

# **Teaching English in Vietnam: Improving the Provision in the Private Sector**

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**by  
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## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Son Thanh Le, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Teaching English in Vietnam: Improving the Provision in the Private Sector* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, charts, appendices, and references. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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Signature: .....

Date: .....February 11th, 2011.....

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMES	Adults Multicultural Education Services
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BANA	British and North American
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English Examination
CHEER	Cultural, Health, Education, and Environment Resources
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESC	English Speaking Club
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FCE	First Certificate in English Examination
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GE	General English
GTM	Grammar-Translation Method
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILC	Independent Learning Centre
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NEC	National Education Curriculum
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESEP	Tertiary, Secondary and Primary
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite the growing need for communicative English skills suited to employment in the fast developing context of Vietnam and government policies stating the will to upgrade delivery of English language within the education system, traditional grammar translation teaching methods still prevail. Many educators are unclear about the concept of “communicative teaching” and its implementation within the Vietnamese context where overly large classes, poor equipment, out of date teaching materials, inadequately trained teachers, and written grammar-focused government examinations are the norm. As a result, young people are increasingly turning to private English language centres to help fill their communicative English gap in the hope of gaining employment in the newly developing sectors. However, as this study shows, despite the overwhelming desire of these students to learn in ways that assist them to practice spoken English, few of these private centres are able to satisfy their stated wishes due to teachers’ lack of knowledge and experience, and concern for the government grammar and vocabulary based examinations required for certification of English. In this context, this thesis aims to help fill the gap by designing an ideal model of an English language center suited to delivering world class communicative English language courses in the specific context of Vietnam.

Chapter 1 emphasizes the need for policy change focusing on communicative approaches to English language teaching and learning in Vietnam. Chapter 2 provides a brief review of the history and development of communicative language teaching in Asian countries in relation to English language teaching in Vietnam. Chapter 3 describes the processes of data collection using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to develop three case studies. Chapter 4 outlines the process of data collection through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the case study results, discussing the findings of each case study and answering seven aspects of the key research question. Chapter 6 identifies the key issues identified to draw up a draft model of an ideal English language centre in accordance with a review of relevant literature. It also discusses the responses and suggestions of a

panel of Vietnamese experts to the draft ideal English language centre. Chapter 7 describes the redrafted ideal English language centre modified to suit these comments and suggestions. In conclusion, Chapter 8 discusses the outcomes of the study, provides suggestions for future policy, practice and research, and possible constraints and feasible solutions.

# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Since 1986, English has been widely chosen as a foreign language to study in Vietnam, thanks to the ‘Open Door’ policy issued by the former General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh, marking changes in the Vietnamese economic system and leading to changes in teaching and learning foreign languages, mainly the English language. Further to these changes, in late 1993 Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued a policy of educational reform to meet the demand of the market economy. One of the factors of this reform included increasing the enrolment for English language training programs because Vietnamese people needed to communicate in English at their workplaces. In addition, the Prime Minister (Government of Vietnam, 1994) signed an order requiring government officials under 45 years of age to study a foreign language. More importantly, it required government officials to be able to communicate in a foreign language, preferably English, by 1997. Indeed, Tri Binh (2001) reported, “When Vietnam embarked on economic reforms in 1986, making a major shift from a centrally-planned economy, it prompted a nation-wide rush to learn English, economics, and business management. English-language classes were crammed with not just students but also professionals such as doctors and engineers as well as retired government officials, senior police, army officers and diplomats” (cited in Kam, 2004, p.1).

When Vietnam became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1995 and the 150<sup>th</sup> member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 15 November 2006, these changes saw a huge number of foreign investors and visitors welcomed to Vietnam which led to many opportunities for Vietnamese people to access good jobs with good pay. Vietnam has also gained significant attention from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), much of which requires communication in the English language (see Appendix 1).

The third TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) conference was held at Thong Nhat meeting hall in combination with the English and Vietnamese American Association on 26/7/2008. The conference’s theme was “From

the Objective Examinations to the Purpose of Communication” signaling the importance of communicative approaches to teaching English. It was addressed by world famous researchers including Andy Curtis, Alan Maley, Ian Walkinshaw, Clyde Fowle, Bruce Veldhuisen, Paul Grainger, Stephen Thomas and David Nunan, and had an attendance of over 700 Vietnamese teachers of English as well as people who were interested in English teaching and learning nationwide in Vietnam. At the conference, Dr. Curtis (2008), director of the English Language Teaching Unit at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, stressed “I encourage English teachers in Vietnam not only to help their students pass examinations but also to use English as a means of communication. If they can do this, English will be useful for learners”. The conference’s theme and Dr. Curtis’ emphasis reminded the researcher of his own unforgettable memory of learning English as a foreign language in grade 11. It also set the theme for this thesis of searching for communicative approaches to English language teaching in the centres I observed based on my analysis of and clear preference for that approach.

### **1.1. Need for policy change in English language teaching and learning in Vietnam**

The year was 1990 - four years after the ‘Open Door’ policy was issued 20 years ago. The researcher had started learning English as a foreign language at school when he was in grade 6 in 1985. During secondary school (years 6-9) and high school (years 10-12) years, his results of English language subjects were from good to very good (see Appendix 2). One day in English class at grade 11, his teacher who was undertaking a teaching trial in which English teachers were required to speak English (conducted at the former Centre for Foreign Studies of the University of Agriculture and Forestry, Thu Duc district, Ho Chi Minh City), suddenly asked him the question “What’s your name?” It was a shock for the researcher because he did not know what she was asking. He was so embarrassed that he was standing still and looking at her without a word; he could feel his ears and face become red. The teacher also asked him the number of students present and who were absent on that day, as the

researcher was the roll keeper. It was the first time in his life that he had heard a teacher use English to communicate directly with a student, as Vietnamese students studied English only for the purpose of passing formal examinations to move to further study (Denham, 1992, p.65). As a result, English words were being produced according to Vietnamese pronunciation, where for example ‘you’ /ju:/ would be noted that /du/ on top of the word. In this way students could remember the way to pronounce the text in the reading period, and also remember the meaning of words for translation. They could also remember by spelling words in the Vietnamese way, such as ‘vocabulary’ /və'kæbjuləri/ being written as / vô cá bự lại rẻ / on top, and remembering patterns and sentence structures to complete grammar points. English tests were designed in a style that consisted of reading comprehension and knowledge of linguistics (see Appendices 3a & 3b). As a result, after six years of learning English under the general education curriculum of three 45 minute lessons each week, students could not even communicate in English with others in basic daily life situations.

Twenty years later, despite the ‘Open Door’ policy and endless input and encouragement to improve TESOL, the younger generation’s foreign language learning outcomes are not much different. In 2006 Ha Thi Thieu Dao, the Ho Chi Minh Banking University, reported that Vietnamese students’ English proficiency levels were evaluated at the lowest of all countries in ASEAN (2006). National English certificates - Levels A, B and C (elementary, intermediate and advanced levels, respectively) are standard tools for evaluating students’ English proficiency. Pham Thanh Truyen (2008), a third year student of the Foreign Faculty at the University of Technology and Education Ho Chi Minh City states that most of those who achieve National English certificates at all levels are unable to produce a perfect sentence. In addition, Huy Thao (2006), vice principal of Luong The Vinh high school addressed that although some students are very good, achieving scores of eight or more out of ten in English examinations, they fail to take part in oral communication. Hence, this failure in education has motivated the researcher to focus on finding positive ways to help Vietnamese students of English not find themselves

in the same situation; I am strongly motivated to search for what can be done and how English should be taught so that the language needs of Vietnamese students can be fully met in the current era.

As “the last 50 years have witnessed the rise of English from an international language ... to the position of the first truly global language in the history of the world” (Hung Tony, 2004, p.33), the need for English in Vietnam has increased significantly. Due to requirements including increasing foreign companies, expanding international trading relations and the growing tourist industry and number of students undertaking overseas study, English is now taught not only in general education levels and university levels but also in most foreign language centres. This means that the needs and requirements of Vietnamese learners have changed. In the past, students only wanted to be good at grammar and gain as much vocabulary as possible so that they could read, understand and even write in English. Nowadays, English is needed for daily communication and employment. Indeed, to improve English communication skills, To Minh Thanh (2006) (member of the Examination and Evaluation centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities) stresses that it is very important for Vietnamese students of English to be taught good listening and speaking skills.

Despite the need for oral communication skills in Vietnam, in the government sector most teachers continue to apply grammar-translation methods in English classes (Le Van Canh & Barnard, 2009; Tomlinson & Bao Dat, 2004; Le Van Canh, 2002). In both secondary and tertiary levels, the MOET curriculum is exam driven, being geared to the examination of grammar, reading and translation; the emphasis still remains on grammar rather than on communicative competence (Denham, 1992). However, Hoang Tuy (1999, p.79) and Pham Hoa Hiep (1999, p.5) stressed that the exam-driven instruction, teacher-centred language teaching method in Vietnam produces students who may achieve the highest grades in examinations, but fail to communicate effectively in real-life situations. In addition, Hoang Van Giang (2000, p.1) added that Vietnamese students feel embarrassed, confused, and lacking in confidence in terms of communication skills. To Minh Thanh (2006), member of the

Examination and Evaluation Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, noted that as Vietnamese students' pronunciation increases in importance, English training curricula at university levels mainly focus on vocabulary, grammar structures and reading comprehension skills. In short, when learners attend English classes, they just listen to their teacher's explanation of vocabulary, language points, and the meaning of texts, finish tasks provided and sit for final examinations (Viet Bao, 2007; Tuoi Tre Online, 2005). The researcher for the current study understands and accepts the value of communicative approaches to English language teaching and aims to investigate its use in three private English language centres in Vietnam (see Section 1.2).

Recent international conferences on teaching and learning English held in Vietnam (including the British Council third and fourth National VTTN English Language Teaching conferences of 2005 and 2006 with the themes 'Creativity in English language teaching' and 'Learning English in a changing world', respectively) have emphasized the importance of using updated approaches in teaching English in Vietnam. In addition, in August 2006 Hue university and a non profit organization CHEER (Culture, Health, Education, and Environment Resources) also held an academic conference on 'Teaching English in the <sup>21st</sup> century: Opportunities and Challenges'. Tran Van Phuoc, Principal of Hue University, noted that most Vietnamese teachers of English have considered the 'communicative approach' as a main tool to apply in their teaching, and this has led to some fruitful results, especially among young teachers. However, he reveals many difficulties in implementing this approach in the wider Vietnamese context (2006).

In the private sector, the situation is more flexible however, as these schools can choose their own teaching materials and types of assessment in order to attract good business in English language provision. For this reason, private English classes have been mushrooming in Vietnam. Do Huy Thinh (2006, p.2) points out that "English has undergone explosive growth, hundreds of language centres have been established all over the country with an overwhelming majority of Vietnamese learners studying English". In addition, according to Nguyen and Buckley (2005, p.1), "English

Language centres have been mushrooming around Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) at a rate of about 100 new centres per year”. People can see courses and examinations advertised everywhere. Many of these course advertisements offer a communicative approach and training for international assessment of the four-macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The majority of these private centres operate in the evenings and teach both adults and children. Students’ specific reasons for paying to study English vary, but broadly speaking we can assume that they desire the more communicative outcomes advertised by the centres. Unfortunately, many students still finish these courses with national language certificate levels A, B or C, assessed and recognized in the Vietnamese educational system nation wide, without being able to effectively communicate orally in English. As these English language training institutes also evaluate students’ performances according to the national system, they experience the same shortcomings in oral communication (Nguyen Duc Nghia, Deputy Director of National University-Ho Chi Minh City, 2006).

As a point of comparison, the researcher’s observations and experience when teaching English at Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) found differences between newly arrived learners and immigrants who had been in Australia for long time. New arrivals who had studied English before they came to Australia could write, do reading comprehension, and understand grammar but were not confident in communication, especially in their listening skills. People who had been in Australia for more than 10 years and worked in English speaking companies were very confident in listening and communication, but not in writing and reading. Why were there such differences? Generally, people who live and work in a certain language environment are influenced by that environment, so it is easy to understand that those who lived and worked with English speakers are able to listen and respond in English but have poor skills in grammar and reading exercises. Conversely, those who have studied grammar points and reading comprehension are good at these, but not at speaking and listening. Therefore, the researcher would like to consider more communicative ways of TESOL teacher training in Vietnam so that Vietnamese learners of English will be able to adapt to current social trends in which they need to



use English in communication, not just in their work and business but also for entertainment and travel.

Kim Lien (2006), Trinh Vu (2006) and Vu Thi Phuong Anh (2007) point out that Ho Chi Minh City has become home to the strongest movement towards learning English with the largest number of students learning and taking English examinations in Vietnam. However, they also point out that after years of learning English, both under the general educational system and in the private sector, students remain unable to use English communicatively or lack the confidence to do so. Hence, observing and considering the students' motivations, students' preferences, and methods used in teaching English in the context of school management, especially in private English language centres, are the priorities of this study.

## **1.2. Research question**

The aim of this research therefore, is to improve the effectiveness of EFL instruction among private sector providers in Vietnam in general, and in Ho Chi Minh City in particular. My key research question is:

“In the current Vietnamese socio-economic context, how can language learning outcomes in private English language programs be improved?”

In order to answer this question, my sub-questions include:

- 1) What are students' reasons for learning English?
- 2) What teaching methods are being used in the English language centres?
- 3) What are students' perceptions of the kinds of language teaching they need?
- 4) What are teachers' perceptions of how best to assist students to achieve their language goals?
- 5) To what extent are communicative language teaching approaches valued and used in classrooms?

- 6) What needs to happen so that communicative approaches rather than grammar-translation methods can become the norm?
- 7) What other improvements can private centres make to better meet students' English learning needs?

### **1.3. Contribution to knowledge**

Finding ways to improve ELT in Vietnam will be useful to managers of private English language centres by assisting them in making informed decisions on how best to develop their curriculum and manage their staff in facilitating teaching methods that meet the communicative needs of their students. In this way this study will contribute to the knowledge of learning and teaching English in Vietnam from the point of view of both students and teachers.

This timely study may also contribute to MOET's understanding of how to promote communicative competence within classrooms in the government sector which is currently constrained due its existing examination system.

### **1.4. Statement of significance**

Western researchers have so far conducted most research related to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL (English as a Second Language) context. Therefore, this research is significant because it adds to the growing body of research conducted by Vietnamese researchers, using a case study approach in Vietnam. More importantly, the Vietnamese participants in the case studies have experienced conditions and experiences that are different from those in other countries, so data collected will assist in understanding students' motivations and methodological preferences in learning English in the context specific to Vietnam. Teachers' perceptions of methods of EFL teaching and management experience in the private English sector specific to Vietnam will also be identified. Data analysis undertaken by a panel of Vietnamese experts to reflect the reliability and validity of this research

within the Vietnamese cultural context is also expected to contribute to the quality of English classes in the private sector of Ho Chi Minh City in particular.

## **1.5. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 1 deals with the general background of the study, contribution to knowledge and statement of significance of the study. In this chapter, the researcher reveals how Vietnamese society has been changing in all aspects since the ‘Open Door’ policy was declared in 1986. One of these changes that needs to be mentioned here is the foreign language movement, leading to English language currently being studied nation wide. As a result there have been many workshops on language teaching conducted in Vietnam given by local as well as foreign organizations to assist English language learning and teaching. Even so, many educators have noted that English competence, especially in listening and speaking skills, needs to be improved. Therefore, due to the poor quality of learning and teaching English language in Vietnam, the researcher has sought to find some solutions which can contribute to English language learning and teaching improvement in the current Vietnamese context. The improvement focuses on how to help Vietnamese learners develop their ability of using English in communication through a model of an ideal English language centre.

In the next chapter, the researcher describes the history and development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and focuses on factors such as teachers, students, motivations and materials contributing to the quality of CLT. He briefly explores the role of English and levels of CLT in Asian countries. More importantly, he shows the historical and cultural context of English language teaching and learning as well as some constraints in implementing CLT in Vietnam. The focus on CLT is in acknowledgement of the need identified earlier in Chapter 1 by Government, practitioners and researchers for increased communicative status in English in Vietnam.

## **CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Vu Van Phuc (1986), in Vietnam, English teaching has used different types of teaching methods such as the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), the Direct Method, the Reading Method, the Audio-lingual Method, the Cognitive Method, and the Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In fact, the direct method is mostly used in schools in which students' major is English while the GTM is the main method used in the others. Translation, lists of bilingual vocabulary, and the study of grammar are still essential in the teaching process. Therefore, the GTM is still popular. For those who read books and materials in foreign languages, the reading method is used in order to do their research. The Audio-lingual method has been used in Vietnam but it requires expensive teaching resources which are often not available. Because they are most familiar with it and materials are available, teachers tend to use GTM most frequently although CLT is growing in popularity due to acknowledgement that communication is the key in language use.

The GTM has been a deeply rooted teaching method used for teaching foreign languages in the Vietnamese education system because the goal has traditionally been "to develop the pupils' reading skills in the language" (Denham, 1992, p. 65). With GTM the language is learnt based on grammar rules which are used as the basis for translating texts into and out of the target language. Its focus is primarily on reading and writing, not on speaking and listening. Words are listed bilingually and students' native language is used to explain the meaning of texts. GTM also focuses on accuracy which helps students pass required written examinations (Richards & Rodgers, 1990, p.3).

However, GTM has some features which are not relevant to the current goal of foreign language study which is clearly to develop skills in communication. Since 1986, Vietnam has opened its doors and welcomed more and more foreigners and allowed Vietnamese people to visit other countries, with English considered as the most useful foreign language. Therefore, teaching methods need to be adjusted to

meet the needs of the society and its people through the use of communicative language teaching.

Hence, this literature review commences with a detailed discussion of CLT, followed by a more general overview of English language teaching throughout Asia, especially addressing impediments to the introduction of CLT, before considering the imperatives of this. This study is therefore located within the changing expectations around foreign language learning in Vietnam generally, focusing on the changing expectations of best teaching methods for achieving the changing purposes for learning English.

## **2.1. Communicative Language Teaching**

In the late 1960s, CLT approaches appeared in English language teaching in Western contexts, and expanded greatly throughout the 1970s. In fact, CLT became so popular that Harmer (1982, p.164) commented that “no self respecting teacher, materials designer, or applied linguist would think of teaching as anything else”. Savignon (1991, p.263) tells us that the reason for this popularity is that CLT met “the language needs of a rapidly increasing group of immigrants and guest workers and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behavior”. In other words, with the influx of migrants from non English speaking backgrounds, the goals of language study changed. No longer was it enough for people to study the rules of a language, people had to be able to use the language for real-life communication. Communication, rather than grammar, became the focus of language teaching, and in the communicative classroom, rather than translating texts, students had to “use the language, productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts” (Brown, 1994, p.245).

Underpinning this communicative approach to language teaching is the notion of communicative competence. According to Ellis (2000, p.696), communicative competence is “the knowledge that users of a language have internalized to enable them to understand and produce messages in language”. Brown (2007a, p.218) adds

that “recent trends have put less emphasis on structural and cognitive characteristics of communication and more on the myriad social, cultural, and pragmatic implications of what it means to communicate in a second language”.

