and Literature or a Master of Arts in English and Applied Linguistics.

The teachers had 2 to 6 years of teaching experience in higher education though two of them had 5 to 7 more years teaching English in secondary school as well. I will follow Tsui’s (2003) classification that, teachers who have subject matter knowledge, but have no or little teaching experience and no formal training can be identified as ‘novice teacher’. Expert teachers or experienced teachers, on the other hand, were more complicated to identify. They could be teachers who have at least 5 years of teaching. In addition, some criteria are proposed in the literature for an expert teachers involved, for example, recommendations from school administrators as outstanding teachers, being selected as a mentor-teacher or having attained a master’s degree. I also noticed that the interchangeable use of the terms ‘expert teacher’ and ‘experienced teacher’ reflects our limited understanding of expertise in teaching (Tsui, 2003). This is discussed in details in 5.5. In other words, the two teacher participants who had two years of teaching experience in higher education in the present study could be named as novice teachers. They had taught English at middle schools 1-2 years before becoming a teacher at university. The other three teachers with 5 to 6 years of teaching experience were called ‘experienced teachers’ in the sense that they had a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience. These three teachers have also earned a Master of Art in English and Applied Linguistics which included a number of subjects in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

The table below is the summary of teacher participants, including their participation in the data collection strategies. Pseudonyms were used to ensure that the participant teachers will be guaranteed anonymity.
All of 8 teachers were invited to attend an introduction session where I introduced myself, informed them of the goals and methods of the project, and encouraged them to seek clarification of research details. 5 teachers volunteered from the 8 to participate in the research. Also in this session, I gained their permission to use their data. The ethical form (appendix 1) included the guarantee of anonymity and the participant’s right to withdraw at any time.

### 6.2 Research design

In order for an investigation of English education at university, a case study approach was used, as I was investigating the actual situation of how English education was at a university. This approach was opted for the study because it has an advantage of “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context;[...]and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984, p.23). With a qualitative case study included, a clear description of events together with analysis, focusing on a group of teachers at a university hopefully would be provided. In other words, I would like to provide the reader a picture of the phenomenon being studied (i.e. to understand the teachers’ perspectives and what factors that may cause a gap between their perspectives and their practice). My reason for doing this is, as Borg (1997) states, if this picture is clear and sufficient, the reader would contribute as a co-analyst.

In addition, there was an action research aspect in the study, including assisting teachers to reflect on their own work. The following reasons explain why my research issue (i.e. the second research question) involved an action research design to be addressed. First, an action research highlights the essential feature of the method which helps researchers/ teachers to “try out ideas in practice as a
means of improvement and increasing the knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p.5). Second, the purpose of the action research process, is “to bridge the gap between the ideal (the most effective ways of doing things) and the real (the actual ways of doing things) in the social situation” (Burns, 2009, p.290). Furthermore, as teachers should be regarded not only as curriculum implementers but planners and evaluators as well (Burtons, 2009, Tomlinson, 2003), they need to be able to “conceptualize their practice in theoretical terms, they need to be aware of issues amenable to action research” (Nunan, 2009, p.62).

The discussion above applies that action research can help teachers to improve their practice through the reflection on their teaching. Accordingly, the notion of the teacher as a self-reflective and critically motivated practitioner (e.g. Zeichmer & Liston, 1996) or ‘teacher as researcher’ (Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Nunan, 1989) has been examined in English language teaching environment. This leads back to Dewey (1933) who put the foundation of the ideas on reflection through observing how practitioners think in action. Fifty years later, Schön (1983) extended Dewey’s ideas and made the image of the ‘reflective practitioner’ popular. He distinguished the two forms of reflective thinking: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. According to Schön (as cited in Leitch & Day, 2006, p.180), reflection-in-action concerns “the tacit processes of thinking which accompany doing and which constantly interact with and modify ongoing practice in such a way that learning takes place”. Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, is viewed as “teacher’s thoughtful consideration and retrospective analysis of their performance in order to gain knowledge from experience”.

Some of the benefits of action research reviewed by Burns (2009) are that action research can assist teachers to become:

- More conscious of ‘problematizing’ an existing action or practice and more conscious of who is problematizing it and why they are problematizing it;
- More planned and deliberate about commencing a process of inquiry and involving others who could or should be involved in that inquiry;
- More systematic and rigorous in efforts to get answers;
- Changing actions as part of the research process, and then further researching these changed action;

(Burns, 2009, p.292)
These features of action research discussed above were useful for my study because I conducted a study to understand how English education actually happened in the classroom in my study context and the teachers’ processes of ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ in their teaching practice.

6.3 Research methods

6.3.1 Interviews

In this stage of the research, the important aim of the study is to investigate teacher understanding of CLT which relates closely to teacher’s practical knowledge and thinking. For this purpose, semi-structured interview is chosen as an appropriate method for the study which can be used to assist a teacher in the explication of his/her practical theories of CLT (Mangubhai et al., 2004). A number of considerations that shapes the decision to use this interview approach include:

- The flexible order of questions enabled the teachers to have the opportunities and ample time to recall accurately their approaches to teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1983).
- This method makes the voice of teachers rather than that of researcher, to be heard, which is important for ensuring reliability of accounts of practice and their rationales (Elbaz, 1983).
- Semi-structured, in-depth interviews help lower the difficulties of explaining teacher practical theories (Gage, 1977) through “creating a climate conducive to teacher reflection and disclosure of details of their practical theories” (Mangubhai et al., 2004, p.294).

There are also a number of challenges using this method, though. First, the quality criteria for the interview depends on how well the interviewer establishes a good relationship, listens carefully to interviewees and comments sympathetically (Borg, 2006, Kvale, 1996). Teachers would be engaged in the processes of interviews if they found the interviewer “empathic, supportive and non-evaluative, asking open-ended question, seeking clarification” and extension of the participants’ comments and using the language of the participants where possible (Mangubhai et al., 2004, p.294). These strategies guided the researcher throughout the interviews.

Another challenge involved a set of main questions to be used within a semi-structured interview approach. It concerns the decision on “how wide the net should be cast in interviews” to ensure full disclosure of interviewees (Mangubhai et al., 2004, p.294). It also involves how to develop an open-ended interview protocol (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). In this study, the interview questions were based on protocols. For example, background questions were separated from major interview questions so that the interview could focus on the specific questions (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999, p.499).
As for interviews and discussions with teacher participants, initial questions were designed drawing on the concepts used for exploring teacher’s beliefs and practical theories on CLT and CLT practices. These questions usually took the form: “Do you use (e.g. strategies, skills, etc) in your use of a CLT approach?” or “Are there any (e.g. teacher roles, aims) that are central to your use of teaching method (e.g. CLT approach)?” (Mangubhai et al., 2004, p.296). Follow-up questions were designed based on the initial questions in keeping with “the basic requirements for creating a context appropriate to teacher disclosure” (ibid). For example, ‘How to create more business contexts for students?’; ‘Can it be possible to use authentic materials sometimes?’; ‘Why you did use group work for this activity?’. Apart from field notes, I also relied on audio recordings to capture and store the interview data. This offered a permanent record, sufficient data that can be checked later on (Denscombe, 2007).

6.3.2 Observations
There were 2 classroom observations which were carried out for each teacher participants in this stage in order to understand how English was being taught by the teachers. The aims included what Gebhard (1990) describes as the mentor’s role in helping teachers in attaining their “ideal teaching behaviour”:

To provide the means for teachers to reflect on and work through problems in their teaching; to furnish opportunities for teachers to explore new teaching possibilities; and to afford teachers chances to acquire knowledge about teaching and to develop their own theory of teaching.

(Gebhard, 1990 as cited in Bailey, 2009, p.271)

In order to achieve this, collaborative supervision and non-directive supervision (Freeman, 1982; Gedhard, 1984) were chosen as the means of using the observations for this study. In collaborative model, “the supervisor actively participates with the teacher in any decisions that are made and attempts to establish a sharing relationship” (Gedhard, 1984, p.505). In non-directive supervision, the supervisor is non-judgmental to teachers when describing their work and interpreting their actions (Freeman, 1982).

A supervisor usually has a position of relative power and has been traditionally described as a person who tells teachers how to teach (Bailey, 2009). However, this does not describe my role as a researcher doing classroom observations in the research. Though previously I had such power due to the position of a department manager, it did not cause a distance between the teachers and me. Otherwise, an advantage could be seen: a trusting relationship that was likely to exist between us, which would be probably caused by a quite long good time we worked together. However, as I was
an insider (as discussed in chapter 1) I had kept in mind while doing classroom observations for the research that the teachers might always consider me as a teacher supervisor with a ‘traditional’ role. In order to avoid this, I paid attention in selecting supervision models (as discussed above) to facilitate the new role of a supervisor as discussed next.

The new role of a supervisor in the selected supervision models shifts from ‘judgmental inspector’ or “that of expert to that of a colleague who encourages teachers to practice reflection” (Bailey, 2009, p. 271). Supervisor’s responsibility now involves “gaining teachers’ trust and creating an environment that cultivates reflection, exploration, and change”, which requires greater attention to the relationship between the supervisor and the teacher (Chamberlin, 2000, p.656). Observation which builds up a trusting relationship between the teacher and the supervisor may allow teachers to feel free to express themselves and clarify their ideas.

By combining the two methods for this stage of understanding English education at the university, I can avoid potential criticism linked to either the relatively small sample size associated with the interview method or the relative superficiality of data collected via questionnaires (Collin at al, 2006); I can also use one method (i.e. interviews) to have some foundations for further research (i.e. observations) to check the conclusions (Silverman, 2001; 2005).

6.4 Data collection and analysis

The study was conducted when the term began in February. After the deduction meeting, the classroom observations were carried out every two weeks for a participant teacher. In this stage of the study, a total of 10 classroom observations were done for 5 teacher participants before the intervention: 2 observations for each experienced teacher and 2 for each novice teacher. It was approximately one observation every two weeks for each teacher.

In practice, as for the classroom observations, I was usually seated at the back of the classroom and moved around occasionally to have a clearer view (e.g. when students were asked to work in groups). Field notes taken documented the progression and procedures of each lesson observed. The observations focused on what was observable including participants, settings, events, acts, and gestures (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The content of observation involved whether the goals of the lesson were achieved satisfactorily, classroom interactions (i.e. teacher-student interactions and teacher-student interactions), and classroom management (e.g. teacher giving feedback, pair work and group work). A draft of the checklist for classroom observation is included in the Appendices. Audio-recording was employed using a wireless cassette recorder with a clip-on microphone.
attached to the teacher. This arrangement recorded all teacher-learner interaction, whether one-on-one, in small groups or a whole class (Loewen, 2005). However, learner-learner interaction was just captured when the teacher was present. Therefore, the notes consisting of students’ speech extracts and if possible, students’ names were made detailed and matched to the recordings. Immediately after the observations, I reviewed and expanded the notes together with the recordings to include further information and detail (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). After each observation, there was often a 20-30 minutes discussion with the teacher on the classroom activities observed during the break time or after class. The discussions were conducted in Vietnamese to make the teachers feel at ease to express their ideas and to save time in the class. I tape-recorded all these discussions to transcribe and translate for analysis. Such rounds of data collection permitted ‘methodological triangulation’ (Stake, 1995) which allowed a comparison between what the participants said and what their behaviours observed for the ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the research.

In approaching the data, I re-read all my notes of the observations and compared them with the notes made of listening to the audio-recordings of classroom observations. The audio-recordings of discussions after observations were also transcribed and translated to supplement the analysis of the field notes. ‘Sequential analysis’ of discourse (Silverman, 2005; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002) was adopted, in which the transcripts of the two data resources (observations and interviews/discussions) were analysed and integrated, split into segments and then made into themes. Themes were emerged through the comparison of the teachers’ practice observed and their interview statements on the basis of the criteria offered by some authors (e.g. McDonough & Shaw, 2003 and Nunan, 1990) for observations of teachers’ CLT implementation, as presented in chapter 7 below. In addition, the act of my writing itself was also part of analysis as it “helps bring un-conscious processing to light as articulated synthe-sized statements” (Krathwohl, 1993, p. 81 cited in Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999).

The findings later were used to compare with the findings of the research stage after the interventions. This is to see whether any changes in term of teachers’ cognitions of CLT and their CLT practice which might be caused by the interventions happened. It involves the procedure of action research which includes a plan of critically informed action, the implementation of the plan and the observation and feedback on the effects was adapted (Kemmis and McTaggart’s, 1988). This research method will be discussed in the next section.
In order to see how effectively students seemed to be prepared to communicate with English in the workplace, I focus on how communicative English training was in the classroom on the basis of features of communicative classroom (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). For this purpose, classroom observations with 5 teachers were carried out to see how teachers explore teaching methods and materials for communicative purposes. The observations included 2 stages: classroom observation before intervention and classroom observation after intervention to see whether the teachers made any change in their class. This chapter presents the observational data before the intervention.

All the aspects of the analysis of classroom observations relates to communication. The information getting from classroom observations focuses mainly on the teacher: what teachers actually understand by CLT and how they implement CLT in classroom (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Because the focus is on the teacher, the criteria that could be offered as factors for observations for looking at teachers’ CLT implementation are derived from the criteria offered by McDonough and Shaw (2003) and Nunan (1990). They include: how teachers facilitate real life-like conversations in their class, teachers’ use of materials to create learning contexts, teacher’s questioning/elicitation techniques, student and teacher talk time, CLT use activities and interaction between students.

Among many more criteria for classroom observation (McDonough & Shaw, 2003), these above criteria were selected because they were useful for the purpose of the study: I was looking at classroom to analyse how the teachers used the materials and methods for communicative purposes and interaction patterns that occurred as the result of task the teacher set up and managed. In other words, my analysis for classroom observation is based on the criteria offered by researchers (e.g. McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Nunan, 1990) as discussed above and to address these following questions:

1. How is language contextualized? (Do the teachers create learning context to facilitate real life-like conversations?)
2. How are communicative tasks used?

This question includes:
- Do the teachers provide sufficient real-life practice?
- How do the teachers use questioning and error correction techniques? Do the teachers provide sufficient wait time?
- Does the teaching encourage learners to try more for the learning goal (i.e. learning English for communicative purposes?)
I am now addressing the questions as follows:

7.1 Contextualisation

Contextual factors are important because when we receive a linguistic message, we are influenced by many other factors (i.e. body language, our cultural and social relationship) apart from the language itself. Language teaching, therefore, needs to concentrate on these aspects of communication apart from the formal language system (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary). This is to “achieve effects and communicate successful with people in particular contexts” (Cook, 1992, p.12). Findings from classroom observations indicate that in many classes observed for the study, there was little evidence of contextualisation to facilitate real-life conversations, as examples of how the two novice teachers introduced the topics as below:

Example 7.1

(Observation 1 of Minh)

First, the teacher drew a clock on the board and explained students several ways of talking the time. She gave some examples for her illustration. She wrote the examples on the board for students to follow. She then changed the time with the clock and asked some students to read out the time following the changes. After that, she told the students to open the textbook to do exercises about the time. She asked individual students to answer them. Then, she told some situations relating the time (e.g. Someone gets up at 6 a.m., etc.) in Vietnamese and asked some individual students to say it in English. There was no interaction among students until 5 minute final exercise which the teacher asked a student to ask another student who sat next to him/her about his/her routine with suggestions in the same order provided in the textbook (e.g. get up, have breakfast, go to school, take a bus, etc...).

Example 7.2

(Observation 1 of Diem)

First, she greeted the class and checked for the homework by calling up individual students to read the answers. Then she asked students some questions to introduce to the lesson. The topic was about “Food and Restaurants”. When she had some students who could say some words for the question that she wanted, she moved on to the lesson immediately (e.g. T: ‘What kind of food do you like to eat?’; S: ‘Bread and egg’, T: ‘OK, now we learn about restaurant and food’). After that, she told the students to open the textbook and started with vocabulary session. She explained the meaning of some new words in Vietnamese. The students did vocabulary exercises. For the first two exercises, individual students were asked to answer questions in whole class setting. For the third exercise, students were divided into groups. Each group was asked to discuss and answer the two questions in the exercise (For example, T: ‘Group 1, you do number 1 ‘Anything to drink?’; tell me who says that: waiter or customer?’). After 2 minutes for preparation, she called up each group to give the answers.
There was little context clues or real contextualization (e.g. the clock drawn on the board or no follow-up questions) found in these classes. Translation seemed to be most useful strategy for these two teachers to teach with vocabulary. The teachers also talked in Vietnamese for giving instructions quite often. Text book was followed strictly (e.g. Students were often asked to finish all exercises in the textbook). As a result, students did not have much chance to use language for real-life conversations about their own experience.

My construction of ‘novice’ and ‘experience’ groups of teachers (6.1) has contributed to the analysis: It could be explained that the novice teachers rarely engage in materials adaptation because they lack experience which leads to lack of confidence, whilst the experienced teachers make use of this approach more in their class. In particular, compared to the novice teachers, the experienced teachers often tried to create a learning context by personalizing and asking questions relating to student experience more. As they shared their idea in the discussions after class observations, they believed this could help to engage students in the lesson and “encourage students to talk more in English class”. There was some evidence of ‘contextual realisation’ (McGrath, 2002; McDonough & Shaw, 1993) in these experienced teachers’ classes:

Example 7.3

(Observation 2 of Thanh)

In one of her classes, in order for the listening task on ‘Queuing to pay in the supermarket’, Thanh had students listen to the tape twice but students could not answer the questions followed the listening. She then stopped the CD and asked questions to individual students about what they had bought recently in the supermarket, where they did their payment, and then whether they queued in line and what they could say if they had just one or two items and would like to pay first. Students then could answer the questions.

As we can see from the extract above, after the teacher realized that her students could not do the task, she modified her teaching behaviour, contextualizing the listening better. The students in Thanh’s class seemed to be engaged in the lesson and learnt the topic enthusiastically when they were encouraged to reflect on their own experience. It is evident when more students raised hands and gave the right answers.

Khanh is one of the experienced teachers who spoke English most of her lesson. She said in the discussion after the class “I often speak English and use easier English to explain a new word. I keep on saying it and giving examples until my student can guess what it is. I think it could make student to think in English and can speak in English”. This might suggest practice more in line with CLT. However, it would be hardly starting a real life context as we can see in her class observed below.
Example 7.4

(Observation 2 of Khanh)

First, Khanh wrote grammatical points on the board and gave some examples. She started to explain the grammar (patterns of comparison with short adjectives) and kept on giving examples in English (e.g., Zoe is taller than Dave). While she explained the structures, students wrote them down in the notebooks. After that, she gave some short adjectives and made students say comparison form. Then, she asked students to do the exercises in the textbook that made comparison sentences. Finally, she asked students to create their own sentences using the structures learnt by writing it down first and then going to the board and write. They repeated the same process with patterns of comparison with long adjectives.

Grammar points in this experienced teacher’s lesson were explained deductively without any context clues (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) and were followed by exercises in the textbook. Although the teacher spent most of her lesson speaking English, students often answered in Vietnamese during the lesson.

Furthermore, eliciting catering for contextual factors to facilitate learner communication was also challenging to teachers. In a lesson with the topic of relax, Hanh asked questions to some individual students at the beginning to contextualize to stimulate the conversations among students about what sport they often play to relax in their free time.

Example 7.5

(Observation 2 of Hanh)

T: What sport do you often play?
S: Swimming.
T: Where?
S: In a lake near my dom.
T: Do you need any special thing?
S: Er, no...
T: Like ...swimming suit
S: No (definitely)
   T: ...er, ok, how do you feel after swimming?

As we can see from the above example, the teacher had a good start, but it seemed to require something more to stimulate a real-life interaction in classroom. For example, the teacher needed elicitation techniques which considered contextual factors influencing the student’s involvement (e.g. Vietnamese, especially students, may feel shy mentioning wearing swimming suits because they often wear full clothes going swimming). How the teachers used teaching techniques to involve learners in meaningful interactions in classroom is more explored in the next part.
7.2 How do the teachers use communicative tasks

This theme is raised as the other main part of classroom observations for the study because of the value of communicative tasks in involving learners in using language meaningfully to achieve communicative purposes. This value has been supported by various authors (e.g. Nunan, 1989, Long & Crookes, 1993). Communicative tasks need to be understood in the context of task-based learning (TBLT) which is considered as a coherent development of CLT (Willis, 1996). In this approach, learner-centredness is a key element (Jacobs & Farell, 2003). The features of CLT to observe here, therefore, include error correction techniques (in this study, the techniques involve questioning techniques, feedback and wait-time), interaction patterns that include pair work and group work and activities designed to motivate learners to engage in meaningful communicative opportunities (Richards, 2005, Wyatt & Borg, 2011).

7.2.1 The teacher’s questioning/elicitation techniques

As researches (Stubbs & Delamont, 1976; Nunan, 1991) suggested, questions a teacher asks can be very important to help students to develop their competence in the language. Questioning take an important role in English teaching because asking and answering are the major ways for teachers and students to communicate with each other (Xianyan, 2008). Teachers are supposed to know how to make effective questions for effective eliciting learning goals. This is to help learners to be clear with what they are going to do and get involved in the discussion. Otherwise, the teacher may waste time and lack student involvement.

The questions which the teachers ask can be divided into some different categories: yes-no questions or wh-questions (in terms of form), outside fact, personal fact or opinion (content), open or closed questions (response), and display or referential questions (purpose) (Dickson & Hargie, 2006, Chaudron, 1988; Nunan, 1989).

7.2.1.1 Questioning

In classes observed, Yes-No questions and closed questions were more often asked than open questions, as it showed in example 7.1 above and example 7.6 below.

```
T: Did you have breakfast?
S1: Yes,
T: Ok, and you? Do you often have breakfast?
S2: Er, yes, I have breakfast.
T: What kind of food do you eat?
S2: Er, bread and egg.
```
Example 7.6

(Observation 1 of Hanh)

[Aim: Preparing for the discussion on what means of communication should be used in some situations]

T: We talk about means of communication already, yes? So (T invites a student), can you tell me which means of communication you often use in your daily life?

S1: Er… I use face-to-face conversation

T: Face-to-face conversation?

S1: Yes, what else?

S1: Cell phone

T: Cell phone?

S1: Yes.

T: Ok, what else? You, please.

S2: Er...email.

T: Email..., what else?

S2: ...er...

T: Do you use fax machine?

S2: No,...

T: No, ok. In question number 5, there are some situations for you to decide which means of communication you should use. Work in your groups, choose 3 situations, discuss which your team to decide which means of communication you should use in each situation and tell the reason why.

The conversation between the teacher and the students can obviously be developed with teacher asking more ‘wh’ follow-up questions such as ‘When do you use cell phone?’, ‘Who do you use cell phone to communicate with?’, ‘Why do you often use cell phone?’ or ‘Why do you often use email and not using fax-machine?’. These wh- questions which were totally lacking could promote students to talk about themselves and also have some ideas to prepare for the discussion for their learning goal: what means of communication that should be used in some certain situations.

Accordingly, there were more closed questions than open questions. The teachers were asking closed questions that required short answers. The questions starting with ‘Do you...?’ required ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers in terms of response. When students answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’, they do not speak much. Furthermore, a ‘wh’ question such as ‘what else?’ which the teachers often use would just invite students to list the items, without developing the interactions anymore.

Teacher’s questioning could contribute to develop conversation skills for students if students are asked about their opinions more. Some questions such as “What do you think about...” seek the answers that students reflecting on their own experience. As for this kind of question, teachers could not know about students’ answers in advance. This will be discussed more details in the following part about the purposes of questions: referential or display questions.
When teachers ask students a question that they have no ideas of what the answer is (e.g. what are you doing after class?), is a referential question. Referential question is argued to support communication in classroom and call for evaluation or judgements (Wilson, 1973). If the teachers asked more referential questions, it could help to get more meaningful conversations in classroom.

In her class mentioned in example 7.5, Thanh explored referential questions to prepare students for a listening task as detailed below.

**Example 7.7**

(Observation 2 of Thanh)

[Aim: Listening: Giving an offer ‘Do you want to go first?’ at the cashier]

At this moment, students listened to the tape twice, they still could not answer the question “What does the woman offer?”, teacher stopped the CD and asked some individual students questions

T: Have you gone to the supermarket?
S1: Er, yes,...
T: **What did you buy?**
S1: Er, fish, noodles and vegetables
T: Ok, then after finishing buying things, **what did you do next?**
S1: Er, er,...I think I pay money
[T: Yes, **how can you pay?**
S1: By cash, er, I think ..by cash, I will pay by cash
T: **Where did you pay for it?**
S1: er, cashier,., at the cashier
T: Yes, at the cashier... Did you go in line? I mean you were waiting in line waiting for your turn to pay?
S1: ..er..yes, I go in line
T: Ok, let’s ask one other person. You, please. Did you go to the supermarket yesterday and what did you buy?
S2: Yes, er, I buy some noodles.
T: Did you go in line?
S2: Yes,
T: Ok, so you were in line and you just had one thing to pay when your friend has a lot more items to pay. Did you want to pay first?
Ss: Yes, I want to pay first.
T: Ok, what could you say then to your friend (S1). Let listen to the tape again tell me, the woman give an offer to the man, what does she say?
(The tape’s voice: The woman: Is that what you have?/ The man: Yes, it is/ The woman: Do you want to go first?/ The man: Are you sure?/ The woman: Of course, I have a lot of things/ The man: Great, thanks)
T: **What did the women offer?**
Ss: er,...to go first.
T: Right, she offers the man to go first (or pay first).

When they are used properly, the questions (in bold) which are mainly referential become useful means to develop the conversations and also help to prepare students to learn the target language. Some questions (e.g. How can you pay?; Did you go in line?), though could be display questions, still included the referential element because they drew on learner’s experience(Brock, 1986; Van Lier,
1996) and help the conversation to flow. By this way, the teacher encouraged students to understand the learning context by personalizing and relating to students’ own experience. Students in this session then joined in the learning process enthusiastically.

On the other hand, display question is assumed to be at low cognitive level, asking for factual recall or recognition (Wilson, 1973). The use of display questions, or known-information question (Mehan, 1979), “reflect the one-way flow of information from teachers to students found in most classroom” (p.294).

Research found that ESL teachers asked significantly more display than referential questions in the classroom (Long & Sato, 1983). My class observation’s data reveals some similar outcomes. In classes where the teachers asked more display questions and/or do not explore referential questions efficiently, students were operating very little in reply. There were also no real life-like conversations stimulated.

Example 7.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Diem-Observation 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Aim: Work in pairs. Discuss the question what the difference between a film and a play?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Now tell me, what do you do in your free time? You please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1: Er, watch T.V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Ok, watching T.V. And you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2: Er, listen to music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Ok, now... do you like watching a film in your free time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: Er, no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Uh, you don’t like. You, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4: Yes, I like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Yes, I like, ...no, you say Yes, I do, ok? Do you like watching a play in your free time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5: No,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Ok, have you ever watched a play in the theatre or a film in the cinema? You, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6: Er,...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Ok, many people like to stay home to watch a film or a play, ...I think it’s convenient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher started with a referential question ‘what do you do in your free time?’. However, she seemed to have no interest in the answer when she moved quickly to other students. It ceased the conversations to develop naturally. The language form was also more concerned throughout the conversation, e.g. the teacher said ‘Uh, you don’t like [...] yes, I like, ...no, you say Yes, I do, ok?’. In terms of methods, it is not very engaging approach. If the teacher asked questions like ‘Think about a film you have seen recently. What do you think about it? (Do you like it? Why?), she could save time leading students to the target (to explore for vocabulary in terms of opinions: describing films, plays...
and musicals). Otherwise, she has to ask many questions (e.g., what do you do in your free time?, Do you watch a film in your free time?) which could waste time searching for a student with a ‘yes’ answer. This could also drive students far from the topic they are learning.

The following was another practice in terms of the teacher’s questioning techniques. A positive teaching and learning environment happened when the teacher asked students about a game show that students have seen, and what happens at the beginning of the game show to relate it to the current learning activity.

Example 7.9

(Hanh-observation 2)
The teacher spent 10 minutes preparing students for a listening task on a game show by asking some questions
T: Do you usually watch TV?
Sts (some): No
T: No? Why not?
**What do you often do in your free time? Play game online?**
Ss: Yes (laughter)
T: We have many…I mean, game shows on T.V. Do you often watch a game show? Have you ever?
Ss: Sometimes.
T: Can you tell me **what happens at the beginning of a game show?**
S1: (a st in front) A MC will ...uh ..appear on the stage and introduce...uh...
T: Who he introduces?
S1: Er, he.....the players...
T: Ok, MC appears on the stage and he will introduce ...the contestants. Contestants are people who join the game. **After that what happens?**
S2: They start (laughter)
T: Er, ok, I mean what information of the contestants?
Some sts: Er,..., name, ages.
T: Their name, their jobs, what else?
Ss: hobby
T: Hobby, where they live...Ok, now you are listening to an introduction of contestants in a game show, then tell me three things about the contestants.

Though it could say that the students were engaged because the topic relates to their interests, the teacher’s questioning also showed its influence, as indicated in the observation data above. When the teacher moved from asking more display questions to more referential questions (e.g. From ‘Do you often watch T.V?’ to ‘What do you often do in your free time? Play game online?’; ‘what happen?’), students were spontaneous, they laughed, were engaged and appeared to be having fun.

7.2.1.2 Feedback

In addressing the question ‘Do the teachers encourage learners to try more or try again?’, my observations revealed that teacher’s feedback sometimes does not encourage students to try more
for a conversation. The feedback from the teacher could not encourage the student to continue to talk. In some cases, while students deserve an encouragement, the feedback that discouraged the students could make them feel that there was no point to think and develop the idea. First, let us get back to example 7.1.