One of the earliest theorists to investigate the notion of language competence was Chomsky who proposed a model of linguistic competence. Chomsky’s concept (1965, p.3) of communicative competence was that “linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance”. Chomsky (1965, p.4) also clearly distinguished between competence and performance: ‘competence’ refers to the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language which is important for linguistic study, and ‘performance’ is the actual use of the language in concrete situations. However, Chomsky’s concepts of competence and performance were criticized by many theorists. One of the theorists who had strong ideas about Chomsky’s concepts was Hymes.

Hymes (1972) proposed a concept of communicative competence that reacted against Chomsky’s notion which was limited to the knowledge of language use. Therefore, Hymes’ model, according to Hedge (2000) and Brown (2007a, pp.218-219) focused on both grammatical rules and language use. Hymes (1972) recommended, “.... not only to see languages as part of systems of speaking but also to see systems of speaking from the standpoint of the central question of the nature of sociocultural order” (p.70) and “Sociolinguistic description and taxonomy are joint conditions of success for understanding and explaining the interaction of language and social life” (p.71). Hymes believed that communicative competence encompasses conveying, interpreting and negotiating meanings interpersonally within specific cultural contexts.

Canale and Swain (1980, p.27) later refined the definition of Hymes by proposing a model of three distinctive components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Later, Canale (1983, p.6) added discourse competence. The first two components of competence, grammatical and sociolinguistic are related to use of the linguistic system, and the second two, strategic and discourse, are related to the functional aspects of communication (Brown, 2007a).

In relation to use of the linguistic system of a language, grammatical competence is concerned with “knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.29). Learners with good grammatical competence know how to use structures of language more precisely. However, sociolinguistic competence refers to “the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse” (Brown, 2007a, p.220) in order “to perform a particular function or express an intention clearly”. This is based on the social knowledge of how to choose when to use language forms so that they can achieve the aim of social interaction.

In the functional aspects of communication, strategic competence refers to “how to cope in an authentic communicative situation and how to keep the communicative channel open” (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.25). This includes both achievement and reduction strategies, the former indicating that learners try “to say or find ways of compensating for their insecure or inadequate knowledge of English”, and the latter indicating that learners avoid the forms they are not sure about and use what they know to limit misunderstandings. Hedge (2000) explains that “strategic competence is the way we manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals”. However, discourse competence is concerned with relationships between sentences (Brown, 2007a, p.220). It means that learners of the language know how to string sentences together and to take turn in conversations, how to keep the conversation going on, and how to develop or end conversations. To do this, learners need to acquire typical discourse markers in spoken and written forms.

Whereas previously grammatical competence was the sole focus of the traditional language classroom in Vietnam, language teachers now need to pay attention to building their students' competence in all four components of communicative competence. Over the years there has been much debate and argument about how to do this, especially in relation to the teaching of grammar. In reaction to the traditional grammar focused curriculum, some people have argued that there should be no need to teach grammar at all and that people will be able to just pick up languages as children do. However, it soon became clear to researchers that adults did not learn language in the same way as children for a range of reasons, resulting in a debate about how best to promote grammatical competence in the classroom alongside communicative competence. Moreover, as the aim of communicative classrooms is for students to be able to communicate outside that classroom, it is now recognized that communicative classroom learning must focus on the students' needs and goals, and be student-centred, conducted using a range of practical, authentic, and real life situations, focusing on both the linguistic and functional aspects of communicative language. In other words, classroom practice should be conducted under CLT and learner-centred curriculum which is "a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught" (Nunan, 1988, p.2). He also points out key elements in the learner-centred curriculum as follows: "initial planning procedures (including data collection and learning grouping); content selection and gradation; methodology (which includes the selection of learning activities and materials); and ongoing monitoring, assessment and evaluation" (p.4).

The collection of information about learners is essential in order to understand learners' needs and help them sit in their relevant level / interests. The content selection, an important element of a learner-centred curriculum, provides guidance on the selection of learning activities and materials. It is an ongoing discussion process between teachers and learners related to their needs, expectations, and preferred learning styles. Therefore, the deeper the relationships between teachers and learners the more likely the selection of content and methodology is suitable. For this reason,



learners should be encouraged to speak about their learning experiences and preferred learning styles. For low-level learners, it is possible to use bilingual assistance in order to support communication between teachers and learners. Methodology ideally consists of learning activities and materials which are negotiated between teachers and learners. The final element of the model is evaluation which parallels all curriculum activities and is separated from student assessment. The purpose of assessment is to determine whether the learning objectives have been achieved or not. Evaluation of the teaching and learning processes and materials is carried out in order to find out reasons why learning objective may or may not have been achieved (Nunan, 1988, pp.4-7)

Therefore, in order to contribute to English language learning and teaching improvement in the Vietnamese context in general and in the private sector in particular, communicative classrooms comprised of the elements below are considered the most effective way forward.

### **2.1.1. The roles of teachers and learners**

Lewis (2002, p.47) explains that when implementing communicative approaches to language learning, teachers “manage students and the environment to make the most of opportunities for learning and practising the target language”. It is generally considered (e.g. Jacobs and Hall, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001) that one way to maximize such opportunities is through the use of collaborative or cooperative learning activities in the classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.192) describe collaborative learning as an approach in which learners use cooperative activities such as working in pairs or small groups of learners, in order, as Jacobs and Hall (2002, pp.52-53) explain, to provide students with opportunities to share their ideas, express their opinions and debate with each other. They remind us that the benefits of incorporating cooperative learning activities into language teaching include less teacher talk, increased student talk, more negotiation of meaning, a greater amount of comprehensible input, a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, and greater motivation for learning (p.53).

Collaborative learning is a student-centred approach which, as Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.193) point out, provides opportunities for naturalistic language acquisition while at the same time enabling the teacher to focus the learners' attention on particular vocabulary and language structures. They also point out that the use of interactive tasks provides ideal opportunities for learners to develop communication strategies. Thus, it can be seen that student-centred collaborative learning assists in the development of students' overall communicative competence.

Lochana and Deb (2006, p.141) believe that nowadays (at least in Western contexts) teachers of language are aware of the importance of using student-centred approaches in teaching. Teachers believe that with this way of teaching, students can learn the target language in context so they can also effectively apply it to real situations inside or even outside the classroom. Additionally, Lea et al. (2003, p.322) point out some teachers' beliefs about student-centred learning: "reliance upon active rather than passive learning, an emphasis on deep learning and understanding, increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student, an increased sense of autonomy in the learner, an interdependence between teacher and learner", mutual respect within the teacher learner relationship and reflexive approaches to the teaching and learning process on the part of both teacher and learner.

In order to put these beliefs into practice, Littlewood (1981) advised that while students are involved in a communicative activity, teachers should take the role of the observer who walks around and is ready to give students advice or to solve their disagreements. He also mentions that teachers should help learners participate in classroom activities in which students divide into groups of four or five or pairs and conduct their interactions without teacher supervision. He observed that it is usually difficult for students and teachers to conduct learner-centred activities if they are unfamiliar with the procedure. He also suggests that for those who have never applied this activity, teachers can help students with clear instructions and relevant language before working in groups or pairs so that they can build up confidence and independence (pp. 18-19).

More recently, Green et al. (2002) have suggested that teachers should pay attention to the development of discussion skills, which, they maintain help students gain independence, confidence and self direction in their learning. They advise that students should have “opportunities not only to participate in discussion but also to observe, describe and evaluate the process of discussion” (pp.225-227). They also suggest that teachers should pre-teach students vocabulary related to the topic they are going to study through brainstorming and mind mapping. By doing this, students will know enough words to express their ideas and participate in discussion.

Brown (2007b, pp.235-237) points out that teachers have five main roles to play when implementing student-centred collaborative activities such as group work and pair work. First of all, they should make sure that students have enough classroom language so that they can follow teachers’ instructions. Next, teachers should choose group techniques relevant to students’ needs and levels. He suggests a range of techniques such as games, role plays and simulations, drama (more formalized form of role play or simulation), projects, interviews, brainstorming, information gap, jigsaw activities (special form of information gap), problems solving and decision making, and opinion exchange (pp.231-234). Then, teachers should plan group work following the steps: (a) introduce the techniques, (b) justify the use of small groups for the technique, (c) model the technique, (d) give explicit detailed instructions, (e) divide the class into groups, (f) check for clarification, and (g) set the task in motion (pp.235-237). After that, teachers should monitor the task in which they take the role of both facilitator and resource person. Lastly, teachers should help debrief the students so that they can ‘let go’ of the activity.

When changing from traditional to student-centred collaborative learning approaches, students as well as teachers must take on new roles. Breen and Candlin (1980) describe the learners’ role within CLT as “The role of learner as negotiator - between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning - emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he

should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way” (p.110).

In order to become interdependent, students must firstly be guided by teachers to be managers of their own learning process (Guo & Wills, 2005). Hedge (2000, p.36) explains that students can contribute to course design through telling the teacher their needs, negotiating the context, and monitoring the process; can contribute to activity design through exploring information needed or relevant for experimentation; can develop more independent approaches by continuing their searching and learning outside the classroom at home or in self-access facilities; and can take over their learning process by interacting throughout a lesson; and asking questions, with clarifications, suggestions and comments from both teachers and peers.

Indeed, students have the capacity to interact and support each other, and as Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain, in a collaborative learning environment “...students are expected to interact primarily with each other rather than with the teacher” (p.166). This capacity requires students to have confidence, their own motivation and positive attitudes to their study (Liu, 2007, p.128; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Therefore, it is true that students can get knowledge of the target language more quickly if they are familiar with the topic, in order to prepare for classroom activities and build up confidence, O’Dwyer (2006, p.234), Han (2007, pp.13-15). Also, Raof and Yusof (2006, p.148) recommend that students have extra learning hours engaging in in-depth reading, and enrich their knowledge themselves prior to participating in classroom activities. They can do this in a number of ways such as through the internet, library, TV, and DVD. By preparing themselves in these ways, students will have more knowledge of the topic they are going to study and discuss, be able to participate in classroom activities more easily.

### **2.1.2. Students' motivation**

As with all learning, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are important factors in determining the success of language learning. Intrinsic motivation is involved with factors within the individual while extrinsic motivation is concerned with what takes place outside. However, Lewis (2002), points out that the two, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, are not mutually exclusive as extrinsic motivation can open up opportunities for students and support the development of their intrinsic motivation. Harmer (2007) notes that students' intrinsic motivation is affected by such extrinsic factors as the goal for which students are learning; the society students live in and to what extent English is highly estimated; people around having the same enthusiasm about learning English; and curiosity to understand (pp.98-99). Similarly Harmer (2007, p.51) defines extrinsic motivation as the student's desire of achievement, for external reward or recognition such as the need to pass examinations, the hope to get a job, or the dream of future travel.

Lepper (1988) noted that students with intrinsic motivation have their purpose of learning "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes" (pp.289-309). Harmer (1991) and Lewis (2002) also agree that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in stimulating students to focus on their learning process. In order to foster intrinsic motivation in English language classrooms, Brown (2007b, pp.94-95) asks teachers to help their students understand that only their own will and desire can help them deeply engage in their learning process and achieve their goals. He says that students should take charge of setting up their own goals and learning strategies initially with their teachers' support.

In short, in order best to assist students' engagement, teachers should use communicative activities in which teachers pay attention to students' interests and needs (Stribling, 2003; Holt, 2001) as well as allow them to contribute their choices in classroom activities. By doing this, students will be involved more in real life communicative purposes and build up their motivation.

### **2.1.3. The roles of teaching materials**

As well as motivation, materials are essential in the promotion of communicative language use, with Nunan (1988, p.98) and Sheldon (1988, p.237) describing them as being at the heart of any CLT program. Richards and Rodgers (2001, pp.168-170) point out that in order to implement communicative approaches, a wide variety of text-based materials, task-based materials and realia are required.

According to Brown (1994, p.67), CLT textbooks are normally designed in the pattern of a notional-functional syllabus that provides opportunities for students to interact with others. Therefore, a typical lesson with CLT textbooks might include dialogues, drills, role plays, multiple choice exercises on functional conversations, and discussion activities.

Razmjoo (2007, p.127) and Crawford (2002, p.88) emphasize the roles and benefits of textbook materials. Firstly, textbooks can offer grammatical and functional frameworks that provide for the common needs of a group of students. Secondly, textbooks help students and teachers. Students can benefit from the materials not only at school but also at home where they can go back and revise what they have studied so far. For teachers, well designed teaching materials can help them be more responsive by saving them much preparation work and allowing more time to meet students' needs. Thirdly, textbook materials do not necessarily prevent creative spin-offs in the classroom into other activities. Hence, Razmjoo (2007, p.127) notes, "textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions - public schools; colleges and language schools-all over the world".

In addition to textbooks, the use of teacher-designed text based materials can be very effective in stimulating communication in the classroom. According to Crawford (2002, pp.84-87), Savignon (2002), Cunningsworth (1995, p.7), and Scarcella and Oxford (1992), there are some basic principles in designing effective teaching materials, for example: language needs to be functional and contextualized within the CLT frameworks; language development requires student engagement in purposeful

use of language; language use should be realistic and authentic; classroom materials should usually seek to include an audiovisual component; students need to develop the ability to deal with written as well as spoken genres; effective teaching materials should be designed to meet the needs of students and aims of the program to foster student autonomy; materials should be flexible enough to allow for individual and contextual differences; and learning needs should engage students both affectively and cognitively.

In complementing well designed text based teaching materials, task-based materials can include exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, and student-interaction practice booklets. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), these materials provide “a variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities” (p.169) in which students communicatively participate.

Other complementary materials include realia, real and concrete objects; which can be seen, touched and described. These are used in classrooms to illustrate and support students’ understanding. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.170), they might include money, signs, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, stationery, wall clocks, phones and all visual sources used to assist communicative activities in the learning process.

In order to make teaching materials work for both their students and themselves, it is generally considered (Brown, 2007b, p.188; Lingley, 2006, pp.124-125; Richards, 2001) that they should be developed or adapted accordingly. In other words, teachers should make teaching materials work for both their students and themselves.

In short, both teachers and students play important roles in CLT classroom practice. Teachers manage students and the environment in which language is learnt and practiced through collaborative or cooperative learning activities while students are negotiators. In other words, student-centred approaches are applied throughout

classroom activities where students are encouraged to state their preferences and to lead activities. Moreover, motivation also plays an important part in language learning which requires students' self recognition of their own goals and teachers' support. The third element contributing to a CLT framework comprises the materials and resources available. These three, teachers' management of the classroom environment, students' motivation to learn and materials available are important points for consideration in evaluating CLT practice.

## **2.2. English in Asian countries**

English is now considered the defacto language of Asia (Krasnick, 1995), and according to Kachru (1996), the number of English users and their interest in learning English in East Asian countries is remarkable. Therefore, in order to provide a context for the understanding of CLT in Vietnam, this chapter briefly overviews the growth of English language in the region.

### **2.2.1. Role of English in Asia**

Kirkpatrick (2006, pp.22-23) notes that there are more non-native speakers of English than there are native speakers of English, with English being a communication tool that is used more between non native speakers of English than native English speakers, particularly in communications between Asian countries. However, as this communication is particularly important for interchanges related to education and business, the cultures and backgrounds of the various people becomes an important issue, perhaps even more important than knowing the cultures and backgrounds of native English speakers. Kirkpatrick also points out that if English is primarily used as the mode of communication among Asian countries, understanding the way those people use English is more important than perfecting the way native English speakers speak.

Factors such as business, trade, employment, education and tourism have contributed to the growth in English language teaching and learning in many places, including in



Vietnam, the focus of this study. Kam (2002) notes that as, English continues to be used and developed in the region due to being considered the most powerful language; most Asian countries have introduced English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum, even at primary school levels. The only reason that others have not yet introduced it to that level is due to shortage of teaching staff. He believes that in the future, people in the region will communicate in English easily, but in order to achieve this there should first be enough competent teachers, and that communicative language teaching and skills integration will have been the main focus for several years.

Kam and Wong (2004a, p.6) note, “As an administrative language in regional, international and multinational organizations and in trade and industry and modern communication, English is spoken by millions in East Asia, although its specific role varies from country to country”. They also strongly point out that “English Language Teaching is flourishing in East Asia” (2004b, p.455). They show us that in China’s secondary education the ratio of English learners to those of other foreign languages is 99 – 1, with English being used for instruction in some subjects at university level, including information technology, finance, economics and law. Moreover, in Malaysia people expect English to be used as the medium of instruction for all subjects at school. The Department of Education and Culture of the Philippines has reconstructed its educational curriculum with increased time for English teaching, and in South Korea English is used for public signs alongside its own language.

In summary, English has now spread to such an extent that it is seen as “the global language” (Crystal, 2003, p.1). English is not only used for those who are originally from English speaking countries but also for those who are from non English speaking countries, particularly in Asia. Therefore, ESL or EFL teachers in many Asian countries including Vietnam, now feel the need to research the best methods of teaching to ensure full communicative competence to their students (Pham Hoa Hiep, 2005, p.1).

### **2.2.2. Levels of CLT in Asian countries**

Recognising the important role of English language in the Asian region and worldwide and the effectiveness of CLT in enabling learners to communicate more effectively, CLT has recently been introduced in language education systems in Asian countries. However, in some countries CLT has been successfully implemented, whereas in others it has not been as expected.

For example, Singapore has strong links to the English language due to its British colonial past. In fact as British English is the first language in the country, many language schools have opened to welcome overseas students, mostly from regional areas, to study English. As Mee (2004, pp.369-370) notes, “The demand for English at all levels is growing and private language schools are mushrooming to offer English to an increasing number of foreigners coming to Singapore for English immersion”. In Singapore English is the medium of instruction in its educational system. However, Lim (2004) notes that although there have been changes in ELT in Singapore’s education system, the syllabus still focuses on grammar as an important factor in English teaching and learning. According to Lim (2004, p.390), “the ability to speak, write and present effectively in internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture is a critical part of a pupil’s proficiency. The study of the grammar of English, its structures and language conventions, including spelling and punctuation is; therefore, an important aspect in the learning of English” (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001a, pp.6-2). Nevertheless, while grammar is considered important, language use leading to effective communication is no less important as “pupils need to know how to communicate fluently, appropriately and effectively in internationally acceptable English. They need to understand how the language system works and how language conventions can vary according to purpose; audience, context and culture, and apply this knowledge in speech and writing in both formal and informal situations” (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001a, p.4).

Similar to Singapore, Kam and Wong (2004b) have noted that English plays an important part in Brunei's educational system because of its links with England dating from its colonization in the late 1800s. Therefore, English is mainly used in schools, courts and the mass media. Textbooks in Brunei are imported from overseas, mainly from England because of its colonial history. Many subjects including Science, Mathematics, Geography, History and English are taught in English, so it is very important for students to have the language levels to cope. Furthermore, the new English language syllabus focuses on the communicative approach; teaching and learning of English are encouraged to be in a more interactive, meaningful and enjoyable way. In order to support the focus, the Ministry of Education launched computer projects for primary schools in 1999 and high schools in 2001. Clearly, English teaching in Brunei has moved from a passive mode of learning to an active and creative mode of learning and communication (Martin & Abdullah, 2004, pp.91-98).