(Diem – Observation 1)

For warming up to the new lesson, she asked questions to individual students.
T: Do you have breakfast?
S1: Yes.
T: What do you have for breakfast?
S1: Bread and egg
T: Ok, good. How about you?
S2: Er, noodles.
T: **Ok. Now today we learn about food.**

Feedback given by the teacher seemed not to contextualize to encourage the communication to be developed. In the meantime, follow-up questions were rarely used. When the teacher said ‘ok, good’, she did not focus on the meaning of the student’s answer, but the form of it. Accordingly, there were all sorts of communicative possibilities the teacher missed. The conversation could be more communicative if the teacher develops it a bit with a follow-up question. That is whether that student had bread and egg every morning, then a follow-up question could be ‘Do you always eat bread and egg for breakfast?’ showing the teacher’s interest and inviting expansion. The student then could list some more food or exchange the information with his/her friends.

Example 7.10

(Diem – Observation 2)

T: […] Ok, can you tell me what the differences are between a film and a play?
S: I think,…er, I can see the real people in a play, er…, when you watch a film, you…only see people on …the screen of , er, T.V.
T: I think you go to the cinema to see a film, we go to the theatre to see a play, er, I think the difference between a film and a play is that where you go to, huh?

In this case, the teacher could accept the idea from the student and ask for more discussion. For example, when the student told about her own idea on the difference between a play and a film (i.e. seeing ‘real’ people on the stage and people on the TV screen), the teacher might give some approval for that student’s answer before going to the point of where to go to see a play or a film mentioned as the answer in the textbook. She might lead students to that point by asking questions such as “where do you go to see a film? – the cinema or the theatre” or asking the same with ‘a play’. As some authors (e.g. Tsui, 1996) say, learners could have more confidence to join in the discussion.
(learning process) if they feel part of it, including their opinion was considered good in some aspects (e.g. accepting a variety of answers, ibid, p.162).

In the other situation, teacher’s feedback was not open enough to the student’s responses. This could occur when student’s answer was different with what the teacher found it in usual.

Example 7.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Observation 2 of Hanh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T: ...er, ok, how do you feel after swimming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: ....Tired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: If you feel tired, so why you go swimming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: (in Vietnamese: Swimming certainly could be tiring, teacher)...(then switch to English) to be taller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: To be taller? Are you sure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: (Smile)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student’s answer ‘tired’ sounds like a real answer. Interestingly, there was communicative purpose in the student’s response in Vietnamese (i.e. swimming certainly could be tiring). The student might be struggling for appropriate vocabulary as well. Therefore, the expected reply from the teacher would be “How much/How far did you swim?” rather than the strange response “If you feel tired, so why you go swimming?”. This caused some obstacles in continuing the conversation. Here the teacher also missed a good point to elicit from the class the benefits of swimming in terms of fitness and health.

The teachers in the study do actually use IRF patterns (Initiation, Respond, Feedback). The teacher initiates, the student responds, the teacher gives feedback on a student’s response, but really on whether it is grammatically correct or not. This can be a temptation for the teacher to focus just on the grammar, the accuracy rather than what is actually meant in the messages. In IRF pattern teaching, it is more about the learner saying what the teachers want to hear than really communicating (Alwright & Bailey, 1991, Wells, 1993). As researchers (e.g. Lier, 1996; Mercer, 1998) discuss, IRF patterns have been criticized for just reinforcing accuracy, after Behaviorism and Audiolingualism. Teachers are advised to respond communicatively these days.

7.2.1.3 Wait time

Wait time is an important issue in question techniques. I am addressing the question “Do the teachers provide sufficient wait-time?”. In classes observed, the teachers seemed to rush to get the answers without allowing enough time for students to think over the questions and to answer. As Ma (2008) discusses, the amount of time teachers generally wait for an answer to their questions is less
than a second which does not stimulate the communication between the teacher and students. As a result, students do not have chance to react to teacher’s questions.

Teacher’s wait time for student’s responses concerns closely to teacher talk and student talk. Teacher talk relates to some of the functions of the teacher in classroom which include giving instructions, setting up and building up situations through questions, directing practice activities (Stubbs & Delamont, 1976, p.233). The teachers in the study (especially strong teachers) intended to expand the conversations with students by questioning techniques sometimes, but they turned out to dominate students when their talk overcomes student talk. Students themselves did not feel confident to continue the conversation when their answers are not encouraged at the right time.

Example 7.12

(Khanh- Observation 1)

[ Aim: By the end of this activity, students will be able to discuss the idea on how much they think the things (e.g poor sight, confidence, criminal behavior, etc...) are caused by genes, childhood experiences or the place where people live ]

T: Look at the book page 12
   And now, criminal behavior is caused by gene, the place where you live or your experiences?.
   Who can? (…)
Class: (silent)
T: You know what criminal behavior means? (She explains and translates it into Vietnamese)
   Maybe a child has his criminal behavior because of his genes..., or because of the place where he lives. Right, who can? Please give me your idea.
   You, please. Tell me your idea.
S1: I think because of experience, (do moi truong co)
T: Yes, because of the place where he lives...Can you give me some examples?
S1: I...er..don’t know.
T: Why you don’t know? Can you explain more?
S1: (Say in Vietnamese)
T: (interrupts the student) and how can the surrounding (the place where he lives) affect on his behaviors?
S1: (say very softly) [inaudible]

T: (turns to other sts) Can you? Can you help him?
S2: Because when... when the children... don’t go to school...
T: (not wait for any second) Hm, yes,... when the children... don’t go to school, they don’t have education, they play with...
S2: er...bad students
T: huh, ...bad friends, right, and they learn from...
S2: (silent in ½ second)
T: They learnt from their bad friends, right. Ok, thank you. Good idea...Right.
The teacher in this situation asked quite many follow-up questions with the aim of developing the conversation and the interaction between the teacher and that student. For example, “Can you give me some examples?” could be very good for expanding the conversation. However, this question could not take its role if the teacher impatiently asked “Why you don’t know?”. It was not really a wait between teachers’ questions either when it was just about half of a second among the questions. The teacher might dominate the student and this student could feel scared of saying something else because it could be a wrong thing. He, therefore, switched to Vietnamese for the safe (he may also know about the answer but just lack some confidence to speak it in Vietnamese). As for the second student, he had a good start to answer the question. The teacher now might be aware that waiting was better, but found it difficult, so she gave the answer. Unfortunately, it could stop the student from developing his idea. Lack of time waiting for the student’s responses or follow-up questions also indicates the lack of student-centredness in class.

7.2.2 CLT use activities

In many activities used in the classroom, students’ accuracy rather than extending communication practice seemed to be focused. Teachers tend to emphasize notional rather than functional categories. ‘Notions’ are closely related to grammatical categories while ‘functions’ refer to practical uses of language, usually interaction with other people (Johnson, 1981), p.23. Furthermore, we can see that a large amount of published course books for English emphasizes ‘functions’ rather than ‘notions’ for the purposes of stimulating real life interaction (McDonough & Shaw, 2003; ). This also challenges teachers who have to explore the relationship between the grammatical forms and their communicative function to teach for communicative purposes. In teaching practice observed for the study, mastery of the formal grammatical system was more focused than how to use the patterns of language in real-life communication.

Example 7.13

(Observation 2 of Khanh)

[Aim of the activity: students are able to use language patterns of comparison with short and long adjectives]

She let students to choose 5 adjectives from the list given to create sentences using comparison structures with short adjectives. When finished, the students were asked to compare their sentences with their partners’ before going to the board to write their sentences. Then she invited individual students to go to the board to write their sentences. She then gave feedback on the sentences the students wrote on the board. The process was repeated with language patterns of comparison structures with long adjectives.
In this activity, the teacher gave some examples before exploring the patterns for students and then asked students to make examples themselves to remember the structures. The students could find it detailed and clear with the language patterns the teacher was teaching. However, the development of communicative competence for students was unlikely to be supported unless the teacher had students say something about themselves and their friends using this pattern. For example, an activity designed like “compare your height with your friend sitting next to you (using ‘tall’), who is taller?, or I compare your book (new, old) with your friend’s book” could help. Doing this, the teacher still can start by talking about grammar or vocabulary, but the students then are able to take language and use it in their own situations.

Example 7.14

(Observation 2 of Minh)

[B. Work in pairs. Say the time in the pictures from a-h in 2 different ways]

Sts work individually, go to the board to write. T invites some students to say the time

T: Number a, the whole class?.

Ss: Er, twenty past nine

T: Right, the other way?

S1: Nine, er, twenty.

T: Next, b.

Ss: Er, five to nine (soft voice)

T: Five to nine, and...?

Ss: Eight, er...

T: Eight fifty five., now c

S2: Nine past five, er..., five past nine

Similarly, this grammar practice activity is carried out with very little reference to everyday reality in above classroom situation. Though the text book says ‘work in pairs’, the teacher does not use it. Students rehearsed individually telling about the time simply in order to get them right rather than to express meaning. The teacher could make her teaching grammar more communicative by having students work in pairs asking and answering about the time at the moment they are talking. Student could also pretend the time in the exercise as the moment time to practice.

In the following classroom situation, though the teacher had very clear goals for practicing some expressions communicatively, the activity used turned out focusing on getting students to use the expressions correctly rather than also getting the language in appropriate ways. It was somewhat a memorization.
Example 7.15

(Thanh-observation 2)

[Aim: Talking about a restaurant that you often go to.
Target structures: It’s very good value for money, you get really big portions]

The activity Thanh designed for the students was that students working in groups of 5-6 to prepare at home practicing each other about their own favourite restaurants using target structures. When it was done in class, any member of each group would be invited to talk about this.

T: What restaurant do you often go to? (In the book p.20: Look at the different kinds of restaurants in the box below. Which do you have in your town/city?)
S1 (group 1): I often go to a fast food restaurant. Hmm, there not have a wide selection of thing...er...but their dishes (inaudible) very de...licious (problem with pronunciation)
T: You mean food is delicious, right?
S1: Yes,
T: Ok, How about you, group 2?
S2: Er, I often go to a food store...
T: food store, ok...
S2:...call Co Ba
T: OK
S2: It’s really good value for money, It’s quite cheap and ....have very ...big por..tion
T: OK, you get really big portions, ok, what else?
S2: Hmm, (his friend reminds him in Vietnamese: keep talking...)
S2: Er, seafood is,eh, very good there.
T: Ok, good, thank you. One more members in your group, who can?

At first glance, this activity appeared to influence student motivation. Students prepared it well and supported each other when presenting, but it was not really a real-life communication stimulation. Speakers in reality should say some more to explain why they say ‘it is very good value of money’ or ‘you can get really big portions’ for the restaurant they came to. In cultural aspects, speakers could also say who needs big portions. They could tell some about the food (what kind of food, how the food is), the price and probably the service there (e.g, fast, convenient, friendly). It could be considered unusual if the conversations stop after telling the name of the restaurant the speaker went to, and then some general remarks without any explanation. Furthermore, there was a limitation in the vocabulary, or restricted input to introduce to students so they might not have enough language for meaningful conversations.

In term of speaking tasks (speaking drills) in which students drill some dialogues using the target patterns of language after listening or reading to develop communication competence for students (some authors), few teachers could manage to do it. Except for some speaking tasks after listening tasks provided in the textbook, teachers had almost no time to design some post-reading or post-
listening activities for student’s communication practice. The similarity applied to teaching listening and reading, teachers tended to have all questions for reading texts or listening task answered correctly, then move to next exercises.

7.2.3 Pairwork and groupwork

Many writers (e.g. Brumfit, 1984; Willis, 1996) see that communicative purposes are valid and important aims of group work and pair work. Having students work in groups is necessary in English classes in the present study because of the large size of class (classes of 45 to 55). The teachers in the study often construct the groups on the basis of learners choosing their friends themselves to form the group. This is to achieve co-operative behaviour in groups (Harmer, 2001). These groups would be fixed throughout the term of 14 weeks. There are often 6-7 groups of 6 or 7 students in a class.

In the classes observed, the teachers used pair work and group work quite often for learning practice. Overall, ‘closed’ group work activities when small groups of learners working together independently without the teacher’ intervention (Wyatt & Borg, 2011) were seen more in experienced teacher’s classes while ‘open’ group work activities (used for display, with everyone in the room able to listen (ibid, p.241) were used more in novice teacher’s classes.

In the experienced teachers’ classes, role-play of any type was used. Group work was also used by these teachers more efficiently than the rest of teachers. For example:

Example 7.16

(Thanh-Observation 1)

Thanh had the students work in groups to read and answer the questions for a reading task. She wrote groups’ names on the board to give the groups who could give the right answers some points.

T: (writes the question on the board), now you read the first paragraph, look at the question on the board, discuss with your friends in your team and give me the answer. (After 5 minutes)
T: Are you ready? Who can answer?...er... raise your hands, please? You, please.
S1: The best place for children is Netherland.
T: Netherland, good. Your group, group 6 get 0.5 point
Ss: (show their approval excitingly)
T: Now, tell me why Netherland is the best place for children. Er, we have 4 reasons. What is the first reason? (Wait..) You read, discuss with your friends and tell me... You talk to your friends and may ask him “Is my answer correct?”,er,...or something like that... You, please, can you move here to talk with your partner...and every group...you make sure that every member in your group knows the answer.
(a minute later)
T: Now group 3, the first reason?
S1: The first reason is because there are many play spaces, facilities for young people.
T: Yes, good, your group get one point… Now reason 2? Group 5
S2: Er, the second reason is their parent have… er, a lot of time to take care of children, ...
T: Why parents have a lot of time?
S2: Er, because the mothers, er, who work quite low time
T: Good, right answer.

T: Now I give you more chance to get point, this time is more challenging. Work in pairs, you have a minute to talk with your partner. Choose one of the reasons and tell me what you think about it, ok? I will help you with some expressions to make it easy for you to talk, e.g put pressure on or ‘liberal’-children can talk everything to their parents…

Though this activity could be made more communicatively followed by the debates among the groups, students working in groups in this class obviously bring an active learning atmosphere in some aspects. Students work more enthusiastically for their group’s sake. For the competition among groups, they focused more on the reading text to have the right answer as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the teacher also set up a closed pairwork activity (Wyatt, 2009) in which students chose a reason to tell about this with the teacher monitoring.

In the novice teachers’ classes observed (e.g. example 7.1, 7.2), though the teachers had students work in pairs or groups for some minutes at the end, it was in reality somewhat a grammar structure or a vocabulary memorization. Furthermore, these teachers sometimes made misuse or ineffective use with group work. For example:

Example 7.17

(Observation 2 of Minh)
She had students to work in pairs to ask and answer about the time with the questions suggested in the text book in two minutes. After that, she asked some individual students to answer the questions. There was no dialog practice among partners who had just worked together or to some others in the class. Pair work was not explored effectively in this case.

(Diem-Observation 2)

[Aim: Exercise on completing the sentences with the adjectives given in the box]
T: You work in groups of 4, you discuss and do the exercise. You have two minutes.
(After 2 minutes)
T: Group 1, number 1, please.
S1: (a student from group 1): funny
T: Very good. Group 2, number 2.
S2: (a student from group 2): uh, ‘scary’.
T: Uh…, (calls for a stronger student) Loan, please (Loan is from the third group).
Loan: Sad
T: Right.
In the example of Diem’s class above, the group of four was unlikely to work. Though being in a group, a student only discussed with the other sitting next to her/him. It also was not clear what was the teacher’s purpose of using groups of four. Perhaps for this kind of exercise, it could be better if the teacher had students work in pairs. Even in experienced teachers’ classes, ineffective group work was also observed sometimes:

Example 7.18

(Observation 1 of Khanh)

T: You work in your groups, create 5 sentences using patterns of comparison with long adjectives, each of you will write 2 sentences and you discuss in your group to select 3 best sentences to write on the board.
Ss in some groups observed did not discuss, but had the exercise done individually by each of them finishing a question in the exercise.
(2 minutes later)
T: You finish?
Ss: Yes,
T: (Why don’t you write it down in your notebooks?: The teacher asked when she saw some students do nothing in groups)
   Ok, group 1, go to the board and write, and group 2 go too, please.

Group work did not really work for communication purposes in this activity either. Though students were working in groups, they were not discussing much together. In some groups, some strong students talked to each other when they were doing the exercise. In some other groups, students divided the numbers of questions to do equally in person. In other words, this group work somewhat involved students working individually to finish the exercise.

7.3 Teaching pronunciation and with supplementary Pronunciation Practice book

As stated in previous chapters, pronunciation teaching plays an important role in addressing the goal of intelligibility in using English for Vietnamese learners. This part involves classroom observation data which explore pronunciation teaching in classrooms. Three of the teachers in the study participated in writing supplementary pronunciation practice books to support the old text book. Though currently teaching with the new text book and the syllabus without pronunciation sessions, most teachers argued in the discussions that “teaching pronunciation is important to support students for learning English effectively, especially for listening and speaking skills”. They were aware that pronunciation was one of the largest challenges faced by university students. Therefore, the teachers insisted on spending some time in class for pronunciation if they had time, as illustrated in below examples. In practice, what most teachers usually did for pronunciation practice was students repeating the words or sentences selected from the lessons in the text book after the teacher,
particularly along with teaching vocabulary in the text book. For example, in example 7.2 above, the teacher started the lesson with a vocabulary section by explaining the meaning of some new words in Vietnamese, then the students did vocabulary exercises. In order to help students with pronunciation, a number of new words of the topic ‘restaurant and food’ such as ‘restaurant’, ‘waiter’, ‘waitress’, ‘beef’ were pronounced by the teacher and students repeated. They did this either with the whole class or some individual students. However, they could skip this ‘important’ section anytime when they lacked time and suffered the pressure to finish the schedule (the syllabus) in time.

Few teachers tried to insert a pronunciation session in their lesson. For these teachers, though teaching with the new text book and syllabus, they still used the Pronunciation Practice book as supplementary materials to design some activities for teaching pronunciation.

Example 7.19

(Observation 1 of Thanh)

Thanh often takes 10 minutes at the beginning of the lesson to review for pronunciation. In her class, she writes the pronunciation symbols of 15 words (e.g., reviewing the words of topic ‘The best place to live’ including Dutch, Holland, liberal, percentage, success, facility, report, Netherland) on the board and read out loud the words for students to listen to and write down the words next to their correct symbols.

Example 7.20

(Observation 2 of Khanh)

In Review unit, Khanh gave students a list of words (many of them taken from Pronunciation Practice book) and ask students to listen to the words to put them in the correct column in a table, e.g., /ɪ/, /iːl/, /e/./eɪ/. She then read out the word for some individual students to come to the board and write the words they heard in the column.

The teachers’ attempts to support students with pronunciation were somewhat useful. As we can see from the two examples above, pronunciation could be taught through easy but interesting ways such as dictation or can be fun as a quick game involving students in class. However, the teachers said that they could not do it regularly because it was time-consuming. They shared their view in discussions that pronunciation should be integrated in lessons and taught systematically. In order for that, they needed a ‘leader’ (the department head) to put it in the syllabus and organize for materials design and being shared among teachers.
7.4 Summary

The teachers made efforts in their teaching that they thought it could involve students and facilitate students’ communication in English. In order to achieve the goal, most of the teachers in the study applied pair work and group work regularly in class, using questioning techniques and trying to relate to learners’ experience. Some teachers used pronunciation supplementary materials when they had chance and designed some materials to support the textbook.

However, classroom observations for the study reveals that there were various problems identified concerning teacher’s contextual realization, the teachers’ questioning, teacher’s use of CLT activities that could not stimulate communication. Quite traditional teaching methods (e.g. patterns of presentation, practice) which was teacher-fronted, form-focused were observed. There was also a lack of communicative purpose in classroom communication and few student-student interactions. In other words, the overall impression was that this was not an environment necessarily conducive to supplying the workplace with suitably communicatively competent graduates. The teachers all agreed that teaching language should be teaching for students how to communicate with other people using the L2. This can be seen as an idealized cognition (Borg, 2006) and corroborates that finding of Sato and Kleinsasser’s (1999) study. They were aware that stimulated real-life situations (e.g. creating a context or communicative tasks) should be used in their class for communicative purposes. However, they were realistic in sharing how they actually implemented it, as they said in the discussions after classroom observations. For example:

I should do something but I am not very confident for that. I also see that I should provide some more tasks that let students talk about themselves to push students to talk, but I have not done it and sometimes do not know how to do it (Minh, Diem).

I try to ask some questions for students to talk, but many students are often very quiet, so I have to end up by calling up some stronger students for the answers. When students talk, I do not really have enough time to focus on their answers (Hanh). If there is a student who can answer my questions, I will hurry to move on. I think it is not really a good way for a conversation, so I think I should focus on students’ answers more (Thanh, Khanh).

This raises the issue that teachers would need some chances to look back at how they have been teaching in their class, how they explore materials, whether they are facilitators of learning and the interaction within their classroom to stimulate learning opportunities that students can get to achieve communicative competence. Then they need support to be self-aware and self-evaluate (Leitch & Day, 2006) of their teaching in order to improve their teaching practice. These issues will be addressed in the next section.
SECTION 4: INTERVENTING TO IMPROVE

This section includes four chapters which discuss the intervention and examine whether the intervention influences on teachers and their English teaching practice in some ways. The four chapters are: Chapter 8 is about teacher education, the impact of teacher education on teachers’ cognitions, the considerations of the action researcher in the Vietnamese context. Chapter 9 presents action research method used for this stage of research. Chapter 10 provides the analysis of how the intervention was carried out to support the teachers to reflect on their current teaching practice. In chapter 11, the findings of the section – whether any changes after the intervention- are presented.

CHAPTER 8: LITERATURE REVIEW – TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER’S COGNITIONS

The focus of this chapter is on teacher education and the influence of teacher education on teacher’s cognition. For this purpose, this chapter first discusses how a number of studies’ findings might be implemented for teacher education and the impact of teacher education on the growth of teacher’s cognition to help teachers to be reflective practitioners in CLT implementation. The next parts of this chapter address the considerations of the action researcher in the Vietnamese context, especially responding to my initial observations in the previous stages of my research.

8.1 The implications of studies on teacher’s knowledge for teacher education

There are several ways in which the studies of teachers’ knowledge (5.4 above) might be implemented for teacher education. Tsui’s (2003) case studies of teacher’s ways of thinking and ways of learning may serve as a reference for both novice and experienced teachers to have insights in understanding their own professional development: to think about their work as a teacher and how they learn to teach. In other words, case studies of their peers would help teachers to “raise their awareness of their own actions, and to help to make their tacit knowledge explicit” (p.281). This implicit knowledge, as Richards (2003) discussed, was a key element in determining how student teachers respond to training courses. It is because the knowledge which is related to teachers’ maxims – “principles of practice derived from personal experience, and embodying purpose in a deliberate and reflective way, which can be drawn upon to guide a teacher’s actions and explain the reasons for those actions” (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p.290 as cited in Richards, 2003) provides a useful perspective for student teachers to study the professional course as they explore their own thinking in action and that of others. As Clandinin (1985) demonstrates, teachers’ thinking and practice are often powerfully influenced by teachers’ images and perspectives which may also create resistance of the alternative modes of thought and action. Borg (2006) has some conclusions on teacher...
cognition: teacher cognition research has provided evidence of the way in which teachers’ beliefs and knowledge influence what teachers do in the classroom. Therefore, recognizing the maxims that teachers use to guide their teaching can be achieved in a number of ways, such as discussion, narratives, journal writing, and other forms of critical reflection (Richards, 2003). These methods (often delivered through teacher training courses) could help teachers to develop teachers’ cognition for knowing what should be done and why some innovations in terms of learners, the curriculum and the context, the resources and facilities, personal confidence and competence (Howard & Major, 1998) or what teaching materials should be made (Alwright, 1981). In summary, studies on teachers’ knowledge suggest that making explication of teachers’ belief, principles and values has become an ongoing focus of teacher education programs.

8.2 The impact of teacher education on teacher’s cognitions

Teachers’ cognitions can be developed through teacher education and experience. As Borg (2009) states, through successful teacher education courses, awareness-raising activities, opportunities for teachers to put their ideas into practice, set their own goals and evaluate their own progress can be achieved. With teacher training courses, teacher’s knowledge can be also gained through teachers researching their own practice which may help deepen teacher personal engagement and teachers may thus be empowered, pedagogically and, cognitively, and politically to become more active in supporting learning (Wyatt, 2010a). This corroborates the ideas of Richard (1998), who said that a teaching training course would help teachers to heighten the awareness of their learners and equip teachers with some experience that they can apply to classes (Richard, 1998).

Wyatt (2008) reported a number of strategies for developing teacher cognition through in-service teacher education suggested by researchers (e.g. Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999; Wallace, 1991; Roberts, 1998). The first strategy is involving the encouragement of reflection through mentoring (Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999). It is because “through reflection, people make sense of their experiences, explore their own cognitions and self-beliefs, engage in self-evaluation, [and begin the processes which] alter their thinking and behaviour accordingly” (Pajares, 2002, para. 13, cited in Wyatt, 2008). Reflecting deeply, however, requires of the practitioner qualities such as open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and a sense of responsibility, together with various skills (9.1.1).

The strategy of encouraging reflective practice through mentoring can be supported by another strategy: teacher training courses designed to integrate “experiential learning, theoretical input, reading, discussion, reflection, formal writing and experimentation” (Roberts, 1998, p. 274). Such courses, as Wyatt (2008, p.24) discusses, need to be designed in the way that corresponds more to a
reflective rather than to an applied science model of teacher education (Wallace, 1998). A reflective model of teacher education is designed according to the principles for practical assignments and support, which help teachers to develop as more analytical, context-sensitive practitioners. This may not be achieved in an applied science model of teacher education which is focused on theoretical input. In particular, through practical assignments and support in conducting action research, these courses can encourage teachers to “analyse, discuss, evaluate and reflect on their theories” that they rely on for their work (Wyatt, 2008, p.25). Some authors (e.g. Freeman, 1993) found that such training courses can support teachers to experience adjusting to factors, such as the context, subject matter, and students in their developing understanding, which is helpful to develop their classroom practice.

Reflection also brings up a third strategy for in-service language teacher education, that is, getting teachers involved in curriculum development projects, which offer them the opportunity to contribute to structuring a syllabus suitable for their context (Roberts, 1998). In this strategy, the teachers were supported through interventions, experimentation in design, together with receiving input through literature and benefiting from experienced mentors. It is believed that, with support, teachers could change their practices and improve learning in their context, leading to the growth of self-efficacy (Henson, 2001, as cited in Wyatt, 2008).

Furthermore, it has become evident that the experience promoted from training programs would support teachers to overcome obstacles caused by contextual factors and interpersonal factors (Borg, 2006; Bailey, 2009; Burton, 2009). These factors (e.g. large classes, examination pressures, a set syllabus, lack of support for professional development, teachers reflecting in different ways, etc.) have been seen as preventing teachers from applying the principles promoted during their training (Spada & Massey, 1992; Borg, 2006; Leitch and Day, 2006). Findings from a number of studies show that teacher training programs have changed teachers’ cognition effectively (Borg, 2006); the training course could help a teacher become more open-minded and flexible in the approach to problem-solving (Wyatt, 2010a) and it seemed to “empower” the teacher to be better able to help his learners, his colleagues and himself when he became more autonomous and more confident in his role in the school by the end of the course (Wyatt, 2011a).

I believe that teacher education basing on strategies which focus on context-specific needs (Williams & Burden, 1997, cited in Wyatt, 2008) as discussed above, can provide support to the teachers in my context in developing practical knowledge (5.5, above) and improving their practice. I now present a number of approaches suggesting how.
8.3 The implications of interventions for teacher education

8.3.1 Interventions encouraging the growth of teacher cognition

There is evidence from a few studies that growth in teacher’s cognition can occur through interventions (Wyatt, 2008). The two examples for this reported by Wyatt include: Chaing (2008)’s study on teachers’ incorporating fieldwork into a year-long EFL methodology course (i.e. teachers observed a middle school English class on four occasions and then taught it once) and Henson (2001)’s study on investigating the effects of participation in teacher research on teacher practical knowledge. The findings of the two studies indicate

...The teachers reflected on problems they faced and then engaged in tackling them through action research. Their context allowed sufficient autonomy for this. Their reflections were enriched by external sources of input, including peers they not only shared reflections with, but also the work of designing, implementing and evaluating the interventions. Mentor teacher researchers and research literature also provided support. (Wyatt, 2008, p.23)

Seen in this light, I believe that interventions can be done for the teachers in my context. It is because interventions could provide opportunities for the teachers to reflect on the problems they face and then learn how to deal with them.

8.3.2 An insight to inform interventions

A teacher is considered to take a vital role in teaching implementation because they are ones who understand their own learners’ needs best (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998) as discussed below:

Teachers are expected to get students’ involvement not simply in classroom activities but in participation in decision making (Allwright, 1981). Allwright discusses that teachers often start the course by analysing students’ need, from that the structure of the course is developed. Halfway through the course teachers have learners’ feedbacks (e.g. through interviews) and evaluation on the course before making more decisions. And finally, several months after the end of the course, teachers may also design a follow-up questionnaire to get learners’ advice for future courses and follow-up activities.

Teachers are involved in some different stages in the process of curriculum development including curriculum planning, specification of ends and means, programme implementation and classroom implementation (Johnson, 1989 as cited in Masuhara, 1998). In particular, teachers can help to
analyze the learners’ needs, observe materials being used and test learners before and after use of materials. Teachers are the ones who actually teach the materials and who have to rewrite the materials sometimes (Masuhara, 1998). Whilst-use and post-use evaluations of material use which can be extremely valuable would be hard to carry out without the great investment of teacher energy and time. Therefore, a teacher may be expected to function as a course designer, need analyst and methodologist, particularly teachers would be DIY (‘Do It Yourself’) materials designers (Block, 1991; Wyatt, 2011b). Course designers, needs analysts or methodologists can do these things but “it is the teachers who could tell us the most” (Tomlinson 1998, p.262).

However, teachers playing their roles as discussed above is not a straightforward matter. They need help to strengthen their understanding of some factors (e.g. learners, the curriculum, the context, the resources and facilities, personal confidence) for efficient teaching practice or knowledge of principles underpinning materials design such as organization, quality and time (Howard & Major, 1998). Otherwise, difficulties caused by lack of knowledge and contextual factors can prevent teachers from doing their job as best they can (Block, 1991).

Supporting teachers can be done through teacher training courses which could bring some benefits to deal with their difficulties (8.2, above). Together with teacher training courses, interventions to give teachers the chance to reflect on what they do in their classroom (6.2, above) can help develop teachers’ cognition for knowing what should be done and why some innovations in teaching practice the materials design should be made. In other words, teachers need support to become action researchers in their contexts. In the next part, the considerations of action researcher in the Vietnamese context will be discussed.

8.4 The considerations of the action researcher in the Vietnamese context

8.4.1 The implications of teachers as action researchers

It is clear from the discussion above that teacher education which contains a reflective element can help teachers to develop their practical knowledge, if they are fully involved as researchers researching their own practice. I believe that Vietnamese teachers, who are teaching crowded classes, reticent students, inauthentic English course books and experience a lack of supplementary teaching materials (1.2.2, above), can benefit teacher education in this way. That is, teachers can be supported with action research to improve practice through experimentation and reflection. The progress might be as follows:
First, action research could help to get teachers to their cognition—“what teachers think, know and believe, and of its relationship to teachers’ classroom practice” (Borg, 2006); then teachers get to understand their learners in the way that would probably be different to what they used to think. For example, through action research (i.e. through experimentation and reflection), Vietnamese teachers might realize that Vietnamese learners may respond more enthusiastically to authentic materials than global textbooks materials with the topics are not culturally familiar to them; learners may be willing to participate in English in classroom if the teacher provides them some types of activities that promote verbal skills (Dat, 2002 cited in Tomlinson, 2005); or the majority of learners prefer opportunities to benefit from experiencing language in use rather than from receiving knowledge about it (Tomlinson, 2005). The growth of cognition then will help the teachers in selecting and developing appropriate materials and methodologies which they use with their students. They, for example, would invest more time and energy in adapting and designing materials which are of ‘contextualization’ to able to be responsive to Vietnamese cultures, together with creating tasks which can help stimulate ‘real-life’ communication for learners.

Action research might also help the teachers in my context to teach with pronunciation. Through reflecting on the problems of learning and teaching pronunciation (1.3.2 and 5.7.1, above), the teachers might realize that although Vietnamese learners are familiar with Vietnamese pronunciation system (5.7.1), they themselves do not know that English pronunciation has various components such as sounds or stress which are different with Vietnamese. They can not tell if they have got it right, they may continue the way they have done – they may make inaccurate assumptions about how English is pronounced. Even when the learners are aware that their pronunciation is different from the way English people may do it and may automatically change it, they could not be able to make sure what features would be essential to be changed (Kenworthy, 1997). It is difficult for learners to do this for themselves, it is the teacher’s job. Pronunciation work, therefore, should be a focus in teacher education for Vietnamese teachers to enhance the cognition of what might cause the problems they are facing with. Then the teachers would be willing to search for appropriate materials and possible approaches to teach pronunciation, some of which would be as follows:

**8.4.2 Potential approach to teach pronunciation**

The above discussion suggests the two aspects of pronunciation work recommended for teachers by researchers (e.g. Kenworthy, 1997, Harmer, 2007) which are particularly appropriate to Vietnamese learners. They include (1) building awareness and concern for pronunciation and (2) integrated pronunciation teaching.
(1) Building awareness and concern for pronunciation. English pronunciation has various components such as sounds, stress, intonation, linkage of sounds which are very different with Vietnamese, and the learners need to understand the function of these components (Kenworthy, 2007). Learners also need to understand that their poor pronunciation could cause frustration both for themselves and for their listeners. In order for these, a teacher is expected to support their learners in providing hints to make sounds of English which do not occur in Vietnamese and helping learners be aware of what to pay attention for an effective message to listeners (Kenworthy, 2007).

What is more, a teacher is expected to consider what types of exercises and activities that could be helpful to build the awareness of learning pronunciation. These activities could be the ones which can be used for specific aspects of English pronunciation (e.g. sounds, stress, intonation, sound and spelling (see Harmer, 2007, chapter 15) or general awareness-building activities such as time spent discussing the issue of pronunciation in a general way (e.g. questionnaire-based discussion of the importance of ‘good pronunciation’) to stimulate interest and increase motivation for pronunciation work (Kenworthy, 2007, p.54).

(2) Integrated pronunciation teaching
Integrated pronunciation teaching means pronunciation work should not be limited to particular lessons or slot because pronunciation is so often a part of many other language learning activities such as speaking and listening (Kenworthy, 2007). This view of integrated pronunciation teaching is supported by Harmer (2007) who writes “whole pronunciation lessons may be unaffordable luxury for classes under syllabus and timetable pressure” (p.252). In additions, as Kenworthy discusses, ‘integration’ should be defined with two vital factors: the first factor is the consistency and planning that is associated with integration (e.g. correcting mispronunciations which are crucial for intelligibility and let the others pass), the second factor relates to the teacher approaching pronunciation in a way that it promotes appropriate learners’ attitude to give necessary time and effort to it.

One method which is commonly suggested to achieve this integration is pronunciation and vocabulary work. For example, teachers, in preparing for a listening or a reading activity, will note the words/phrases that maybe new to learners to have a pre-activity for the new vocabulary or a post-activity to practice the learned words. Another method involves exploiting transcriptions of recorded material, for example, marking transcripts for weak forms or for rhythm-learners have the transcript of the text, and they listen for weak form or rhythm as the tape is played. The other way relates to
integrating intonation. The teacher calls the learners’ attention to the use of intonation when they are listening, and comments on intonation when speaking (Kenworthy, 2007).

In summary, pronunciation teaching to address the goal of intelligibility for Vietnamese learners is not only getting learners to produce correct sounds or intonation, but rather to have them notice how English is spoken. It is because the more aware the learners are, the greater chance that they can get to the desirable intelligibility levels (Harmer, 2007).

(3) Pronunciation teaching relating to CLT: Questioning and feedback
Integrated pronunciation teaching as discussed above also rises the issue in terms of questioning techniques for Vietnamese teachers. It is about what actual pronunciation to enable students to answer the questions and participate classroom interactions. Students may know the answers, but are reluctant to talk due to their lack of confidence in pronunciation. Teachers, therefore, not only should ask the right type of questions to promote learners to speak, but also have to think of new ways of improving students’ pronunciation. This should include types of feedback which would be implemented to their learners, whether the feedback is constructive and encouraging to build confidence for learners. These could be good starts in the row to develop student’s communicative competence.

8.5 Summary
In summary, this chapter discusses how teacher education can support teachers to reflect on problems they face and then engage in dealing with them through action research. In Vietnamese context, action research can help teachers strengthen their understanding of their role in CLT and materials adaptation such as contextualization and pronunciation teaching. This might be considered as an appropriate approach to the effective CLT implementation and meeting requirement of English use at the workplace in Vietnam. The next chapters of this section will provide the analysis of how action research (the interventions) applied in the study can help teachers to improve their CLT practice.
CHAPTER 9: RESEARCH METHODS – ACTION RESEARCH

9.1 Research design

In this stage of the study, action research was used, including the interventions (the workshops) to assist teachers to reflect on their own work. As stated earlier (8.5), action research has been considered as a means for professional development (Nunan, 1990) and classroom-based research (Allright, 1988; van Lier, 1988). In particular, action research has been perceived as a practice of professionalization that is appropriate within a model of teacher education (e.g. an in-service training program) or playing an important role in teachers’ development as an approach to help teachers improve their practice through reflection (Bartlett, 1990; Leitch and Day, 2006; Nunan, 1990).

From the above analysis, reflection is implied to the current context to provide the teachers a way of working which links theory and practice into one whole: ideas-in-action (6.2). As Bartlett (1990) discusses, reflection might help teachers to move away from the ‘how to’ questions, which have a limited useful value, to the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions as a part of broader educational purposes. In reflecting on ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, teachers begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming their everyday classroom life. The process of control is called critical reflective teaching. The elements of a cycle for the process of reflective teaching could be defined as mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and acting (Bartlett, 1990 adapted from McTaggart and Kemmis 1983, Smyth, 1987). This could be used to help the teachers in my context. The five elements respectively relate to five questions suggested by Bartlett (1990), which the teachers can ask themselves to be assisted in the process of becoming critically reflective are: what do I do as a teacher?; what is the meaning of my teaching?; how did I come to be this way?; how might I teach differently? and what and how shall I now teach? This way can support the teachers to involve in the shift to the emphasis on their thinking and acting, which is regarded as the most important means for helping teachers to improve their practice.

9.1.1 Considerations of applying action research in my context

There were a number of issues to take into consideration to carry out action research for my study, though. First, the teachers in my context were influenced by issue of contextual factors obstructing teacher research as indicated by researchers (8.2, above). Besides, they lack skills in acquiring the discourses of research and research writing and have limited sources of advice (McKenan, 1993, cited in Burns, 2009). They, therefore, need support to develop the qualities required of teacher researchers. These qualities concern reflective skills such as noticing, analysing, problem-solving,
hypothesizing and evaluating outcomes against objectives (Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999 cited from Wyatt, 2014). Writing reflectively is another useful skill required of teachers for the reflection process (Burton, 2009). However, it is challenging to achieve because teachers rarely write down their insights (Burton, 2009) and they are also unlikely to enjoy the process of writing (Lu, 1998). One way that could help to develop this useful skill suggested by these authors is to engage teachers in reading the publications already available.

A number of methods to carry out action research that fit with my study context could be: through oral processes such as stimulated recall (e.g. video stimulated recall (Wyatt & Arnold, 2012), seminars, and discussion groups (e.g. post-lesson discussions (Wyatt, 2014); or through reflective writing which is considered as an effective means of teachers supporting their own professional learning and also enabling them to share that learning with others (Burton, 2009). Project-based teacher development should also be done because such long-term reflection allows the time and distance from their daily work for constant reflection on practice and opportunities to work with their colleagues (Burton, 2005). I took all important points discussed above into considerations carrying this intervention stage of my research.

Reflecting on practical theories as discussed above, I adapted the Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988)’s model for the procedure of action research to use at University of Information Technology (UIT), the university I was carrying out the research as it is indicated next.

9.2 Procedure of action research

I adapted Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988) model of action research which includes a plan of critically informed action, the implementation of the plan and the observation and feedback on the effects. The implication of this procedure is: When a researcher/ teacher plans and carries out actions to improve the current situation, she also observes and documents what happens with these actions. The results of changes often reveal new or unexpected possibilities for further action, which are then observed and documented. I hope the procedure can contribute to improve the teachers’ practice at the university. Classroom observations and the workshops included in the stages of the procedure were as follows:

Step 1: Classroom observations (2 observations for each teacher) to investigate the teachers’ current teaching (chapter 7). The documents from these earlier observations contributed to prepare for the workshops.
Step 2: Workshop 1a and 1b were carried out to provide the teachers a variety of information concerning aspects of CLT practice such as materials adaptation and classroom interactions. The information provided also aimed to support the discussion among the teachers for them to look back on and reflect on their current teaching practice.

Step 3: Classroom observations again (2-3 observations for each teacher including post-lesson discussions). The materials collected in this period were also to prepare for the next workshop.

Step 4: Workshop 2 provides the teachers the videos of their own teaching and of the company teacher’s teaching. The purpose of this workshop was for the feedback and discussions among teachers on any changes they have made after the two workshops. It was to see the extent to which the teachers were affected by the workshops 1a and 1b and reflected on their teaching. It was also hoped that this workshop would derive teachers to continue with their positive changes.

The timeline for the action research was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of the research</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Methods/ Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 – Classroom observations</td>
<td>- Started 1 week after the term began.</td>
<td>- One observation every two weeks for each teacher. - The total of 2 observations for each teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 – Workshops 1a and 1b</td>
<td>- After the first observations - 1 week gap between the two workshops.</td>
<td>- The two parts 1a &amp; 1b of the same workshop (due to the teachers’ lack of time) to make it focused on two aspects of CLT: materials adaptation and classroom interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 – Observing the teachers again</td>
<td>- After workshop 1b</td>
<td>- 2-3 observations for each teacher including post-lesson discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4 – Workshop 2</td>
<td>- After the later observations</td>
<td>- Feedback and discussions among teachers on any changes they have made after the two workshops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: The timeline for the action research

9.2.1 Workshop design

As stated earlier, the purpose of the workshops (the intervention) is to provide teachers opportunities to reflect on their own work for the improvement of their teaching practice. Seen in this light, it is necessary to design the workshops which take into account the features of supporting the teachers in this way. This leads to Roberts’ (1998) provider roles in teacher education. Roberts discusses that the new information should be presented to teachers in the way it is ‘personalized’: “processed and interpreted by teachers according to their current theories, and then tested against direct experience and social exchanges”. This can be done through private reflection (e.g. journal writing, reflective assignments) and dialogue (e.g. discussion with learners, peers and supervisors)
I therefore followed Roberts’s (1989, p.153) processing cycle of three phases when designing the workshops. The three phases include:

1. Input: First, uncovering the teachers’ prior knowledge and personal theories so that the teachers can become aware of the difference between their current ideas and practice and the new information presented to them. Then, presenting the new information by appropriate means such as readings, lectures, demonstrations, experiential activities etc. In my context, demonstrations and experiential activities were mainly used.

2. Processing input: relating new information to the prior knowledge and beliefs, teachers criticizing the new information, comparing others’ interpretation of the new information and accessing its relevance to the teachers’ own context.


The three processing cycle of three phrases was applied as principles to carry out the workshops in my study (chapter 10). I now present research methods including observations and discussion used for the stage of action research.

9.3 Research methods

Because it was the stage of the intervention to seek for the improvement, my role as a supervisor to gain teachers’ trust and an environment to promote reflection, exploration, and change (Chamberlin, 2000; 6.3.2, above) was even more necessary. In order for this, I drew on three research methods: observations, interviews (discussions) and survey. In this stage of the study, the interviews were mainly used as post–lesson discussions (rather than formal interviews). It was to create an empathic, supportive environment to assist the teachers in the explication of their practical theories of CLT (Mangubhai at al., 2004). Feedback through post-lesson discussions offered as soon as possible after observations or delayed until the workshops depending on the participant teachers (e.g. if that teacher had a difficult practice lesson, the delayed discussion would also be helpful (Roberts, 1998).

9.3.1 Observations and discussions (feedback)

I kept on with supervisor models selected, i.e. collaborative supervision and non-directive supervision, to help teachers to reflect on their teaching (6.3.2). I also considered some other points as follows:

First, in practice, there were a number of times when I shifted roles depending on the teacher’s needs. For example, I sometimes gave the teachers prescriptive advice (directive supervision) on
what teaching activities to use or suggested alternatives to what they had done (e.g. with novice
teachers). I gave the support individually or in the workshops depending on the teachers (e.g. novice
teachers often preferred having support and feedback individually). That means, the features of the
other two models of supervision, directive option and alternatives option (Freeman, 1982; Bailey,
2009), were also combined. The combination of the four supervision models coincides with the fifth
supervision approach. Gebhard (1984) terms this as ‘creative supervision’, useful for a supervisor to
play his role effectively (Bailey, 2009).

Teachers may be aware of the freedom to try new ideas, take the chance to raise questions about
themselves and about the effects of their teaching. They may also gain experience in making
decisions on their own and deepen their awareness of their responsibility for their own teaching
behaviour (Gebhard, 1984). This is in line with what Freeman (1989) discusses as reflective approach,
which could bring about changes in teachers’ awareness, attitudes, knowledge and skills.

The second consideration for the use of observations in this stage of the research was the language
used in the post-observation discussions. The purpose of post-observation discussions was offering
critical suggestions. The language for this, therefore, should be “gentle enough that teachers can
listen to it but clear enough that they can hear it” (Bailey, 2006, as cited in Bailey, 2009, p.273). In
other words, feedback should be appropriate, honest, sensitive and useful for teachings to meet the
targets for teacher development (Arnold, 2006). In order to achieve this, a number of Wajnryb’s
(1995) mitigation strategies were applied. They included syntactic mitigation devices (e.g. person
shift, the use of negation, model verbs, interrogatives); semantic mitigation (e.g. lexical hedges,
hedging modifiers) and indirect mitigation (i.e. conventionally indirect mitigation, implicitly indirect
mitigation, and pragmatic ambivalence). For example, I used “Can you think of a reason why students
often do not speak in class?” instead of “Do you know why students do not speak in class?”; or “I
think we can have students do this exercise in groups” instead of “You can have students do this
exercise in groups”. These aimed to soften the critical messages and avoid face-threatening to the
teachers. Immediate feedback or delayed feedback was given after the classroom observations
depending on the teachers’ needs. For example, immediate feedback was provided when some of
the teachers needed prescriptive advice or suggestions for alternatives to tasks that they had used in
class. When more time was needed for discussion or support (e.g. documents of CLT), feedback was
delayed until the workshops.
9.3.2 Survey

In this stage of my research, I wanted to explore Vietnamese teachers’ perspectives and their practice in a university, so I used survey technique. This technique, though defined as a useful research method for a large number of people who are often chosen at random rather than small-scale research, is considered as an important technique when the purpose of research is to describe and explore phenomena (Wallace, 1998). Furthermore, the interviews are expected to complement the survey instrument by providing rich contexts and thick descriptions and explanations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). A survey, therefore, was complemented with qualitative interviews with teacher participants in the study. A questionnaire on teachers’ beliefs (e.g. open questions to invite the respondent to express his/her opinions (Walliam and Buckler, 2008) on English teaching and learning was used in the workshops (the intervention) and while carrying out classroom observations to obtain teachers’ awareness, attitude and knowledge of English language teaching.

Likert-scale responses were not analysed quantitatively in the study because of the small number of participants: 5 teachers. Rather, the teachers’ responses to the survey were proceeded by manual coding, through which teachers’ individual differences and overall general attitude toward CLT were uncovered. These differences of interpretation among the teachers were then compared with those of interview and observation data. This comparison was believed to further reveal and better define teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards CLT (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999).

The questions designed for the questionnaire (appendix 5) were also used as guide questions to support for deeper discussions with teachers in the workshops. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, apart from the last part which was used to collect information related to the personal background of the subjects.

In part one, controlled-choice questions were used to collect information related to teaching material adaptation, including the frequency of the subjects adapting the teaching materials and possible reasons for this. The last item in this part was an open-ended question related to the subjects’ recommendations for support needed to undertake materials evaluation and adaptation successfully at the university.

Part two - teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning and language learners included survey items divided into three sections. Section I contained 5 items designed to explore the subjects’ opinions about lesson planning and consideration of learners. These items were scored
using a scale that listed from “unimportant” to “very important” or asking participants to give each factor a priority rating from 1 to presenting ‘most important’ to 6 presenting ‘least important’. The last item in this section involved any other factors which the subjects think a teacher should take into consideration for learners’ motivation.

Section II elicited the subjects’ understandings of language teaching and learning and CLT. The first two items measured the level of the subjects’ perceived importance of CLT classroom aspects regarding teacher-student and student-student interaction and classroom behaviours. A scale that listed from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly” or the options of “should be encouraged/should be discouraged” was used. The next three items went into more details of the teachers’ teaching methods, classroom interaction and error correction. These questions were designed including three pairs of examples regarding more communicative approaches versus more traditional teaching methods in terms of the issues discussed to invite teacher’s choice. The last item in this section was to ask for a brief reason for the subject’s answers. Section III was used to explore the subjects’ opinion on the general attitude about research at the university. It included concerned items such as whether doing research was considered as an important part of teachers’ job, opportunities for teachers to learn about current research or access to research. A scale that listed from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly” was also used in this section to assist the subjects’ responses.

The questions I designed in the questionnaire were adapted from researchers who suggested frameworks that can generate a set of questions to use for the purpose of eliciting teachers’ attitude and understandings of CLT. They included Borg (2009)’s questionnaire about English language teachers’ conceptions of research and Wright (1990)’s recommendation on factors to investigate for understanding classroom role relationship. A draft of the survey questionnaire is included in the Appendices.

9.4 Data collection and analysis
In this stage of the research, a total of 13 classroom observations were undertaken for 5 teacher participants: 3 observations for each experienced teacher and 2 for each novice teacher. The novice teachers were tense a bit more than experienced teachers preparing for exams at that moment (the time of mid-term exams) and asked for reducing the number of observations. However, the observations offered sufficient evidence about English language instruction needed for the study.

As discussed (9.3), the classroom observations were often followed by post-lesson discussions. In the discussions, I used the ‘stimulated recall’ technique (Bailey & Nunan, 1996), with the notes rather
than video, to prompt the teachers’ interpretations of their teaching practice. The semi-structured interviews in the workshops were also developed as post-lesson discussions (9.3). Because the teacher participants were teachers of English, there was a mixed use of English and Vietnamese language and the interview questions and the questionnaire did not have to be translated into Vietnamese. I, however, encouraged the teachers to ask for clarification in terms of the questions during the time the teachers worked on the questionnaire or in the discussions. Furthermore, since I and the teachers shared the native language, Vietnamese used in the interviews were also helpful for a good interchange between the participants and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and to obtain richer data (Fetterman, 1989).

The information obtained from participants’ comments and interviews was categorized and analyzed together with the observation data. This relates to method and data triangulation, “the attempt to get a ‘true’ fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings” (Silverman, 2001, p.212). The description was made deeper (Geertz, 1973) with reported opinions elicited through interviews and with observed actions. This allows the ‘additional interpretations’ and so the study’s ‘credibility’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Silverman, 2005) can be achieved. The details of the data analysis will be presented in the next chapter.
In this chapter, the intervention (i.e. the workshops) is analyzed. The workshops were carried out aimed to provide the teachers a variety of information concerning aspects of CLT practice and to support the teachers to look back on and reflect on their current teaching practice. This was considered that this could assist the teachers to provoke some innovations they think they could make for their class and put the ideas into practice (8.3, 9.1, above). In order for the purpose, the three workshops were arranged as 9.2 (table 9.1) and followed Roberts’ (1998) processing cycle of three phases (9.2.1) as follows:

- **Workshops 1a and 1b.** The outcomes of the earlier classroom observations (i.e. how the teachers used materials and teaching methods) were essential data for setting up these first two workshops. The data was used to uncover the teachers’ personal theories and knowledge relevant to the new information. The new information was presented in the workshops through demonstrations, experiential examples. Teachers were then supported to reflect on their teaching practice through raising self-awareness (e.g. relating the new information to their own context) and discussions.

- **Workshop 2** – The input of this workshop was the outcomes of the first two workshops (the data collected through observation and reflection after the first two workshops). The main content of this workshop involved ‘relating to practice’: feedback and discussion among the teachers on what they had done to see what extent they were affected by the first two workshops and made changes. It was also hoped that this workshop would inspire the teachers to continue with their positive changes.

### 10.1 Workshop 1a

The main purpose of this workshop was to know what the teachers thought of materials adaptation to contextualize for real-life communication to support students’ communicative competence development and how they implemented it to their teaching. In the first section of the workshop, the ‘uncovering existing knowledge’ of the teachers was done through a discussion about the teachers’ current use of supplementary materials. Then the input was presented to the teachers with my work on materials adaptation (appendix 4 and 10.1.2.1) and the research data I collected from the three companies involved, indicated the kind of English businesses require of the graduates. In the next section of the workshop, the input was processed through the discussion on the teacher’s conception of materials adaptation which was developed and deepened with a number of follow up questions. Findings are presented below.
10.1.1 The teachers’ use of supplementary materials compiled and designed by the department

In terms of the supplementary materials including Pronunciation Practice books and Grammar and Lexis books compiled by the department (1.3.1), the experienced teachers (Khanh, Hanh, Thanh) said they still used them when they had time. They reported how they used these books as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It depends on the lesson, maybe this time or that time, it needs some extra exercises so I pick up and put them in my teaching lesson so that my students have more chances to practice, maybe do group work. For example, I use units of vowels in Pronunciation practice books, I organized it in group work to have students identify the vowels in two columns, write down the vowels or compare the words. As for intonation, I often have students listen to the tape to identify the foreigners raising or lowering their voice which is different with in Vietnamese and my students can learn from that. (Khanh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often correct them with vowels and consonants. I found that students often pronounce incorrectly when they work in groups for preparing conversations and corrected their pronunciation then. If they repeat the mistakes another time, I remind them until they get it right. I think in daily conversation, rhythm is not very necessary, the others are more necessary, if they can speak the word correctly, it is ok. As for the Grammar and Lexis books, I use all sections there (Hanh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often do correction if students have some pronunciation mistakes with vowels or consonants. As for some students who I can see they know how to pronounce English vowels and consonants, I also notice them about intonations, raising or falling. I still take exercises in the two supplementary books for use. I need them to design some more pronunciation exercises for my student’s practice. For example, for irregular verbs that many students don’t know how to pronounce it correctly, I can take some tasks in the books immediately to use. Or else I have to download something from the Internet and it’s time consuming (Thanh).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data above indicates that the teachers concerned supporting students with pronunciation. As they said, they took use of Pronunciation practice books quite often as the extra materials for their teaching pronunciation. Sometimes, they based on these materials to design interesting tasks to assist the lessons they were teaching, e.g. Khanh had her students listen to the tape to identify English native speakers raising or lowering their voice. The other issue emerged from the data was that vowels and consonants were the two sections which these teachers were first focused, rather
than the others: intonation and rhythm. This might be caused by the cognition of the priority of teaching vowels and consonants in pronunciation which was often seen among teachers. The understanding might be affected by the reality of many Vietnamese students find it really hard to pronounce English words (Vo, 2004; 1.3.2).

The two novice teachers (Diem and Minh) showed their lack of confidence in their L2 proficiency to teach with pronunciation, they said they used more with the supplementary Grammar and Lexis books, whereas Pronunciation practice books were used as their teaching references which they used to assist themselves with pronunciation skills.

10.1.2 Providing teachers examples of materials adaptation and data collected from the companies
10.1.2.1 An example of materials adaptation
The example of materials adaptation was a pilot study I did on designing and adapting materials to a lesson plan in terms of English in restaurants (appendix 4). For this lesson plan, I used the real extracts of conversations of Vietnamese workers with English-speaking customers in some restaurants in Portsmouth, U.K for the work. The text-driven approach (Tomlinson, 1998, 2010) which engagement is potential for learners’ cognitive learning process was also applied. The aim was to support adult learners who were at the low level of English to be aware of some aspects of spoken discourse concerning conversational strategies and pronunciation in context (English in restaurants).

In particular, I showed the teachers how language features were derived from authentic materials as above and consciousness-raising activities to help support the development of communicative competence for learners. I also elicited clearly to the teachers why and how I selected and designed these materials in harmony with the principles that can be seen in Tomlinson’s (2003) task categories of his text-driven framework, which included:

- Readiness task: achieves the mental readiness by activating connections to learners’ lives.
- Intake response task: gets learners to think about what is being said or done in the text.
- Input response task: encourages learners to discover about the language used in the text by encouraging them to respond to the text based on their background knowledge and to think deeply about the text.
- Development task: provides opportunities for meaningful language production based on what they have already stood from the text and on connections with their own lives.
With the demonstration, I hoped the teachers could realize that my example of materials adaptation, together with the sequence of tasks adapted from Tomlinson (2003), was useful for CLT practice. This, hopefully, would help the teachers to raise the awareness, reflect on their teaching and then design materials and tasks on the development of communicative competence for learners.

10.1.2.2 Data collected from the companies

A number of data collected from the companies recently collected were shared with the teachers by showing the data according to the concerned themes and having discussions among teachers:

(1) The companies required their employees of English as a lingua franca in business contexts. What the business needs were language strategies (i.e. identification strategies that make successful conversation) rather than language skills. For example, the employees reported about English language required at the workplace correlating with the ideas of the employers: the expressions which they had learnt through the communication for their daily conversations with English at the workplace belonged to communication strategies (i.e., asking for explanations, declarations, making requests) as in 4.2.2.

As for successful conversations with English speakers, the managers emphasized that pronunciation and listening skill were very important. Some simple mistakes in pronunciation, as the managers said, could fail the employees in the conversations or create negative feelings from the other partner that they might think that employee could not the right person for the job, particularly when that employee was shy to ask for declaration (that was common seen among Vietnamese employees).

(2) It was important to consider cultural factors that influence Vietnamese employees using English at the workplace as mentioned in 4.2.1. The two kinds of politeness- hierarchy politeness and solidarity politeness- which can be known as the underlying values of Confucianism in Vietnam (Sullivan, 2000) were discussed by the employers in the interview to cause the indirectness, the hesitation to voice one’s own idea or to ask for declaration or explanation among the employees.