According to Foo and Richards (2004) and Pandian (2004), when Malaysia was a British colony, English was introduced as the medium of instruction in the primary and secondary schools. With national independence, Bahasa Malaysia was used as the medium of instruction in all schools. More recently, the Education Ministry of Malaysia has called for increasing students' English proficiency especially since science and technology have become more globally focused. Now, some universities and colleges of science, engineering and medicine use English as the medium of instruction. Therefore, Malaysia attracts foreign students who come to undertake further studies in the common language of English.

English language is a second language in the Philippines and foreign students also go there to learn English (Magno, et al., 2009) with English being well established in its education system, but unlike Singapore and Brunei, its links are with America. Filipinos have been provided with native American teachers and instructional materials since the American occupation early last century. The development of English language was so successful that English was also used as the medium of instruction for subjects other than English in Philippines schools (Martin, 1999;

Gonzalez, 1997). However, following World War II, the Americans left the country and a Bilingual Education Policy was introduced in 1974 with school subjects designed to be instructed in English (Science, Mathematics, and English) or Filipino (the rest). Since this time students have preferred to use Filipino for their communication, and teachers to use Filipino in the teaching of various subjects. However, quality instructional materials are not continuously supported and training for teachers is not regularly scheduled. As a result, despite a long history of ELT, teachers in the Philippines still use traditional methods and teacher-centred approaches, even though the curriculum is designed to focus on student-centredness in the teaching and learning process (Castillo, 2004).

Due to its French colonial past, Cambodia provides an example of an Asian country with weak historical links to the English language. However, although its demand for English in the future will be much higher due to globalization in the region and its relations with nearby countries, Pit and Roth (2004) note there is no clue to foresee the future of ELT in Cambodia. If ELT curriculum and methods are to be improved, due to its poverty, Cambodia will need external assistance so that it can continue going with its ELT renovation from traditional French grammar based rote learning practices to CLT. Luckily, recent research (Moore & Bounchan, 2010) found that English usage has spread and evolved dramatically in Cambodia since early 1999 and the development continues.

Similar to Cambodia, Laos also has a history of French colonization and Laos was a member of French speaking group of nations and membership requires Laos to continue considering French as an official foreign language. Therefore, French remains as a compulsory language in secondary schools (Phouthonesy, 2009). Teaching and learning English language has recently been paid much attention by the Lao government which, with aid from donor countries, the number of top officials who can speak English is to be increased so that they can participate in regional and international conferences. However, as in Cambodia, the teaching and learning of English language has not been successful for many regional school learners because of the geography of the country in which people live mostly on agriculture (Goh &

Vonechith (2004); Phouthonesy, 2009). Furthermore, Phouthonesy points out the shortage of qualified English language teachers, suitable textbooks and audio-visual teaching aids is leading to a consequence that only few graduates are able to speak, read or write English (2009).

Myint and Poe (2004) reveal that despite earlier colonization by France, English has long been the only foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in the Myanmar educational system, and introduced at kindergarten level. In 2002, in conjunction with a 30 year plan, papers on reforming curriculum by upgrading the teaching of English were presented in order to promote English language proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.6). However, due to established habits of traditional methods in which teachers use mother language to explain the meaning of words and requiring students to participate in rote learning, teachers have difficulties in implementing CLT in their classroom. Based on its role in economic and social development, ELT in Myanmar also needs to change from a reading and writing focus to speaking and listening, but as they say (2003, p.324) “Habits die hard”. On the other hand, science subjects are taught in English as the medium of instruction for all higher institutions (Fen, 2005).

Originally a Dutch colony, Nur (2004) points out that learning and teaching English language in Indonesia have been largely unsuccessful due to a lack of government attention. Although English is introduced at primary school level, it is not considered as a compulsory subject. In high school, it is a compulsory subject to be taken at students’ final examinations, but a survey conducted in Indonesia on the development of ELT says that generally Indonesian students lack motivation for learning English, do not receive enough resources, and are not able to communicate in English (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Dardjowidjojo (2000, p.21) points out five reasons leading to such failures in the English language learning process: “(a) large class sizes, (b) teachers with low levels of English proficiency, (c) the low salary of government English teachers, (d) the lack of adequate preparation to teach the new curriculum, (e) and cultural barriers”. Therefore, a change in government priorities and increased assistance will be needed to improve CLT in Indonesia.

According to Chiou-Ian (2004), English has been introduced into Taiwan education as a required subject from year 7 and an additional subject at primary school level since 2001. However, students do not have high motivation as they just expect to pass their English examinations with little incentive to communicate in English. Teachers feel uncomfortable applying new teaching methods such as discussion, pair group and group work due to their concerns about classroom management and learning outcomes (Wu, 2009). In addition, at university level teachers help students study to pass their examinations; they focus on reading and grammar translation. However, following the expansion and development in Taiwan, there is a need of English communication worldwide and learning English have become popular for all ages.

Unlike the situation in Taiwan, however, Honna and Takeshita (2004, p.217) point out that learning and teaching the English language in Japan has been successful due to a good understanding of the role of English in development. For example, English is considered as the second official language in Japan; English was introduced into primary level from 2002 and English programs for junior and senior high school are focused on oral communication. “College students of English are informed of English as a cross-national and cross-cultural language”. Seeing English as a language for communication worldwide, high school teachers in Japan have renewed their attitude to embrace CLT as the way to improve ELT outcomes. In fact, teachers conduct communicative activities such as pair work and group work in the EFL classrooms (O’Sullivan, 1996).

Similar to Japan, Shim and Baik (2004) point out that English plays an important part in the official language training curriculum in South Korea. Korean people understand the role of English and are willing to achieve oral communication goals in order to communicate worldwide. Here, parents even send their children to private English institutions before they start first grade (90%). The government has changed its educational policy to meet the needs of the people, stating objectives for English education in the seventh NEC (National Education Curricula) as: “(a) develop a basic communicative competence that enables students to understand and use every day English. In addition, English education should provide students with appropriate

understanding of foreign cultures so as to further develop the Korean culture and introduce it to foreigners; (b) allow students to develop an interest in English and then develop the ability to communicate in English; (c) allow students to communicate naturally on everyday conversation topics; (d) allow students to understand a variety of information from foreign countries and enable them to make use of this information; (e) allow students to renew their understanding of the Korean culture through their understanding of foreign cultures and thus develop an appropriate view of the world” (cited in Shim & Baik, 2004, p.245).

However, despite the positive role of ELT in Korea, Jeon and Hahn (2006, pp.136-137) point out that most Korean teachers of English still use traditional teaching methods in their classrooms settings. Jeon and Hahn suggest several reasons why teachers hesitate to use task-based methods: (1) teachers do not have enough knowledge and confidence in applying the methods, (2) teachers do not like to face some new disciplinary problems in using task-based methods, and (3) teachers would need to redesign teaching materials to make the available textbooks relevant to students’ learning and matched with the principles of promoting interaction and collaborative learning.

Wongsothorn et al. (2004) note that in Thailand English is the most popular foreign language. Since 2002, there has been a new curriculum and many changes in English language education. Teachers in English language classrooms have become facilitators employing co-operative learning focused on the international community. However, Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Moni (2006, p.8) describe ongoing difficulties of implementing CLT in classrooms as because “the inadequate facilities, resources and learning environments have made the policy goals unrealistic and all but impossible to achieve”. In addition, in a recent study, Segovia and Hardison (2009) reported that it is hard to conduct a proposed move from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches in English language education due to similar constraints.

Realising that English language is essential to future development, Jin and Cortazzi (2004, p.119) note that the Chinese government announced “learning English is for

the whole nation-not only for students and young adults but also for those of all ages and occupations”. China now provides English language training centres throughout the country to encourage English competence to both children and adults. They also use technology and employ foreign teachers to work alongside their local English teachers for learning and teaching English, especially in the cities (Vance, 2008). However, even with this investment the results in implementing CLT are low. Wang (2008) revealed that there is a big gap between policymakers and implementers as classroom teachers. Policymakers expect classroom teachers to implement curriculum innovation where they emphasize learner-centred approaches and maximize the use of English in instruction. On the contrary, classroom teachers carry out teacher-centred approaches, using their first language in instruction and focusing on testing textbooks.

Namsrai (2004) and Cohen (2004) point out that due to its relative isolation, teaching and learning English in Mongolia is at its early stage of development. However, Mongolians realize that English is an international language required for every job interview at international organizations. English, hence, is expected to achieve good results in the near future because the national curriculum and textbooks have been designed in terms of a communicative approach and follow themes. In addition, Namsrai believes that with students’ motivation to learn English, teachers using communicative approaches can help students develop their communicative skills as well as fulfill their personal needs (2004). Therefore, Cohen (2004, p.22) concludes, “Whatever the case may be, one important fact remains for the future generation of Mongolians: English is here to stay”.

In summary, for those countries where CLT has not yet been successfully implemented, although most ELT teachers know the effectiveness of using CLT in the language teaching environment, they still keep to their safe traditional methods. Kam and Wong (2004b, p.456) note that some major problems facing ELT in East Asia include (a) traditional versus modern: old ways of teaching English remain unchanged although the official rhetoric is to adopt newer and more effective ELT methodologies; (b) continuity versus change: which is an aspect of the same problem



where some teachers continue to use traditional methods of teaching which they regard as effective; and (c) quantitative versus qualitative: large numbers of teachers still need to be trained as English teachers, and those currently teaching English need to have their proficiency and knowledge of English improved. In addition, Jeon (2006, p.193), Kam and Wong (2004b, p.456), Kam (2002), and Le Van Canh (1999) point out that the common problems for many countries in East Asia are large classes, poor facilities, and over-centralised systems in which ELT is always understood in accordance with political, historical, social and cultural contexts.

Even when there is government policy supporting the implementation of communicative approaches, that policy may not be put into practice at local levels by managers and/or teachers for a range of reasons. Teachers may not be ready or lack confidence in implementing communicative approaches in the classrooms. Likewise, students may not have motivation or confidence to use language communicatively. Even when teachers are willing to implement CLT, training organizations do not always assist them in developing the skills. Therefore, an entire top down agreement on implementing CLT in the education system along with adequate resourcing may be necessary. In order best to conduct change, governments should publicly express the important role of English and plan how to globally achieve communicative goals. More importantly, their understanding should not stop at theory alone; they must strictly bring communicative approaches into practice. Teaching materials should be designed based on communicative principles and teachers trained on how to use and make sure they apply communicative approaches in their classrooms. School management also needs to pay attention to learning and teaching resources. Learners will then soon recognize the role of English and set up their aims to positively affect their lives both in the present and future so that they can achieve those goals. As we will see in the next section, similar conditions and recommendations are also applicable to ensure the successful implementation of CLT in the more complex setting of Vietnam.

## **2.3. English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam**

“English language teachers are now required to develop research skills ... Research, especially classroom research, therefore, plays an important role”; however, “a small body of literature published locally in Vietnam reveals that research is not a feasible practice among Vietnamese teachers of English” (Pham Hoa Hiep (2006, p.1). Some researchers have studied teaching and learning English in high schools and universities in Vietnam but private English centres have been paid little attention. In setting the scene for the current study, this section overviews the historical and cultural context related to English language learning in Vietnam generally.

### **2.3.1. Historical factors**

During its 4000 years of civilization, Vietnam has expanded from a small province in the mountainous North, gradually expanding southward to become a strong, growing economy with a population of 85 million. During this period, Vietnam has had direct involvement with such powers as China, France, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. These involvements have all contributed to the many changes in language development and language choices that have shaped Vietnam.

#### **2.3.1.1. From pre-modern time to 1945**

Language is one of the elements that indicate a nation’s strength or identity as well as its changes. Goh and Nguyen Bang (2004) note that China ruled Vietnam for a long period of over 1000 years (111 BC to 938 AD). Therefore, Chinese was used as the language of state, and the written form for law and government used the Chinese script. However, among the populace Vietnamese language was still used in spoken form. In government, Vietnamese first used Chinese with Vietnamese pronunciation and then borrowed Chinese characters which were altered to form their own version known as Chữ Nôm around the 10<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was difficult for Vietnamese people to read and write this script. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, French missionaries began arriving in Vietnam, and Alexandre de Rhodes developed a new script known as

Quốc Ngữ (Vietnamese) based on the simpler phonetically based Latin alphabet to translate and write catholic religious materials into Vietnamese. This laid a strong foundation for future access into the written forms of both French and English.

French dominated Vietnam from 1887 even though the Vietnamese language used in schools still used Chinese characters. However in 1919 the French introduced their educational system and eliminated the Chinese script, meaning that the languages used in schools and official documents were now both French and Vietnamese. Wright (2002, pp.230-231) reveals that under the French, Petrus Ky produced bilingual material using French and Vietnamese. In addition, the French government sponsored newspapers were also published in Quốc Ngữ with some Vietnamese now speaking French due to their work requirements. At this stage French was used as the medium of instruction in schools nationwide, and English was taught as a foreign language at very few private schools in big cities.

#### **2.3.1.2. From 1945 to 1975**

After the liberation from French occupation (Dien Bien Phu battle and the Geneva Conference) in 1954, Vietnam was temporarily divided into two parts in accordance with its own political issues. The North followed communism with support from Russia and China, and the South followed capitalism supported by France and the U.S.A. In the North the Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, declared independence and the wish that every Vietnamese citizen be able to read and write Vietnamese. Hence, in the north Vietnamese was promoted and taught in schools. Russian and Chinese also became important because of their political involvements. Meanwhile the South of Vietnam was promoting French and English due to their political involvements (Do Huy Thinh, 2006; Goh and Nguyen Bang, 2004).

In the American War of 1955-1975, American involvement in the South of Vietnam meant that the number of troops using English in Vietnam increased to more than half a million US troops in 1965. In order to fight the communists the Americans needed the co- operation of a large number of Southern Vietnamese who spoke competent

English. As they needed people who could use English to provide services, English became an important tool for communication. Southerners realized that their children could succeed in life if they became involved in the American military, politics or business through having the advantage of English. Therefore, “there was a mushrooming of private English language schools hoping to profit from the need of so many to acquire some English” (Wright, 2002, p.235). However, in April 1975 the communists completely conquered the South causing English to disappear from educational training. Do Huy Thinh (2006) adds that with the fall of Saigon and the Communists conquering the whole nation, they expanded their approach to the teaching of foreign languages within the educational system. This meant that Russian and Chinese were now the main foreign languages for Vietnamese to study.

#### **2.3.1.3. From 1975 to 1986**

Wright (2002), Napier and Nguyen Thi Thuy Mai (2003, p.237) note that in the period 1975-1986, Vietnam had a strong relationship with both Russia (The former Soviet Union) and Eastern Europe, and among the Eastern communist bloc “Russia became the main supporter of an impoverished Vietnam”. The reason for this affiliation was because Vietnam was isolated from the world not only due to the U.S led trade embargo and China following the border war in 1979, but from surrounding countries that were afraid of Vietnam expansionism. At this time Vietnam received Russia’s technical assistance, trade and education; meaning that the Russian language became the most popular foreign language taught in the Vietnam educational system nationwide. However, Vietnamese students did not wholeheartedly accept this, especially many of those in the South (e.g. the researcher and his siblings) who chose not to study the Russian language in secondary school level when it was compulsory for students to study a foreign language, and Russian was strongly encouraged. In fact, at that time my school was unable to organize any Russian classes because no students wished to learn that language. Do Huy Thinh (2006) points out following this period Vietnam received limited aid from the communist world because they were undergoing serious difficulties themselves. Therefore, at the Sixth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1986, Vietnam officially announced

its decision to open relations with other countries regardless of their political differences in order to solve its economic problems and develop a strong future. For this reason English became popular again.

#### **2.3.1.4. From 1986 up to present**

Goh and Nguyen Bang (2004) and Napier and Nguyen Thi Thuy Mai (2003) note that since Vietnam's 'Open Door' policy in 1986, the country has taken different directions in trade and diplomacy. The use of English provided opportunities for Vietnam to build up relations with other countries using English, especially since English had become the language of international communication in the late 1980s. Numerous foreign companies began investing in Vietnam's potential market such as those from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, Malaysia and others from the European Union, using English as the means of communication. As Do Huy Thinh (2006, p.1) notes "English has thus regained its role as the main foreign language taught and used in Vietnam". At the same time, Wright (2002) points out that the 1991 crisis related to political and trading issues in the Soviet Union meant that Vietnam no longer received their support, and Russian language quickly lost its standing position in Vietnam's educational system. As a result, "English replaced Russian as the favorite foreign language to study" Denham (1997, p.195). Goh and Nguyen Bang (2004) point out that these new circumstances meant that "the learning of English in the schools gained in popularity" and "English quickly became the first foreign language". This meant it could be introduced earlier in the Junior high school curriculum particularly in the metropolitan centres of Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City. Do Huy Thinh (2006) agrees that as Vietnamese people had opportunities to work for new foreign companies they rushed to English classes to support their current positions or to assist their future job prospects. English language centres were mushrooming nationwide in order to meet the demands of the society and "the English language movement underwent explosive growth during the early 1990s leading to an official acknowledgement of the role and status of English" (Do Huy Thinh, 2006, p.8). From the early 1990s, students were required to achieve foreign language competence and mostly English was chosen in order to graduate in all

majors. The Prime Minister issued an Order on 15/8/1994 (Government of Vietnam), saying that government officials under 45 years old must study a certain foreign language and be able to use it as a tool to communicate. By 1997 this was mainly and favorably English.

Consequently the number of people choosing English as their preferred foreign language has increased so rapidly that there was a shortage of English teachers. As Do Huy Thinh states, “In the early 1990s, since the demand for English outstripped supply, those who had no official training also became teachers” and “85 percent of foreign language learners in Vietnam choose English” (2006, p.6). Indeed, the researcher’s case was a typical example. In 1993 while he was the third year student (attending morning classes) majoring in English to become an English teacher, he was taking charge of some English classes (running in the afternoon) at a secondary school as an invited teacher with a teaching load of 20 hours per week. A remarkable point is that the teaching contract was signed each year between the researcher and the district’s Education and Training Office which controls all secondary schools in the area. In order to address teacher shortages, the government allowed Vietnamese Russian language teachers (mostly in the North) to attend special courses to enrich their knowledge of English so that they could continue their jobs as Vietnamese English language teachers. As Denham (1997, p.195) stated there was “...a surfeit of teachers of Russian, many of whom sought to be re-trained as teachers of English”.

Currently, as well as English being taught at government schools and language centres, there is a growing presence of many private English language centres opening in order to meet the learners’ needs and social trends due to “... strong feeling among the Vietnamese that English is now an important asset”. Consequently, “in the cash-strapped public education system, the main foreign language is English” (Wright, 2002, p.241). Do Huy Thinh (2006, p.8) concludes that in the decade of 1996-2006 “English has developed with an unprecedented speed in Vietnam”.