When the researcher’s work on materials adaptation and the data collected from the companies were shown, the teachers became more realistic in discussing whether they had done enough with materials adaptation to provide opportunity for the development of communicative skills for students. The two encounters the teachers emphasized were lack of time and the large-sized classes.
from one group came to ask other members from other groups about the food they wanted to. Students feel interested when they practised English for the real purposes: decorating the menu, making an order and going to their kitchen to bring some food to the other students. However, I have not done it here, I did it with a class of less than 20 students in another school. Here there are 40 students in a class, as you know. It could be time consuming to carry on this activity, I have a lot of more thing to do for my lesson (Hanh)

What concerned the teachers a lot in the workshop was ‘We could do that if we have time, but time is what we do not have’ as they all said this. The teachers appreciated the supplementary materials because they are “useful for our teaching in terms of saving a lot of time as they are kinds of in-hand selected materials for the teachers’ use” (all teachers).

10.1.3 Responding to the follow-up questions on the teachers’ conception of materials adaptation

(1) What do you think about the idea that ‘more business contexts should be created for students in the classroom’?

Though the teachers showed their interest knowing about what kind of English the companies require of their candidates, they had little ideas about creating more business contexts for students. Furthermore, they did not take it as part of their role. They said “We know little about this, but even if we know more about this, we as English teachers who have to follow the syllabus and the principles from the university for our teaching everyday could not change anything”.

I think we should consider the gap between the syllabus and real English, I mean we teach with General English but it give us a big gap to English for Specific Purposes, that’s the reason why students come to the Internet, they don’t know what happens in the future, they just know what happen now (Thanh)

We don’t know much about what the companies requires (all teachers)

Despite admitting that it was necessary to know about English that employers required of their candidates, the teachers showed their uncertainty in attending some English training courses at the participant companies. There were two of the companies who offered English training courses for their employees and were willing to invite the teachers to come to know about English at the workplace. Lack of time was a common reason among the teachers. However, the other reason could be seen when some teachers said:

Who has responsibility for the syllabus should go to know what English is used in the real context, not only the teachers.
This conveyed the message that the teachers would not do it until the department head and the school took it. In other words, the teachers did not consider it as an issue that was directly related to their teaching; or they could do some innovations to create more business contexts for students.

(2) Could it be possible to use authentic materials sometimes?

Similarly, the teachers started the discussion on this issue with their complaints about the difficulties to face when they applied some authentic materials. The difficulties they mentioned were: lack of time for materials adaptation, load of exercises in the textbooks to finish, crowded classes which cause impediments in having pairwork or group work in class, uncomfortable classroom facilities for communicative activities such as fixed tables and chairs.

Despite this, all teachers approved of the benefits of using authentic materials in classroom in responding to the question why they sometimes or often adapt or design materials as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Total of 5 teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It helps me to suit them to the needs of a particular teaching context</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes my teaching easier</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students like it and it motivates me</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More chances to use a variety of activities and tasks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m interested in teaching with some extra materials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.1: The teachers’ responses to the reasons for their materials adaptation

Three of the teachers provided more details of their using the materials they designed in their classes:

Because when I do it, our students are happier, it wakes students up and they listen to me and learn, uh, so it’s good (Hanh); we can base on the textbook to design activities for students and ask them to do exercises in pairs or groups (Khanh) and/or sometimes some groups are invited to the board the activity when it is designed as a competition (Thanh)

However, only one teacher showed her strong belief in the possibility of using authentic materials in class through teachers sharing their own materials to save time and being able to use a number of teaching materials at the same time by the exchange.

I think the best way is you just prepare all for yourself and you show us and I can pick up what I like from Hanh, for example, it depends on my lesson, so I can pick up some I think interesting for my lesson, uh, I think you don’t need to do it like an extra job, we just prepare it for our own and then show the others. (Khanh)

The others did not really favour the idea of designing activities from the course book and share it with other teachers, making it like a library of teaching materials for use among teachers. Reasons for
their uncertainty were indicated in their wish for some support from institutes to enable the design and the use of authentic materials as below.

First, they needed an organizer who was responsible in decision-making, organizing and having the work done co-operatively and fairly among members:

| We need to work together, but we need a group leader and a unity, a co..cooperative work, working together, who do that? I don’t think one of us the teachers could do it, we need a manager. I also think that no one could do it unless there was an organizer to force them and arrange things. (Th... |  |
| We are always in the position that we don’t know when we must change the materials, the textbook, it’s based on the leader, so if I invest money, effort in it and then the textbook is changed. (Khanh) |  |
| And we have to share our work with other people? But the other may not put the same effort as me, I mean fair, it has to be fair, but I see it unfair so I don’t want to do it. So I mean try my best and keep it for my class, that’s all. And as Thanh said, why we have to do it, no one force it. (Hanh) |  |
| A leader would help people to agree with each other, or everyone can work under the umbrella of the department, then things come easier. (Thanh, Hanh) |  |

Second, more time should be allowed and workload should be reduced for teachers

| I can manage some time for materials design, but time to use the materials in classroom is problematic, we have lots of things to do with the course book. (Hanh) |  |
| The workload should be reduced for the time for more communicative activities. (Thanh, Diem) |  |

Third, training in terms of professional skills was desired

| Teaching skills are also my difficulties, e.g. I don’t know how to teach this activity or that activity effectively, or find hard to manage time (Minh). |  |

This outcome was even more supported with the teacher’s responses for the question ‘what kind of support do you think you need to evaluate your teaching materials for adapting/designing materials?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of supports</th>
<th>Total of 5 teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria to evaluate materials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to research books and journals on materials design</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching in several different contexts | 4
What English graduates use at the workplace | 2
Doing research on classroom (e.g. observing teachers and being observed, investigating how learners work with the materials, etc...) | 3

Table 10.2: The teachers’ responses to what kinds of support that it should be for adapting/designing materials

The outcome as shown in the above table indicates that the teachers seldom acknowledge the broader picture for their English teaching. That is, a minority of the teachers cared for the criteria to evaluate materials or what English graduates use at the workplace. This could be explained that the teachers lacked opportunities to know about it. They were likely to be limited in their everyday workload and teaching context. This is also shown in a majority of teachers who said that ‘teaching in several different contexts’ or ‘investigating how learners work with the materials’ could be the supports needed for their materials evaluation and adaption.

(3) In considering cultural factors, e.g. politeness in different cultures, could it be possible to find some examples, maybe on Youtube, or just look at ‘politeness’ or to read about ‘politeness’ in different cultures?

The teachers had little time or almost no time to read about cultures (Minh, Diem). If they had some time to read about this issue, they would read about some cultural theme they like, not for the purpose of teaching. Only one teacher took some time reading about cultures of English speaking countries such as Australia and the U.S (Hanh). Accordingly, the consideration or reading about cultural factors, e.g. politeness in different cultures, which are necessary for their teaching, seemed to be lacking among the teachers.

The teachers cared for the information that the number of people who were non-native speakers using English worldwide outnumbered people who were native speakers and that graduates had to cope with English users from non-native countries more than native speakers. They said “Yes, we have to think about it”, which means the role of teachers to help students to prepare for that future English speaking environment could be recognized by the teachers. This allowed the hope that the teachers also showed their promising attitude towards reading and learning more about cultural factors in ELT.

In summary, all teachers in the study agreed that material adaptation was helpful in terms of contextualizing students’ learning, creating a fun environment and involving students more. As
indicated above, the three experienced teachers showed their enthusiasm applying this in their classes more than the other two teachers. They said they often organize some activities, or sometimes asked students to share their ideas. They used some exercises in teaching materials to create some activities to suit their students. Workshop 2 took workshop 1 further in terms of CLT classroom aspects.

10.2 Workshop 1b

This workshop was a continuation of workshop 1a, run a week after workshop 1b (table 9.1). The goal of this workshop was to support teachers to reflect on the other aspect of CLT: the teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning and language learners. For this purpose, a questionnaire (appendix 5) was used as guide questions to support a deeper discussion. The questions focused primarily on language teaching fields including three sections: (1) Lesson planning and consideration of learners; (2) language teaching and learning; and (3) teachers’ opinion about doing research. The findings are as follows:

10.2.1 Lesson planning and consideration of learners

The first issue of this section relates to how important the teachers think it is for each element that constitutes a ‘good’ lesson to help students develop communicative competence. All teachers ranked the elements (i.e. aim, target structures, aids, teaching material, timing, interaction formats; procedures) listed from ‘important’ to ‘very important’. The three elements ‘aim’, ‘teaching materials’ and ‘timing’ were mentioned ‘very important’ most frequently (4 times for each) while ‘interaction formats’ and ‘procedures’ got one of ‘very important’.

Second, in terms of factors which might be considered when planning a lesson, ‘learners’ needs’ and ‘learners’ level of ability’ were given a priority rating ‘1’ or ‘2’ (most important) by all teachers. The least important factor was rated for ‘learner’s age’. Interestingly, ‘how to make the lesson interesting’ was considered ‘less important’ by more than half of the teachers, and so was ‘the activities should be related to cultural context of learner groups’, though in a bit (more important) higher position of priority than the former, which seemed to show that the teachers showed little clarification of cultural context relating to learning activities when it was first mentioned to them.

Third, as for characteristics making a good language learner, all teachers considered ‘practice as often as possible’ as ‘very important’. The other two characteristics that were also ranked as ‘important’ and ‘very important’ are ‘a willing and accurate guesser’ and ‘be willing to make mistakes’. Significantly, four teachers took ‘analyses his or her own speech and the speech of others’
as ‘important’ while only two teachers gave that priority rating to ‘enjoy grammar exercises’. Some teachers took ‘constantly looks for patterns in the language’ and ‘has good academic skills’ as ‘important’ while some other teachers said ‘unsure’ or ‘unimportant’. ‘Begins learning in childhood’ and ‘has an above-average IQ’ were ranked as ‘unsure’ or ‘unimportant’ by most teachers.

Fourth, in terms of factors which affect learners’ motivation, the teachers who have less teaching experience considered factors such as ‘the content’, ‘learning goals’ as ‘very important’ more, whereas more experienced teachers took ‘activities and task in classroom’, ‘teachers asking questions’, and ‘feedback from teachers or peers’ or ‘teaching-learning environment’ as very important. It can be seen that experienced teachers had a tendency to regard features of communicative language teaching more in their choice.

10.2.2 Language teaching and learning

The first question for this section asks for the teachers’ attitude to teacher-student and student-student interaction in classroom. The teacher’s responses show that the majority of teachers disagreed with the idea that ‘teachers usually stand at the front of class when teaching’ or ‘learners are usually arranged at desks in rows’ (only one teacher agreed). On the contrary, most teachers agreed that classroom was a noisy and busy place where students made mistakes which teacher corrected and that learners competed with each other to give answers to teachers’ questions. Teachers also showed their approval of teachers usually ‘setting out the objectives of the lesson at the start’ and ‘setting questions for learners to answer’ and ‘deciding on how fast leaners should work on learning tasks’. These indicated that the teachers generally preferred a teaching–learning environment that encouraged more interactions with and among learners, though few features relating to teacher-nominated still can be seen (e.g. decide on how fast learners should work on learning tasks).

The second question involves teacher’s opinion on classroom behaviour. There was a conflict in teachers’ opinion on this issue: On the one hand, the teachers said it should be encouraged for behaviours such as ‘learners’ collaboration (pair work or group work)’ on questions or exercises the teachers set; ‘teacher repeats or paraphrase the questions rather than silently wait for student’s answer’; ‘learners suggest how exercises might be done’, ‘teacher’s talk should not more than student’s talk’, or ‘Teachers should not correct learners’ errors as soon as they are made’. On the other hand, they also encouraged the behaviour of ‘teachers always provide model answers to learning exercises’, ‘teachers follow lesson plan’. This conflict is explained by the former idea referring to more communicative teaching and learning (which focuses on the content of what
learners are saying or writing rather than just one language structure. The latter idea, on the contrary, involves a teaching method that could obstacle learners to participate and learn communicatively and spontaneously in some ways (i.e., the focus is on form rather than content). The contradiction strengthened the findings of question 1 in this section in terms of traditional teacher-dominated emphasis. Also in this question, four of the teachers expected learners to stand up when they answer the questions, which could be interpreted as the influence of Confucianism underlying values in which students should show their respect to teachers (Sullivan, 2000). Also, as some teachers discussed later on in the workshop, they thought that it could be the way that could encourage learners to answer the questions they were asked or to focus than just letting them sitting still.

The next questions go into more details of the teachers’ teaching methods, classroom interaction and error correction. The questions include three pairs of examples in terms of the issues discussed to invite teacher’s choice. First, all teachers replied that the teaching method or approach they often use was communicative approach. They drew on similar conceptions of this teaching approach including ‘students are required to be active and work more for their learning process’, ‘student talk time should be more than teacher talk time’, ‘students achieve language patterns through classroom interactions’, ‘teachers should provide more materials or create good chances to encourage students to practice English as much as possible’. The data showed that the teachers acknowledged the method and stated to apply it in their teaching practice.

Accordingly, most teachers chose the example of teaching method (question 4.1 in the questionnaire) which described more communicative language teaching and learning. The procedure of teaching and learning in this example, as the teachers explained for their choice, focused more on ‘students as the centre of the learning process’; ‘students work more, so they can learn more’ or ‘it provides students a good chance to practice English or explore the lesson’. One teacher, however, chose the other example, which was described as PPP method. The reason for her choice was that she thought it would save her time while the other method would take more time to carry out. This teacher’s choice was understandable because it was true that more communicative activities often took more time (Harmer, 2007) and as the teachers stated, lack of time was always problematic to them.

However, in terms of classroom interaction (question 4.2), only one teacher chose the example of teaching model which conveyed more conversational teacher-student interaction to apply to her classroom. ‘It’s a natural way to make a conversation’ was the reason for her choice. The other
example which was form-focused and had no communicative purpose was taken by the other four teachers. The reasons were that ‘it is more encouraging’ and ‘easier for learners to answer’, ‘teacher needs to praise his/her students’ and ‘teacher should teach one point of grammar at one time, e.g. simple present and tag questions separately’. This indicated that more traditional teaching methods still seemed to have the influence among the teachers.

As for error correction, four teachers preferred the example of setting a game to practice the third person form of the simple present. In this example, the teacher made brief intervention to correct the student’s error. Because the intervention was brief and the student was on the game, it did not break down the flow of the student’s speech and that student still can correct the error. This is in the harmony with the teachers’ disapproval response to one of statement describing classroom behaviour in question 2 that ‘Teachers correct learners’ errors as soon as they are made’. They may take the suggestion from Harmer (2007) that error correction should be delayed to encourage students to move on with the interaction. Only one teacher chose the other example about correcting errors right from the beginning when the student was talking about his mother’s routine. The explanation from this teacher was she would like to avoid letting students speak freely because this would allow errors and considered it as a natural way to correct errors.

10.2.3 Doing research

In order to understand teacher’s attitude to research in school, a list of statements (adapted from Borg, 2009) concerning doing research was provided to ask for teachers’ opinion. The teachers all had positive towards doing research when they included themselves in teachers who ‘feel that doing research is an important part of their job’ and ‘read published research’. They also appreciated the opportunities when they were given support from the university to attend ELT conferences through which they had some access to research books and journals. However, they emphasized that such conferences were a few and some of them were not useful. ‘The management encourages teachers to do research’ and ‘Time or doing research is built into teachers’ workloads were also received some agreement from the teachers. In details, however, it was revealed that the encouragement the teachers said they had got from the university was still not enough. They included the information of the conference, the teaching schedule was supported to be arranged for substitutions, but their workload was still the same. Particularly, the teachers showed their doubt about ‘teachers talk about research’ or ‘teachers do research themselves’. This implied that the current support seemed not to be enough for the teachers to carry out some research themselves, though they found it necessary, as they all said ‘teachers investigate the processes in their own classroom should be encouraged’ (question 2, section 2).
In summary, the teachers related new information provided in the workshop (via the survey) in terms of CLT aspects to their existing personal theories and knowledge, then through the discussion, they assessed the new information’s relevance to their own context. This, hopefully, would assist them to reflect on their own teaching practice (Roberts, 1998; Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999; Wyatt, 2008).

10.3 Classroom observations after workshops 1a and 1b
After the first two workshops, there were classroom observations to see what extent the teachers were affected by the first two workshops and reflected on their teaching (i.e. whether any changes in the teachers’ teaching). It consisted of 2-3 observations for each teacher including a video-recording observation. There were also two peer observations done among the teachers. Due to the full schedule of the teachers, these two peer observations could only be done among three experienced teachers.

The data and findings of the observations can be seen in details in chapter 11 below. Here, I just present some examples of changes observed in the teachers’ classroom that I used as the input for the next workshop. One example of this was Diem’s activities for grammar practice. For this activity, Diem did not let students do grammar exercises individually in a traditional way, she had students work in groups. Each group had responsibility for an equal number of questions in the exercise. When one group gave the answers, the other groups listened and gave feedback or corrected errors. It was done continuously from the first to the last groups. For other examples, as for teaching vocabulary, Khanh and Minh in their class after the workshops showed learners a picture of the topic which was taught to ask for learners’ brainstorming and writing down as many as possible the words they know about the topic. The teachers then checked learners’ suggestions and provided more necessary words for the list of vocabulary that should be taught. These examples indicate that there were a number of changes done by the teachers in an effort to apply to their practice what they achieved from the intervention to stimulate learning for learners.

10.4 Workshop 2
Workshop 2 was carried out after the later classroom observations. The aim of the workshop was to discuss how the interventions through the previous workshops could influence the teachers’ awareness and whether the interventions could lead to some reflections from the teachers. Furthermore, it was also to provide the teachers with more information and evidence to strengthen the aims and the contents of the two previous workshops. In other words, it involves the ‘assessment of changes in the light of observation and reflection’ (Roberts, 1998) as the final aim of the
workshops. Accordingly, the process of this workshop included: the teachers watched the videos of their own teaching extracts in their classes recorded with their permission to share among them; then the videos of two native teachers teaching pronunciation in the participant companies’ training sections which I recorded with their permission was also provide to the teachers. The discussion among the teachers, as in the previous workshops, was followed in the second part of the workshop to help process the input of the workshop.

10.4.1 Watching the videos

10.4.1.1 The video of the teachers’ teaching

In terms of the videos of their own teaching, the teachers revealed their reluctance to see their own teaching at first. However, after a short time, the discussion on the power of peer review which they could learn from their peers problem-solving strategies that they could apply for their obstacles in their own classes changed their attitude. It was evident when teachers started giving comments on each other’s teaching.

In particular, the teachers showed their interest in their colleagues who apply a number of activities or games to increase the amount of student’s interactions/work in class (10.3, above). Together with watching the videos, the teachers also recalled their observations of their peers’ classes. Though it could last just half an hour each, these peer observations were highly evaluated by the teachers as useful since the teachers themselves could observe how their colleagues did for the same lessons with them. More importantly, as the teachers said, because “we are working in the same institute with the same contextual factors, the peer observation, in some aspects, could be more practical than a teaching model which often occurs in some other different contexts”.

10.4.1.2 The videos of teaching pronunciation in the company’s training course

The teachers feel impressed with the teaching method that the first teacher in the videos who used different kind of games effectively to teach pronunciation. In this class, all learners were involved in the learning activities that were employed for communication. Two examples of these games are given as follows:

The game ‘Ending sounds’ to serve a review exercise - Learners were divided into two teams to practice ending sounds, one group initiated a word by saying out clearly the word and its ending sound such as ‘book’, the other group listened and gave out the word starting with that ending sound, such as ‘kiss’. Every member in each group took turns to keep the game continue. There was an exciting competition among the two groups in the activity.
The game ‘how can we guess the words?’- Learners worked in two teams, each team had a member to stand in front of class with his/her back against the board so that they could not see the content. The teacher wrote down a word on the board for the other members in each group explained the word without saying that word; it depended on how well each team explained the word that the teammate who was standing on the board could say the word correctly and get scores for the team. All learners were involved in the very exciting and competitive atmosphere of this game.

The teaching and learning process in that teacher’s class, therefore, occurred naturally, meaningfully and fun, as the teachers commented:

| The games are very interesting, the teacher carry out games very interestingly. |
| The games that we see from the video can motivate students, we can see all learners in the class feel fun and involved to learn excitedly. |

As for the other teacher in the videos, the teachers showed little interest because he offered less communicative activities in class (e.g. providing learners handouts for phonetic vowel quiz – which words on the list shown on the picture/symbol, learners worked in individually/pairs and then came to the board to write their answers). Viewing this teacher’s class, the teachers said “There was more teacher domination in this class and the learners showed less enthusiasm to learn”.

10.4.2 Discussion

The follow two main issues were discussed in the second part of the workshop:

(1) *Would they do something the same for your class from what they have seen? Are there any challenges if they do it?*

The teachers said though it was hard for them to teach as the same as the two native teachers did due to large-sized class and the workload, they still adapted some games to fit with their class’ conditions when they had chance. They could also focus more on pronunciation for students. Interestingly, they showed the certainty to apply what they had found interesting and useful in their colleagues’ classes to their own classes.

| I think I will change a little bit to fit with my class if I use these kinds of game, you know, I have to evaluate the games depending on the lessons (Khanh). |
| I can use some games like this but I have to limit the words, for example, just review verbs or nouns, not all of them, because I do not have time (Hanh). |
| I may just use four or five key words for students to review pronunciation each time (Thanh). |
| I have not taught much with pronunciation for my class, but I will do it in the future, because I |
see it is important for students to use when they work at the company. I have recently applied Khanh’s method of teaching vocabulary (Minh).

I have used a similar game. That is for a warm-up to review the vocabulary that students learnt in the previous lessons, but it could take a lot of time (Diem).

The challenges the teachers reported mainly involved time needed to prepare the materials, e.g. for designing games or implementing communicative activities and classroom management skills for a large-sized class.

(2) If there were some things that the teachers think they should change for their class, what would they be?

The following issues were discussed most frequently by the teachers responding to the question:

(1) In term of materials design/adaptation, the teachers said ‘If there were more supplementary materials or language teaching resources available at school, it could save us much time for our materials adaptation’. (2) As for classroom interaction, these issues that they thought they had some difficulties to deal with and would do some things to change were mentioned:

Asking questions/ Giving instructions

“Giving clear instructions is important to carry out games or activities”, as experienced teachers stated. They were more confident in this, presenting in one of three experienced teacher statement “I have experience that when giving instructions, the teacher should talk some short instructions, and then do some actions or use gestures to describe the games/activities for students” (Khanh). The novice teachers, on the other hand, were less confident, saying that “I translate the questions in the textbook into Vietnamese if my students do not understand me” (Diem, Minh).

Student-student interaction in class

The teachers all admitted that teacher-student interaction was often used much more than student-student interaction in their class: “When we don’t have enough time, time for teacher-student interaction was more while time for student-student interaction was often reduced. We often don’t have enough time for them to discuss or practice in pairs or groups then”.

The two novice teachers came to more details ‘There was little student interactions in my class. I could have used more group work in my class because I see that more students involve in the task and speak English then’ (Diem); ‘I wish I know how to manage the class to have students work more in pairs and groups, whenever I tried it, my class was very noisy and hardly under control’ (Minh).
Do student talk/work more or teacher talk more?

The three experienced teachers were more confident saying that they could manage to have students work more or talk more in class. For example, Khanh said “I think I can balance this by letting students practice and do some exercises”, but not always, as Hanh: “I sometimes talk more than students, I also realized that but just because of the limit of the time” and Thanh: “I sometimes find myself talk more than students, especially the final three weeks of the term because I have to hurry to finish many things for my students as the syllabus required before the exam”. The two other teachers said: “I talked more than students, particularly first classes of the term” (Diem), “I did some adjustment by giving students some more activities recently” (Minh)

Wait-time

The teachers allowed little time when they waited for the students answering the questions as they said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have enough time so I cannot wait for long, few seconds...enough (Hanh).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a student I asked took quite long time to answer, I would ask another student (a good student) to answer to save time. If I have some more time, I could wait for longer (Khanh, Thanh).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often give sts some time to think, but sometimes I can’t wait and translate it into Vietnamese or answer the questions (Diem, Minh).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.5 Summary

In summary, the teachers more or less recognized there was more teacher control in their classroom interactions. Fortunately, the idea of doing some changes to increase student’s participation has occurred among the teachers. In practice, it was evident that teachers gave some efforts to put their ideas into practice. Though a few changes occurred, they were significant. This will be explored in the last chapter of this section – findings of classroom observations after the workshops 1a and 1b.
CHAPTER 11: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AFTER THE INTERVENTION (WORKSHOPS 1A AND 1B) – HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE

In this chapter, the data of classroom observations after the first two workshops (workshops 1a and 1b) is presented. The goal of the analysis is to see whether any change happened in the teachers’ practice and to what extent the intervention could influence to bring the changes.

11.1 The changes can be seen

11.1.1 More materials adaptation can be seen

The teachers invested more in their materials design/adaptation. This can be seen in most teachers’ classes after workshops 1a and 1b though it could be more among novice teachers who hardly used any other materials beside the text book before. The first two following examples are observations of the two novice teachers adapting materials teaching the same lesson from the curriculum.

Example 11.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 3 of Diem</th>
<th>Lesson: Love and Marriage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level: Elementary</td>
<td>Students: 35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, she showed two pictures she prepared on the slides, one picture of Jack and Rose (in Titanic film) and one picture of Nick Vujicic and his wife (The amazing 30-year-old Australian Evangelist Nick Vujicic, born without arms and legs, visited Vietnam May 22 – 26, 2013. Though not allowed to preach in public events, he took the country by storm as a motivational speaker). She used these two pictures shown for 10 minute warm-up activity.

T: What do you think about them?
Sts: Very happy
T: Yes, very happy. Do you know about Nick and his wife?
Sts: His wife is... very beautiful.
T: Yes, she is beautiful. Nick is a very special man, he has no arms or legs, but he’s very brave... and he’s got a beautiful wife. Now we are learning about the topic ‘love’.

Then, they did vocabulary exercises from the textbook in 15 minutes where the teachers explained the meaning of essential words.
T: What is a marriage? (Who knows? Raise your hands)
Sts: (silent, thinking- about two seconds)
T: It means a man and a woman live together legally explain students about difference in conceptions of partner between Vietnamese and Western.
T: What is the difference between girlfriend, boyfriend and partner?
Sts: (silent- about two seconds)
T: Ok, partners mean a man and a woman live together for long time, they may get married or not get married. (Teacher stopped to explain students about difference in conceptions of partner between Vietnamese and Western in Vietnamese)
Etc
Example 11.2

Observation 4 of Minh                      Lesson: Love and Marriage
Level: Elementary                            Students: 33

First, she showed a picture of a broom and a bride in wedding and another picture of a man and a woman arguing on the slides. She used these pictures for 5 minute warm-up activity.

T: Look at the picture 1. What is it? (Who knows? Raise your hands)
Sts: uh, wedding...
T: Yes, wedding, do you know any other words about it?
Sts: (silent, some students were shaking their heads)
T: What about the second picture? (Who know? Raise your hands)
A st:...uh, angry..
T: Yes, it means...they are broken up.

Using these pictures, the teacher would like to support her students to brainstorm the vocabulary of ‘wedding’ and ‘divorce’.

Then she asked students to work in groups of 4 in 2 minutes to write down any words they know about the topic of ‘marriage’. After 2 minutes, she invited the groups to go to the board and write. The list of each group includes some words in the topic such as ‘wedding, love, happy, angry’. She checked with students, provided some other words that was not in the list and explained the meaning.

Eg, Teacher added the word ‘divorce’ to student’s list while explaining with students
T: Remember picture 2, two people are angry, it means they are broken up (break up) and they may get divorced.
Divorce là gì ban? (In Vietnamese meaning ’What is ‘divorce’?’)
Sts: (silent in 1 second)
T: Là lì dì (telling the meaning in Vietnamese)

After that, they did vocabulary exercises in the textbook. In exercise A (7 minutes), for example, students were given 3 minutes to work in pairs, discuss the question - What’s the difference between girlfriend, wife and partner?
T: Now boys, tell me the answer: what’s the difference?
Sts: (silent, some say something incorrectly)
About two seconds later, teacher provided the answers.

Despite being little different in implementation, the two novice teachers both used the designed materials for the readiness activity in order to achieve their learner’s engagement. They used the materials mainly in some aspects for a readiness activity in which they asked students to think about the pictures (their designed materials). As Tomlinson (2003) discusses, the learners can be supported to facilitate their personal engagement by arousing attention and by generating visual images (pictures). The learners in these classes then showed their attention to start the lessons when they reflected on their own experience about the pictures to say ‘very happy’, ‘wedding’ or ‘arguing’. Achieving learners’ engagement was one of the issues which the teachers showed least confidence.
Therefore, they did some materials adaption, usually in their warm-up activities, hoping to get students’ involvement, as they shared in the discussion with the researcher after classes.

| I can see more students getting involved in the lesson when I start my lesson with some authentic materials to class (Minh) |
| My students were more engaged when I showed them some pictures of real-world life (e.g. someone or something they know) to let them talk about the topic to be taught right at the beginning (Diem) |

The experienced teachers, on the other hand, showed more confidence in adapting materials by having these in some different orders in the sequence of tasks. They used the designed materials in some other activities such as practice or development tasks.

Example 11.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 4 of Hanh</th>
<th>Topic: common diseases</th>
<th>Level: Elementary</th>
<th>Students: 39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The teacher started the lesson with a 5 minute warm-up in which she asked some students about their experience in a time having a headache and the treatment. Then she introduced to the lesson “now we are learning some common diseases”.

Then students were asked to look at the textbook, match the pictures of diseases or health problems to the pictures that may tell the causes. For example, ‘hay fever’ goes with ‘flowers’, ‘a headache’ goes with ‘some aspirins’. This was done and checked with the whole class. Teacher the read out some words that have difficult pronunciation. Some students were invited to repeat the words. Teacher corrected some students who pronounced incorrectly by having these students repeat the words.

Next, using the pictures of illnesses the teacher prepared herself, she asked students to do some vocabulary review before coming back with the vocabulary exercises in the textbook. The pictures which described some common diseases such as headache, flu, stomachache, etc. were showed on the slides. Students were asked to work in groups of 5-6 to discuss and write down the name of diseases they see in the pictures. After 2 minutes, 3 groups who finished first were invited to go to the board and write. Students were excited to work in groups and to complete the task.

After that, students were asked to do vocabulary exercises in the text book. In one of these exercises, for example, the teacher gave students an example of how the exercise ‘fill in the blank with the correct word’ was done, “For example, number 1, do you have any aspirin, I’ve got a headache”. Individuals were taken turned to be invited to do questions in the exercise.

Compared with the other activities, the activity used with the designed materials (e.g. the pictures) involved learners more. Students were excited discussing together and making the lists of diseases they saw on the picture. Hanh used her designed materials to make students feel excited, as she said later : “I sometimes make something new to help my students feel fun to do exercises in the
textbook by bringing them some other materials (e.g. pictures) to do some other tasks which support
the textbook exercises”.

Example 11.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 5 of Thanh</th>
<th>Topic: Getting there</th>
<th>Level: Elementary</th>
<th>Students: 38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5. Speaking practice (15 minutes) - Giving directions</td>
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</table>

Teacher draws on the board the map which she adapts from the textbook so that students do not know in advance where they are at the moment and where they have to go to. Students were asked to work in pairs in 1 minute to look at the map to prepare. Pairs were invited to the board. One student of the pair stood at the board, the teacher told where he was on the map and where he had to go to. That student asked his partner for direction, listened to his partner to give him the instruction and drew the arrow on the map to the destination. If the partner could not finish the task, the teacher will ask some other students to help.

T: …Now, Tung (volunteered to go to the board), you are here (marks at one point on the map), St1 (Tung): Excuse me, do you know the way to the museum?
St2: Hmm, can you pass the Queen road, go straight to the Winter Road
St1: (listens to student 2 and starts to draw the arrow)
St2: …um and…and…uh…
T: OK, who can continue to tell him the way?
St3: You pass Winter road, you will see a T-junction, now you can see the museum on your left
St1: (Finishes drawing the arrow to the destination)

In this activity, Thanh adapted the materials for the development task, in which the learners were provided opportunities to produce meaningful language by using the map to ask and reply about direction while they did not know the places in advance. In this way, the task was created as an information gap activity. Students felt interested to participate and there was also more interaction among students in doing this task. Thanh was the one who went farther than the other teachers in material adaptation though the activity could still more like real communication: one student has the map which does not have the museum shown on it, while the other student has different map with the museum written on the correct building – but which the first student can not see. In order for the first student to locate the museum on the map, the two students have to ask and answer to fill the gap between the knowledge which the two participants have (Harmer, 2007, p.70). However, in the class of 38 students as this class, it was hard to ensure that students did not look at each other’s maps. Moreover, a map drawn on the board and students being invited to go in front of class to do the task could draw the other students’ attention than those pairs invited to do the task at their seats.
11.1.2 Student-student interaction was little more focused by experienced teachers

Compared with their earlier classrooms observed and with novice teachers (examples 11.1-2) where teacher-student interaction was found more, the experienced teachers allowed more interaction among students. Accordingly, the students had some opportunities to practice English in free conversations (meaningful situations). This is illustrated in example 8.3, example 8.4 above and the other example as below:

Example 11.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 4 of Khanh</th>
<th>Topic: Relax</th>
<th>Students: 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| After giving instructions for the structure of ‘go’ ‘play’ and ‘do’ and a certain kind of sports and a model dialogue in sport a person often play in free time, the teacher gave students 5 minutes to prepare for a role-play (a kind of sport in free time). The teacher walked around the class and sometimes answered students’ questions. Then, five pairs performed in front of the class. When students played roles, one was asked to stand in front of class, the other at the back of class to make students speak as loud as possible. While four pairs mainly followed the model dialogue, the last group did not. They were interesting and made class laugh. The teacher made comment ‘well-done’.

The performance of the last pair:
St1: What do you often do at weekend?
St2: I go swimming. What about you?
St1: I often play football.
St2: Do you want to go swimming with me this weekend?
St1: Yes, but I don’t have… swimming suit. Can I borrow from you or from the...pool?
St2: Uh, yes.., uh, you can borrow from the pool.

(The whole class laughed and paid attention)

In contrast to the traditional practice where teacher ask and student answer following a model, more student-student interactions allowed more opportunity to language use for real purposes. As we can see in the above example, the two students made their conversation naturally and fun in the way that they talked about unexpected thing “Yes, but I don’t have swimming suit” whereas we often expect an agreement such as ‘Yes, I’d love to. Thank you’ in classroom practice. This interested the whole class (they all laughed and engaged in the learning process) because these students did not follow the model dialogue. Such spontaneity was rarely seen in the other lessons observed.

11.1.3 Communicative activities were more employed by one novice teacher to teach grammar

Classroom observations of Diem after the workshops, compared with her own classes observed before, showed that she applied a variety of communicative activities in her class to teach with grammar. Her efforts could be explained that she was aware of the importance of getting her students’ attention, which she indicated as “I think it’s important to make students feel interested to
learn grammar, so I tried with different activities to engage students. And thanks to our discussions after each class observation, I have feedback on how I am doing it”.

Example 11.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 4 of Diem</th>
<th>Review Unit</th>
<th>Student: 32</th>
<th>Level: Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Choosing the correct words ‘much/many, a few/a bit’ to fill in the blanks. Students were asked to work in groups of 6 to do the exercise in 2 minutes. The questions in the exercise were divided equally for each group (e.g. group 1: questions 1-3; group 2: questions 4-6, etc.). The teacher then asked groups to read out the answers (group members took turns to read). When one group giving answers, the teachers asked another group “Group 2, tell me what you think about the answer?” and would ask that group for the correctness if there was any incorrect answers. All students were expected to stand up doing responses.

2. Filling the blank with one correct word.
There were short dialogues in the exercise so the teacher asked students to work in pairs in 3 minutes, discuss the right words to fill in the blanks and make the dialogue together. Then pairs were invited to role play in front of class.
St1: I have a headache
St2: Maybe you should lie down

3. Completing the words in the text (e.g. I’m trying to keep my we____ under control).
Students were asked to work in 5 groups in 2 minutes to discuss and finish the exercise. After 2 minutes, all groups were invited to the board to write the answers. In order to make it competitive among groups, the teacher drew on the board a table in which the vertical was for 8 words that need to find out and the horizontal was the name of the groups. This table was a good way to see which group that had the most correct answers to be the winner. Students did the exercise excitingly. The teacher then gave feedback and praised the win group.

Different from traditional methods (e.g. the whole class do the exercise and give answers individually) that could usually be used for doing these exercises, pair work and group work were explored for above grammar exercises. The students enjoyed doing grammar exercises that they had some communication with their peers or joined in some activities. These activities were communicative in the ways that learners were given some reasons (e.g. have comments on other classmates’ answers, discuss to choose the best answers in groups) to communicate while doing grammar exercises.

11.2 The aspects that can be seen with not much change

11.2.1 The use of tasks
The use of authentic materials, as researchers (e.g. Nunan, 1988; Richards and Rogers, 2011) state, involves tasks because task is considered as a pedagogical model to achieve communicative purposes. Unfortunately, authentic tasks going along with the materials the teacher designed were
lacked in many classes. In particular, few teachers made a sequence of tasks for supporting learner’s communicative competence. The designed materials seemed not to be fully explored to go further than one or two tasks in the sequence of tasks suggested by Tomlinson’s (2003) text driven framework to develop communicative competence. As we can see from the examples, Diem used the pictures only for the introduction to the lesson. Minh made use of the pictures more when she had her students to work in groups to write down the words they know about the topic shown in the pictures (example 11.2). However, she was not able to retain to use the pictures in this useful way when she started to translate the words into Vietnamese or provide the answers soon.

Together with examples of Diem, Hanh in example 11.3 also made use of designed materials in only one activity. The materials seemed to be better used if they were introduced earlier for the lesson. Furthermore, the materials could still be further used to link to the next activity (i.e. word families for telling about diseases or illnesses) by asking students to describing the pictures to tell what problem with each people in each picture and what causes they think it could be.

To summarise, the teachers often had a good start by contextualizing pictures which mime the actions. This supports Harmer’s (2007) view that the best way of introducing new words that it would be best to let students to see or hear those words in action. Questions related to students’ real-life experience were also often used with the pictures shown. Like in classrooms observed before the workshops, the teachers often asked questions to involve student in warm-up activities. However, few of the teachers were able to make full use of the pictures in a sequence of tasks for students to practice and produce the words to be learnt. It was likely that the teachers had a tendency to go back to traditional teaching methods quickly. For example, they returned to the grammar-translation method in teaching vocabulary - often translated the vocabulary to be taught into Vietnamese (example 11.2), or the IRF patterns for classroom practice (the vocabulary exercise in example 11.3). This was not able to support a top-down process, which cares for the affect to language learning by the brain’s potential being activated (Mishan, 2005).

11.2.2 Questioning techniques
11.2.2.1 Little effective use of questioning skills
Teachers’ effective use of questioning, as many researchers (e.g Stubbs & Delamont, 1976; Dickson and Hargie, 2006) discuss, promotes student learning and classroom interactions. However, the use of questioning for supporting learners’ development of thinking skills in the learning process, as it was in classrooms observed before the workshops, was little seen in these classes.
First, the teachers in some cases started the lessons asking questions related to students such as questions for their personal idea about the phenomenon in the field of practice or about the information known by them, which could achieve learners’ mental readiness by activating connections to learners’ lives, one of useful skills of questioning proposed by researchers (Morgan & Saxton, 1991, 2006; Nunan, 1989). However, the use of further questions to get students more involved in critical analysis of their own and other students’ answers was absent. For instance,

In example 11.1 and 11.2, the activities after the warm-up could be developed more and communicatively if questioning technique was effectively used. In the activities, students were asked to work in groups to write down the words about the picture which could give learners little support for brain-storming, or the meaning of ‘marriage’, ‘the difference between girlfriend, boyfriend and partner’. It could be more helpful if the teachers instructed with some questions such as “Do you have a boyfriend/ girlfriend?/ Do you have any sister or brother who has been married?/ Do you and your girlfriend (if you have one) always feel happy together? In what way?”. These questions that draw upon learner’s experience and knowledge could encourage learners to respond to the current activity and think more deeply for the next task based on their background knowledge and culture.

Similarly, Hanh in example 11.3 could ask her students such questions as “Can you describe people in the pictures?”, “What do you think s/he (with a certain disease)? feels/suffers?”, “What are the possible causes do you think?”, “What might happen if a person has (a certain disease)?”. These questions that test learner’s comprehension, require solving and/or encourage analysis could help students more involved in critical thinking and ready to move on to the next activity: filling the gaps with words describing some diseases.

Second, few referential questions that focus on meaningful communication in the language classroom were used. The interactions as the follow examples were common.

Example 11.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 3 of Minh</th>
<th>Topic: Technology</th>
<th>St: 35</th>
<th>Level: Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary (10 minutes)</td>
<td>T: Open your book, please. They are some pictures and some words about machines and technology. Look at the pictures and decide which word belongs to each picture. You work in pairs to do it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Number 1, what is it? You, please.</td>
<td>St1: (stood up and was silent 2 seconds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: Do you know which?...You, please (points at the other student)</td>
<td>St2: Digital camera</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As we can see in the above examples, questions used were mainly display questions which require the information that the teacher already knew. For example, the teachers knew the answers “digital camera” or “opposite” in the examples above. Therefore, they could leave no room for students to answer in any unpredicted way to the teacher’s elicitation or to express some different ideas. Display questions call for factual recall or recognition (Brock, 1986), so opportunities for students to influence the contents of classroom interaction were reduced. These questions are proved to use the most by teachers in IRF classroom interaction where the student’s responses are often under the teacher’s control (Van Lier, 1996). It is evident in the data that there were few questions asking for valuation, judgement or developing conversational skills (e.g. negotiating, self-determination) such as “How do you know it is a digital camera?”, “Is this laptop the same as yours?”, “When we say ‘A’ is opposite ‘B’, what does it mean, can you draw to describe it?”.

The next example is one of few classroom interactions where the teacher allowed more referential questions:

Example 11.8

The conversation above occurred naturally, like a real life conversation, because it allowed a negotiation between the speaker and the hearer making the meaning of an utterance (Ma, 2008;
Long & Sato, 1983). The teacher did not know in advance the students’ responses for the questions such as “What do you do there?”, “Why do you think it’s good for you?”.

In some other cases, unfortunately, referential questions were discouraged by the teachers themselves when they were initiated and in a good process. To take example 11.1 and 11.3 above as examples, when the teachers said “Now we learn about …” suddenly while the interaction could be developed, they were not able to make use of probing (the use of follow-up or leading questions to help students to provide a more complete answer (Dickson and Hargie, 2004, 2006). They also closed up students’ answers – the best possible opportunities for students to learn. It is not hard, however, to understand the reason: the teachers had a tendency to get back to traditional teaching methods where IRF classroom interaction is often dominated (Van Lier, 1996). In this classroom interaction, it is not the referential question but the display question that teachers refer to use so that the student’s responses are often under the teacher’s control (Mercer, 1998 cited in Dickson & Hargie, 2006). Furthermore, lack of time and teachers being under pressure of workload to do should also be considered to explain why the teachers used more display questions.

11.2.2.2 Giving feedback

As the above examples (examples 11.1, 11.2, 11.7) illustrate, the teachers often allowed little time for students to think. This was just the same with the way it happened in classroom observed before the workshops. The average wait-time was about 2-3 seconds while students might need some more time to think. The teachers then provided the answers soon or ask the other student to answer. Giving feedback immediately could demotivate students or remove student’s need to negotiate meaning (Lynch, 1997).

The follow example shows the other aspect of giving feedback that could also de-motivate students.

In this example, the teacher reacted to the mistake quite directly and immediately.

Example 11.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 4 of Khanh</th>
<th>Topic: Relax</th>
<th>Sts: 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Students were asked to work in groups of 4 to find out the answers ‘go’, ‘play’ or ‘do’ with some certain kind of sports. The teacher then invited students to say sentences using the expressions.

T: Who can do no. 1? You, please.
St: uh..., I often go basketball
T: No, you can’t say ‘go basketball’, we use go with V-ing, for example: go skating, go scuba-diving, go kayaking.

The focus in feedback during such fluency work was mainly on how well learners perform, not just to the language form Harmer (2007). In this case, gentle correction is suggested. For example, instead
of saying ‘No, you can’t say go basketball’, the teacher could use echoing (e.g. You GO basketball emphasizing ‘go’ that was wrong) or reformulation (e.g. You say you PLAY basketball, don’t you?). The gentle correction may not only help students to realize their mistakes to correct but also keep the flow of their speech.

Additionally, students’ reluctance in classroom interaction or taking long time to answer questions could be caused by some reasons that the teachers should consider. The students preferred telling the answers in Vietnamese, for example, indicated that pronunciation might be a problem for them to speak English. This could lead to their lack of confidence in speaking English. Students need support for learning pronunciation (Kenworthy, 2007). It is then necessary to see how pronunciation was taught in class.

11.2.3 Teaching pronunciation

Though there was a little more time teaching and learning with pronunciation which could be seen among classes, there was no activity (e.g. games or puzzles) that was able to apply for it as it was observed before the workshop. There was almost no use of the supplementary pronunciation practice book seen in the classes observed as well. The common example in terms of pronunciation teaching could be seen as follows:

Example 11.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 5 of Hanh</th>
<th>Listening: Health problems</th>
<th>Students: 37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to prepare for a listening task, the teacher reviewed vocabulary of diseases for students. First, the teacher asked students to list the diseases they learnt in previous lesson. Then, she read out the words that the students felt difficult to pronounce often made mistakes (e.g. hiccup, a sore throat, a nosebleed, asthma, etc). After that, the whole class was asked to repeat these words several times.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 4 of Khanh</th>
<th>Topic: Relax</th>
<th>Students: 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher asked students to look at the text book for the vocabulary that would be learnt in the lesson. First, she explained some difficult words such as ‘activities, equipments’ for the meaning. Then she had students work on pronunciation. She wrote phonemic symbols next to some difficult new words, read the words and invited students to repeat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sts (the whole class): ‘basketball’, ‘bat’ |
| T: (call individuals) You, please. Read it for me. |
| St1: (stand up) “basketball” |
| St2: (stand up) “bat” |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 3 of Minh</th>
<th>Topic: Technology</th>
<th>St: 35</th>
<th>Level: Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After introduced the structure of ‘be thinking of + V-ing’, the teacher provided students some words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for students to say a sentence with the structure learnt
T: First, ‘hair dryer’, how do you say?
St1: I’m thinking of…uh…buying…,
T: a..
St1: hair…dry…(the students said ‘dryer’ as /drɪə/)  
T: hair dryer (correct pronunciation: / heə ‘draɪə/)
St1: (repeats) hair dryer /heə draɪə/  

Observation 5 of Thanh  Topic: Getting there  Students: 35  Level: Elementary
In a listening task for asking the direction, students were asked to listen to the tape and choose the best answer from the list according to the text they hear. The teacher corrected the pronunciation of single words for students. However, the final rising tone on yes-no question was neglected.

T: (Hoang), can you tell me what the question for it? Hoang, please.
St: Uh…, do you know where the museum is? (He pronounced the first vowel of museum as /u/ and low pitch at the end for this yes-no question)
T: The museum /mjuːˈziːm/ (correct pronunciation)
St: (repeated) the museum /mjuːˈziːm/
T: Alright. Now we listen to the second conversation and you tell me the answer. (etc.)

Observation 5 of Hanh  Topic: Illness and diseases  Students: 37
Teacher invited a student to retell the instruction to cure a problem. She then made an intervention to correct the student’s pronunciation.
St: Take some water in your mouth, put your fingers in your /eə/ (he mispronounced the word “ear” /eə/ as /eə/).
T: You put your fingers in the /eə/? /eə/ like… airplane or in the air?
St: No, in the… (touch his ears)
T: Yes, what is it? (point at her ears)
St: ear /eə/ (with correct pronunciation)
T: Yes, put your fingers in ears and…
St1: and… bend down,

As we can see from the examples above, the usual pronunciation work that the teachers did for students was saying the words that the students met problem with and having students repeat the words. Few teachers (e.g Khanh, Thanh) used phonemic symbols to help learners to be aware of the different phonemes, e.g. to illustrate how to pronounce ‘a’ in ‘bat’ and ‘basketball’. Using phonemic symbols, as Harmer (2007) discusses, could be useful and easier to explain mistakes and why it has happened. Gentle error-correction techniques were sometimes applied by the teachers for pronunciation such as echoing (e.g. You put your fingers in the /eə/? – emphasizing the pronunciation that need to be revised). Apart from these, almost no chance was provided to demonstrate how the sounds are made and how they can be spelt, for example, how the vowel ‘a’ in bat and ‘basketball’ different with the ‘a’ in Vietnamese. This is a main concern with English since one-to-one correspondence between sound and spelling is far less in English than in Vietnamese. In
particular, the teachers did not remind students, e.g., ‘dryer’ is in the list of words spelt with ‘y’ or ‘i’ (e.g. why, island) have the sound /ai/.

When students listened to a recording, the things which the teachers can do to draw students’ attention to pronunciation features on the recording (Kenworthy, 2007) were little seen. In the classes observed, we can see the teachers sometimes had students work on sounds that were special prominent. However, some other useful pronunciation work with listening such as getting students to imitate intonation patterns for questions was absent.

It is useful here to get back to the previous analysis in terms of questioning techniques, when the teachers asked questions, students showed their reluctance to speak many times. Students’ lack of confidence in pronunciation could be responsible for this. The teachers who did not pay enough consideration for this often gave students little time to think, gave the answers soon or asked others students for the answers. These kinds of feedback could make students even less confident to join in classroom interactions.

11.2.4 Pair work and group work

Pair work and group work in classes observed were often used for speaking activities. For example, students were given five minutes to prepare for a role-play in pairs (e.g. one student was a patient telling his/her health problem, one student was a doctor giving advice) or for a discussion in groups of 5-6 (e.g. discuss ‘Do you like football?’ to prepare for a listening task). Then some pairs or a representative of each group performed in front of the class. These could help to increase the amount of students’ speaking time or to make the class become a relaxing and friendly environment for learning (Harmer, 2007). The other advantages of group work such as a great chance of different opinions or promote learner autonomy were hard to achieve. The reasons involved large - sized classes and the values underlying Confusianism that Vietnamese students working in a group to share an agreement rather than telling their own idea (Sullivan, 2000).

However, interestingly, group work was used by most teachers to solve the problem of big-sized classes. While the teachers based on IRF patterns for their teaching, they incorporated group work to get more students in a large class involved. The following examples indicated that group work was used in this sense.
Example 11.11

Observation 3 of Minh  Topic: Technology  St: 35  Level: Elementary

First, the teacher introduced and wrote the sentence ‘be + thinking of + V-ing’ on the board. She then gave some examples to illustrate the structure. After that, she provided students some words to ask them to make sentences (e.g. Teacher: ‘a dishwasher’ – A student: ‘I’m thinking of buying a washing machine’. She made comments on students’ performance ‘Yes, good’.

Then students were asked to work in groups of 5-6 in 3 minutes, each group will write 3 sentences using the provided structure. Each member in group was asked to write 1-2 sentences and then compared with the other’s to choose the best 3 sentences for the group. Teacher went around and sometimes answered student’s questions. The teacher then asked one student from each group to go to the board and write. The teacher corrected errors with students’ writing on the board.

Observation 4 of Hanh  Topic: Listening: Health problems  St: 38  Level: Elementary

She wrote the three questions (e.g. Where is the conversation?; What problem does s/he have?; What did s/he do to cure the problem?) on the board for students to prepare. Then she had students work in groups of 5-6 to listen to 3 conversations in the tape and answer the questions. Every member in each group was expected to work for the answers. Students listened to the tape three times. They then had two minutes to discuss and select the best answers for the group. The groups who could provide the most correct answers for each conversation would get some award marks. Students felt competitive and more involved in the lesson.

Group work here as we can see could be useful to get the attention of more students than letting students work individually. If the tasks were done in person, some students might not write the sentences or listen to the tape to find down the answers. The teachers themselves could not make sure that every student in a class of 35-40 was working.

Pair work or group work, in few other cases, were deployed to use with some physically related activities (such as games). The teacher who offered these had about 5 years teaching English in a secondary school.

Example 11.12

Observation 5 of Khanh  Topic: Mind and body  Level: Elementary  Students: 35

First, the teacher showed the picture of parts of the body on the board, which she hid all the words going together with the picture so that learners could not see them. Then the teacher asked students to work in pairs in two minutes to prepare. After that, some pairs were invited to perform in front of class. One student called out a word of a part of body at a time while the other student pointed at the picture on the board or at his/her own part of the body (Eg. Student 1: head, Student 2: (pointed at her head or that of the picture shown).

In an activity after that, students were asked to work in groups of 5-6 in 5 minutes to discuss
advice for some common diseases listed on the board (e.g. headache, stomach-ache, flu, hay fever). First, the teacher then used an empty chalk box to throw at one group to start, she said “I have a headache”, one of students in the group gave advice “You should take some aspirin”. That group then continued the task by saying one of their health problems and throwing the empty box at another group to ask for advice.

Though they could be criticized as not very suitable for adult learners, particularly the first game, the above activities drew student’s attention in some aspects. For example, learners focused to listening to words the teacher or their peers’ speaking to do the action-pointing at the part of body accordingly. It could also help to direct attention to all students so that all have a chance to respond. Students (or groups) who the box was thrown at would give advice for a health problem.

11.3 Summary
In summary, though it could be impractical to expect much improvement for teaching practice due to the limitation of the two workshops, a few considerable changes made by the teachers still can be seen. The changes were primarily in terms of materials adaptation and on more classroom interactions. It is considered that the teachers were influenced by what they perceived from the workshops and the discussions with the researcher and their peer colleagues to do the innovations as illustrated above in their classes. This was evident when the teachers did some innovations in their later classroom teachings that they had not done before. The teachers also showed their positive attitude towards the changes which was indicated in their willingness to innovate and ask for the evaluation on their work in the discussion after class. They also show their pleasure delight to be able to engage more students by making some changes.
SECTION 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final section of the thesis includes two chapters which deal with the discussion of the findings and the implications of the research.

CHAPTER 12: DISCUSSION

The study was designed to answer a number of research questions concerning how material design and teacher education can support the development of communicative competence in the Vietnamese workplace. Qualitative data were gathered in an attempt to answer those questions. The findings were reported in previous chapters. In order to understand the discussion that followed in this chapter, the brief review of the findings would be useful. First, relating to one stage of the study to investigate into what English graduates’ needs at the workplace, the results reveal that meaningful conversations and the balance between transactional and relational talk that required graduates at the workplace are often absent in language classroom and teaching materials (chapter 4). Second, in the other stage of the research, the other two main tasks of study were carried out: observing at the university to see how needs were being met and intervening in a minor way to influence teachers and their English teaching practice. Findings appear to suggest that English training at the university was not an environment necessarily conducive to supplying the workplace with suitably communicatively competent graduates due to various problems concerning teachers’ teaching that could not stimulate communication identified (chapter 7). However, other results showed some positive changes made by the teachers in terms of materials adaptation and classroom interactions. This concerns the other significant finding that the teachers were influenced by what they perceived from the intervention done for the study (e.g. the workshops) making these changes (chapter 9).

In this chapter the answers to the study’s research questions are presented through discussion of the results (summarized above) relevant to each question. I restate my two research questions as follows:

1. To what extent does English education at university fulfill the workplace requirements for Vietnamese graduates?
2. To what extent is action research able to improve English education at a university in some way?

12.1 To what extent does English education at university fulfill the workplace requirements for Vietnamese graduates

The first research question includes two sub-questions:
- To what extent do graduates seem able to communicate in English to fulfill their work-related tasks?
- To what extent does English education at university provide the support they need?

**12.1.1 To what extent do graduates seem able to communicate in English to fulfill their work-related tasks?** I now address the first research sub-question above. My discussion for this question relates to the investigation into (1) what (model of) English do employers require of Vietnamese employees in the workplace; and (2) graduates were unlikely to be able to communicate in English to fulfill the requirement.

**12.1.1.1 English required of Vietnamese employees at the workplace**

The results of this study show that there are a number of elements that constitute the model of English that the employers would like their employees to possess to be successful at their workplace. They include the effective use of types of interactions in the workplace such as meeting and email and the intelligibility in English pronunciation. This study confirms that these elements are associated with not only transactional aspects (i.e. directives and politeness strategies) but also relational aspects for relationship building at the workplace (Koester, 2010; Handford, 2010). Cultural factors were found to influence the employers’ use of English in their everyday interactions with their colleagues or subordinates.

(1) The effective use of both transactional and relational aspects at the workplace

The most important finding was that relational interactions were as much important as transactional interactions in their roles at the workplace. For example, participants tell about their daily life stories, use sense of humour or off-task small talk in interactions. It highlights the reality of relational interactions (including sense of humor) being as important as transactional talk in the workplace. That important role can be seen as the one through which colleagues build up and maintain relationships that are necessary in business. This finding supports the idea of relational talks being used in workplace contexts to perform a variety of types of face work by researchers (e.g. Holmes, 2000; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003, Koester, 2006). In this study, relational language was found in both the two common types of workplace interactions: email and meetings. The interactions became more relational when they occurred in small groups or groups of all Vietnamese working together for quite a long time. This can be explained as being due to the close relationship among colleagues – a relationship which stimulates more relational talk.
Relational talk in the study occurred in on-line texting, email and meetings. It was common that the interlocutors have some relational talks before focusing on the task. In some examples, the interaction switched from relational talk to transactional talk and then back to relational language. It is evident that these relational talks also functioned to have work done. This finding is consistent with that of Koester (2010) who indicated that both transactional talk and relational talk are important and can be analysed as ‘identity work’. It also further support the idea in the literature of the consideration for both transactional and relational talk as being able to have work done could be a more rewarding attempt than trying to distinguish the two kinds of talk. One interesting thing emerged from the finding is that small-talk put the employees at ease in a comfortable atmosphere for discussion for work, whilst purely transactional one could make them feel uncomfortable to deal with.

Communicative strategies as discussed in 5.1 were required either in transactional or relational interactions. These strategies include asking requests, asking for explanations, expressing the negotiation and using functional expressions. Among them, directives and requests were seen to occur frequently. Politeness is considered as a major factor that influences the choice of giving directives and requests of the employees in the current study, which supports the idea of Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Harries (2003). “Could” for politeness was often used by Vietnamese employees; they also often avoided stronger modals such as ‘have to’, ‘should’ which may carry face threat in procedural or requesting discourse. This finding is in agreement with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) and Schnurr’s (2013) findings which showed that conversation participants often deployed such politeness strategies in order to reduce threatening the addressee’s negative face.