### **2.3.2. Overview of English teaching and learning in Vietnam**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in most East Asian countries in general, and in Vietnam in particular, has been conducted using teacher-centred, book-centred, and grammar-translation methods (Liu & Littlewood, 1997) where students receive knowledge of English directly from their teachers as controllers. As Le Van Canh (1999, p.3) pointed out “Central to pedagogical practices in Vietnam is the traditional view of the teacher-student relationship. This view supports teacher-centred methods and a structured curriculum. The teacher is supposed to be the only provider of knowledge and therefore she/he is highly respected by the students, students’ parents, and the society as a whole. What the teacher or the textbook says is unquestionably standard norms”. Kennett and Knight (1999) and Le Van Canh (1999, p.4) also mention that Vietnamese schools operate under teacher-centred methods where students first listen to their teacher, repeat, and then copy the models. At this time, most teachers believed that reading was the way students could best learn the language. In a reading class, for example, students read new words aloud after the teacher. After that, the teacher explained the meaning of the text sentence by sentence, along with grammar structures which explored the meaning of the texts while students listened and took notes. Students then had to answer the questions provided. Following up, teachers conducted grammar sessions in which teachers, as Mack and Lewis (2003, p.32) pointed out, transferred grammar points to students and corrected students’ errors and “of all the information transmitted by teacher to learners, information about language (or explicit grammar teaching) is one of the most valued”.

Le Van Canh (1999, p.3) showed that in Vietnam education is key to opening any gates and considered a passport, meaning that language competence is less important than language certificates. This point acts as a deterrent to learning to communicate. As well, when learning involves sitting for examinations in order to get certificates, students become stressed, and this affects students’ learning processes. In addition, teachers pay attention to the numbers of students gaining the pass rate more than to the quality of teaching, because they consider that the pass results reflect their

teaching ability. Teachers have to follow exactly the teaching curriculum assigned by the school or centre or the MOET in general in order for their students to pass the exams. Often, Hoang Tuy (1999, p.79) concludes, “Students may achieve the highest scores in the exams but fail to show their excellence in real life performance”.

In Vietnamese education settings where students follow passive learning styles and teachers always play the dominant role in the classroom, students must be obedient and dependent on whatever the teachers tell them to do. As Le Van Canh (1999, p.4) points out “influenced by Confucianism, students feel rude if they interrupt, question, or argue with their teacher. Language activities like role plays, problem-solving tasks, or information gap activities are strange to their culture of learning. When they fail to understand something, they are not daring enough to ask for clarification in public for fear of losing face. They are not pro-active enough to initiate interaction, either. In the classroom, they are expected to sit in silence unless the teacher calls them individually to speak”. Even though there is a Vietnamese saying which can be translated as “To learn is to ask”, meaning that if a learner is not sure about a certain thing, he can raise a question in a polite way, it is not a common habit of Vietnamese students. The researcher’s case is an example. He was teased by his classmates with a name ‘thắc mắc’ during secondary school because he was the one who asked teachers a lot if necessary. This also made him uncomfortable and not confident in raising questions afterwards. For these reasons it is difficult for Vietnamese teachers of language in general and of English in particular, to change the passive learning styles and traditional beliefs of Vietnamese students, even in this modern era of communication.

However, despite the social trends discussed, Tomlinson and Bao Dat (2004) found differences between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the role of interaction in English classrooms in Vietnam. They found that teachers believe their students to be passive, not willing to participate in classroom activities, and seldom speaking English in the classroom. For these reasons they keep on using a lecturing style in class. At the same time students complain that teachers are controllers in the classroom and keep lecturing; hence, students do not have opportunities to practise



interaction skills which help them follow through from easy steps to harder steps. This means that students do not have opportunities to talk with classmates to share ideas or to have thinking time before delivering answers to teachers' questions. They also found that students expect their teachers to organize group work so that they can develop communicative skills. These findings support the Vietnamese education authorities' perspectives on ELT in which learning a language is seen as being able to communicate using that target language. Wright (2002, p.242) reveals that the MOET realizes that English pedagogy needs to be reconsidered because "the traditional emphasis on accuracy in the written language rather than the acquisition of fluency in the spoken language is inappropriate for many Vietnamese today". This means that CLT has now become a focus in Vietnam.

### **2.3.3. Communicative language teaching in Vietnam**

Nguyen Xuan Vang (2004, p.447) points out that "the government fully recognizes that English has become an international language and that it is the language for business, commerce, computer science and efficient use of the internet, which is indispensable in the modern world". In addition, he states, "English has really become increasingly popular and important for Vietnamese. Young people in Vietnam now consider the mastery of English and the acquisition of computer skills as their passports to a good career, particularly in multinational organizations. In this context, it is undoubtedly obvious that ELT in Vietnam will naturally witness further and more wide-ranging developments" (p.453). He also confirms that English is standing at the highest position with a much greater status than the three other most popular foreign languages in the Vietnamese educational system: French, Russian and Chinese.

For general education school level, English has been recently introduced as an optional subject at primary level, especially in the two largest cities of Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, and compulsory for those who are shifting from secondary school (years 6-9) to high school (years 10-12). In fact, Vietnam MOET (18/9/1996) issued a document No. 6627/TH providing information for the adoption of English as an

optional subject at primary school level, running two hours per week and starting from the second semester of Grade 2. Following this, English started to be taught from grade 1 in the school year of 1999-2000 in Ho Chi Minh City. Nguyen Xuan Vang (2004, p.449) concludes that 98% of students at all school levels choose English to study as a foreign language rather than other languages.

All school students follow the national framework and study English using textbooks designed by the MOET. As English is one of the subjects needed to be passed in the national examinations for secondary and high school students, it is considered a main goal. Unfortunately, this kind of examination which is designed in accordance with the national framework is in written form only, including reading comprehension, grammar and translation. Therefore, in preparing their students for such exams, teachers fail to implement communicative approaches in their classrooms and use teaching methods relevant to the students' goals of passing the exams (Kim Lien, 2006). They follow the framework using grammar translation methods rather than communicative approaches because students need strong knowledge of grammar and vocabulary for the examinations ahead. In addition, classes are always large, consisting of over 40 students sitting in rows that face the teacher, which is not conducive to working in groups. Hence, students at general education levels lack opportunities to study using communicative approaches, leading to their inability to communicate in English.

For university level and over, after 1975 English was not paid attention, probably due to the lack of teaching staff and the shortage of teaching materials and facilities. In addition, Vietnam had not opened its door to look at the world outside, being directly influenced by the Soviet Union and Eastern communist bloc countries. Nowadays however, English language programs are delivered nation wide but the focus of English language training is the ability to read texts related to students' majors or disciplines (Nguyen Xuan Vang, 2004). However, those proudly entitled undergraduate students now have more options and use textbooks chosen by their own universities. Although students still have to follow the national framework, especially for the national examinations, each university is allowed to teach students

with teaching materials of their own choice. In fact, even non-English major students have to study general English during their two first years, often having two 45 minute periods per week with each session consisting of 50 to 200 students, depending on the classroom or theatre. However, due to the national examination requirements they study English mostly in written form with little or no communication. As To Minh Thanh notes, English training curricula at university levels mainly focus on vocabulary, grammar structures and reading comprehension skills (2006). Students often do reading comprehension and many exercises on grammar. In the last two years they start reading their specialized materials depending on the university and major. Therefore, university students lack being trained in communicative approaches. In response to this weakness, prospective university students rush to private English language centres where they believe they will be able to improve their communicative skills.

As earlier mentioned, private English language centres are mushrooming in Vietnam nationwide for many reasons and are places where students believe the weaknesses in their English classes for general education and non-English majors can be met. The textbooks or learning materials used are designed and written mostly in English speaking countries. Introduction is given by either local teachers or local and foreign staff from either English speaking countries such as America, Australia and England, or from expanding circle countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. These teachers bring diverse types of teaching methods to the centres, and depending on school fees, students receive different qualities of service. If they pay low school fees, they will probably be offered English classes with many students, limited facilities and local teachers only. If they pay high school fees, they will certainly be offered English classes with few students, modern facilities and either both local and foreign teachers or foreign teachers only mentioned in Section 7.2.7. These teachers bring communicative approaches in English including group work and pair work, and inhibit the use of mother language. As a result, the English language learning environment at private English language centres is likely to be better than in either general government education or non-English major university levels.

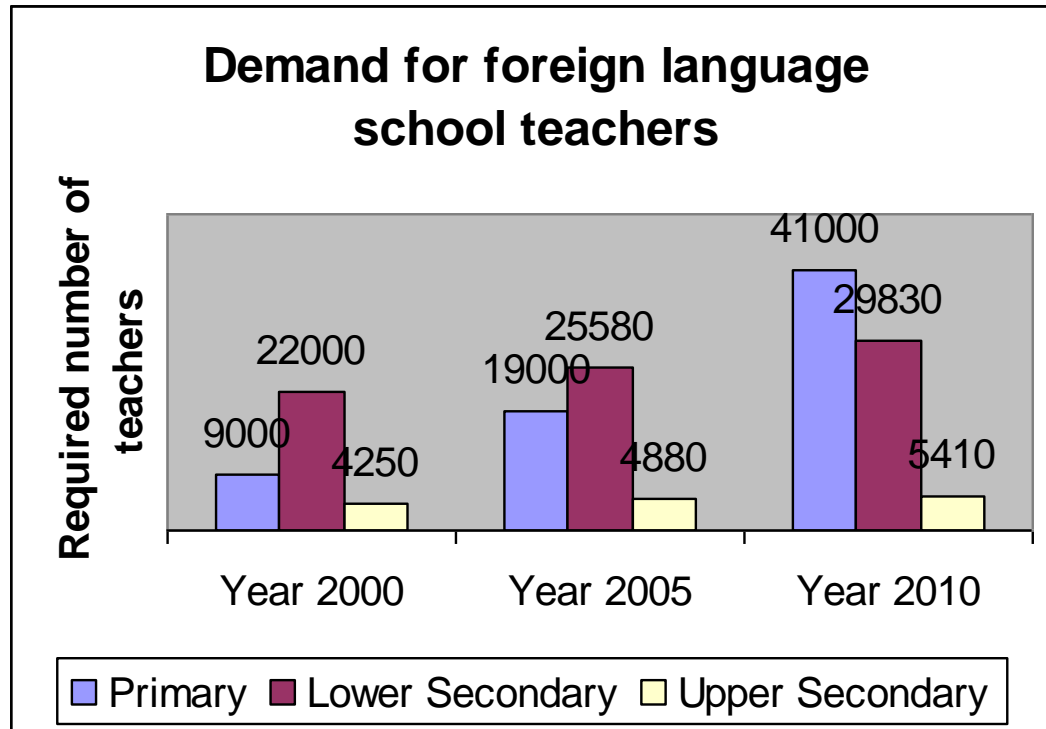
Vietnam MOET (2008a) issued instruction No.30/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT on 6 June 2008, to guide organizing institutions engaged in teaching, assessing and issuing foreign language certificates. Item No. 4 details conditions for registering a training institution as: (a) fully conduct the content, timeframe and curriculum designed by the MOET; (b) officially have experienced administration staff in education, qualified teaching staff, and class sizes of 40 students maximum; (c) adequately provide students with teaching materials; and (d) follow instructions on infrastructure, learning and teaching facilities in order to meet course requirements to make sure that rooms have enough lights, tables and chairs, as well as a board and adequate learning and teaching facilities with average space not being under 1.5 m<sup>2</sup>/student; make sure that there are offices for the board of directors, teachers' lounge and library; make sure that there are language labs and practice rooms; and make sure there are enough facilities to support management tasks. Item No. 9 details that (a) test content must include four macro skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking; (b) time allocation is 90 minutes and 120 minutes in accordance with levels A, B and C; and (c) requirements of the test must be fulfilled.

In addition, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 the Vietnam MOET (2008b) issued instruction No.7984/BGDĐT-GDTrH on teaching foreign languages in which they stated that Vietnam focuses on maintaining and promoting foreign language teaching staff in both quantity and quality and maintains responsibility for language training. Teachers must focus on the four macro skills of language in order to improve communication skills, and create various teaching styles to make sure students have opportunities to use the target language. Training organizations must be equipped with teaching facilities, especially visual and audio equipment designed to assist in improving the four macro skills identified by the MOET. It also encourages all training organizations to fund modern facilities for students such as language learning programs in order to promote communication skills as well as internet services. Assessment and evaluation are based on language knowledge, cultural understanding, and the four macro skills in language learning.

As some researches have been undertaken on CLT implementation to date in the Vietnam language education system, the researcher will present some of the difficulties found. For example, Le Van Canh (1999, pp.4-5) states, “the pre-determined syllabus and prescribed textbook are also frustrating to teachers if they are committed to communicative methods. In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training designs the national curriculum and sets the syllabus in schools. The Ministry also monitors the implementation of the syllabus and sets the school final examinations. The syllabus and the textbook, once approved by the Ministry, become laws that must be strictly observed and with the misinterpretation of the principle of ‘testing only what students have learnt’, test writers confine the test content to what is covered in the textbook”. He also explains how large class sizes of from 45 to 52 students per class and learning hours limited to few hours per week make it difficult to implement communicative approaches in which students can work in pairs/groups and conduct communicative activities. Large class sizes where students sit in long rows of fixed desks facing the front make it difficult for teachers to organize communicative activities for CLT. Therefore, students do not have opportunities to practise English speaking skills in the classroom, leading them to not doing this outside the classroom either.

Nguyen Xuan Vang (2004, p.451) notes some difficulties in conducting CLT in teaching organizations including shortage of English teachers, lack of teaching facilities and textbooks. Kam (2004, p.18) also reveals this trend pointing out that Vietnam is facing some difficulties such as shortages of English teachers, teaching materials, and teaching spaces and class sizes. The shortage of teachers including both locally trained and foreign language teachers has led the Ministry of Education and Training to draw up a foreign language school teacher plan of requirements for up to 2010 (see Chart 1 below).

**Chart 1: Demand for foreign language school teachers**



(Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2000 cited in Nguyen Xuan Vang 2004, p.452)

Tomlinson and Bao Dat's study (2004, p.217) shows that many teachers do not wish to change their grammar translation teaching methods, and some teachers believe that students are not willing to participate in communicative tasks. They note that most teachers, are also concerned that if they develop classroom interaction, students will not have enough time to cover the syllabus assigned. In addition, Hoang Thi Hoai An and Wright (2005, p.1) point out that 'old style' textbooks are still in use at high schools in Vietnam. These text books are used as a tool to teach grammar and vocabulary. Generally, teachers pay little attention to the four macro skills in English language, especially listening and speaking skills. In addition, they use teacher-centred approaches rather than student-centred approaches in their teaching performance.

Pham Hoa Hiep (2005) points out some of the reasons that CLT fails to be applied successfully in the Vietnamese classroom context as: (1) Vietnamese do not have an immediate need to use English, so they all use Vietnamese to interpret meaning; (2) the principle of doing tasks in the classroom is not suitable in Vietnam because Vietnamese people do not have opportunities to use English outside the classroom; (3) teaching materials which are mostly from English speaking countries might be a problem for Vietnamese settings. Holliday (1994, p.53) made a similar point that English language teaching needs to be relevant and appropriate to local cultures; (4) teaching facilities are rather simple, including only a blackboard and textbook; (5) class sizes are overcrowded, as Kam (2002, p.14) found “the reality of large classes from 50 to 70 students in a class has made any methodological innovation difficult to implement”; and (6) the traditional examination system in which teachers have to cover the syllabus assigned to achieve written test results, prevents teachers from applying the new methods/techniques they have studied.

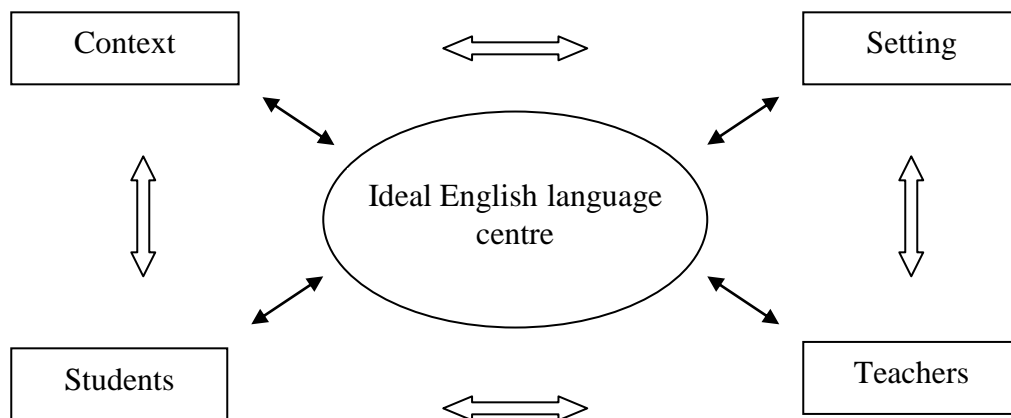
Vietnam MOET has recently focused on communicative approaches which now officially become the goals of teaching and learning English in Vietnam (Government of Vietnam, 2008; MOET, 2008a, 2008b). Therefore, this research plans to investigate whether there are better outcomes in implementing CLT at training organizations and private language centres, or if the situation in these institutions is similar to that in organizations associated more directly with the MOET.

## **2.4. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the history and development of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Asian countries, emphasizing four factors including historical context, teachers, learners, students’ motivations, and teaching materials affecting the quality of teaching and learning. The historical context of the growth of English language teaching in Vietnam is discussed in detail, along with the reasons that CLT has been difficult to implement in this particular societal context. Although the historical context of ELT in Vietnam is unique, similar constraints in CLT implementation are found in other East Asian countries. The researcher is

seeking solutions to build up a model of an ideal English language centre aimed at delivering world class communicative English language courses in the specific context of Vietnam. Looking at the focus of the research as identified in the introduction (Chapter 1) and in the literature review (Chapter 2), the theoretical orientation is towards CLT. Oxford (2001) points out that teaching English as a second or foreign language is an image of tapestry requiring several strands. Teachers must pay attention to learners' learning styles. Learners must be motivated. The setting must provide enough resources and be managed in order to assist the teaching and learning. On this basis, the theoretical framework for formulating a model of an ideal English language centre suitable within the Vietnamese context includes four fundamental elements: the reasons and purposes of learning English (context), centre management and materials (setting), teaching staff and their approaches (teachers), and students' motivation and expertise. In addition, these fundamental elements were identified from other researchers in Section 6.1 and in the seven sub-questions mentioned in Section 1.2 which shaped the research design (methodology) and data analysis for the current study.

**Chart 2: Theoretical framework for a model of an ideal English language centre**





## **CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY**

In outlining the design and methodology employed in this study, this chapter begins with a presentation of the objective of the research and methods employed to achieve its objective. This is followed by a description of participants and the data collection procedures involved in the formation of three case studies of three private English language centres in Vietnam. These were developed through classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires which are used to identify and compare the key issues in relation to research literature. From this, the researcher has developed an outline for a draft ideal English language centre which was then sent to a group of experts in English language learning in Vietnam for comments and suggestions aimed at enhancing the objectivity, validity and reliability of the study. The experts' comments and suggestions are discussed and compared with the original draft model as the second phase in drawing up a model for an ideal private English language centre in Vietnam.