The findings of the use of politeness strategies in workplace interactions confirms the ideas of Schurr (2013), who suggests that professional communication is influenced by the concept of gender in a variety of different ways. In this study, it is evident that female employees tend to show politeness (i.e. the use of ‘Could you please’, ‘Could you’, etc.) more in interactions, with either Vietnamese or foreign colleagues rather than male employees. There was an example of a female who was ‘direct’ in the study. However, it is likely that her directness was due to her follow-up interaction with a member in her own small team. In other words, the directness might be modified by preceding discussions such as reasons or explanations (Schnurr, 2013). Male employees, on the other hand, have a tendency to be direct when they are among Vietnamese co-workers. In terms of leadership, either male or female leaders often
skillfully combine transactional and relational objectives. However, the use of politeness markers and avoiding face-threatening to addressees can be seen more in messages or email sent by females than by males.

It is perhaps not surprising to find that males rather than females deployed the use of humor because it corroborates the findings of a number of the previous studies in this field. The study did not detect any evidence for females using humour, though it might result from the reality of more male than female in the current study. Contestive humour (Holmes & Marra, 2002; Holmes, 2006) was found, which are consistent with other research (e.g. Coates, 1996) which found that men often use contestive humour which is challenging and non-collaborative. It is interesting, however, that the function of humour as ‘collaborative’ still could be found in such contestive humour, which might be different in other contexts. There was a solidarity established among members of the group later on. This might be explained by the influence of the solidarity included in the underlying values of Confucianism in Vietnam.

Another important finding was that the cultural factors are influential in many aspects of their workplace discourses which may cause a conflict in communication with foreign colleagues. The underlying values of Confucianism including hierarchy politeness and solidarity politeness (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) were found to cause the indirectness, the hesitation to voice one’s own ideas to ask for declaration or explanation. When interacting with a senior person, Vietnamese employees always show respects to managers (e.g. the use of ‘sir’). They do not initiate their ideas on the issue and do want to make the addressees feel good (e.g. back-channeling (yeah, yes) before expressing the disapprovals).

When the employees work in teams, the employees often show the solidarity spirit where participants express their closeness together. It is explained for the use of “I will”, “we” and “I think” as a way to express the sympathy on hearing the other and the harmony in group; ‘we’ or “we will” to convey the meaning of the willingness to support and encourage the member to overcome difficulties. This finding supports the idea of Nguyen Chi (2012) that individualism is less preferred and group spirit is generally considered as being a central aspect of societal relations. Additionally, the use of the pronoun ‘we’ and you’ as second person in emails sent by leaders, and among employees in many cases, carries less face threat and makes messages be read as suggestions or advice which benefits the receivers as much as
the senders. This includes a ‘solidarity’ communication strategy which Koester (2010) describes as effort to make the process of instruction-giving more interactive and interpersonal.

Equally important, the finding shows that the foreign colleagues were different with Vietnamese in their workplace discourse use. They were more direct. It indicates that foreign colleagues tended to use “Can you” and “Can I” and “Let me” as directives or requests more. They were also quite straight - bald imperatives were also more frequently employed by them than the Vietnamese employees for the procedural discourse. Politeness strategies were also more transactional in these foreign colleagues. A number of examples that can be seen for this are ‘Here is attachment’, ‘Please check’, ‘Let’s keep up with the good work here’. The difference which can be explained by different cultural behaviors raised a considerable issue that it could cause the communication breakthrough in some ways. For example, Vietnamese colleagues who express politeness frequently may find it challenging to cope with their foreign partners’ directness and they therefore need to adjust to it.

(2) Intelligibility in English pronunciation

In this study, poor pronunciation was one of the major reasons found to cause the conversation breakdowns for Vietnamese employees. The common mistakes of pronunciation frequently reported involving the mispronunciation of some key words, missing of final sounds or linking sounds. This finding is in agreement with Honey’s (1988) findings which showed that there are a number of particular problems of pronunciation of Vietnamese learners due to the dissimilarities between English and Vietnamese. The finding also suggests that poor pronunciation might cause a lack of confidence to speak English among Vietnamese employees. These employees may know the answers, but because of their poor pronunciation, they were reluctant to respond to the other speaker in the conversation.

Another finding was that poor pronunciation relates closely to weak listening skill. Because of poor pronunciation, employees could not recognize and catch what the other speakers were saying. If they were not confident enough to ask for explanations, in some cases it could lead to some serious mistakes in their job. The finding again suggests the importance of pronunciation in successful conversations at the workplace.

Interestingly, one unanticipated finding was that the employees whose companies had non-native English speaking partners reported that they found it was harder to respond to English spoken by Asian
people such as Japanese, Indian, Chinese or Korean than by English native speakers. A possible explanation for this might be that learners are familiar with English standard accents (e.g. American or British) from the teachers and textbooks they learn at school. When they entered into a real-life workplace, accents from other varieties of English could cause communication breakdown. This finding confirms what has been reported in the literature (e.g. Kenworthy, 1997) that intelligibility rather than native-like pronunciation and English as a lingua franca rather than standard English are what employees need for workplace interactions.

In summary, the findings discussed above suggest that the English that an employee needs can be described as the ability to know how and when to use transactional and relational language in the workplace. It involves appropriate communicative strategies and politeness strategies. Besides, intelligible pronunciation and intercultural communicative competence are also required to avoid a conflict in interactions and to make a successful conversation in business either for spoken or written English.

12.1.1.2 Graduates were unlikely to be able to communicate in English to fulfill the requirement

The findings indicate that Vietnamese employees did not meet a requirement of a variety of workplace discourse aspects as discussed above for successful English use in the workplace.

First, the need of communication was based mainly on communication strategies such as asking for explanations, declarations, making requests. Surprisingly, basic expressions for these communication strategies such as ‘Could you please tell me how to implement it/explain me?’, ‘Sorry I can’t get you. Can you say it again?’ were not with the employees when they first came to the workplace. Most of the employees admitted that they learnt about these expressions through their experience using English at their workplace more than from school.

Second, the linguistic skills that most concerned Vietnamese included pronunciation and vocabulary. However, they showed their worry about pronunciation more than vocabulary. A possible explanation for this might be that while vocabulary could be learnt gradually through work, there would be no time to get ready for intelligible pronunciation in real-life communication. Poor pronunciation in many cases created the lack of confidence to communicate in English as required in the workplace among the employees. It could cause the employees to be unable to catch what the other speakers said as well.
Additionally, writing an effective email was also a challenge to a majority of employees. They do not know how to write an email that has a clear, logical structure and includes cultural communicative features required. For example, the status difference between the sender and the receiver should be considered for the politeness to write a more formal email. Furthermore, it is also necessary for employees to know about the principle of making requests that it tends to be more indirect and hedged to avoid the thread to the addressee’s negative face (Schnurr, 2013). Some example, the stronger model “should” and the use of second person pronoun “you should” made it face-threatening; ‘you’ referred the addressee, not ‘you’ as general and the request ‘should’ was too direct.

Third, the understanding of the influence of local cultural factors (e.g. Confusianism) and the different cultural behaviors from foreign colleagues could be an advantage for employees. Once they know this, they would be confident in choosing appropriate communicative strategies and/or workplace discourse to meet the requirement for an international communication. This could help them to avoid some face-threatening that may be caused by cultural differences. Unfortunately, the finding suggests that the employer recognized the influence of cultural factors while the employees may not be aware of this. A possible explanation for this (and could be a problem for employees) might be that the employees themselves could not automatically recognize it until they experienced it (often through unpleasant experiences).

Furthermore, the employees might not be aware that their poor pronunciation is causing communication problem as well. It could be very frustrating to employees when they might know something, but they just were not able to convey it to anybody else because of the lack of confidence in pronunciation. The employees might be aware of the differences between relational talk and transactional talk when they learnt about it at university. However, when they really have to use it in the workplace, they may not know about, for example, how relational talks actually work in practice (i.e. using language to build the relationships). Unless people were clear about it, they could not be able to communicate their knowledge and put it into practice successfully. Otherwise, this could create a problem in communication. It is not uncommon because someone could not automatically understand something.
It is likely that the employees were not equipped enough with English that was required for successful communication at the workplace. Some important issues, therefore, emerging from the findings are: communicative competence for learners is unlikely to be achieved from English teaching and learning at school – the graduates seem to lack communication competence when they join the profession; the balance between transactional and relational talks and the consideration for cultural influences seem to be absent in teaching materials and language classroom. These issues will be discussed next.

I now address the other sub-question for my first research question, which was as follows:

12.1.2 To what extent does English education at university provide the support graduates need?

In other words, it is a question about what English education looks like at university in meeting the need of communicative competence for learners. The discussion for this includes two main parts: teachers’ understanding of CLT and teacher’s CLT practice. The discussion is supported mainly with the findings of the data analysis before the intervention. Some connectivity and comparison with related data (e.g. interview data of teacher’s understanding of CLT) obtained in the workshops were also done.

12.1.2.1 Teachers’ understanding of CLT

The data from three sources indicates that the teachers in my study held three conceptions of CLT which corroborate the four conceptions of CLT identified by Sato and Kleinsasser (1999). They are: CLT (1) emphasized communication in the target language, (2) covered four macro-skills but emphasized speaking and listening skills and (3) used time-consuming activities. However, there were numerous difficulties that challenged these conceptions to be static.

The interview data indicated the teachers believed that CLT was possible, which are illustrated as follows:

Communication is emphasized. Almost all teachers believed that learning a language is learning to communicate in this language. Through the discussions after the first two classroom observations, the teachers agreed that students would be motivated to learn a language if they were successful in learning to speak the language. They shared their consideration that some of their students often showed their lack of confidence and motivation though they were good learners in grammar and reading. Particularly, the teachers agreed that it could be hard to be successful to teach conversational skills without using real-life situations. They reported they adapted materials to suit their contexts when they had a chance, such as designing a task of ordering food in a restaurant or using an exercise in supplementary
Pronunciation practice books as a task for students to listen and identify English speakers raising or lowering their voice in comparing with Vietnamese language. However, they were realistic in agreeing that such opportunities to support the conversational skills were few in the class. Furthermore, the two novice teachers showed their lack of confidence in terms of English pronunciation teaching and using supplementary materials.

The teachers’ emphasis of communication in teaching can also be seen in their interest in the examples of the real extracts and consciousness-raising activities for the lesson shown in the first workshop. However, the experienced teachers were unsure about the extent to which they had the time to design materials and use the designed materials in class, whereas the novice teachers were uncertain about how to use the materials. Furthermore, the observation data before the intervention showed that the teachers rarely stressed language strategies (i.e. identification strategies. e.g. asking for explanations, declarations, e.g. Could you please explain me this?, Can you check whether..? or saying thank you, sorry) for learners. It was likely that the teachers paid little attention in factors which make successful conversation including basic expressions, rather than language skills (e.g. being good at reading professional materials) or cultural factors that might influence Vietnamese learners in using English. They indicated that ‘good pronunciation and listening skills were required at the workplace’ were what they expected. This could partly result in the teachers admitting that they did not know about what English the companies required. Despite that, they showed their reluctance to attend some English training courses for employees that the companies offered. They blamed a lack of time for this, but they could go if the department arranged this for them. The discussion above indicates that there was a lack of a deep understanding about communicative competence among the teachers. An academic help for this therefore was required for them.

CLT covers four macro-skills but emphasized speaking and listening skills. Unlike the teachers in Sato and Kleinsasser (1999)’s research who emphasize listening and speaking skills in the conception of CLT, the teachers in the study emphasized that ‘communicate’ was to be able to communicate with others in English via four skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading. This conception of the teachers shown in survey data relates very much to one of the major objectives of the program that it should be covered four macro skills for learners. It could be considered as a benefit when the teachers who take an important role in implementing the program approve of the program’s goal. Accordingly, the teachers did not find it an obstacle with the department guidelines for communicative assessment focusing on all
four skills which each given equal weighting. However, it was hard to identify whether the teachers let their promotion of CLT to be influenced by the policy (e.g. assessment focusing on the four skills) because some different ideas were shown in the other source of data. The interviews revealed that most teachers viewed CLT as focusing more on listening and speaking. Additionally, the discussions with teachers further revealed that most teachers preferred the textbooks with more dialogue memorization or conversation practice. This lead to the conception that these teachers think reading and writing are not as important as listening and speaking in CLT.

The observation data revealed experienced teachers think they should encourage as much English as possible in oral exchanges in the classroom, no matter how hesitating or incorrect students’ speech may be. Students should be encouraged to answer a question in English with phrases or some words (not necessary a complete sentence). Furthermore, they believed that the development of communicative competence by students involves listening to English by teachers and sometime by their peers. These teachers, therefore, encouraged students to speak English as much as possible when answering questions. The teachers themselves kept talking English in class with the hope to give the students the opportunity to hear English spoken and to be able to pick up certain phrases. The novice teachers, despite sharing the idea of English should be used in all interactions with students, thought that switching between English and Vietnamese was necessary because this enabled them to keep engaged in the lesson students who might not understand what they were saying in English. In teaching practice, they used Vietnamese more frequently than experienced teachers. There are similarities between the teachers’ cognitions and use of the learners’ first language (L1) and target language (TL) in this study and those described by Imran and Wyatt (forthcoming, 2015). The teachers in this study also justified the use of L1 to support their understanding of L1 use in a way that stimulated the optimal position – using the L1 purposefully and ‘judiciously’ for benefit (Macaro, 2001 cited in Imran & Wyatt, forthcoming, 2015). However, the teachers seemed to lack self-awareness of how much they should use L1 as they, particularly the novice teachers, made quite wide use of L1 in their observed lessons (approximately 40 – 45 %). This points forward a need of training for awareness – raising of TL/L1 use as part of teacher education to support teachers with conceptions of the value of ‘judicious’ L1 use (Imran & Wyatt, forthcoming, 2015).

**CLT uses activities.** The interviews and survey data showed that the teachers had a positive attitude toward and were interested in using CLT activities in their classes, but almost all teachers admitted that
these activities were time-consuming. Similarly, the survey data showed that the teachers acknowledged about CLT and tended to apply it in their class, which is evident in the follows:

The teachers stressed communicative activities such as the ones that could help to increase student talk time or create good chances to encourage students to practice English and achieve language patterns through classroom interactions.

However, the survey data showed that the teachers had hybrid beliefs (Mangubhai et al., 2004) that included CLT and non-CLT features. While the teachers believed the behaviors such as not correcting students’ errors immediately or learners suggesting how exercises might be done should be encouraged, they also encouraged the behaviour of teachers following a lesson plan or always providing model answers to students. The former behaviors reflect CLT features while the latter behaviors refer to non-CLT features (Wright, 1990; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Mangubhai et al., 2007). Furthermore, as it is shown in the survey data, most of the teachers took the example of classroom interaction which was form-focused and less conversational teacher-student interaction to apply to their classroom. They believed that way to be more encouraging and easier for learners to answer, which was very much related to teacher-centred model in more traditional teaching methods. These teachers explained their choice as this could take them less time though they did consider some examples of more communicative classroom interactions (question 4 in appendix 5) better. This supports the idea mentioned earlier that they were interested in applying communicative activities, but concerned these activities were time intensive, not only with regard to preparing these activities, but also carrying them out in the class.

There was an understanding among the teachers that using games in class can create fun and support CLT. Though reporting that they were still adapting some games to fit with their class’ conditions when they had chance, they obviously indicated the common concern that such CLT activities as games were challenged to implement due to contextual factors such as large-sized class (and students’ low level of English). Most of the teachers including experienced teachers felt it hard to get all students in a class of 35-40 involved in the activity. They said that group work might help, but were conscious of one teacher being able to interact with some groups at one time, while the other groups might be neglected and talk to each other in Vietnamese or do some different things. The teachers also found it difficult to use English for instructions to students who had low level in English. It also can be seen in the observation
data that the teachers struggled to motivate students using communicative activities. One of the two
novice teachers admitted to her lack of skills in classroom management.

It seems possible that the teachers believed that CLT activities created too much work for them and
took a lot of time. The teachers lacked time, so CLT activities were not a priority. This corroborates the
findings of a number of the previous work in this field (e.g. Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). The finding of
non-static teacher’s beliefs of CLT also suggests factors have an influence. They are factors of teaching
contexts (e.g. large class size, lack of time), teachers (novice or expert) and cultural values (e.g.
Confucianism), which will be more discussed next.

12.1.2.2 Teachers’ practice

(1) A tension between belief and practice

There was a gap between teacher’s belief about what they ought to do and what they did. It is not
uncommon. It is encouraging to compare this finding with that found by Nunan (1988) that seven
experienced ESL teachers in Australia had a tendency to use traditional interaction patterns in their
classes that did not motivate communicative language use, though they were consigned to CLT. The
findings of Sato and Kleinsasser’ (1999, p. 505) study indicate that: “Although most teachers said they
used role-plays, games, stimulations and so on, classes observed for this study were heavily teacher-
fronted, grammar was presented without any context clues, and there were few interaction seen among
students”. In his case study of the practical knowledge growth in CLT of a lower secondary teacher in the
Middle East, Wyatt (2009) reports the tensions between the teacher’s beliefs and practices. Similarly,
though the teachers in my study said that they preferred and used CLT approaches for their English
teaching, many traditional practices were usually observed: teacher-fronted, practice from the textbook,
repetition, explicit grammar and vocabulary presentation.

The teachers reported that they had no time to design extra materials and create activities for
communicative teaching. Only few materials adaptation or materials design for CLT purposes was
observed before the workshops. Furthermore, tasks going along with the materials the teacher designed
(if any) were lacked in many classes. The teachers did not explore the designed materials or make a
sequence of tasks for supporting learner’s communicative competence. The use of authentic materials
in only one activity by most teachers resulted in not being able to facilitate students’ personal
engagement nor supporting a top-down process, which cares for the affect to language learning by the brain’s potential being activated when the emotions are engaged.

Teachers were aware of pronunciation as part of learning activities, being evident in their spending time supporting learners with pronunciation, particularly with vocabulary. However, pronunciation teaching was limited in students repeating the words after the teachers. The teachers often stated that games or some other activities for pronunciation could take a lot of time. However, the findings suggest that lack of investment for pronunciation seemed not only to be caused by the time limit, but also the lack of some possible practice that the teachers can do for the issue. For example, the teacher might be aware of learners’ pronunciation which contributed to the reluctance to speak, but they did little to apply some ways of improving students’ pronunciation. Building awareness and concern for pronunciation for learners and integrated pronunciation teaching, that do not take a lot of time, as suggested by Kenworthy (2007) and Harmer (2007), for example, were not seen in the teachers’ practice. One issue, therefore, emerged from the finding is that together with the right type of questions they asked to promote learners to speak, some ways of improving students’ pronunciation should be considered by the teachers.

Much less student-student interaction than teacher-student interaction was observed in most of classroom. Role-play was often used by the teachers, but mainly to memorize dialogues, practice grammar patterns or complete tasks from the book. This did not really genuine communication except for some cases when students did not follow the model dialogue and made the negotiation for the meaning themselves (example 7 in earlier observations and example 5 in later observations). One issue that emerges from the finding is the balance between transactional and relational aspects of the language use was not provided. For example, there was little chance for common talk (e.g. when practicing conversations about sports in free time, a student said that he felt tired after swimming or another student said he did not a swimming suit and asked if he could borrow from the other speakers). Such small-talks are common in real-life conversations, but often absent in classroom practice.

Group work in the study might not take the advantage such as allowing students to work and interact independently or providing chance of different opinions and varied contributions due to the influence of Confucianism underlying values. This finding is associated with Sullivan’s (2000)’s finding in terms of social values of Vietnamese society. In some other cases, group work was underused (classroom
There were also few observed opportunities that allowed a negotiation between the speaker (the teachers) and the hearer (students) making the meaning of a statement. This is indicated in little effective use of questioning skills such as less referential questions used or sometimes was discouraged by the teachers, wait-time was not enough or feedback was too soon or sometimes was in inappropriate ways (as indicated in classroom observations before the workshops). A number of good functions that questioning can contribute to classroom interaction such as increasing the amount of speaking learners do in classroom (Brock, 1986) or developing conversational skills (such as planning ahead, negotiating and arguing, and self-determination (Van Lier, 1996), therefore, were little exposed.

Similar to the interview data and survey data, the observations revealed that teachers did not support students much in terms of the knowledge of the cultural integration. Little declaration or explanation of cultural differences was seen in the observation data (e.g. the explanation to students about people from different countries using politeness strategies differently). This went along with what the teachers expressed in the interview data that they had almost no time to read about cultures. Another possible explanation for their little consideration on this essential field in language teaching might be that the teachers themselves lack opportunities to know how important cultural factors would be for learners of English. The information of what cultural integration that influenced Vietnamese employees using English at the workplace as provided by the researcher in one of the workshop, for example, was very rare to the teachers during their years of teaching.

(2) The teachers in the study were interested in applying the principles of CLT and kept traditional aspects of language teaching at the same time

This finding corroborates the findings of a great deal of previous work (e.g. Lewis & McCook, 2002; Sullivan, 2000) on this field. Though it could be seen more in classroom observations after the workshops, teacher’s interest in applying principles of CLT was also showed in classrooms observed before the workshops. A numbers of CLT elements in were constantly used in class by the teachers, particularly experienced ones. They included warm-ups that related to student’s experience to achieve the engagement or a number of pair-work, group-work activities used in classrooms.
The teachers used a mix of CLT and traditional methods in order to handle contextual challenges. Teachers emphasizing both memorizing and understanding was one of evidence for this. For example, dialogues were memorized and retold, sometimes successfully in class when students spoke out the conversation without looking back to the textbook (e.g. observations of experienced teachers). Additionally, students’ understanding was valued by the teachers. For example, Hanh felt it successful when her students used her own words to summarize the text, or when one student gave the first idea, the others added for the next to complete the task (observations of Hanh before the workshops). Understanding also includes the teachers’ explanation in English. While most of the experienced teachers try to use English in their classroom, the novice teachers (Minh, Diem) often tried English and then reverted it to Vietnamese, because “It’s very difficult for them to understand my explanation though I use very easy English”. These teachers themselves felt unconfident if their students were confused by their explanation, whereas more experienced teachers scoped with the situations better, for example, they rephrased their explanation (observations of Khanh, Hanh, Thanh).

The balance between CLT and traditional methods was also shown in the way that the teachers could take use of the value of showing respects in Vietnamese culture to achieve students’ involvement. In many cases observed, when the teacher asks questions, he/she expected students to stand up to answer and students would also like to show their respects by this action, as evidenced by many students doing it spontaneously. Not only the teacher but the majority of students do not feel offended in this way. It was generally observed that students who were with more ‘strict’ teachers (who would call students to stand up and speak English after their questions) were more focused and enthusiastic than students who were with ‘less strict’ teachers who did not require the same. As these teachers explained in the discussions after the observation, it could be a useful way to push learners to think and answer the questions they were asked or to focus than just letting them sitting still. In this way, they made use of the cultural performance, as Vietnamese teachers and students are expected, which called as “behavior educators” by Ha (2004) to assist student’s participation. Here, the teachers made reference to components that are not strictly CLT, but that what Mangubhai et al. (2004) named as ‘CLT-compatible’ which incorporate CLT features.
12.1.2.3 Teacher’s practice was influenced by their experience and knowledge

This finding concurs with the ideas of Tsui (2003). It is indicated from the observations that the experienced teachers in my study based on a variety of activities in their teaching, whereas the novice teachers replied on traditional methods more. Additionally, the novice teachers who have experience teaching English in secondary school tended to focus on student discipline more. For example, some teachers often asked students to stand up to answer the questions or used physically related games more than the others. The teachers who had more experience and a MA degree in TESOL had the creativity in employing activities and group work to fit with their teaching context more than the other teachers.

12.1.2.4 Teachers’ practice was influenced by local cultural factors such as the values underlying Confucianism culture in which younger people should show their respect to older people, subordinates often show respects to their superiors. Most teachers, therefore, expected learners to stand up when they answer the questions. The respect was also shown in the expectation that students were supposed to listen to the teacher when he/she talked. These, though not always, could influence classroom interactions in some aspects: it might cause students’ reluctance to speak out their opinions right at the time they had the ideas as how interactions usually happened.

The results of the study also show that teacher’s practice was influenced by contextual factors such as lack of time to prepare materials for CLT activities, large-sized classes, few opportunities to develop conceptions of CLT and CLT implementation. This supports previous research into teachers’ understandings of CLT and their CLT practice (e.g. Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Vu, 2004). Among them, a lack of time and large-sized classes were the greatest constraints to the teachers as they indicated in all three kinds of research data. They had their influence in a number of aspects of the teachers’ practice which were discussed earlier such as contributing to the obstacles to the teacher’s materials design and using communicative activities. It suggests that teacher support in term of materials design and using communicative activities which are appropriate to the context could help to solve the problem. For example, teachers in my context could be helped to design materials and tasks in a group: each teacher works with one or two topics in the programme and they then share the designed materials together. This way could help to save time and provide chances to exchange experience among teachers to reduce their workload and solve the problems of large classes.
It is possible to draw a conclusion from the research findings that the teachers’ beliefs and practice were rarely guided by their conceptions of CLT. There was a two-way influence between the teachers’ practice and their understanding of CLT. This is supported by one of the aspects of teacher knowledge summarized by Tsui (2003) that teachers’ knowledge and their practice relate to each other: when teachers respond to their contexts and reflect on their practices, they gain a new understanding of teaching and learning. In particular, the teachers in the study were aware of CLT principles to develop learners’ communicative competence, but lacked opportunities and support for implementation. Lack of CLT implementation, in its turn, led to little chance for their conceptions of CLT to be developed extensively. This then could influence on teacher’s perception of CLT that the teachers could not realize that there was the potential for communication in their difficult teaching contexts. For example, they still integrate into their CLT approaches the components which were not related to CLT features, but included some features of CLT-compatible such as switching English to Vietnamese and vise versa or using group work in some ways that fit with their context of large-sized classes. Unless they realize these, the teachers could not seek for opportunities to understand more about CLT.

Another issue which emerges from the finding is that the teachers appeared to think CLT could be possible in other teaching contexts with better support than their context. They, therefore, cease to look around for opportunities for understanding of CLT. It is again necessary to support the teachers to get to know that CLT could include some features of CLT-compatible and it is the process of how teachers are able to apply teaching approaches (e.g. CLT) effectively in their contexts and continuous efforts to improve themselves in that process that characterize teachers’ expertise. This is supported by Tsui (2003) to emphasize that expert teachers involve the process of how teachers are able to attain that high level of performance rather than when they actually engage in performance as experts. In the light of this, it is very likely that every teacher can become an expert provided they keep their effort in the process for levels of performance.

In summary, the findings suggested that the teachers had positive attitudes towards CLT. However, they lacked a full understanding of CLT. Moreover, there was a gap between teacher’s understanding of CLT and CLT practice due to the contextual factors. Therefore, the goal of helping learners to achieve successful English use at the workplace that requires intelligible pronunciation, the effective use of communicative strategies and politeness strategies and the consideration of intercultural factors (as discussed in 12.1.1.1) seems to be at a far distance. However, what emerged from the findings in terms
of teachers’ positive attitudes towards CLT and some of their efforts to use more communicative teaching methods in their contexts are positive and encouraging to possible solutions for the issues raised in this research question. That is, the teachers need academic help to deepen their understanding of CLT and then could implement CLT in their contexts. Action research could be an approach which brings such impact on teachers’ understandings of CLT. This will be discussed in the next part.

Now I address my second research question, which is as follows:

12.2 To what extent was action research able to improve English education at UIT in some way?

In order to answer this question, I first describe the process of action research used in my study and then analyze how action research can play a role in my study – whether action research helps me to get to know about the teachers’ reflection and whether it is evident that informed actions support the teachers to improve their English teaching practice.

12.2.1 How action research applied in the study

In order to illustrate this, I will discuss how an action research was employed in the study. The study involves an investigation on how English language was actually taught at the university in the study to see whether it is satisfied or it needs some improvement to meet the goal of fulfilling the workplace requirements for graduates. The procedure for this investigation includes: First, the goal of the study was informed clearly to the participant teachers: to understand teachers’ views on the issue that language teachers were recently being encouraged to develop skills, expertise and creativity with regard to learner-centredness. The teachers were also told that non-participant observations would be carried out to get to know about their practice. The information collected from the interviews and discussions with the teachers was to use for the development of an appropriate workshop supporting their teaching. Then, on the basis of the goals identified, these actions were initiated:

- Classroom observation with the teachers to see how teachers explore teaching methods and materials to support students
- The intervention-the workshops including questionnaires, discussions and feedback on English teaching and learning aim to support teachers to reflect on their teaching practice.
- Observations after the workshops to see any evidence of changes in the teachers’ teaching.
- Discussion and feedback on changes the teachers had made after the workshops. It also aimed to inspire teachers to continue with their positive changes.
As mentioned in the methodology chapter, Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988) model of action research can be seen here. It includes a plan of critically informed action (i.e. observations before the intervention and the workshops) to be developed to improve the current situation, acting to implement the plan (i.e. carrying out workshops 1a-1b and documenting what happened), observing the effects of the critically informed action in the study context (i.e. observations after the workshops) and reflecting on the effects as the basis for further planning (i.e. workshop 2). Though it may need more follow-up process, this procedure worked as useful means to an approach that helps teachers to be self-aware and self-evaluate (Leitch and Day, 2006) of their teaching in order to improve their teaching practice. This will be further discussed next.

12.2.2 How effective was action research in my study

There are a number of positive aspects to say that my research can take some advantages of the use of action research. These positive aspects include the teachers’ positive attitudes toward opportunities for professional development. This is encouraging for action research which aims to help teachers improve their practice through reflection (Bartlett, 1990; Leitch and Day, 2006; Nunan, 1990). They also include some changes in either the teacher’s practice or their perspectives after the informed actions – the interventions (the workshops) as follows:

12.2.2.1 The teachers have positive attitudes toward opportunities for professional development

The teachers in the study had a positive attitude toward professional development. This indicates in their awareness of some problems of their teaching practice and the willingness to take my suggestion for the improvement. Unlike Rashid, described by Wyatt (2010), who seemed unwilling to add a preparation activity to reduce task demands, the teachers in this study were willing to add or change activities to achieve the desired goals:

In earlier observations, I could see that all teachers cared about engaging students in the lesson and making lectures interesting to students. They shared the same concern about how to involve as many students as possible in a crowded class. The teachers felt their class ineffective as they said “I feel that my students are bored” (Minh), “my student did not talk much”(Diem) or “many students are often very quiet, so I have to call stronger students for the answers” (Khanh). They were thinking about the issue and the possible solution as they told me after class “I like to use group work in my class or some modern methods that make students feel fun to learn” (Diem); “I should do something differently but
I’m not very confident for that” (Minh); “We should provide some more tasks for students to practice in groups and pairs to push students to talk” (Khanh, Thanh, Hanh). They came to me and asked for some suggestion on how to motivate learners to talk. We had a short discussion on using group work at break time and after class. They said in the discussion that “I think it is not a good way, the way I am doing, so I will try with group work as you said next time” (Diem, Minh). The next time when I observed their classes, the two novice teachers used group work to teach vocabulary and grammar. Then they were pleased to tell me that they found more students were engaged in this way and said thank you to me for my support. This indicated their positive attitude forward opportunities for their professional development.

As for experienced teachers, though they often applied more group work in class, they also have a concern that not every student in a group participated. They showed concern and tried to involve students more through varying the ways to carry out group work. This can be observed in earlier observations. For example, Thanh and Hanh had students work in groups and instead of letting a volunteer from each group to talk in front of class, they called any member in a group to talk. Answering my question why they did that, they told me they realized if they asked for volunteers, strong students would work more while weaker students worked less or even did not work. The teachers seemed to be aware that the benefits of group work could be realized in the classroom if certain principles as described in Wyatt (2010b) applied. For example, it is important that all members of group to be involved, which can be achieved through task design or group organization, e.g., learners are given different roles (Abdullah and Jacobs, 2004). Therefore they changed the way which they believed could force every student in a group to work. This indicated that the teachers were motivated by new ideas that they thought they could be helpful to solve the problems.

Furthermore, through the positive attitudes toward professional development and the willingness to put ideas into practice as discussed above, the teachers’ reflective qualities were revealed. These qualities included noticing learners were not engaged and analysing to find some ways to solve their problems. This finding corroborates the ideas of Wyatt (2010a) who found that a teacher in his case study possessed reflective qualities. However, as we can see from the examples above, though the teachers also used a number of reflective skills, they seemed to employ the qualities spontaneously, rather than deliberatively. This could refer to Schön’s (1983) ‘reflection-in-action’ form of reflective thinking as the teachers did this in order to solve the issues raised at the moment. They were unlikely to be conscious of
it as using some reflective skills but as something they had to do to support students. This raised the issue that the teachers need to be shown that they owned reflective qualities which can be explored as an advantage to better their teaching. It is action research that can assist teachers to develop these qualities more systematically to acquaint them with research skills for their professional development (Burns, 2009; Nunan, 1990). The teachers’ positive attitude as discussed above is important in the way that it would motivate the teachers to put ideas into practice. Once the teachers are motivated, they would focus on things that can be relevant to their context and their learners, as it is discussed through the two next parts in this section.

12.2.2.2 The interventions supporting the teachers’ changes

It can be said that the workshops provided the teachers opportunities of awareness-raising to think back and discuss with other teachers about their teaching experience. After the workshops, the findings indicate that there were a number of changes the teachers made, which is encouraging as it could be seen as the teachers’ reflection and self-development. They told me that our discussion after earlier observations and the workshops inspired them to make these implications. For example:

In the workshop on materials adaptation, first, brief information on materials evaluation criteria was provided to the teachers. It included the processes of materials evaluation proposed by McGrath (2002) and McDonough and Shaw (1993). Then, a good point that teachers had made for adapting the textbook was discussed: while introducing the materials (the topics) the teachers often asked questions which was related to students. This was emphasized as a good starting point and could be developed with materials adaptation. The findings of the researcher’s pilot study of English in the restaurants were used to demonstrate how language features were derived from authentic materials and consciousness-raising activities. After the workshop where they were drawn out the idea of materials adaptation to achieve student’s engagement, the teachers showed more enthusiasm to put the idea into their practice. The material adaptation was seen to be focused more by all of the teachers. They brought pictures to class, stimulated students’ talk by asking questions about the pictures and relating to students’ experience. These can be explained as resulting from the teachers’ reflection on their teaching from what they have seen and discussed in the workshop.

Similarly, in almost every lesson observed after the workshops, group work was employed more by the teachers. In the workshops and in the discussions after the earlier observations, for example, we
discussed the use of group work to teach vocabulary and grammar. One experienced teacher then did some innovation for vocabulary teaching: first, she let students work in groups to brainstorm and discuss the list of vocabulary they might have for a topic they were going to learn, then the teacher checked their work and provided them more vocabulary. As for grammar, group work can be used for grammar practice such as letting students do grammar in groups and exchange the answers. Two novice teachers then tried these ways for their vocabulary and vocabulary teaching. Diem, for example, set some tasks in which students worked in groups giving the answers, asking for the other group’s answer and exchanging the ideas whether the answers were correct (observation 4 of Diem). Here, the teacher adopted the role of ‘facilitator’ when she did a little intervention to steer students to the right direction. The students in this example played a role of ‘listener’ but also ‘initiator’, for example, of questions in English asking their peers for the ideas on the answers. The classroom atmosphere that could be seen was positive and non-threatening one and the process of teaching and learning turned to more student-focused.

The experienced teachers, on the other hand, were concerned how to get more students in a crowded class to talk more. We discussed some possible ways for this such as focusing more on student-student interactions, questioning techniques and wait-time. The teachers realized that they often talked more than the students in class and gave students little time to think. They then did some changes in terms of allowing more interaction among students, increasing little more time after their questions to students.

There was also a discussion on when it would be necessary to translate English to Vietnamese in class which led to some changes in novice teachers’ classes in later observations. The teachers realized that they overused translation tried to use more English for their explanations to students in class and appeared to realize that it was helpful to explain vocabulary to students in easier English, rather than translate the vocabulary to Vietnamese immediately.

12.2.2.3 The interventions supporting the teachers’ reflection

Doing a number of changes after the workshops, the teachers showed their pleasure to learn from their peers and from the documents provided. They came to tell me that they were glad to get more students to involve through their adapting materials or having students to work in groups. Significantly, the teachers, particularly novice teachers, were more comfortable in their class now. They told me in the discussions after the later observations that before they often felt very tense when students could not
answer their questions, but now they knew that students needed some more time to think. As Ma (2008) discusses, sufficient time helps to formulate the answer. In some other cases, the teachers also felt more comfortable allowing more interactions among students while they were playing facilitator’s role. They told me they felt the atmosphere of classroom activity more relaxing when the majority of students joined in and enjoyed the tasks.

Furthermore, some other important issues, in spite of not really making any change yet, provoked the teachers’ thinking. They were pronunciation teaching and cultural influence consideration. In particular, it was evident that the teachers noticed the information of English required of employees at the companies including intelligible pronunciation and communicative strategies. This can be seen when the teachers were pleased to tell me that they kept up with pronunciation support in each lesson for their students. They said they felt pleased because they now knew clearly that it was needed for students. They would like to see the syllabus for English training at the companies (if the company could provide it) to know about English required at the workplace. They also showed their promising attitude that they should read more for intercultural communication due to the information they learnt from the workshops that Vietnamese employees were required to use English with people from a number of different countries. This is significant because they had not thought like that before or these issues were just vague to them until they participated to the current study.

More evidence of the reflection due to the interventions was also seen through the teachers’ ideas about the interventions. The teachers told me that they appreciated such opportunities to have workshops, discussions, peer observations. Without it, as they said, they could hardly think about change or adapting anything. This corroborates the ideas of researchers who said that if there was no refresher course from the inspector or a senior teacher to advise them to change, the teachers could follow the teachers’ book or the techniques learned in university (Leitch & Day, 2006; Harmer, 2007). These techniques sometimes alone could not help teachers to do their work dealing with real situation in class. When the teachers could not solve the problem, it sometimes even led to teachers’ lack of confidence. For example, the teachers in the study were concerned by students’ lack of engagement. Without opportunities to think about it thoroughly, they could blame for students’ passive learning. Even worse, the two novice teachers became very unconfident about their teaching as they came to tell me. It is because they did not realize as they did after the workshops that their students could engage
more if they were given, for example, some authentic materials and tasks or group work which was organized appropriately and effectively by the teachers.

The workshops, in some aspects as the teachers said, supported them to be aware why, what to do and how to do some changes in their class. This helped them to gain more self-confidence, particularly the two novice teachers. They were encouraged in keeping up with what they are doing in a right way, felt comfortable to learn from each other to adjust or do new things in their class. These were evident in their teaching behaviour, observed two or three times for each teacher after the workshops.

Also in the workshops, when the teachers watched their teaching on video, I could see that they compared their teaching with the other’s teachers and some of them reported that they could learn some good practice from their peers. I also asked them what they had thought of their lesson. Most of the teachers reported that they would make some improvements next time. For example, the novice teachers said they should enhance pair work and group work more; the experienced teachers said they would try some ways to have students talk more and they talk less. Viewing the recordings of the teachers teaching in the companies, the teachers discussed whether they could adapt some games for pronunciation teaching that they saw in the videos to their context of large sized classes. It can be seen that video-stimulated recall helps the teachers to gain deeper cognition of their teaching practice. It supports the idea of Burton (2009) and Wyatt and Arnold (2012) who said that (video-) stimulated recall can be incorporated into an action research approach. However, the teachers did not really feel relaxed to watch the video-recording of their teaching. This should be taken common due to the effects of socio-cultural factors. Some authors (e.g. de Sagovia and Hardison, 2009) had been denied the permission of video-recording and had to use audio-recording instead. The teachers in my study, though tense at first, allowed me to have one video-recording for each of them and then had some reflections on the videos. This positive point was very encouraging for me to enhance positive rapport that helps the teachers feel relaxed and willing to speak if I have chance to do further research.

In summary, the findings suggest that providing ways for the teachers to explain their spontaneous actions help them to raise self-awareness of their current teaching. They then have better decisions and some innovations in their next classes. This allows us to recall Schön’s (1983) reflecting on action described as means of which teachers “continuously compare new experience with previous experience in order to find useful precedents, examples, and ideas, and increase the range and influence of their
actions” (Burton, 2009, p.299). It helps to create more systematic, personal evaluative structures (Burton, 2009). The findings concur with researchers’ idea (e.g. Nunan, 1990; Burns, 1990; Bartlett, 1990) that action research is a means to further their own professional self-development. Equally important, the findings also suggest issues to take into consideration to enable action research possible for the current study context.
CHAPTER 13: IMPLICATIONS

As it is viewed in the chapter of discussion, we can see a picture of English that required of employees to be successful English users at the workplace. This picture stimulates an assessment in terms of the extent to which English education at university provides the support learners need. A number of questions can be asked and answered for the assessment of the current curriculum: to what extent the materials used at the university is authentic (e.g. tailored to students’ need) or to what extent English teaching and learning at university stimulates opportunities for learners to achieve communicative competence that they need. From the assessment, a number of implications termed from the research are as follows:

13.1 Implications for materials development

Authentic materials would help for the purposes of supporting learners to reach communicative competence (Mishan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2012). Teachers and material evaluators need evaluation criteria that can help to decide how the materials should be adapted and/or supplemented for the authenticity. However, how to define the authenticity of materials is challenging (Hall, 2011). Teachers, for example, can invent a task relating to a kind of job to make the materials authentic (i.e. to provide learners real examples to learn. Nevertheless, this may not bring authentic dialogs to practice in classroom because it is argued, e.g., that language in fact is not real any more when it is removed from its original context (Widdowson, 1998). This suggests the ways in which authentic English is drawn upon in ELT classrooms depend on a number of contextual factors. These factors include: ‘authentic’ language regarding both the aim of learning and relevant to classroom life, the learner’s social context, the reasons for learning and the relationship between ‘real’ English, of which descriptions within ELT are drawn from native speaker usage, and local Englishes (Hall, 2011, p.193). In other words, it is more important to consider the authenticity in the context which is being looked at, rather than the authenticity of the materials itself. As authors (Hutchinson & Waters, 1978; McGrath, 2013) argue, ‘fitness for purpose’ should be the basis for judgement for the authenticity. The authenticity could be seen when it reflects to a certain point about the type of problems and issues in a certain context and how communication is used over them. Furthermore, ‘authentic’ materials are discussed to be particularly relevant to prepare learners for ESP contexts where learners need to communicate effectively in a specific work or study situation (Hall, 2011; Robinson, 2004). In the current context, the findings revealed that learners had a specific need to learn ESP (e.g, English used for email at IT companies). The collection of authentic materials at
the workplace in the study can be later used as teaching materials. For example, materials and tasks can be designed from the email data collected from the companies for students to learn and practise how to write emails or messages at work. One such task could be: Exchange emails between colleagues to have a request from the producer or the manager (e.g. issues on Q. 13 should be fixed before 12 a.m tomorrow) done.

In the light of the discussion above in term of attaining ‘authentic’ materials for the research context, the findings of the research can be applied to a framework for teaching materials evaluation and development proposed by Chan (2009), as illustrated in the figure below. This framework relates to checklists for both pedagogical considerations and discourse features that teachers can refer to when adapting and supplementing the materials.

Figure 13.1: Chan’s (2009, p.127) framework for developing checklist for evaluating materials

13.1.1 Pedagogical considerations

The following are two pedagogical concerns that the findings from the research relevant to:

13.1.1.1 Needs analysis

Regarding Ellis and John’s (1994) classification of learners according to their work experience, learners at university can be classified as ‘pre-experience’. This situation may influence the focus of the materials and the weight of types of knowledge/ skills provided in the course. In many Vietnamese universities, English courses focus on General English (Vu, 2004) which can be seen that “general language knowledge” and some “general communication skills” (Brieger, 1997) are focused. However, learners entering the workplace after their university would need professional communication skills as well. The findings of this research, for example, indicated that graduates needed communicative strategies and
politeness strategies in using English for email and meeting at the workplace. The target situation in which learners will be using English, therefore, should be ascertained for the development of materials. Furthermore, the research suggests that learners need help to use English successfully in either in transactional or relational interactions in workplace communication. Materials should include a range of role-plays or stimulation real-life tasks to cover the types of interactions needed for the learners.

13.1.1.2 Integrated pronunciation teaching
Intelligible pronunciation was also required to avoid a conflict in interactions and to make a successful conversation in business either for spoken or written English. Poor pronunciation could cause the conversation breakdowns for Vietnamese employees and it related closely to weak listening skill. Furthermore, using English with non-native English speaking partners was often required. Therefore, intelligibility rather than native-like pronunciation was what Vietnamese learners need. This suggests that integrated pronunciation teaching is necessary to insert in the current syllabus in which pronunciation sessions have been rarely seen and sometimes done spontaneously by teachers. The pronunciation books compiled (as the pronunciation practice books at UIT) to use as supplementary materials should be utilized more fully. Furthermore, not only pronunciation with British or American accents as often seen in text books, but also the pronunciation of various World Englishes is required. This is for various international contexts that students deal with in business environment. In order for this, the pronunciation practice books could be improved using the techniques of adapting, deleting, modifying proposed by some authors (e.g. McDonough and Shaw, 1993). The findings of the study could be used as follows:

- Analysing the books to see to what extent they meet the learners’ needs.
- Reducing some parts (e.g. separate sounds) which are not really useful for learners.
- Adding some contents (e.g. linking sounds, intonation) found necessary for successful conversations at the workplace.
- Modifying some parts of the books for integrated pronunciation teaching, e.g. marking transcripts for weak forms or rhythm - students have the transcripts of recorded workplace conversations, and they listen for weak forms or rhythm as the tape is played; or teacher calls learners’ attention to different accents when they are listening to the recording of conversation at the workplace.
13.1.2 Discourse features

Relevant findings of this research relate to discourse features can be organized under the following headings:

13.1.2.1 Goal orientation

In reality, graduates were required an effective use of both transactional and relational aspects of English in the workplace. It proves the fact that colleagues also need relational talks (including the use of humour) to build up and maintain relationships that are necessary in business (Koester, 2006). For example, relational language was found in both the two common types of workplace interactions in the study: email and meetings and also functioned with a function of having work done. Given the important role played by relational talk, materials should not only aim at transactional talk, but also care for the balance between transactional and relational aspects. By this way, materials could also raise learners’ awareness of what English they are required for their future in the real-life workplace to encourage them to put more effort in their English language study at university.

13.1.2.2 Strategies and language used at the workplace

Communicative strategies and politeness strategies were the two kinds of strategies required most for workplace interactions. Among communicative strategies such as requests, asking for explanations, expressing the negotiation and using functional expressions, directives and requests were seen to occur frequently in IT workplace environment. Politeness (i.e. in order to reduce to threaten the addressee’s negative face) was considered as a major factor that influences the choice of giving directives and requests of Vietnamese employees.

In order to help learners develop the required strategies, materials should provide the language required for those strategies (Chan, 2009). For example, greetings such as “Hello” and more imperatives, e.g. “Here is the attachment. Tell me if you have further questions” can be used for an informal email among colleagues. An email among managers and employees, on the other hand, requires more formal lexical or syntactic forms such as “Dear all”, “Please let me have this to be fully fixed and hope you could meet the deadline”. Another example relates to the use of modal verbs for politeness strategies (Koester, 2010, p.80): ‘could you’ is needed in transactional talks, whereas ‘can you’ can be used among participants who know each other well. Because the appropriate degree of these forms depends on the context, the activities designed for the language use should also provide clear context to learners for the most useful practice using language for communication strategies.
13.1.2.3 Cultural differences

The references on cultural differences that influence goal orientation and workplace discourse can be seen in the study. In terms of goal orientation, while a number of Vietnamese employees could find small-talk or relational talk put them at ease in a comfortable atmosphere for discussion or having work done, foreign colleagues (e.g. Indian, Japanese, Australian, American) tended to be more transactional. On the level of workplace discourse, the influence of the cultural factors (i.e. hierarchy politeness and solidarity politeness (Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Nguyen Chi, 2002) caused the indirectness, the hesitation to voice one’s own ideas to ask for declaration or explanation among Vietnamese colleagues (e.g. “yeah” before expressing the disapprovals or ‘we’ or “we will” to show the solidarity spirit). Along with the indirectness, Vietnamese colleagues often preferred language use that avoids face-threatening. For example, the use of “Could you please...” was seen common in their workplace discourse. Foreign colleagues, on the other hands, were more direct (e.g. “Can you” and “Can I” and “Let me” as directives or requests were used more). These differences could lead to conflicts in communication that the participants found challenging to cope with.

The examples of cultural differences above show that learners who are using English as a lingua franca in international business contexts need not only knowledge of cultural differences, but also strategies to deal with the communication difficulties involved. Materials, therefore, should raise learners’ awareness of cultural differences and provide them with appropriate communication strategies. Furthermore, gender as a cultural factor that influences professional communication and leadership in a variety of different ways (e.g. male colleagues and leaders are more direct and transactional than female colleagues and leaders but male colleagues tend to employ the use of humour more) should be sensitized to learners in the materials. This could help learners indicate an appropriate level of directness (and avoiding face threatening) in the conversation for successful English use in the workplace.

In summary, the implications for materials development as described above could draw out a picture of what materials (e.g. English for emails) would be for Vietnamese learners of English. If the implications are considered, learners will receive the materials/instructions (e.g. facilitating communication strategies, including type or variety of English should be taught and integrating pronunciation teaching) that meet their needs to avoid breakdowns in communication in the future.
13.2 Implications for teacher development

The issues discussed above for materials development all need teachers to play roles as curriculum designers and implementers (Burtons, 2009; Nunan, 2009; Schön, 1983). It leads to the second implication of the research involving the need for in-service professional development programs to support teachers to play their expected roles. As arisen from the research findings, such programs could be done through workshops such as workshops on materials development and communicative language teaching.

13.2.1 Workshops on material development

Teachers play an important role in selecting, adapting and developing materials that support learner’s needs (Mishan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2012). A shift from EFL materials to ESP materials to response to the need of learners of using English (Hall, 2011; Edwards, 2000) requires the specification of criteria which are appropriate to the evaluative purpose. Much of the discussion on materials evaluation, as a result, tends to be specific or context-related (McGrath, 2002). Teachers need to know about criteria for such materials assessment and development (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003) for their selection and adaptation of materials. As McGrath (2013) discusses, the application of either ESP or all forms of English language teaching highly requires the roles of the teachers. The roles include materials adaptation and supplementation which could extend to selecting authentic texts and designing suitable exploitation activities. McGrath stresses that if we wish teachers to play their roles “which are more demanding in terms of creativity, expertise and potentially time”, we may need to convince them of the need and support them to develop confidence and skills (p.24).

For the purposes discussed above, the following approaches to materials development could be suggested to the teachers:

In the workshop as workshop 1 in the study, Tomlinson’s (1998, 2010) text-driven approach on material development can be illustrated and suggested to teachers. This approach emphasizes the collection of texts which engage the teacher and therefore also appear to engage the learner. In particular, the texts of the authentic extracts of English in the restaurants (which communication strategies were a focus) were selected to design teaching materials, adapting Tomlinson’s (2003) criteria. A number of criteria to assess whether texts are likely to engage learners set out by Tomlinson (2003) include the extent to
which the text connects to the learners’ lives, the learner’s knowledge of the world and stimulates different personal responses in the target learners. Such materials can function as a motivation for recognition and production, rather than having learners reproduce the language they are given. This can be done if learners are supported to relate to the use of language in task completion and group building activities. In the process of recognition and production, learners become aware of the distinction between relational and transactional language (McCullagh, 2013).

Furthermore, as researchers (e.g. Koester, 2006) and the outcomes of the current study point out, relational talk and transactional talk should not be separated at all levels of workplace discourse, the other approach for materials development which Koester (2010) called ‘discourse-based approach’ can also be suggested to teachers. This approach centres around recordings of authentic workplace interactions which can help learners to understand about workplace discourse (relational and transactional aspects) by observing and being helped to recognize how they are used in specific contexts. This approach was demonstrated experimentally by McCullagh (2013). In her case study, she presents the selection and use of video of authentic workplace interactions to help learners to develop interpersonal language for working in teams in a workplace setting. I myself suggested this approach to the teachers when illustrating the use of authentic extracts of English in the restaurants (from voice-recordings) for teaching materials. This is to provide the teachers an example of Koester’s (2010) discourse-based approach which is used with the insights gained from the analysis of the kind of language used in real-life encounters. Integrated pronunciation teaching is also able to be illustrated to teachers through this approach: exercises or games of sound discriminations are built up from the analysis of pairs of sounds the employees often meet difficulty to deal with at the workplace.

13.2.2 Workshops on communicative language teaching

Further workshops on CLT are also expected to be carried out for teacher’s professional development. Through these workshops, teachers’ perceptions of CLT principles and practical knowledge of CLT will be enhanced. It is useful for teacher’s professional development as it can be seen in the study that the teacher who has an M.A degree in TESOL applies CLT principles more confidently and frequently than the teacher who does not. Furthermore, in order to fill a gap between teacher’s understanding of CLT and CLT practice, the following important issues should be included in the workshops:
First, an awareness of a potential for CLT in their teaching contexts (though it is challenging) should be raised for teachers. It could be done by helping teachers to know that CLT also includes some features of CLT-compatible and that CLT is possible in their teaching context. The following evidence based on the findings from the research could provide to teachers for this point:

- The teachers are interested in applying principles of CLT;
- They have hybrid beliefs (Mangubhai et al., 2004) that included CLT and non-CLT features;
- In practice, they sometimes use a mix of CLT and traditional methods in order to handle contextual challenges;
- They in some cases exploit the balance between CLT and traditional methods.

This hopefully will support teachers to be aware of the discussed issue which they did not recognize before. Once being aware of it, they will seek for opportunities to understand more about CLT and invest in the process being able to apply teaching approaches (e.g. CLT) effectively in their contexts.

Second, provide teachers information about:

- How other teachers apply CLT approaches successfully in their teaching. It is more effective if those other teachers are also in the same context (e.g. lack of time or large-sized classes), ideally their peers from the same institution. By looking at examples of how one of their peers could solve the problems that they often meet, teachers will possibly learn from it and more confident to deal with obstacles to have their teaching practice in more communicative approaches.

- What cultural integration that could influence Vietnamese employees using English at the workplace. It could be done by building up and maintaining a relationship with companies to be updated the company’s requirement of graduates. In the process of doing this research, it is shown that the companies were willing to have a co-operation with the university. For example, they offered support such as inviting educators to attend the companies’ English training courses for their employees or coming to the university several times a year for workshops on what learners need to prepare to the future career. These could be taken as useful resources to provide teachers.

Third, encouraging teachers to be reflective on their teaching brings positive effects to teacher’s raising awareness of language teaching and learning and language learners. They then become more systematic, planned and thorough in efforts to get answers for problems and changing actions, and have critical evaluation of the outcomes of these actions (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, Burns, 2009).
words, it should be done to encourage teachers to learn about their class. It is a process which teachers do classroom research to know about their learners and themselves, what cultural factors making up the context. Through the process of knowing about their class, teachers would explore what, why they are doing their work and what they want or need. And their motivation to teach with this class would be achieved (Holliday, 1994). In this way, supporting teachers to be reflective also contributes to the success of a teacher’s training program (Nunan, 1990). Therefore, it is worth helping teachers to be reflective practitioners.

In order for involving teachers in action research as discussed above, first, reflective skills such as noticing, analysing, problem-solving, hypothesizing and evaluating outcomes against objectives (Malderez and Bodóczky, 1999) should be provided to teachers through workshops. Then reflective writing skill by involving teachers in reflective journal writing should be encouraged. In order for this happening, as Burtons (2009) points out, it relates to the investigation into what kinds of published reflective writing teachers enjoy reading. Making use of the publications already available in this way could be a good start to develop reflective skills for teachers. Reading, reflective teaching and action research, as Mann (2005, p.106) argues, usually lead to sustained experience development of a teacher.

In terms of methodologies, action research can be carried out through oral processes such as video stimulated recall, seminars or post-lesson discussion groups as they work out in the current study. The teachers in this study had discussions after classroom observations and in the workshops, video-stimulated recall on their own teaching and their peers’ teaching. These processes as researchers (e.g. Wyatt & Arnold, 2012; Wyatt, 2014) indicate, could help teachers to think, explain and discuss activities they used (e.g. to what extents the activities support learners and classroom management strategies). They then reflect on the extent to which the activity stimulates learning and on their processes in planning the lesson. These could also be opportunities for teachers to ‘release feelings’, the room for re-evaluation (Leitch and Day, 2006). For example, teachers in discussions may feel free to talk about their working contexts or perceived impediments to apply new teaching methods.

Taking culture and contextual factors into consideration is another necessity for action research. As Borg (2006) argues, what teachers do can be constrained by contextual factors. In the context as in the current context, Vietnamese teachers preferred to work in groups and often do their job well in groups. Action research and reflection, therefore, is not necessary done individually. It can be done in groups
such as observing in groups (e.g. peer observations), sharing documents (e.g. designing and adapting materials and sharing in the group) and staff meetings for feedback. However, teachers need a mentor to support them to do the job and also to have a reliable evaluation on their work. Due to their more practical knowledge and profound experience, senior teachers can be appointed to fulfil mentoring role (Wyatt & Arnold, 2012), considering that these ‘teachers-becoming-mentors’ also require the provision of adequate support to achieve the additional knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for their new roles (Malderez, 2009, p.262). This could be done for the teachers in my context: the university managers can provide more training for teachers through more investment in teacher supervision. In particular, the teachers who have more profound experience are selected and provided more training to work as other teachers’ mentors. Furthermore, project-based teacher development, though it could be a challenge, should be a future goal for teacher development because it would provide opportunities to sustained reflection on practice for teachers (Burton, 2005).

13.3 Implications for school management
The importance of management support can be seen in any level of implications mentioned above. First of all, curriculum innovations require the school managers to capture, update and understand the need of learners as in 13.1. It can be done through taking use of the relationship with company and reading publications in this field.

Then, it is the manager’s role to understand what teachers need for a successful curriculum innovation implementation. For example, they should understand that teacher’s practice was influenced by contextual factors such as lack of time, large-sized classes, few opportunities to develop conceptions of CLT and CLT implementation. These factors contribute to the obstacles to the teacher’s materials design and using communicative activities. Further, it is hard to expect teachers to develop fully as reflective practitioners if they lacked management support. As for teachers to do action research, the assistance that teachers need includes time and distance to ask and answer searching questions such as ‘how’ and ‘why’ which is considered power of teaching for teachers (Barllert, 2009). They also need available and appropriate resources of publications for professional reading as well as support for mentoring and in-service training. All expect the school administrators to take their role.

Once understanding about CLT and what need for it, the school administrator would provide proper support for teachers. Some of their support could be:
• The relationship with the business is enhanced to update information for teacher staff the need of the business of the graduates;

• Time for the use of CLT is allocated satisfactorily in the curriculum such as more time for adapting materials and communicative activities to achieve communicative competence for learners;

• The active role of the administrators should also been shown in encouraging teaching staff to participate in workshops. Based on the administrators’ understanding and support, the workshops will be employed to work out for the goals of providing teachers proper training. The proper training would include training in terms of materials adaptation; new language teaching methods to help teachers to adapt the transition from traditional to CLT teachers and a guild to a process by which teachers can become reflective practitioners.