### **3.1. Objective**

The objective of this study was to find out the most effective approaches to teaching and learning English in Vietnam in order to formulate an answer to the key research question “In the current Vietnamese socio-economic context, how can language learning outcomes in private English language programmes be improved?” Therefore, case studies using both qualitative and quantitative data (see in Section 3.2) were used as the “stories of those living in the case” (Stake, 2000, p.437) are a “step to action” (Bassey, 2000, p.23). In order to answer this question and achieve the research objective, a model for the ideal English Language Centre in the context of Vietnam has been designed using the following procedure:

(1) Case studies formulated through:

- Classroom observations for the purpose of studying and understanding how teachers are teaching and how students are responding;

- Interviews with classroom teachers to explore their perceptions of effective teaching including communicative language teaching, how best to meet their students' needs, and any constraints to meeting these needs;
- Interviews with the centre managers to explore their sources of students, the reasons students attend classes, their perceptions of students' needs and constraints to meeting those needs, and the managers' experiences in operating their English language centres;
- Questionnaire for students aimed at understanding their attitudes and motivation(s) for English learning, their methodological preferences, and their perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in English learning in Vietnam;
- Document reviews of materials outlining the centres' objectives, longevity, policies, selection procedures, fee structures, teaching staff, types of students, teaching materials and methods.

(2) Development of a draft ideal English centre

- Based on recommendations developed as a result of data collection in the three centres;

(3) Feedback from panel of ELT experts by:

- Inviting an Experts' Panel to give comments and suggestions on the draft ideal English language centre model developed in (2) above; and

(4) Preparation of an intensive ideal English language centre model by:

- Building on experts' comments and suggestions, literature reviews, and the draft ideal English centre model.

### **3.2. Data collection procedure**

First of all, the researcher sent an email to each English language centre to seek permission to conduct a case study at each site (see Appendix 3c). All three English centres are regarded as popular English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City in running general English courses. These centres were chosen for their similarity in size, length of time they had been established, and stated purpose. The researcher chose large centres that had been teaching general English for at least five years. Furthermore, these centres are allowed to issue National English certificates - Levels A, B and C (elementary, intermediate and advanced levels, respectively). Two of the centres are operating both day and night shifts only for English training mentioned in Section 4.1.1 and Section 4.3.1; the other is mainly operating in the evenings due to its building availability mentioned in Section 4.2.1. The researcher chose the intermediate level learners as the target group because he believes this group of learners who are supposed to sit for a B level in the English exam mentioned in Section 4.2.4.1 are able to understand and interact in daily exchanges.

Following identification of three private language centres in Vietnam that were deemed as forward thinking and progressive in their approaches, two teachers taking charge of intermediate-level learners at each centre were invited to participate in the study via a written notice in the staffroom. The researcher then arranged meetings with interested teachers at a time and place of their choosing in order to explain the purposes of the study more clearly and obtain signed consent forms together with the assurance that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time of their choosing. Moreover, the researcher asked the interested teachers to distribute the proposed observation times to let students know that they need not attend the class on that day if they advised their teachers one week prior to observation sessions. Notices were displayed on the boards in each classroom proposed for observation. Furthermore, the researcher was willing to answer any questions from participants at any time via cell phone or face to face.

The key research question was explored by means of case studies of three private English teaching centres according to a procedure outlined by Yin (1994) using both quantitative and qualitative data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that some techniques are critical in collecting qualitative data: document review, questionnaires, interviews, and observation in this study. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires for students with analysis undertaken using Microsoft office software. Questionnaires are considered to be a commonly used method in collecting data in language education research. This method can be conducted with a large number of subjects at the same time and provide accurate information for research questions requiring exploration, description, explanation of people's characteristics, attitudes and opinions (Brown, 1997 and Seliger & Shohamy, 1995). The qualitative data were collected through interviews and the observations which were analysed thematically to establish convergences and divergences of the key emerging themes. Interviews are very useful in the process of collecting in depth information, appropriate for complex situations through the interaction with others, usually person to person interaction (Kumar, 1996). In addition, it is employed in this study because Punch (1998, p.174) states, "the interview is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions" and Mc Donough and Mc Donough (1997, p.184) point out, "it allows for richer interaction and more personalized responses".

Managers, teachers and students are the main sources used to reflect the strengths, and development and survival of an educational setting. Even though they were all in similar settings, their points of view were different. What managers thought was not necessarily the same as what teachers or students thought and vice versa. Qualitative data collected were used to explore students' motivations and methodological preferences in learning English, teachers' perceptions of methods of EFL teaching, and management experiences in the private English language centre sector in Vietnam. The study was set within the Vietnamese cultural context in order to improve the provision of English classes in accordance with the private sector needs expressed by these people, not those imposed by Western cultures. According to Holliday (1994), a problem arises when methodologies designed to suit conditions for

teaching English as a second language in dominant cultures that he refers to as British and North American (BANA). He recommends that, due to the differing conditions and social environments of what he refers to as Tertiary, Secondary and Primary (TESEP) countries such as Vietnam, research needs to be done in order to modify BANA methodologies to be applicable in TESEP environments. In this thesis, this goal has been realized through undertaking both ethnographic qualitative and quantitative approaches by a Vietnamese born researcher involving three case studies, based on observations, questionnaires, and interviews with teachers and managers, modified by comments from a team of Vietnamese English language specialists in Vietnam.

Interviews, class observations and questionnaires were conducted in three private English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City. In each centre, the researcher made two classroom observations, conducted follow up interviews with the teachers, conducted interviews with the manager, and administered a questionnaire to the students. In addition, documents relating to the operation of these centres were collected. These procedures, which contributed to the case study of each centre, are described in more detail below.

### **3.2.1. Document reviews**

Existing documents at the three English language centres outlining their length of operation, objectives, policies, selection procedures, fee structures, teaching staff, types of students, teaching materials and methods were scrutinised. More general government documents outlining current policies were also reviewed.

### **3.2.2. Questionnaires for students**

The questionnaire was aimed at understanding English students' attitudes, especially their motivations for English learning, their methodological preferences, and their perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in learning English in Vietnam. The questionnaire, although modelled on one developed by Nunan and Lamb (1996) for

investigating Western classrooms, was significantly adapted to reflect the Vietnamese educational context and subjects were required to answer questions on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) (see Appendix 4).

In each centre, the questionnaire for students was administered to the same two classes that observations had been undertaken and teachers interviewed. The questionnaire took about 40 minutes of class time. The researcher explained items carefully in Vietnamese and asked participants to respond to each item before going on to the next item. After completing the questionnaire, the researcher asked the respondents to go over each item again in order not to miss any item or misunderstand any question.

### **3.2.3. Interviews**

Following classroom observations, in accordance with Wiersma (1991), interviews with classroom teachers and centre managers were undertaken in Vietnamese. Questions were asked using standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 1990, p.289) in order to increase comparability of responses. These were audio taped and transcribed verbatim, then translated by the researcher into English. The average interview length was around 30 minutes, and the researcher took notes during the interview time.

#### **3.2.3.1. Interviews with teachers**

Six teachers (two from each language centre) were interviewed after observations of their classes in order to explore the beliefs and thinking processes that underlaid their classroom practices (Richards, 1994, p.29). The interviews explored their perceptions of effective teaching (including their perceptions of communicative language teaching), how best to meet their students' needs, and any constraints they found in meeting these needs (see Appendix 5).

### **3.2.3.2. Interviews with managers**

Three English language centre managers were interviewed in order to explore the centre's sources of students, their reasons for attending classes, and the managers' experiences in operating an English language centre, and their perceptions of students' needs and constraints in meeting those needs (see Appendix 6).

### **3.2.4. Classroom observations**

Classroom observations were undertaken for the purpose of studying and understanding how teachers were teaching and how students were responding by recording what actually happened. Classroom observations were undertaken in six classes of intermediate level students (two for each language centre). Before class, the researcher asked the teachers which lesson they would teach in the observation time, so that the researcher could predict the teachers' expected tasks and corresponding learners' tasks for the lessons, and more easily capture other special happenings during the observation time. The researcher ethnographically recorded what happened during a 45 minute lesson using an observation sheet (see Appendix 7) which could be transferred to an observation evaluation sheet (see Appendix 8). The purpose of the observations was to collect rich classroom data which could later be transferred to an evaluation sheet for comparison with students' perceptions of their needs. During the lessons, the researcher took notes on the observation sheets.

## **3.3. Draft ideal English centre**

As earlier mentioned, a draft ideal English language centre was developed on the foundation of the three case studies through the procedure of comparing three English language centres, identifying key issues in the three descriptions, and discussing the key issues identified in the three descriptions in relation to research literature.

### **3.4. Panel of Experts**

The initial draft of an ideal English language centre model was sent to a panel of seven Vietnamese experts by the supervisor of this thesis. To identify potential experts suited to participating in this study, an email was firstly sent to some selected people to ask for their contribution to the research project. After receiving positive responses about the draft of the ideal English language centre, the seven selected experts were sent an email in which the purpose of the study was described. This also included a brief description of the methods of collecting data at the three English language centres, and details of the ways experts would contribute to the project by giving comments and suggestions on each section of the draft and by adding additional comments as necessary (see Appendix 9). The timeline for sending their comments and suggestions back was also given. To be considered as expert panelists in the study, participants must have had: (a) a qualification in ESL/EFL; (b) been teaching English for over 10 years; (c) published at least one article about English teaching in Vietnam; and (d) overseas training in ESL/EFL. The supervisor received responses from four of the seven experts invited to comment (see Appendix 10). The responses from the four experts provided detail considered sufficient for the purposes of my research.

### **3.5. Redrafted ideal English centre**

Feedback from the expert panelists' valuable comments, suggestions and additional comments about the draft ideal language centre model were discussed and compared with the original draft model in relation to research literature in order to draw up an intensive ideal English language centre model.

### **3.6. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology used in the research, describing the processes of data collection for three case studies. These include classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires and reviews of documents. These data were then collected,



compared and contrasted to build up a model of an ideal English centre in Vietnam. This draft model was then sent to a panel of experts in Vietnam, and their individual comments were received. These comments were then drawn together to redraft the model of an ideal English language centre, originally developed on the basis of the three case studies in Ho Chi Minh City. The aim of the study is to improve the English provision at private sector through a model of an ideal English language centre. The model covers four fundamental elements as follows: reasons and purposes of learning English, centre management, teaching staff, and students.

## **CHAPTER 4 – FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS**

This chapter describes the three case studies built through the process of classroom observations, teachers' and managers' interviews, and questionnaire survey of students at three private English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. These three English language centres were selected as most suitable because they met requirements for the purposes of my research.

### **4.1. Case study 1**

#### **4.1.1. General introduction**

The website of this English language centre advertises that it is a nationally accredited language institution, founded in 1990. As it was conferred the honour of certificates for excellence in training English by the Prime Minister in 2004 and the Minister of Education and Training in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2006, the centre is considered as one of the premier English language centres not only in Ho Chi Minh City, but in the whole country. In addition, this centre has gained a nationwide reputation for its effective intensive English courses and training in English as a foreign language (TOEFL). The centre offers, as the backbone of its training programs, 20-hour-per-week courses in both general English and college English. These training programs are for students who want to pursue university study in foreign countries as well as for students who want to improve their English for employment purposes. The TOEFL programs concentrate on the practice of TOEFL skills, achieving higher scores essential for undergraduate and graduate study overseas.

Each classroom in this centre is equipped with a blackboard, three electric fans, four neon lights, a desk for the teacher, and tables and chairs to seat 54 students in two lines of nine rows. Because of the large area of each room, some teachers need to use a microphone so that everyone can hear what they want to present. Others have to speak loudly without a microphone.

According to documentation located at the site, the English teachers are the key personnel who significantly contribute to the success or failure of the students. Teachers are both native and non-native professional English speaking instructors who are highly qualified and experienced. Through its innovative student-centred approach to education, the centre claims that students will achieve communicative and academic English competence through being given ample opportunity to practise their English skills and increase their fluency, accuracy and confidence.

According to its documents, the centre applies a team-teaching approach in which several teachers are assigned to teach one class. This approach provides students with opportunities to work with different teachers, to get acquainted with different teaching methods, and to enjoy an ever changing and exciting atmosphere throughout the course. General English and TOEFL programs at the centre are especially designed for learners who wish to use English effectively in real-life situations, to get high scores in TOEFL tests for overseas study, and to find suitable jobs for their future.

#### **4.1.2. Participants**

Two male teachers and one manager agreed to join the study. The two teachers aged in their late fifties and with their teaching experience of around thirty years, were invited to participate. The manager was a female aged in her forties, with a doctoral degree in Education from England. Other participants were 68 students chosen from two observed classes who responded to the questionnaire about students' attitudes and perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in English learning. Among these students, 41 were female and 27 male. Only fourteen out of 68 had jobs.

#### **4.1.3. Student questionnaire**

The questionnaires for this English centre were administered to the same two classes observed, taking about 40 minutes of class time. Seventy nine questionnaires were delivered to students, of which 68 were returned to the researcher. However some

were not completed properly even though the researcher had explained items carefully in Vietnamese and asked participants to respond to each item before going to the next item. Upon completion of the questionnaire, the researcher also asked the respondents to go over each item again in order to be sure nothing was missed or misunderstood. More detailed data are shown in Section 5.1.1.

#### **4.1.4. Interviews with teachers and manager**

In this section the researcher presents overviews of his three interviews including those with reading and writing teachers observed, and with their centre manager.

##### **4.1.4.1. Reading teacher interview**

The reading teacher explained that his students were from many different localities, as well as from nearby suburbs. They had different purposes for studying English such as getting a job, going abroad, increasing their current salary, knowing other cultures, and being forced to study English by their family. As a result, their motivations for learning English were rather different. This teacher explained that he often motivated and encouraged his students to come to school regularly, read more books at home, go over what was done in the classroom, saying “studying at school is not enough, coming here is just getting techniques to do the task for the exams.” However, he believed that only some who had real motivation might do as he said. In his opinion, students were generally not hard working and rather lazy. Sometimes when he gave them homework of finishing the rest of the class reading, they turned up the next day without finishing the task. In addition, students generally just checked the answers at the back of the book to circle the correct answers instead of doing it by themselves. The teacher also gave students homework in advance of the class that was ignored. They were just waiting for the answers and explanations given by the teacher during class.

Another problem facing the delivery of the lesson was that the number of students in the classroom was excessive: nearly 60 at the beginning of the course, with the number dropping after the middle of the course. Furthermore, as students’ tables were

fitted to the floor they could not be rearranged to suit group work. Worse than that, the reading teacher complained that the classroom was small and overcrowded, with only one ceiling fan and two wall fans. As there was no blind and the sunlight went into the classroom, the quality of the teaching and learning environment decreased dramatically. This teacher felt that the centre should consider the facilities at the centre, especially in the classrooms.

In conducting the reading passage exercises, the teacher believed that students could give him the correct answers because they had sufficient knowledge to understand the reading passages. Students wrote down what the teacher presented on the board. The teacher mentioned that if he had the opportunity to study more, he would focus on different teaching skills/techniques.

#### **4.1.4.2. Writing teacher interview**

The writing teacher explained that although most students in his class came from Bien Hoa City, Dong Nai Province (10 km north of Ho Chi Minh City via National Road 1A), some came from the surrounding suburbs. Some were students from other registered schools and some were workers, a few having failed in the national university entrance examinations. Although most were of school age, their ages and reasons for learning English varied; such as getting a good job (most), studying for travel, being sent to the centre to study by their families, and having fun. This teacher described his teaching approach as asking students to practise writing every day, with just a few sentences in the reading. He instructed his students: ‘you can take notes and underline some parts which you think are useful for you later’. He often gave students homework and checked their work, however, only a few had ever finished this work.

In describing the problems he encountered in the classroom, the writing teacher complained that most students could not distinguish the positions and functions of words in phrases. Also, the classroom was too small for the large number of students. Classroom facilities were poorly equipped and heat poured into the classroom due to

strong sunlight coming directly through the windows, meaning that the quality of learning and teaching was severely affected.

The writing teacher believed that his students may improve their work input if every day he randomly collected some papers from them to correct. It is because students would realize that their turn may be coming soon. He complained that although students always took notes in their exercise books of what was written on the board, they did not contribute much to the exercises. They seemed to be passive, seldom speaking English but preferring listening and taking notes. As a result students were not confident in English communication. This teacher revealed that for further training, he would like to focus on new teaching methods.

#### **4.1.4.3. Manager interview**

According to the centre manager students generally come from nearby suburbs within a radius of fifteen kilometres, mostly from Bien Hoa City. Every day three buses bring these students who have a range of backgrounds including those from official universities, high schools, graduates and those currently working or looking for work. Due to their different backgrounds, these students have a variety of purposes for learning English. However, he said that most want to look for well-paid jobs, support their current job or study abroad, with a few being sent to the centre by their parents. In the delivery of English courses, each course lasts twelve weeks. The centre has seven annexes altogether and the main office controls them; the seven annexes do not operate independently.

In order to meet the learners' needs, the centre always issues a survey so that they can convey their needs and demands to the centre at the end of each term. This survey contains questions about teaching materials and methods, centre management, and office staff. If possible, changes are made accordingly. Furthermore the centre organizes workshops and professional development sessions at the end of the term so that precious experience can be shared among the teaching staff, and feedback obtained from the teachers about their teaching and learning. At this time, teachers

also have time to evaluate the teaching materials they have recently used at the centre. Apart from these programs for teachers in-servicing, the centre has some special workshops for the learners. In these they learn English using a variety of materials e.g. using more than (one book, team teaching) so that they can adapt to different ways of teaching. This helps make them feel interested in going to English classes.

The centre manager explained that due to the strong movement towards learning English, many centres have opened to welcome both students and teachers. Some of these centres offer high salaries to attract qualified and famous teachers, creating big competition among them. She said that the board of directors at her centre is currently adjusting the salary policy to attract better teachers. However, in order to do that the centre has to increase the students' school fees. As a result, the focus of the centre will be changed from low class to middle and high class students. At present the foreign teachers currently working at the centre do not have enough qualifications to meet the centre's requirements including university degrees and TESOL certificates.

#### **4.1.5. Classroom observations**

In order to complete a general description of the two classrooms selected in case study 1, observations of the reading and writing periods are summarized in details below:

##### **4.1.5.1. Reading classroom observation**

In observing the designated reading classroom observation, the researcher noted that even though this session was the first period of the day, the teacher did not introduce the new lesson or even say 'hi' to his students; nor he did he revise the previous session. As some students were still arriving, he just opened his book and wrote down the outline of the questions to be answered in order: question numbers 11-15, title of the reading, and answer numbers 11-15. After that he read the reading text to the whole class and asked students if there were any words they did not understand. However, students were quiet and did not respond to his question. Right after that he wrote a list of words on the board with their definitions, for example - 'parasity': to

live on another plant or organism. In the meantime, students wrote in their exercise books what was on the board. While the students were writing, some were talking to each other privately in Vietnamese. The teacher then told his students that with these new words they would be able to understand the meaning of the reading; if they needed more vocabulary explanations, he could give more. The teacher also encouraged students to understand the context in English not Vietnamese, to enable them to succeed in sitting for the English test.

Following the reading, the teacher asked students to tell him the answers to the questions on the board, and they responded well by giving correct answers. He then wrote down the answers in a layout he had set up earlier while reading the questions to the students. However, some students gave him different answers which he also wrote on the board to make comparisons later. Next he went back to check the answers which were not the same, explaining which answers were incorrect and why. As students listened, they took notes about the differences between correct and incorrect answers. He also wrote down some more new words on the board so that students could understand the questions and give clear answers, with examples such as 'Bury: put a dead body in the ground.'

After choosing the right answers, he went forward to the next reading passage with the same instructions: question numbers questions 16-24, title of the reading, and answer numbers 16-24. In the meantime, students copied what the teacher was writing on the board. The researcher observed that at this time some students were nodding their heads, while some were speaking Vietnamese with each other.

The teacher asked students if they knew the meaning addressed in the title of the reading. However, most students remained silent. Then he read the reading text again and wrote some new words for students to copy in their exercise books, for example, embark: to get on, to embark on: to begin. Students quietly copied these words while a few students discussed something else in Vietnamese. In order to encourage students to read more at home and do things to extend their vocabulary, the teacher also walked along the middle aisle of the classroom and asked them to try not to think



of the content of the text in Vietnamese. He then asked students to tell him the answers which he wrote on the board in the same way as the first reading text. The lesson now concluded as time had run out.

#### **4.1.5.2. Writing classroom observation**

The teacher walked along the middle aisle to collect some students' homework to correct on the board. While some were talking Vietnamese, some were looking back at what they had done at home. The teacher wrote some of the students' sentences on the board, and then walked up and down the middle aisle asking them to look at these sentences and give their ideas. The class was quiet with no responses; all students just looked at the board. Then the teacher corrected the sentences, and students followed by copying down the corrections in their exercise books. For example: 'They work economical electricity' → 'They are economical', 'It has nice sharp and powerful motor' → 'Its engine is powerful and easy to start.'

After that the teacher introduced a new lesson on 'parts of a paragraph' and wrote on the board the following:

*Topic sentence: topic and controlling idea*

He gave verbal examples in both English and Vietnamese to illustrate the structure he was presenting. At this time he began interpreting what he was saying. He also used only Vietnamese sentences to illustrate the meanings. Students listened and wrote in their exercise books.

*Supporting sentence: to explain and develop the controlling idea*

Here the teacher gave verbal examples such as 'save time' and 'available to wash'. Students got involved; they listened and took notes in their exercise books.

*Concluding sentence: summarizing the main idea*

Students listened and wrote in their exercise books. After the explanations, he asked students to refer to the exercises. He asked students to find the ‘topic’ and the controlling idea in Vietnamese. Then students found out the answers for requests such as ‘topic: internet’ and ‘controlling idea: useful tool’.

Students responded to the teacher’s questions well. At this point the teacher explained the content of the reading and expanded on implicit knowledge. The teacher used both Vietnamese and English and students took notes. Following this he asked students to write down a task and complete it by finding the topic sentence and supporting sentences, but did not ask the students to work in pairs. Instead, he asked them to do the task individually. Then after a few minutes, he asked students to give answers while he was interpreting the passage into Vietnamese. He used Vietnamese to explain some new words in the belief that students could more easily understand the whole passage. During this time, some students were just talking about things that were not related to the topic.

The teacher then let students find supporting ideas for: ‘using a cell phone while riding is dangerous’. In response, students expressed opinions including robbery and accidents. Some students were doing different things; they were not involved in this activity. Even though they were not involved, the teacher asked them to write down supporting ideas relating to the topic sentences given. Then the time was over.

## **4.2. Case study 2**

### **4.2.1. General introduction**

According to the documentation / website of Centre 2, it is one of the premier English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City. It has been operating since 1980 employing both local and foreign teaching staff (only local staff at time of data collection) holding Bachelor and Postgraduate degrees and using modern teaching methods. This centre has gained its reputation due to the quality of its teaching. Its functions are

teaching English, preparing for examinations and organizing national foreign language examinations levels A, B, and C.

From observations, each classroom is suitable for classes with a blackboard, three electric fans, four fluorescent lights, a desk for the teacher, and tables and chairs for students in three lines and nine rows. Because of the large area in each room with around 54 seats, teachers use microphones so that students can hear what they present.

#### **4.2.2. Participants**

Two female teachers and one manager agreed to join in this study. Of the two teachers, one was aged in her early 30s and the other was in her early 50s. They were both invited by the centre to participate. The female manager of the program was aged in her late thirties and has a Master degree in Education. Other participants were 77 students chosen from observed classes to answer questionnaires about students' attitudes and perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in English learning. Among those students, there were 45 females and 32 males, and only 8 out of the 77 had jobs.

#### **4.2.3. Student questionnaire**

The questionnaires for students in this English centre were administered in the same two classes observed. The questionnaire took about 40 minutes of class time, with eighty two questionnaires being delivered. Of these, the researcher received 77 completely answered questionnaires, with five not fully completed. This happened even though the researcher had explained items carefully in Vietnamese and asked participants to respond to each item before going on to the next one. Furthermore after completing the questionnaire, the researcher asked respondents to go over each item again so that they would be sure not to miss or misunderstand anything. More detailed data are shown in Section 5.2.1.

#### **4.2.4. Teacher and manager interviews**

Interviews were undertaken with the teachers from both observed classes as well as the manager to understand the ways they viewed their language centre.

##### **4.2.4.1. Reading teacher interview**

In interview, the reading teacher in Centre 2 explained that she usually spent from two to three sessions getting to know her students at the start of each course because she wanted to know who her students were and what they wanted to study. In this class, she said that 100 percent of the class was 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year university students majoring in subjects other than English, and living within the city precincts. Their purpose is to pass B level in English which converts to 450-549 points of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in order to graduate from their university. In addition, they want a good knowledge of English for their work in the future. She believes that she helps students improve their four skills of English including listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, she believes that in order to help them succeed in their study, it is not only the teacher but also the students who need to try their best to study at home as well as get involved in classroom activities. She finds that students are rather lazy; they do not prepare lessons before coming to class. She minimizes the time of copying down the meaning of new words in class so that they have time to listen to teacher's explanations. However, as she knows that their writing skills are only limited to short simple sentences, and not essays, she uses both English and Vietnamese. This is because she believes that if she uses only English, students will not continue to come to class.

This teacher says she applies many techniques to help keep students interested, so she was not only teaching but also encouraging and motivating them to study like children, even though they know that English is important to their current learning and future jobs. She believes that students do not try their best because they are not sitting for any official examinations during the course. Before commencing a new course, there is no placement test; therefore, students' English language levels can

differ considerably in class. They just want to have the B certificate, so they enrol to study B level even though their level is not up to that level - which makes her teaching harder. She strives to understand her students well; for example, if she asks them to do more work, she has found that they do not want to come back. She also revealed that the teaching facilities of the centre are not enough, for example, there is only one cassette player in each class and there are no posters or overhead projectors. She says it seems that the centre focuses on the quantity of students rather than on the quality of teaching and learning.

One teacher is given charge of one class for many courses if the students like that teacher. The reading teacher explained that traditionally speaking, students do not want to follow their teacher's advice in encouraging them to study with another teacher. For this reason, she explained to students that by doing this they will miss the chance of listening to many different accents, but they do not seem to care about this. This happens because the centre lets them choose their level and their teacher themselves. The reading teacher also encourages students to go to the English speaking club to practise more English, but they are afraid of going there because they believe their English is still at a low level and they cannot communicate.

The reading teacher explained that most students just want to read the Vietnamese part of the lesson; they do not want to spend time on reading the English version first. In the text book there is a vocabulary part with an English transcript so the teacher minimizes copying time in class. She gives them Vietnamese sentences which are then translated into English, and supplements these with practical sentences which are often used in real life. From her experience, up to the higher level, students do not want to study lessons in the text book, preferring to study practical things such as the news and popular songs. Therefore, she sometimes lets them listen to songs which have blanks for missing words which they have to fill in while listening. She also uses Vietnamese news in English for reading and discussing in groups and strives to create an English speaking situation where they can participate without hesitation, similar to an English speaking club. She skips some of the lessons in the text book, but she still teaches grammar points which help them to pass the B level exam.

This teacher expressed that the centre does not seem to understand the students' psychology. Sometimes it organizes workshops to remind teachers that they must cover all the teaching materials assigned. The centre does not know that students do not like some lessons in the text book and would like to study something in real life instead. That is why she often gives students Vietnamese practical sentences to translate into English in order to stimulate them to come to class. This teacher would also like to enrich her teaching methods if she had the chance to do so.

#### **4.2.4.2. Grammar teacher interview**

In interviewing the teacher currently teaching students grammar at Centre 2 stated, "most of the students are studying at university. Some are working but they try their best to come to class in the hope of gaining a National English certificate to improve their salary. They come here to study English with many different purposes, but those who are university students try to achieve certificate level B (equal 450-549 points of TOEFL) in order to achieve the levels needed for graduation and have a good job in the future. Some want to support their current jobs". Therefore due to these needs, besides the centre's materials which are based on Streamline English - Destination books, the teacher searches for other text books to make the classtime more interesting and diverse. This textbook is a rather old, bilingual language book not suitable for adult students whose English levels may be more advanced. As there was no placement test at the beginning of the course, the teaching materials did not match up and should be replaced. The content of teaching focuses on the lowest level of students in order to maintain the number of students in the class as low level students feel like going to school for more English. This teacher says that she also gives homework to motivate her students to work more at home even though the centre does not organize end of term tests to evaluate their efforts. It is up to the teacher in charge if she wants to design a test for them. The teacher felt happy when students could finish their exercises and believed that her instructions were very clear. She agreed that she was nervous at first, so, she wrote a formula on the board which lacked the subject of "wish". She said that she would like to do more training on

teaching techniques and ways of teaching, especially in modern techniques if she had the chance.

#### **4.2.4.3. Manager interview**

In interview, the manager of Centre 2 explained that his centre is open to all learners no matter what the level. Students can enrol in their English class as they request. There is no placement test; as most learners go to the centre with the purpose of getting certificate B to graduate from their university. In addition, some are currently working and they have to get a certain certificate to satisfy their organization's needs. She believes that teachers are using student-centred approaches, not teacher-centred approaches meaning that students have the chance to practise their speaking skills. Normally, the centre holds an annual meeting to remind teachers to follow and cover the curriculum. If teachers have difficulties arising before the meeting, the centre is willing to receive their contribution and not wait until the meeting to discuss the concerns. She believes that the success of the centre is due to the teachers' hard work, willingness, teaching hours, good classroom atmosphere, and low fees. Students are allowed to choose the teacher to study with. She explained that although the teaching material is rather old, students still like studying with it, preferring it to newer materials that did not attract them. At the moment, the centre is progressing without any difficulties. Each course lasts ten weeks and the centre receives 600-800 students mainly learning English, although there are a few foreign languages taken as well. At present the centre is co-operating with C level teachers to design a suitable program for this level which compares to 550 points or more in TOEFL. The reason for changing to C level materials is that students do not like studying as they find the material is too hard to follow. The centre also organizes some classes which focus on listening and speaking for those who want to improve only those two skills.

#### **4.2.5. Classroom observations**

In observing the teaching and learning activities of the centre, two classrooms including grammar and reading periods have been selected and described as below.

#### **4.2.5.1. Reading classroom observation**

In this class students were at intermediate level and studying Streamline English - Destination book prepared in bilingual language. The teacher warmed up the class by telling a funny story in English and Vietnamese which related to the lesson they would be studying later. After that, she asked if students had read the story in Unit 10 at home. She then asked if anyone could tell the story again. Nobody responded so she still kept asking students to tell a story. She even used a bit of Vietnamese to encourage them. Then she changed her method by asking single questions. Students responded, she also asked students to answer in English her Vietnamese questions. At this time, some students were still coming into the classroom. Students responded to her questions so she asked “Have you ever put on clothes inside out?” to which students replied “no” at first. After that she asked the question in Vietnamese and students replied “yes”. This suggested that students were not clear about the meaning of the question in English. She then asked students how to say in English “Em bị đau chân, em đi không được” which was simply translated as “My leg is hurt, I cannot walk”. Students did not respond right away so she kept encouraging them to answer. Finally they responded. After that, she told the class a funny story before asking if anyone had a funny story that had happened to them. She continued to encourage students to tell their stories but no one responded. However, one student asked her how to say the word “ong” (bee) in English so she helped that student. Then some students used Vietnamese to ask questions so she asked them to use English instead of Vietnamese.

At this point the teacher asked her students to read the story by themselves in English, not in the Vietnamese version. After that, she read the story to them, sentence by sentence, and explained the meaning. She also wrote new words on the board such as ‘arrange’, ‘arrangement’, ‘afford’, ‘expensive’. All students listened carefully and copied these down in their exercise books. After that, the teacher asked students to make a sentence using ‘afford’. She also gave them some Vietnamese sentences to say in English. One student responded well, even assigning other students to answer.



Following this the teacher explained 'got stuck' and 'traffic jam' and provided real life situations related so that they could easily understand. The students listened and took notes. The teacher gave the meanings of 'wonder' and 'walk', with examples to illustrate the meanings. She also explained the meanings of 'be disappointed in love', 'buffet = cafeteria', 'except that....' in Vietnamese.

Lastly the teacher asked students to practise making sentences with 'except that....' Most remained quiet so she gave some sentences in Vietnamese. Still no one volunteered to make sentences so she had to assign students to speak up by offering much encouragement.

#### **4.2.5.2. Grammar classroom observation**

In this grammar section students were at intermediate level using the Streamline English - Destination book prepared in bilingual language mode. The teacher started the lesson at 9.15 a.m. before all students had arrived, meaning that some students were still coming while the teacher was conducting the lesson. She started writing some grammar points on the board and did not say any words to introduce the lessons or link it to a previous one. The lesson was about 'wish and noun clauses'.

*(Using a wish is to say something which is a contrary to fact or an unreal action)*

*Future wish:*                      S + could/would + verb

S + wish(s/es) + were + V-ing

Eg: I wish that you could come to the party tonight. (you cannot come)

He wishes that you could stop saying that. (you probably won't stop)

She wishes that she was coming with us. (she is not coming with us)

*Present wish:*                      S + wish(s/es) that S + V2

Eg: I wish that I had enough time to finish it. (I do not have enough time)

*Past wish:* S + wish(s/es) that +S + had + V3.

(Past perfect)

Eg: I wish that I had washed the clothes yesterday. (I did not wash the clothes)

The teacher kept on writing on the board without saying anything; students were copying all things on the board into their exercise book for about 15 minutes. Then the teacher wrote explanations on the differences between ‘hope’ and ‘wish’ on the board as well.

*Hope/wish*

We hope that they will come. (we do not know if they are coming.)

We hope they came yesterday. (we do not know if they came.)

We wish that they had come yesterday. (they did not come.)

After that, the teacher began explaining the grammar points, but students were still writing. Then she stopped and waited for them to finish copying in their books. A short time later, some students finished writing and they also waited for the others.

About 25 minutes after the class had started, the teacher explained the grammar points in Vietnamese. She read the examples and then explained their meanings in Vietnamese. Students listened, looked and took notes as needed. For each point, she asked students to give more examples. Some students were able to give examples based on guidance given by the teacher in Vietnamese. That meant that the teacher was expecting the students to translate into English. When she assigned particular students to give more examples they did not respond. Then she asked one more student to give an example and luckily, he was able to say “I wish that you could have a car”. Then another student said “I wish I was becoming the president next year”.

To help students understand the difference between the future and the present, the teacher explained the use of ‘wish in present’ which is not true at present. She explained the structure again and how to build up a sentence. Then she asked the students to volunteer to give examples. During the time she was explaining, all students listened and observed and some students also took notes as needed. Students gave examples such as “I wish I were you”, “I wish I won a lottery ticket”, “I wish that I ...”

The teacher continued to explain the structure in Vietnamese, even the meaning of the examples. After the part ‘wish in the present’, she explained ‘wish in the past’, and read the examples. Following this she gave one sentence in Vietnamese, and asked the students to say it in English. Then she said ‘I wish that you had visited me’, ‘I wish that you could have visited me’. After all this, she asked if any students had questions but no one responded.

At this point the teacher asked the students to do some exercises which she wrote on the board (leaving blanks for the ‘wish’ structure). For example:

“Tom is sorry that he did not watch the football match yesterday.”

→He wishes that .....

“She won’t go to the concert tomorrow.”

→She wishes .....

The teacher then modeled four sentences for students to copy down in their exercise books. She explained the way to do the exercise and she said “just think about the situation and convert it into the structure to use”. At that point, students were writing and listening. One student gave an answer for the first sentence but it was not right, so the teacher corrected it in front of the class. Then she walked round the class to help students as needed and some asked for help. After five minutes, she asked students to come up to the board and write down their sentences. Students came up

and wrote down answers. Then the teacher read every answer to correct them. The other students corrected their work as needed. After that, she explained the difference between ‘hope’ and ‘wish’ in Vietnamese. She also gave one more structure of ‘wish to infinitive’ as “I wish to see her soon”. Now the time was over.

### **4.3. Case study 3**

#### **4.3.1. General introduction**

According to its documents this centre has been operating for over ten years teaching general English and other programs. Established in June 1996, Centre 3 became operational later in the same year, offering quality English language programs for those who wish to learn English as a Second / Foreign Language for educational, personal, business and professional needs. Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, this centre is the ideal venue to host a wide range of programs and events. It is well equipped with over 45 spacious, air-conditioned lecture rooms, meeting rooms, a language laboratory, an advanced multimedia computer laboratory, an audio visual room, and a conference hall with a capacity of 150 seats. The centre has recently upgraded its facilities, building more state-of-the-art classrooms with new technical equipment such as computers with ADSL, LCD projectors, cable TV and visual training aids. Besides, the Library and Information Center are being gradually enriched with an abundant source of books, journals and teaching aids. The Self-Access Learning Centre provides an opportunity for self-study and language practice, and accommodation is provided upon request.

This centre has Vietnamese and English-speaking instructors from New Zealand, Australia, UK, Canada and the US. They are well selected, highly qualified and experienced professionals who hold university and / or post-graduate degrees and internationally recognized TESOL qualifications as well as extensive English teaching experience in Vietnam and overseas.

Each program comprises several different levels, with two or three modules for each level. Each module usually lasts for 10 - 12 weeks. Classes meet two or three days a week, depending on the nature of each program.

#### **4.3.2. Participants**

One female teacher, one male teacher, and one manager agreed to join the study. Of the two teachers, one was aged in her early thirties and the other was a male in his late forties. They were both invited teachers of the centre. The male manager was aged in his early fifties with a PhD degree in Education from America. Other participants were 29 students chosen from two observed classes to answer questionnaires aimed at finding students' attitudes and perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in English learning. Among those students, eighteen were female and eleven male. Only two out of 29 had jobs.