13.4 Conclusion

In summary, the research outcome hopefully becomes a useful resource for all stakeholders to use. Two more issues included in my conclusion are as follows:

(1) It is necessary to understand the stakeholders for implementing the outcomes of the research:

Firstly, I should learn to know about the company managers including their working experience and their tastes/attitudes of English learning. It is important because it could influence the success of the implementation. For example, an appropriate English course stemmed from my research outcomes to suggest to the companies may be denied if the companies are not be aware that they need to know about their employees’ need for training. Furthermore, it depends on company managers’ attitude, for example, whether they are open to the researcher’s ideas or suggestions. In my study, for example, some of the companies indicated the appreciation to have support from the research (e.g. the research outcomes in terms of the employees’ needs), whereas several of the companies might be not such appreciated. They seemed to determine that ‘we know what we need’. Secondly, not only company managers’ attitudes that I need to take into consideration for implementing the outcomes of the research, teachers and students also need to be noticed. For example, teachers need to be convinced in training courses/workshops on what I suggest, e.g, why they should consider a certain trend for their teaching practice among different other trends. Similarly, students need to know why English courses are changed in the way they are learning with in order to shape their direction for their English learning. They then would take communication skills seriously for their learning goals if they knew about the criteria for successful communication at the workplace. The more I understand about these
stakeholders (which I could need to do some more research), the more suitable methods I can apply to raise their awareness of the research issues related to them for a successful implementation of the research outcomes.

(2) Further research is suggested raised by the findings of the research. Firstly, as discussed earlier, there is a difficulty in assessing authentic materials. Therefore, more research such as research based on authentic transcripts of workplace talk (or corpus-based research using business English corpora) needs to be done to provide insights into features of authentic English at the workplace. This would contribute to develop a framework for more checklists for business English topics to support teachers to decide on the most suitable materials for their learners’ need. Through publishing these checklists, the practice of teachers, teacher trainers and materials writers hopefully can be improved (Chan, 2009).

Secondly, there are some limitations of the research that need to put into consideration for the findings. First, it is evident in a number of studies (e.g. Crosling & Ward, 2002; Freihat & Al-Machyomi, 2012) that graduates inadequately prepared for workplace communication was a problem worldwide. However, there have been a lack of studies of this field in Asian countries generally, and Vietnam specifically. UIT where the research took place was one of 8 state universities in Ho Chi Minh city which include IT training in the university program. However, there has been almost no research similar to my research to look at what needs to prepare graduates for workplace communication among these universities, despite annual reports of the real need of IT workforce emphasizing communicative skills (Vietnam National University, 2004). This poses a challenge for this study regarding the research discussion concerning whether the findings have been adequately compared to previous research or whether the results support or contradict previous findings. Second, the sample size of the participants in the study is quite small. Regarding the participant companies, the percentage of participants was about 6% of the joint-venture IT companies in Ho Chi Minh city where the research took place (the total is about 150, HCM-Business Associate, 2012 cited in Hoang Hai, 2012). However, the kind of companies which the study focused on, i.e. in hardware or software manufacture, is just about 80. It therefore made the percentage of participated companies go to 10% of the total. Relating to the teacher participants, the study drew on data collected from only five teachers for the research at the university, which was quite small number. However, the data collection through methodological procedures including different research methods (observations, interviews and survey) would support a deeper understanding and provide a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the cases of the five teachers. This could help to provide a clear and sufficient picture of phenomenon being studied for the reader to contribute as a co-analyst.
(Borg, 1997). Furthermore, multiple data resources could also bring meaningful explanations which are important in exploring beliefs, practices, and constraints (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). The possible misunderstandings in identifying the research issues, therefore, could be reduced.

Another limitation is that the research on the teachers’ development was just traced over a short period of 15 weeks. The scope of the study and time pressure made it unfeasible to trace development in longer period such as several years. Such longitudinal research can be valuable because it allows the use of prolonged engagement and persistent observations for more reliable research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and this may support growth in critical reflection for teachers (Wyatt, 2010a). This study’s findings suggest the need for further research in this area. It relates to the question of how teachers can be supported to get to deeper, critical levels of concern in the process to be reflective practitioners. It invites further interventions, observations and feedback in terms of teachers’ process in engaging action research. For example, support and observations with feedback on teachers designing materials with the two approaches on material development as proposed and discussed in 13.2.1 to meet learners’ needs at the workplace, making more innovations in teaching practice and how they reflect on these changes. Further research is also required in term of developing reflective skills that teachers would need and models of action research (Bartlett, 1990; Nunan, 1990) that would be appropriate to the current context. It closely relates to the need of supportive conditions and sound administration of mentors in which mentoring can occur. Mentoring in my context to help teachers develop noticing skills, professional thinking and learning from experience could be done through the process of supporting teachers to design materials and tasks. Using authentic documents of communicative behavior in the companies could facilitate this work.
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Appendix 1: Invitation letters to participants including the guarantee of confidentiality

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Vo Thi Hong Le (Researcher)
University of Portsmouth
School of Language and Area Studies
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth, U.K
E-mail:- ThiHongLe.Vo@port.ac.uk
Tel:-…………………………………
Date:…………………….

Dear Potential Participant

My name is Vo Thi Hong Le and I would like to invite you to participate in my research, evaluating the innovations made for English language curriculum in terms of materials design and teacher support for University of Information Technology (UIT), Vietnam National University. I am a postgraduate student at the University of Portsmouth in U.K undertaking research for the completion of my PhD.

**To Companies:** One part of my research is to gain information from companies by a face-to-face interview with human resource managers, and observations of employee behaviors in companies to attempt to determine what kind of English language competences business truly requires of candidates and to what extent the current innovations for English language curriculum concerning the study meet these needs.

**To Teachers:** One part of my research is to gain information from teachers by non-participant classroom observations and group interviews with teachers to identify how the teachers, who play a role in successful innovation implementation, are actually teaching with the designed materials. This supports the process of in-use and post-use materials evaluations carried out for the research.

By participating you will need to sign a consent form. This consent form will then allow me to transcribe the information anonymously that you have given me to be used and analysed for the completion of this PhD thesis, e.g. I may use quotes in parts of the main body of the PhD. Full transcriptions will be in the appendix of the thesis; however, I will not use identifying statements or data, so that it is anonymous and confidential. You have the right to stop at any time during this interview. You also have the right to withdraw from the study up until the point of analysis.
This letter was forwarded to you because you may be a suitable participant for the research in that you are an English teacher teaching at English language department, UIT. If this is not the case I apologise that this letter has been given to you on my behalf. No personal details have been forwarded to me.

If you would like to verify that my research is genuine please contact my supervisor Dr Mark Wyatt who will be able to help with any questions you may have, his contact details are as follows:

**Supervisor contact details**
Dr. Mark Wyatt (Supervisor)
University of Portsmouth
School of Language and Area Studies
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth, PO1 2DZ
Email: Mark.Wyatt@port.ac.uk

If you decide that you would like to take part in this research, please contact me, where we can discuss further a convenient time and place to meet and/or of any questions that you may have prior to agreeing to take part the study. Attached is an information sheet that may answer most of your questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Best wishes,

Vo Thi Hong Le
Appendix 2: Question guide for company interviews

A. QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH EMPLOYER
(To Human Resource Managers, Trainers)

I. About the company
Location of headquarters _________________________________
Countries which the company deals with or export to _________________________________

II. English that the company requires of their employees

1. Who do they communicate to?
   - Customers
   - Suppliers
   - Colleagues
   - Parent company
   - Subsidiaries
   - Other _________________________________

2. What are the nationalities of the groups of people do they speak to?
   - Native speakers (from?)
   - Non-native speakers (from?)
   - Mixed native/ non-native groups
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

3. What kind of English do you expect your employees use?
   - British English
   - American English
   - Vietnamese English
   _________________________________

4. What English proficiency do you require of your employees?
   - Elementary
   - Pre-intermediate
   - Intermediate
   - Upper-intermediate

5. Which of these areas do your personnel need to use English most in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contracts/ confirming plans</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General interest articles</td>
<td>Websites (please give example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist articles</td>
<td>Chat pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal business E-mails</td>
<td>Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More informal/ chatty e-mails</td>
<td>One to one meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Phone calls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What do you think it may cause the breakdown of the conversations of employees’ use of English?
   - Linguistic skills:
     + meet some difficulties to be able to understand in English (listening)
     + do not know enough English grammar,
     + do not know enough vocabulary,
     + not good enough at pronunciation (e.g. sounds, weak vowels, contractions)
   
   - Communication strategies such as making explanations, saying thanks or apology, etc.

7. How often do your personnel often use these communication strategies?
   Which of these below do your personnel use most in the workplace?

   + Making explanation, e.g. *That’s what I have done on this.*
   + Making checks: Confirmation checks, e.g. *So, you mean; Right*
     Clarification requests, e.g. *Sorry, which one are you talking about?*
   + Repeating information to ensure that he has been understood and to keep conversation go on., e.g. *I won’t have to finish it, will I?*
   + Using some ways of softening the impact of what the speakers say (e.g. *Well, Well actually, I think*) and use discourse organizers (e.g. *so, OK, right*) so that the hearers can follow the message easily.
   + Using functional expressions, for example: *Good morning; Sorry for letting you wait for long; There you are; It’s all right; Certainly, just a minute.*

8. How does it affect the employees’ success in conversations?

III. Your evaluation

9. Your evaluation of your employees using English in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making appointments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirming plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading specialist articles</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Which area of English (question 6, 7 above) do you think your personnel find the most difficult, and would most like to improve?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

11. What do you think your employees’ successful use of English would depend on?
   English education/ employees’ English in practice/

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

12. Do you have to retrain your employees in terms of English skills? How?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

13. What do you think the gap between English education at university and English proficiency that companies require from their candidates/employees?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
B. QUESTION GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWS

I. About you

Job title __________________________ Division/Department _________________________
Brief description of job ________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

II. Your using English in the company

1. Most frequent means of communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contracts/Confirming plans</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General interest articles</td>
<td>Websites (please give example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist articles</td>
<td>Chat pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal business E-mails</td>
<td>Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More informal/ chatty e-mails</td>
<td>One to one meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>Meetings of 3 or more people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business letters</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faxes</td>
<td>Making appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official notices</td>
<td>Others (please name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What are the nationalities of the groups of people you speak to?
   Native speakers (from?)
   Non-native speakers (from?)
   Mixed native/ non-native groups

   __________________________________________________________________________

3. Which of these people do you have to communicate English to?
   Customers
   Potential customers
   Direct boss
   Other superiors
   Subordinates
   Colleagues in same office
   Colleagues in other office (please state where)
   Suppliers

   Who do you find it most difficult to talk to/ understand and why?

   __________________________________________________________________________

4. Relationship in your company: friendly, neutral, formal?
5. How long have you been in this position? What would help you to communicate better (experience/studies)?

____________________________________________________________________________

6. What are some English expressions do you speak most at your workplace?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

7. What are some English expressions do you write most at your workplace?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

8. Which area of English do you find the most difficult, and would most like to improve?
   - Linguistics skills (listening, pronunciation, reading, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, writing)
     + Able to understand in English (listening)
     + Making correct English sounds
     + Lack of vocabulary
     + Writing effectively
   - Communication strategies (making explanations, making checks, using functional expressions such as saying thanks or apology).

Which of the above do you need help with/practise of (in order)?

____________________________________________________________________________

9. What do you find difficult when you try to communicate in English at your workplace?
   Please list some situations that you find most difficult here

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 3: Classroom observation checklists

Class: ______________________________________
Time: ______________________________________
Course book: ______________ Level: ____________
Teacher in charge: __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Comments ( Y/N = Yes/No and some notes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the task/the lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to learner’s experience (Contextualization)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s questions and instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher talk vs. student talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-S interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-S interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction/feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of task/lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments

Notes for student responses to question types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question number</th>
<th>Question types</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Inferential</td>
<td>Key word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: A lesson plan - English for waiters/waitresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level:</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Aims: | - To support learners to be aware of some aspects of spoken discourse concerning conversational strategies and pronunciation in context (English in restaurants).  
- To help support the development of communicative competence for learners. |
| Materials: | The transcripts of authentic English dialogues of Vietnamese learners of English working as waiters/waitresses in restaurants in Portsmouth; pictures of restaurants. |
| Time: | 60 minutes |
| Class size: | 40-45 students |
| A text-driven approach: | - Engagement is potential for learners’ cognitive learning process.  
- Language features to be studies are derived from authentic materials and consciousness-raising activity. |

1. **Activity 1** Warm-up (10 minutes)
   Purpose: aims at helping learners to achieve the mental readiness by activating connections to learners’ lives, by arousing attention and by generating visual images (pictures). The important point of this activity is to help the learners to gain a personal experience before going to the lesson.

   1.1 Tell learners to think about a street restaurant/ a restaurant they often/sometimes go to. Tell them to try to see pictures in their minds of some food and drink they often order in that restaurant when they go there.
   1.2 Play a game - **Hear and arrange** (adapted from Pronunciation in action by Linda Taylor (1993))
      - Tell the learners that they will arrange this set of pictures of food and drink according to instructions.
      - A set of 10 pictures illustrating problem sounds with words of food and drink is projected on the computer screen in the order as in Material 1.
      - Teacher calls out what is on one card at the time in a different order with the one shown.
      - The students arrange the picture according to the order (from 1-10) which they hear from the teacher (e.g, 1 sauce, 2 fried noodle, and so on); the teacher then checks with the whole class the correct arrangement.
   (This is also to prepare learners the discrimination and production of some problem sounds with words of food and drink in this lesson)

2. **Activity 2** (10 minutes)
   Purpose: This activity is given before learners get through the task. It is to help learners to do the task in multidimensional ways which facilitate personal engagement. This aims to get learners invest cognitive energy and attention in the learning process.
   Let learners talk about themselves so that teacher knows about learners’ attitude, feelings and about their expectations to learn the topic.
- Ask learners to think of a waiter/waitress working in their restaurants (the restaurant they are thinking about) and tell them to try to see pictures of their waiter/waitress in their minds, to see what he/she is doing, what he/she is wearing and to see what he/she talking to customers.

- Tell the learners to form pairs and to tell each other about their own time going to a street restaurant, talking to a waiter/a waitress to order food or drink. Tell them to describe the picture of the waiter/waitress in their mind and to express their feeling toward him/her; tell how they felt when they talked to that person.

- Show a picture of ‘in the restaurant’ (Material 2) on slide. Tell learners that this is the picture of customers who have just arrived and sat down. Invite students to think back over the picture of the waiter/waitress in their minds and discuss with their partner what the waiter would talk to the customers.

- Tell learners that they are going to see the extract and then listen to waiters talking to customers in a restaurant, and that as they doing that, they should try to see the picture of the waiter/waitress in their mind and to talk to themselves about the feeling toward the waiter.

3. **Activity 3 (10 minutes)**

   Purpose: Learners are invited to share with the others what the text means to them, to tell about their personal representation of it. It aims to activate the learners’ existing knowledge of the target knowledge and culture as well as awareness of the influence of their native culture when doing the task. Learners are encouraged to respond to the text based on their background knowledge before being helped to think more deeply about it.

   The authentic extracts of spoken English aim to provide learners comprehensible input to raise the awareness (conscious notice) of some aspects of English spoken discourse which will be detailed in next activity.

   - Bring the learners together and divide the class into groups of 4-5. Now give each group the two transcripts of 2 pieces of authentic spoken English (Material 3).
   - Invite learners to look at the transcripts and make a comparison. Tell learners to think back to the pictures of the waiter/waitress in their minds to decide what they think about the two waiters in the extracts and to answer these questions (written on the board to support the learners with their analysis).

     *Which waiter do you prefer? In conversation 1 or 2?*

     *If you were the customer, which waiter would you give a tip? Why?*

   - Bring the learners together as a whole class, a presenter of each group will tell their ideas and teacher write key notes on the board to share with other groups.

4. **Activity 4 (15 minutes)**

   Purpose: Keep learners’ engagement with the text by relating to their personal knowledge, take the learners back to the text and involve them in thinking deeply about the text to
learn new things by helping them to make discoveries themselves about the purposes and language of the text. This aims to achieve explicit understanding of language items and to develop critical and creative thinking skills for learners as well by allowing them to discover and make hypotheses about structures/rules of language use.

- Invite learners to look back at extract 2 and ask questions:
  
  Look at waiter 2: a) What language items do you see he uses that make it different with waiter 1? Do these language items relate to vocabulary and pronunciation only or some ways (strategies) to interact with customers? b) Why do you think this waiter use these language items/these ways?

- With question a, teacher writes down some examples given from learners.
- With question b, teacher supports learners discover conversational strategies waiter 2 used via learners’ discussion on the purposes of using these ways in waiter-customer conversation 2. For example:

  (a) It’s hot soup served with rice → Making explanation of the food to clarify purposes of the customer’s questions.
  (b) One noodle with beef → confirmations or clarification requests or repeating information for checking his understanding and to keep conversation goes on.
  (c) Thank you → Using functional expressions such as saying thanks (or apology) to respond appropriately and politely.
  (d) Right → Softening the impact of what he says to customers (e.g, Well, I think)
  (e) A, It’s → weak sounds and contractions of spoken English

- Invite learners to look back the extract to find out all the conversational strategies waiter 2 used and classify them according to (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e).
- Let student to listen to the conversations on tape

5. **Activity 5** (15 minutes) (Developing activity)

Purpose: Provide opportunities for meaningful language production based on what they have already stood from the text and on connections with their own lives.

Involves purposeful communication between learners and allow rehearsal for real-life conversation when learners can make it in their context.

The use of the designed materials for this activity (the menu) is to provide more opportunities for learners’ practice in the way that it could contribute to generate learners’ communication based on meaningful situations to make learners to speak English with each other.

- Give learners the menu (material 4) and ask them to think back over their own experience going to a restaurant. Invite learners to add some more dishes (and the price) which they like to the menu.
- Tell learners that they are going to role play with their partner as a customer and a waiter/waitress in the restaurant with the menu.
- Teacher moves around the room helping learners when they ask for assistance.
- Class hears some pairs of students performing their dialog. Teacher can audio/video record some of students’ versions (ask students who are willing to be recorded) to play for the whole class.
- Discuss, as a whole class, some difficulties students may meet concerning what they are learning with (e.g., communication strategies, pronunciation in context) from their practice. Learners can test their output via receiving feedback from their peers and teacher to modify their errors.

---

**Teaching materials**

**Material 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dry noodle</th>
<th>fried noodle</th>
<th>lime</th>
<th>slice</th>
<th>pork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fork</td>
<td>salt</td>
<td>sauce</td>
<td>fifty</td>
<td>fifteen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Material 2**

In the restaurant (A sample picture)
**Material 3**  \( W = \) waiter/waitress; \( C = \) customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation 1</th>
<th>Conversation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W1: Here's the menu.</td>
<td>W2: Morning. It's cold today, isn't it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Thank you. Can I have a noodle?</td>
<td>C2: Morning. Yes, it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: With beef or chicken?</td>
<td>W2: Are you ready to order food?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: With chicken, please.</td>
<td>C2: Yes, do you have a kind of hot soup or noodle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: You drink something?</td>
<td>W2: Yes, we do. It's hot soup served with fried rice and that is noodle with beef or chicken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Later. Thank you.</td>
<td>C2: Can I have noodle with beef, please?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Can I have a plate and an extra hot soup?</td>
<td>W2: Yeah, one noodle with beef. Anything to drink?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: (few seconds). Yes.</td>
<td>C2: A lemonade with lime, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Can I have the bill?</td>
<td>W2: Right, one noodle with beef and a lemonade with lime. Thank you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: £6.15</td>
<td>W2: There you are. Sorry for letting you wait for long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Sorry, 50 or 15</td>
<td>C2: That's all right. Thank you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W1: ...15</td>
<td>Do you have any chili oil or chili sauce?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: Here you are</td>
<td>W2: Yes, here it is. Chili sauce, is it OK?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Material 4**

You are given a menu in a Vietnamese restaurant. Role-play with your partner make conversations between a waiter/waitress and a customer in a restaurant, using conversational strategies so as to soften the impact of what you said, offer hearer’s engagement and maintain the conversations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A menu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear teachers,

The questionnaire aims to get information for helping us to understand your beliefs about language teaching and learning and language learners. There are no right or wrong answers. The information will be used for research purposes only. This serves the study titled “Supporting teachers to engage in English language curriculum renewal in Vietnamese higher education”. These are important questions in our field—especially at a time when language teachers are being encouraged to develop skills, expertise and creativity in regard to learner-centredness. This survey asks you for your views on these issues and will take about 20 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be very useful to hold an appropriate workshop supporting your teaching.

SECTION 1: LESSON PLANNING AND LEARNER CONSIDERATION

1. Here is the list of elements that constitute a lesson plan. Tick ONE box for each to give your opinion about how important it is to prepare for a ‘good’ lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Moderately important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. aim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. target structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. aids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. book material</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. timing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. interaction formats (e.g. Learners practise in pairs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. procedures (e.g. Give an example of dialogue orally → learners practise in pairs → some pairs present dialogue to class)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Here is the list of factors to be considered when you plan a lesson. What are your priorities? Give each factor a priority rating from 1 to 6 (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Priority rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Learners’ needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Learners’ level of ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Learners’ ages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. How to make the lesson interesting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The activities should be related to cultural context of learners’ groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Integrated skills teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Here is a list of characteristics of language learner. Tick ONE box for each to give your opinion about how important it is in making a good language learner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. is a willing and accurate guesser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. is willing to make mistake</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. constantly looks for patterns in the language</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. practices as often as possible</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. analyses his or her own speech and the speech of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. enjoys grammar exercises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. begins learning in childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. has good academic skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. has an above-average IQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4. If there are any other characteristics which in your opinion a learner must have to be called ‘good’, please list them here.

5. Here is a list of factors which affect learners’ motivation. Tick ONE box for each to give your opinion about how important it is in having an effect on motivating learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. the content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. learning goals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. activities and tasks in classroom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. teaching materials</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. learning styles</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. teaching-learning environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. asking questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. error correction/ feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. If there are any other factors which in your opinion a teacher should take into consideration for learners’ motivation, please list them here.

SECTION 2: LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Tick ONE box for each statement below to give your opinion about the general attitude to teacher-student and student-student interaction in classroom.
2. Look at the following statements. These statements describe classroom behavior that could be positively or negatively valued. Tick ONE box for each to give your opinion about whether it should be encouraged or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Should be encouraged</th>
<th>Should be discouraged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Learners stand up when they answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Teachers praise correct answers from learners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Teachers repeat or paraphrase the question several times rather than silently wait for the student to formulate the response.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Teachers always provide model answers to learning exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Teachers follow lesson plans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Learners collaborate (pair work or group work) on answers to questions or exercises the teacher sets.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Learners suggest how exercises might be done.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Teachers correct learners’ errors as soon as they are made.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Teachers respond to learners’ error by correctly rephrasing what they have said rather than by explicitly pointing out the error.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Teacher’ talk is more than students’ talk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Teachers investigate the processes of their own classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3. Which teaching method or approach do you often use?

What do you understand by this teaching method or approach?
4. The following are examples of teaching approaches, classroom interaction and error corrections on the correct use of the simple present verb. Read each example and choose ONE answer A or B to say which of the two you choose to apply to the classroom and say briefly the reason for your choice.

4.1 Teaching approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher begins by presenting sentences about the teacher himself: “I get up at 6 every morning; I have breakfast at 6:30; my daughter gets up at 6:30”. The teacher then writes the sentences on the board and explains students the use of the simple present tense and the third person forms of the simple present verb. Then the class listens to a short dialogue illustrating the use of the simple present verb. Students repeat target items and practice sentences in pairs until they can say them correctly. Finally, students are provided a situation such as a role play, a simulation activity or a communicative task to practice the language items they have just learnt.</td>
<td>The teacher begins by getting students to sit down in their pairs and introducing a task - “Your routine”. Each student thinks and writes 3 sentences about his/her own routine in note form in one minute. (The teacher puts an example (I get up at 6 every morning) on the board). The teacher then tells all pairs to practice talking to each other before some pairs will be invited to tell the whole class; explains students that they must listen carefully to other pairs talking to see if they have any difference in their routines. Students in pairs tell the class their differences and the teacher writes these on board. Students then practice talking to other pairs about their partners’ routine using the simple present verb with third person (He/She gets up at 6). Finally, the teacher brings the class together and reviews the use of the simple present verb; students hear the recording and practise saying sentences correctly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please say briefly the reason for your choice here.

4.2 Classroom interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please say briefly the reason for your choice here.

4.3 Error correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students work individually. When a student is asked to talk about his mother’s routine, the teacher avoids letting him speak freely because this would allow him to make errors. The errors, therefore, are corrected right from the beginning to prevent the</td>
<td>The teacher sets a game: A student who can say 4 sentences with correct information about his or her partner’s routine will be the winner. Students work in pairs first to exchange information about the other’s routine. Then a volunteer each time will be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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formation of bad habits.

Student: Uh, in the afternoon, uh, she uh, she uh, cook dinner.
Teacher: She cooks.
Student: Dinner
Teacher: Every day she cooks dinner?
Student: No

invited to tell the whole class until it gets a winner.
The teacher makes brief intervention to correct the
student’s error.
Student: Quynh gets up at 6, uh, she eats breakfast
at 6: 30, uh, uh, she go to school at 7, uh,…
Teacher: You said “she go”. Look on the board. The
third person forms of the simple present
verb “she/he goes”.
Student: She goes to school at 7. She comes home
at 11. ..I win.

Please say briefly the reason for your choice here.

SECTION 3: TEACHING MATERIALS ADAPTATION

1. How frequently do you adapt your teaching materials you provided with?
   Never □  Rarely □  Sometimes □  Often □

   If you choose Rarely or Never go straight to Question 4 in this section

2. You said that you adapted teaching materials often and sometimes. Below are a number
of possible reasons for this. Tick those which are true for you.
   ‘I sometimes/often adapt materials because…
   a. It helps me to suit the needs of particular teaching context □
   b. It makes my teaching easier □
   c. Students like this and it motivates me □
   d. More chances to use a variety of different activities and tasks □
   e. I am interested in teaching with some extra materials □
   f. Other reasons (please specify) □

3. When adapting materials, what do you use to help you? (Tick all that apply)
   a. My own teaching materials □
   b. Web-based sources of ELT □
   c. Materials borrowed from the school English department □
   d. Reading published language teaching research □
   e. Other (please specify) □

   Now go to Question 5 and 6 in this section

4. You said that you adapted teaching materials rarely or never. Here are some possible
reasons for this. Tick those that are true for you.
   a. I am not interested in evaluating and adapting materials □
b. It is hard work ☐
c. I do not have time ☐
d. I do not have access to supportive resources for it ☐
e. I would rather use the materials provided by the school director ☐
f. Other reasons (please specify) ☐

5. How do you evaluate your teaching materials to see if they are used efficiently in class? Tick those that are true for you.
   a. ask learners ☐
   b. observe the class and make notes ☐
   c. ask other teachers ☐
   d. Others (please specify) ☐

6. In order to do materials evaluation successfully, what kinds of supports do you think you need? Tick those that are true for you.
   “In order to do materials evaluation successfully, I want to know about….
   a. criteria to evaluate materials ☐
   b. access to research book and journals on materials design ☐
   c. teaching in several different contexts ☐
   d. doing research on classroom (such as observing teachers and being observed, investigating on how learners work with the materials, etc..) ☐
   e. Other suggestions (please specify) ☐

SECTION 4: DOING RESEARCH
Tick ONE box for each statement below to give your opinion about the general attitude to research in your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers do research themselves</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The management encourages teachers to do research</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have access to research books and journals</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have opportunities to learn about current research</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers talk about research</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are given support to attend ELT conferences</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for doing research is built into teachers’ workloads</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers read published research</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Borg, S. 2009. English language teachers’ conceptions of research. Oxfordjournals)
SECTION 5: ABOUT YOURSELF

1. Your name: ____________________

2. Years of experience as an English teacher (tick ONE)
   - 0-4
   - 5-9
   - 10-14
   - 15-19
   - 20-24
   - 25+

3. Highest relevant qualification to ELT (tick ONE)
   - Certificate
   - Diploma
   - Bachelor’s
   - Master’s
   - Doctorate
   - Other

4. Type of institution you teach English in most often (tick ONE)
   - Private
   - State
   - Other

This completes the questionnaire. Thank you for taking time to respond.
Vo Thi Hong Le, School of Languages and Area Studies, University of Portsmouth, UK.
FORM UPR16
Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please complete and return the form to Research Section, Quality Management Division, Academic Registry, University House, with your thesis, prior to examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information</th>
<th>Student ID: UP 624852</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Name: Vo Thi Hong Le</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department: Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>First Supervisor: Dr. Mark Wyatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date: (or progression date for Prof Doc students)</td>
<td>14 September, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Mode and Route:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPhil</td>
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<td>MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrated Doctorate (NewRoute)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof Doc (PD)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Thesis: A Study of the Extent to Which University English Education Fulfills Workplace Requirements for Vietnamese Graduates and of the Extent to Which Action Research Can Lead to Improvements in University English Education</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis Word Count: 82 032 (excluding ancillary data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study.

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIIO Finished Research Checklist:
(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Candidate Statement:

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):</th>
<th>12/13:04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed: (Student)</td>
<td>Signed: (Student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: 30/03/2015</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have not submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain why this is so:

Signed: (Student)