#### **4.3.3. Student questionnaire**

The questionnaire for students at this English centre was administered to the same two classes in which the researcher had been an observer. The questionnaire took about 40 minutes of class time, with 29 questionnaires being delivered to students. The researcher received the full 29 correctly answered sheets. Like the other centres, before delivering the questionnaire, the researcher had explained each item carefully in Vietnamese and asked participants to respond to each item before going to the next one. Furthermore, as with classes in other centres, the researcher asked respondents to go over each item again after completing the questionnaires in order not to miss or misunderstand anything. More detailed data are shown in Section 5.3.1.

#### **4.3.4. Teacher and manager interviews**

In this section the researcher presents overviews of his three interviews including the listening and speaking teachers observed, and their centre manager.

#### **4.3.4.1. Listening teacher interview**

According to the teacher in charge, students of the class were from other institutions including high schools and universities, with a few who were currently working. They were coming to English classes to enrich their knowledge of English because their parents wanted them to do well at school and study overseas. Students at university level needed to get a national certificate of English at B level to graduate from their university and have English levels that might help their future work.

Although this centre organized placement tests before classes start, the students' levels of English were still very different. This meant that some students got five points while others got nine points in their placement tests, even though they were in the same class. Therefore, the teacher explained that he had to teach at the level of the majority. At this centre teachers are assigned to cover certain macro skills and classes cover different ages and levels of English. Although, the centre assigns teachers to teach using the materials supplied, if lessons are not interesting, teachers are allowed to teach other things as long as their teaching is effective. This meant that he had designed games for extra materials used in the class.

This centre often organized academic workshops to share new teaching techniques among teachers. This meant that some teachers working in the office of the centre also knew the difficulties of the centre such as levels of students, but this did not change the approach of the school. In commenting on the classroom observation the teacher believed that the setting was unnatural because the students were embarrassed and too shy to contribute to the activities. However, at their level, she said students were not using English much anyway. It seemed that this teacher was not satisfied with his teaching and indicated that he wanted to further develop teaching techniques in order to help students study well.

#### **4.3.4.2. Speaking teacher interview**

The speaking teacher revealed that all students in her class were also students of other schools. They were studying English in order to go abroad and enrich their

knowledge of English ability in speaking skills and listening skills. Normally, this teacher asked her students to prepare for the lesson before class. She used English to explain without translating into Vietnamese. This teacher believed that if she used English students would have a chance to study in an English environment. Furthermore, she often changed teaching activities in order to get students involved.

This teacher revealed that she had not faced difficulties in teaching at the centre since she first started. The centre supplied everything required for her teaching, as in other classes which had local and foreign teachers who were required to cover different parts of the curriculum.

This teacher was happy with her teaching hours which were sufficient for all students to work and co-operate with each other to finish their task. On the day of observation it seemed that the activity was different from other days when they had to work from the class book. So it was natural that students had made a lot of mistakes in structure. This teacher also expressed her desire to train further in teaching methods in order to transfer knowledge of English to students more effectively.

#### **4.3.4.3. Manager interview**

According to the manager of this centre, students were mostly from other schools, with some working in jobs around the city. At the beginning of courses, students were interviewed after doing a placement test in order to know their needs and levels. Then students were placed in the correct levels, taking their requests into account and permitting them to choose teachers they liked to study with. They studied the four skills of English including listening, speaking, reading and writing, with classes being restricted to twenty students. At the end of each course, students had the chance to evaluate the whole course in regard to facilities, teaching staff and teaching materials. From this, the centre was able to accommodate new ideas as necessary. The manager pointed out that students at this centre had the opportunity to study with both foreign and local teachers.

Thanks to the interviews undertaken at the beginning of each course, teachers understood the needs and requests of all students, meaning that the centre could meet their demands. In addition, teachers could better help students achieve their goals. Furthermore, the centre frequently organizes academic workshops on teaching for all teaching staff, giving them the right to speak up and contribute to the development of classroom management, and syllabus. All teachers are supplied with teaching materials and worksheets which meant that teachers could have extra copies made for students by giving the original copies to the office. This means that teachers have time to focus on their teaching.

The centre manager pointed out that his teaching staff not only have rich experience but also attend academic workshops. This means that students have the chance to study in a modern teaching environment, studying in air-conditioned rooms equipped with one computer and one slide overhead projector. The number of students in each class is not over twenty students and they study three days a week. The requirements for being a teacher at this centre are very strict and all feedback from students and teachers is considered and adjusted to help develop the centre. This centre has experienced some difficulties with foreign teachers whose majors are not in English teaching, but had just attended a short course of teaching TESOL, meaning that the source of teachers was not always stable. As students pay high fees for attending this centre, they have high demands and expectations. Furthermore, if students under 18 years old are absent from class, their parents are notified early the following week to confirm their circumstances. In every session of the teaching day, teachers are encouraged to call the roll and report attendances to the administration office. Finally, the centre manager explained that staff are encouraged to use English in their working environment in order to build up a model for their students.

#### **4.3.5. Classroom observations**

In two classroom observations the researcher has formed general descriptions of listening and speaking periods as below.



#### **4.3.5.1. Listening classroom observation**

When the teacher entered the listening classroom, he warmed up the class while waiting for more students to come. The teacher then checked students' attendance by calling their names. He followed this by checking students' homework; finding that some students had done their homework whereas others had not, with some saying they had left theirs at home. For about ten minutes the teacher asked students to do work in their work books. Some started opening their electronic dictionaries to look up the meaning of some words in the work, but the teacher did not allow this. He said if they were having any difficulties with new words, just ask the teacher. In response to the teacher's questions, students used English to communicate. Next the teacher introduced a new lesson (unit 2 / part 2): 'Part-time jobs' from the book entitled 'Expanding Tactics for Listening'. While he was introducing the lesson, he turned on the computer and students opened their textbooks. The teacher then asked if students knew some words such as 'convenience store' but they did not respond. Then the teacher explained the meaning of every word that was new for the students while they listened and looked at the pictures. Then the teacher played a CD-Rom and asked students to tick the answers in their books, which they did while they were listening. After some time listening, he played the CD-Rom a second time and asked students for the answers. Students responded to his requests in English. When the teacher asked his students how they knew the answers they could not explain why. Then the teacher played the CD-Rom again a few times so that students could answer by explaining and giving details. He played a CD-Rom on the topic 'What job was it?' If students could not answer, he gave some clues to help them; however it seemed hard for them to meet the teacher's requests. Some gave answers that were not 100% correct. Finally, the teacher told them the answers.

After that, students moved to 'part 3' in which students had to listen and identify jobs by numbering the pictures. Here students listened and filled in the correct numbers. The teacher then asked students to say the answers and explain why they had chosen such answers, but students could not give any explanations. Then the teacher explained some new words and repeated important parts of each statement. He

explained the meanings in Vietnamese while students listened and copied the meanings in their exercise books. Then when he asked what the job was, students were able to reply. The teacher and students kept on listening and answering the rest of the exercise until class time was over.

#### **4.3.5.2. Speaking classroom observation**

In this observation, while students were still arriving, the teacher started the session with a warming up activity in which she asked them questions related to their family matters and daily work. After that she started the lesson, but students asked if she could do something else instead. After thinking a while, she decided to let students play an 'if clause'. She divided the class into two groups; one would write 'main' clauses, while another would write 'if' clauses. The teacher gave some examples on the board such as "if I were a bird, I would be a pigeon", but she did not explain the grammar type in this use of 'if clause'. Students did not write down the examples because she did not give them time to do so. Then she gave students some pieces of paper to write down parts of 'if clause' as assigned. Students used half English and half Vietnamese to ask each other questions such as "How many sentences? What do I write, half or whole sentences?" The teacher answered the students' questions and when they finished writing she asked two students to collect the folded papers. After that she asked each student to come up and pick two pieces of paper to read what was written aloud to see whether they could make sense of them and put versions of each sentence into one group. The game was going on like that and she did not care about mistakes students had made such as "if I were..., I will ..."

After finishing matching up sentences, the speaking teacher then asked students to choose which sentences were the best by reading each group of sentences again. In this activity students became involved and responded rather well, choosing the three sentences they thought was fun and made sense. Then she read them again to choose the best one. Students had different ideas, so she asked them to raise their hands for each sentence. Students continue to respond to her requests well. Finally after the best sentence was voted for by students he asked them what they had learned from the

game. They said they had learned about ‘if clause’. She also asked what kinds of if clauses there were and explained that there were three types they could list. Finally, she asked students if they had any questions but there were no responses and the session finished on time.

#### **4.4. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 4 describes the fieldtrips to the three English language centres selected for analysis in this thesis. In each case study the researcher provides a general description of data collection through classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires. In other words, this chapter details data about various factors such as teachers’ practice, teachers’ perceptions, students’ perceptions, and managers’ views in the three English language centres. In the next chapter, the researcher analyzes the data and discusses it in order to identify effective approaches to apply in Vietnamese contexts for improving students’ communication skills.

## **CHAPTER 5 – DATA ANALYSIS**

In the previous Chapter 4, data from qualitative classroom observations, manuscripts, teacher and manager interviews and quantitative student questionnaires were recorded as a basis for analysis of the three case studies of English language centres used as the basis for this research. In order to analyze these data, this Chapter comprises data collected through classroom observations, responses to questionnaires by the students, and reports from teachers' and managers' interviews which are discussed to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each English language centre. It also compares and answers the seven aspects of the key research questions outlined in Chapter (1.2). This includes similarities and differences among three English language centres in order to form a basis for the draft ideal language centre.

### **5.1. Case Study 1**

Data from the first case study includes a student questionnaire for 68 students, interviews with reading and writing teachers, an interview with the centre manager, and two classroom observations.

#### **5.1.1. Student questionnaire**

The aim of the student questionnaire was to understand English students' motivations for English learning, their methodological preferences, and their perceptions of how best to achieve their goals in English learning in Vietnam. From the data collected (see Table 1), it was obvious that students' purposes for learning English were clear. They had motivations to study with 81% (56% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing) that they wanted to study English to get a good job and 50% (15% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing) wanted to assist their current jobs. 39% (21% strongly agreeing and 18% agreeing) wanted to further their overseas study; and 29% (4% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing) wanted to enjoy the pleasure of learning English. Only 18% (none strongly agreeing and 18% agreeing) wanted to make their families pleased. From the data, the researcher believes that students mostly had good

motivations to study. Only 28% (7% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing) of respondents considered passing compulsory subjects and examinations important. This indicated that they were studying another major at their university. English was just a tool to help them to ensure their future jobs. In addition, learning English for going abroad was not a key motivation due to the current social economic development of the country. Students understood that since Vietnam had entered the WTO, foreign companies and foreign investors had been pouring into Vietnam more and more, and they would need to employ people with English ability. They saw the new local labour resource as a benefit for the future in which they could have well-paid jobs in Vietnam. This requirement encouraged students to focus on oral communication while attending English classes.

**Table 1: Summary of results gained from students' responses on purposes of learning English (Case study 1)**

Item 2 Purposes of learning English is to ....	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. get a good job.	56%	25%	16%	1%	1%
b. assist my current job.	15%	35%	49%	1%	0%
c. further my overseas study.	21%	18%	53%	6%	1%
d. give me more fun and personal satisfaction.	4%	25%	51%	10%	9%
e. pass compulsory subject and exam.	7%	21%	56%	9%	7%
f. make my family pleased.	0%	18%	54%	16%	12%
g. other	9%	1%	0%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Table 2 shows that 67% of students believed it was good for them to work in pairs (24% agreeing and 43% strongly agreeing), 81% in small groups (56% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing), and 54% the whole class (28% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing). Significantly, 56% strongly agreed that working in small groups was the best chance to practise English, while only 10% (4% strongly agreeing and 6% agreeing) agreed that working individually was best. The data reflected students' needs and understandings about communication which match their purpose for learning English. Students believed that learning English requires practising it with peers / groups through integration activities / discussions. By doing this, students can remember and use it later outside the classroom.

**Table 2: Summary of results gained from students' responses on student work practice (Case study 1)**

Item 3.1  In class, it is good for students to do work .....	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. individually.	4%	6%	46%	21%	10%
b. in pairs.	24%	43%	32%	1%	1%
c. in small groups.	56%	25%	19%	0%	0%
d. in a whole class group.	28%	26%	44%	1%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Students also thought that learning at school was still not enough, and 79% wanted to have more homework to improve their levels (38% strongly agreeing, 41% agreeing) (see Table 3). From this we realize that students show their fondness for the study and have motivation to study for themselves with the purpose of enriching their knowledge of English to be ready for work in an increasingly prosperous economic period. However, this is different from their teachers' views that students are passive and lazy. Thus, there is a misunderstanding between students and teachers in the way that students' needs about learning preferences are not always well communicated or understood.

**Table 3: Summary of results gained from students' responses on homework (Case study 1)**

Item 4.1	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
Homework is useful.	38%	41%	15%	4%	1%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Students (71%) wanted their teachers to use English only in classroom (50% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing). In addition, 65% wanted to use English more than Vietnamese in class (40% strongly agreed and 25% agreed), while only 3% preferred to use English less than Vietnamese (see Table 4). Therefore, students strongly support the idea that learning English needs an English language environment so that they will be able to achieve their goals. They prefer their teachers to use English and also to pay attention to speaking skills and listening skills. They know that listening and speaking skills play important roles in their daily life and work. It is true that a language learner can communicate in English easily if he lives in that language community. Students realize that English learning hours at school are limited, so they require an English environment so that they can become familiar with English.

**Table 4: Summary of results gained from students' responses on teachers' use of English (Case study 1)**

Item 5.1 In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. English only.	50%	21%	29%	0%	0%
b. English more than Vietnamese.	40%	25%	34%	1%	0%
c. English less than Vietnamese.	0%	3%	56%	13%	28%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Questionnaire responses indicated that 90% of students believe English speaking clubs to be places for them to practise English (47% strongly agreeing and 43% agreeing). In Vietnam, even though English is now considered as a very important language to equip students for present and future occupations, English is a foreign language. Therefore, it does not mean that English can be heard and used everywhere. An effective place to practise and use English is learning is at an English speaking club where everyone has the same purpose of using English. Even when a student does not speak English there, he can observe and listen at least. The term 'excursion'



does not sound familiar to Vietnamese students, but at 66% students also believed that excursions would help them to study English (29% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing), with 63% preferring to practise on campus (19% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing) (see Table 5). Statistics showed that ‘theory goes along with practice’, and that students needed an English environment to learn and use the language. They clearly paid attention to the importance of communication skills.

**Table 5: Summary of results gained from students’ responses on place to practise English (Case study 1)**

Item 6.1 It would be useful to practise English ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. on an excursion.	29%	37%	29%	3%	0%
b. at English speaking club.	47%	43%	7%	1%	0%
c. on campus.	19%	44%	35%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

In looking at students’ preferences in ways of learning English (see Table 6), 78% confirmed the value of speaking English with other students (41% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing), with 56% wanting to learn grammar rules (15% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing), and 44% wanting to learn by reading and taking notes (13% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing). This showed that students believe that speaking English with other students helps them to improve their English more. Copying from the board was not considered as a preferred way to learn English, as only 12% (3% strongly agreeing and 9% agreeing) agreed that they preferred to this way. These results clearly recognized that students prefer communicative approaches, mainly with 72% preferring listening and taking notes, 81% preferring television / video / film, and 76% preferring radio / music. The statistics show that students strongly believe and prefer to improve communication skills through learning style preferences ranging from 81% (TV, video, film), 78% (talking to other students) to

12% (copying from the board). On this basis, teachers should consider and focus on students' learning preferences in order to help them achieve their communication goals. In order to understand issues, teachers need to build up an open and non threatening rapport and encourage students to raise their ideas and preferences and participate in syllabus design (Dang, 2006). This approach might help teachers have different understanding of students' learning attitudes.

**Table 6: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning style (Case study 1)**

Item 7.1 I like learning by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. copying from the board.	3%	9%	66%	15%	7%
b. listening and taking notes.	35%	37%	24%	4%	0%
c. listening and completing a task.	16%	37%	41%	4%	1%
d. reading and taking notes.	13%	31%	50%	4%	1%
e. repeating what I hear.	28%	40%	29%	3%	0%
f. talking to other students.	41%	37%	22%	0%	0%
g. learning grammar rules.	15%	41%	44%	0%	0%
h. television/video/films.	37%	44%	19%	0%	0%
i. radio/music.	26%	50%	22%	1%	0%
j. written materials.	25%	43%	31%	1%	0%
k. pictures/posters.	18%	44%	35%	1%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Results show that 77% (59% strongly agreeing and 18% agreeing) of students agreed they prefer to be corrected immediately in front of everyone, while 61% (37% strongly agreeing and 24% agreeing) want to be corrected quietly and immediately. On the contrary, 26% preferred to be corrected later, at the end of an activity (7% strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing), and only 13% in private (7% strongly agreeing and 6% agreeing) (see Table 7). These percentages showed that students wanted to learn the right things right away; they did not care about people being around them. It is Vietnamese culture that the young are ready to accept correction from adults as they are still influenced by traditional ways of correcting errors from the grammar translation method. Students' understandings of "learning from errors and mistakes" are part of that tradition. However in the interests of maintaining communication, it may be more appropriate sometimes not to interrupt the flow by pointing out each error as it occurs.

**Table 7: Summary of results gained from students' responses on mistake correction (Case study 1)**

Item 8.1 The best way to correct students' errors is .....	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. immediately, in front of everyone.	59%	18%	24%	0%	0%
b. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone.	7%	19%	60%	9%	4%
c. later, in private.	7%	6%	63%	9%	15%
d. quietly, immediately	37%	24%	31%	3%	6%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Although students believed that talking with friends helped them to study English better, 93% wanted their work to be corrected by their teachers (65% strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing) more than by their friends (15% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing), and only 23% (7% strongly agreeing and 16% agreeing) agreeing to

correct work themselves (see Table 8). In the Vietnamese context this means that students rely on their teachers with great respect, and want to learn English correctly right away. This clearly reflects the culture, habit of teaching and learning in Vietnam as in the saying ‘Không thầy đố mày làm nên’ which translates as ‘You cannot do anything without a teacher’. These students see their teachers as both knowledge transferors and classroom controllers. Forty-seven percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that peer correction is their preference. Teachers can strongly develop this point by letting students do peer correction first and then teachers will explain and give final answers. From such practice students have opportunities to develop integrated skills of working with both peers and teachers, understanding and explaining errors and of delivering praise and encouragement.

**Table 8: Summary of results gained from students’ responses on work to be corrected (Case study 1)**

Item 9.1 I prefer my work to be corrected by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. other students	15%	32%	47%	3%	3%
b. the teacher	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%
c. self	7%	16%	66%	3%	7%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Again 87% students showed that in learning English, talking with and listening to other students plays an important role (53% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing), with 59% preferring making conversations / dialogues together (22% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing), with 52% wanting role play (18% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing), and 51% wanting language games (22% strongly agreeing and 29% agreeing) (see Table 9). Students focused a lot on language listening and speaking skills and concluded that these skills could increase their chances of finding good jobs. However, this point is different from their teachers who were failing to provide them with any opportunities to prepare answers by discussing and sharing

information with each other before providing answers in front of the whole class; teachers just raised questions in general. Therefore, teachers need to provide students with more pair and group work to involve them in classroom interaction activities so that they can build up their confidence. Students liked learning grammar rules and 47% believed that grammar played an important role (9% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) (see Table 9). This figure (47%) reveals that students are still concerned about assessments which contain grammar.

**Table 9: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning strategies (Case study 1)**

Item 10.1 In learning English, .....plays an important role	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. role play	18%	34%	47%	1%	0%
b. language games	22%	29%	49%	0%	0%
c. songs	16%	25%	59%	0%	0%
d. talking with and listening to other students	53%	34%	13%	0%	0%
e. memorizing conversations/dialogues	22%	37%	40%	1%	0%
f. grammar exercises	9%	38%	53%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Results in Table 10 show that 93% of students believed they learned best from assessment being set up in real life English language situations (65% strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing) (see Table 10). Again this proved that students wanted to gain their goal of using English for real life situations. It was logical that students wanted to study what would be tested related to practical contexts, and teachers should use communicative approaches so that students could use what they had learned. Moreover, 62% of students also considered that assessments set by teachers is important (20% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing) for written tasks, and 60% (28% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing) for oral tasks.

**Table 10: Summary of results gained from students' responses on assessments  
(Case study 1)**

Item 11.1 Assessment is important with ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. written tasks set by the teacher.	22%	40%	37%	1%	0%
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	28%	32%	38%	1%	0%
c. checking your own progress by making tapes,	15%	29%	54%	1%	0%
d. setting up real life English situations.	65%	28%	7%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

These results clearly indicate that students need to use English in real life situations not just for written grammar translation as previously. In addition, students need an English environment to practise in. Students do not want to remain using traditional ways of teaching and learning in which they only learn about the language and not how to use it. They want to change to a new way of teaching in the hope of using English in real life activities that leads to getting good jobs in an expanding economic era. It seems then that there is a need to run English language centres not only for general English but also for English at the workplace, including an English speaking club. Besides this, centres can sometimes organize speaking contests in order to stimulate and develop students' communication skills.

### **5.1.2. Teacher interviews**

Both the reading and writing teachers complained that students' tables were fitted to the floor and were rather long and heavy, meaning that they could not move or rearrange them for group work. This limitation prevented them from conducting classroom activities that would improve the students' learning processes, particularly practising in pairs and groups. Moreover, there was no blind, so the sunlight came directly into the classroom through the windows. Added to this, with only one ceiling

fan and two wall fans the quality of teaching and learning were severely affected. In fact, during the reading observation, it was clear that the teacher was overheated and sweating because of the heat of the sun coming from outside.

Added to their poor classroom facilities, the teachers mentioned that large class sizes were a major obstacle. The average class size was around 45 to 55 students which meant that they could not give equal attention to all students. As a result, it was difficult to understand students' needs or what they wanted to do. When questions were asked by the teachers, only more able and less shy students wanted to answer. As observed when the teachers tried to call on students to answer questions, it took a long time, resulting in uninvolved students getting bored and starting to do something else. For example, when the reading teacher asked students if they knew the meaning of the title of the reading, students did not respond at all. At this point, the teacher could have organized a pre-reading activity and set up group / pair work for students to share their ideas before asking students directly and individually.

Both teachers confirmed that even though their students had stated that they were learning English for their future jobs and strongly encouraged to complete their homework, most were lazy in doing so. However, this may have been because the textbooks had the answer keys and they could easily access the answer keys without spending time working it out. In addition, another reason (students' preferences in ways of learning English) can be seen in interpretation of Table 6.

As the reading teacher was aware that learning English in an English speaking environment assists learning, he always used English to ask questions and explain things to students. He also encouraged students to spend extra time revising old lessons and learning in advance at home. However, he found that students were rather passive in the classroom and avoided getting involved in activities, instead, enjoyed copying down what the teacher wrote on the board, especially definitions of new words. From the observation, he failed to conduct pre-reading and to build students' confidence by peer discussion; he seemed to prefer teacher-dominated interaction. This approach led students not to get involved in classroom activities.

Overall, despite the reading teacher using more English in class, being hampered by poor facilities, these teachers failed to achieve communicative classrooms in which students had time or opportunities to practise speaking. Consequently, students were not confident in verbal communication. Therefore, even though these teaching periods were not speaking classes, the researcher was concerned to note that neither of these teachers were making efforts to assist their students' English communication by at least getting them to discuss their work with their nearby classmates. They did not guide students to implement integrated skills. For example, (in the case of the reading class) before conducting the reading, the teacher could do pre-reading in which the teacher and students brainstorm to have knowledge about the topic and have enough vocabulary for the discussion later. Next, the teacher could conduct the reading activity with explanation. Then students could work together to find out answers orally. They can produce the answers and explanations. After that their answers could be confirmed by the teacher. Finally, students could summarize the content of the reading in their own words (this can be homework). On this basis, students can develop their integrated skills in only one reading session.

### **5.1.3. Manager interview**

The manager of Centre 1 explained that students are free to go to any English language centre they like, no matter how far they travel. Furthermore, both students and their families realize they need English due to the needs of the society and their future jobs. Officially, most were students of other universities where they were training for various majors, but English would be a means of communication at their future workplaces.

The manager explained that his centre knew how to listen to both the learners' and teachers' needs through their feedback, which helped the centre survive and develop. As the centre understood the importance of understanding and meeting these needs, teachers were given time to sit together to share their experiences and evaluate ways of teaching that would enhance the development of the centre. In addition, team teaching helped students have a chance to practise listening to various voices. In this



way, they could build up their listening skills and catch up with different voices in real life. Moreover, they could experience a fresh environment every session.

Due to the strong movement for learning English in Vietnam since Vietnam entered the WTO, especially Ho Chi Minh City, English language centers have been mushrooming and attracting senior teachers to co-operate with them. This has led to big competition among English language centers with invited teachers being paid higher salaries. This has meant that Centre 1 needs to balance its input (students' fees) and output (teachers' salaries). Furthermore, in hiring foreign teachers mentioned in Section 7.2.7, there is a danger that they will not have enough experience and teaching qualifications, which results in poor teaching and drops in student enrolments in particular.

#### **5.1.4. Classroom observations**

In observing two English classes (one reading and one writing), the researcher found that teachers in this centre used both English and Vietnamese to give instructions and explain the meanings of words and phrases. The reading teacher used English more than Vietnamese which was highly valued by the students who preferred learning in an English environment (see Table 4). The researcher also found that both teachers asserted an overly strong influence over learning due to occupying a lot of time in explanations during lessons, with learners simply required to listen and take notes, only answering questions and commands when required. The teachers' methodology mainly involved transmission of knowledge, with very little interaction between students. However, the two teachers possessed expertise in the ways they explained the meaning of new words and structures, and verbally showed students some learning strategies to assist them in dealing with learning tasks. Most of the students seemed to be patient and content with listening to the teachers' explanations and carefully took notes. The action of encouraging students to do more work helped students have higher motivation to follow. This reminded students of their duty to do their homework and also take responsibility to do it because they believed that the next day teachers might ask questions and check their work.

Overall, classes fell into the category of what researchers call ‘a traditional class’ with a formal atmosphere in which the teacher is the central transmitter of knowledge, and the students are merely receivers (Korthagen et al., 2000). For example, in the reading class the teacher did not focus much on asking students to guess the meaning of words based on titles or context, meaning that students did not have time to develop a general idea about the reading. The teacher also did not give students time to talk or discuss the meaning of the text before being asked to give the answers. Although he gave the meanings of some new words before reading the text on board, he did not ask students which words they did not know in order to compensate for their shyness in asking in front of the others. At the end of the text after all questions were answered, students were not given time to summarize the content of the text to make sure they understood. This may have helped them improve their writing skills as well. By not letting them retell the text in their own words, the teacher was also unable to evaluate their understanding and develop their speaking skills. He did not pay attention to integrated skills.

As Littlewood et al. (1996) have pointed out, if teachers talk too much during class, students will lose opportunities to improve their communication skills. As teachers controlled most of the class time, explaining problems and not creating opportunities for students to discuss, students were being robbed of opportunities to develop their speaking skills. For example, in the case of having differences among students’ answers, teachers could have given students time to discuss this in groups and even debated their ways of choosing the best answer.

In observing the writing class, collecting students’ homework was highly appreciated because students were clearly motivated to do their homework and enjoyed having their papers corrected in front of the class, which had the benefit of helping the other students to learn as well. However, this writing period did not allow students much chance to talk, discuss, share or cooperate to contribute their ideas. Students mostly just sat and listened, then wrote down what was on the board, whereas they could have been given opportunities to discuss and enrich their knowledge of social events

and then compose a short passage. Some students were not involved and kept talking in Vietnamese, and by mainly speaking Vietnamese himself, this teacher did not encourage students to use English only. It seemed that the writing teacher did not pay any attention to classroom management.

In the writing class, the use of traditional methodologies was clearly demonstrated by writing everything on the board, encouraging students to work independently, and telling them all the answers. This was further evidenced when the teacher bilingually used both Vietnamese and English to explain the structures of sentences as well as illustrate the main points. However, although hearing passages in Vietnamese helped the students clearly understand the meaning, it interrupted and distracted their thinking and made them passive. He did not even use English when it could have been most useful, neither did he use it for very simple instructions and interactions with his students. When he did speak in English, he then repeated it in Vietnamese, meaning that students did not pay much attention to their teacher's English but just waited for his explanation in Vietnamese in order to take notes in Vietnamese. However, when a teacher does not use English very often, it is difficult to encourage them to communicate or do learning tasks in English.

The ineffectiveness of teaching and learning due to the overuse of the mother tongue has been thoroughly analyzed by Zhenhui (2000, p.18) who points out that a limited and appropriate utilization of the mother tongue can facilitate English learning and teaching, but the "overuse of mother tongue in EFL teaching can make teachers and students rely too much on translation". The overuse of mother tongue is especially harmful to students who might form habitual learning styles of translating every word while learning English. Moreover, it can make students fail to realize how essential it is that they use English in class as much as possible. Understanding the disadvantages of overuse of mother tongue in teaching a foreign language, we can infer that the teachers will meet difficulties when encouraging students to perform communicative tasks in English. Therefore, teachers need to put more effort into making their instructions in English rather than Vietnamese, as by using English appropriately students can learn a lot from their teacher talk. Nunan (1991) states that in language

classrooms where English is learned as a foreign language, teacher's talk should play an important role in providing learners with substantial live target language input. He concluded that when the teacher increases his / her use of target language in class, the students' use of that target language will rise proportionally.

Overall, the observations showed that students did not have time and chance to discuss in groups or even in pairs, meaning that they were being given no opportunities to improve their speaking. If teachers had given students time to discuss in groups or pairs, they could have been able to generate more ideas as well as arrange them in order before discussing their answers. For example, the atmosphere of the reading classroom was rather boring even when the teacher used English most of the time. He did not warm up the class in any way by using spelling exercises, playing games, telling stories or even checking on the previous lesson. As students were only given time to copy answers in their exercise books, little real communicative language teaching took place. The reading teacher did not use pair or group work at all, and he did not link any other skills to his reading period, seemed strange, particularly as reading skills clearly link with writing skills. In general, it was clear that the teachers in this centre had not planned a communicative syllabus to enable students to use English in class, even though the center's advertised methodology was communicative language teaching. They had totally neglected the follow-up communicative activities recommended by Richards and Rodgers (1986, 2001) in which classroom activities are designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language, and involve negotiation of information and information sharing.

In being unwilling to shift their teaching methodologies away from the traditional approaches and overusing teacher's talk, teachers in this centre paid more attention to the linguistic items than to the practice of using English through communicative tasks. Their practice is not meeting students' preferred way of learning which focuses on communication discussed in Section 5.1.1. As Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.38) point out, teacher-oriented activities give students "no control over the content of learning and they are likely to succumb to undesirable behaviors unless skillfully

manipulated by the teachers”. From observations in this centre, too many students were seen to be in a passive position, always waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do, and avoiding speaking in front of the class due to a complete lack of confidence which might have resulted from teachers’ teaching methods and misunderstanding of students’ learning preferences discussed in Section 5.1.1.

The seven sub questions outlined in Chapter (1.2) are addressed as below:

### **5.1.5. Students’ reasons for learning English**

The highest percentage showed that students have strong motivation to enrich English knowledge with 81% wanting to get good jobs in the future and with 50% also wanting to assist their current job prospects (see Table 1). Vietnamese people foresee their bright future if they can be able to use English which is a means of communication both at work and daily life. It is true that their teachers and the centre manager identified students’ purposes for their learning similarly. It is clear that students have an English needs in order to meet the social requirements which is the labor source can communicate in English at work. Indeed, English is now one of requirements in recruiting procedure at workplace.

### **5.1.6. Teaching methods used in the centre**

Although teachers in Centre 1 believe that a student-centered approach is encouraged for use in the classroom context, they are unable to apply it in all their teaching hours due to objective conditions including classroom size, fixed tables and rigid school syllabus. However, the manager stated that the centre wants teachers to use student-centered approaches in teaching and organizes workshops and professional development days to inform all staff and allow them to share precious experiences with one another. In the observation, it was clear that the writing teacher mainly used traditional teaching methods in which the teacher was central to transmitting knowledge and the students were more receivers. Nevertheless, the reading teacher used English to explain and transfer knowledge of English to students as much as he

could in order to create an English environment. He also encouraged students to use English and even understand the texts in an English context. However, by controlling the class most of the time, he was not complying with students' needs or preferences. That could be the reason why both teachers found students to be lazy in class. In fact, they did not feel like listening to teachers' explanation while they did not have the opportunity to practise in pairs / groups. Indeed, most people fail to achieve well when they have to do what they do not like doing and cannot do what they want to do. At no time during observations did either of these teachers set up pair work or group work to encourage students' participation while Cazden (2001) concludes that teachers should encourage students to engage in student-to-student discussion which stimulates and supports students' thinking in their study. She also adds that demonstrating performing oral ability both inside and outside the classroom requires students be active and participate in classroom activities. It seemed that these teachers did not believe in pair work or group work, even though the students' preferences were to do so. These students responded that they could like to work in small groups, with 81% strongly agreeing and agreeing to working in small groups and 67% strongly agreeing and agreeing to working in pairs (see Table 2).

In theory, teachers and the centre manager should understand their students' needs and use English all the time. Administration staff are also required to communicate with each other in English in order to build up a model that encourages students to use English. However, observation data shows that only one teacher uses English most of the time, with other using it half of the time, continually translating what he says from Vietnamese into English or vice versa. In addition, the administration staff uses Vietnamese most of the time, indicating that the school policy aimed at providing an English speaking environment is not being implemented. Teachers do not set up opportunities for students to work in small groups or pairs, neither do they often use English television / video / films while students required with 81% (see Table 6). In one term of twelve weeks, students have little time or even no time to attend a language laboratory room because of lack of facilities. The main building has only one language laboratory room of 49 headphones, with two other computer

laboratories which are used for special Intensive English programs and English for Business. Again, teachers do not organize activities for students to exchange ideas, only allowing time for listening to their explanations and copying down from the board. Students have no chances for role play; therefore, they do not have time to memorize conversations / dialogues while they preferred with 59% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing (see Table 9) so that they can apply it in real life situations. Based on the observations and interviews, neither teachers nor the center manager have understood their students' needs or implemented their stated policies. Therefore there is a gap between students' needs and their English language provider.

#### **5.1.7. Students' perceptions of the kind of language teaching needed**

From the questionnaire for students' data, students want to do homework with 79% (see Table 3). It showed that students were still influenced by the local culture less or more and it also reflected that the hardworking habit has been built so far. Also, it showed the motivation of students who need to do extra work besides school work load. It is against what teachers evaluated students' homework mentioned in 'teacher interviews' which is they were lazy in completing their work. Hence, maybe homework given was not matched with what students expected to have in order to improve English skills for communicative purposes. However, from the reading observation, homework was what to prepare for a new exercise and while conducting that exercise in the classroom, the teacher provided new vocabularies and its meanings on board. This caused students a feeling that the teacher would perform the whole exercise in class leading to reducing the motivation of well prepared time. Therefore, the teacher should change the way of conducting this stage e.g. let students work in pairs/groups and identify the meaning of the text instead.

It is true that students also would like their teachers to use English only with 71% and use English more than Vietnamese with 65% (see Table 4). Students understand the role of English in the society nowadays and they try to meet social requirement which is communication skills. Therefore, students expect teachers to use English in the

classroom in order to build up English environment which students believe will bring them benefits.

They also like to learn English by talking to other students with 78%, listen to television/ video / films with 81% and listening and taking notes with 72% (see Table 6). Students recognize in learning English that talking with and listening to other students plays an important role with 87%, memorizing conversation / dialogues with 59%, and role play with 52% (see Table 9).

From the data collected and analysis, students drew up a new point of view on learning preferences. They would like to work in pairs / groups, need to have more opportunities to practise English, study with visual aids, and so on in order to be able to communicate. Students believe that they do not have English environment, so they expect their teachers to create it by setting up opportunity for students to use English besides teachers' using English. Students also need to take note while listening in order to improve their input. They also look forwards to enriching more English by watching television, video, and movies.

### **5.1.8. Teachers' perceptions of how best to assist students**

The reading teacher believed that learning in an English environment would help students a lot. Indeed, he tried to use English in the classroom to help students study in an English language environment but by occupying most of the class time himself, he denied students the opportunity to practise English. Instead, he encouraged students to do more work outside the classroom such as reading at home, believing that coming to school is just to gain techniques or methods for doing tasks. Nevertheless, the action of encouraging students to do more homework helps students to be motivated and remind them of their responsibility as a student. In addition, although the centre issues surveys at the end of each course aimed at understanding students' needs, the centre only considers their request if the centre is able to adjust accordingly. If it is possible, changes are made in the following term. Besides these surveys, the centre also organizes workshops and professional development days for



the whole staff. This is the time for teachers and the board of directors to share precious experiences aimed at improving the development of the centre, which in turn contributes to improving teachers' salaries. The centre also runs a team teaching approach which helps students listening skills by understanding different voices. This approach not only contributes to making students feel excited and interested in attending classes, but also helps teachers to last the whole teaching day in a stimulating atmosphere; teachers are not seeing or dealing with the same class for long periods of time.

#### **5.1.9. Extent to which communicative language teaching approaches are valued and used in the classrooms**

In Centre 1, teachers did not set up work for students to do in pairs / groups in order to promote communication skills. Neither did they ask students to work in pairs / groups to guess the meanings of texts or brainstorm for general ideas about the readings they followed. Instead, teachers mostly explained the problems and individually asked students for the answers. As a result, students just listened in general and then chose the correct answer or corrected the answers written on the board. Therefore, it was clear that teachers in this centre did not effectively implement communicative language teaching approaches. Although, they know the value of these approaches, they allow the objective difficulties to prevent them from attempting to apply these approaches to their teaching. If they had tried, students could have at least been given a short time to verbalize the whole meanings of texts and discussed and compared ideas before summarizing them in their own words. In doing this, teachers would have been able to evaluate students' understandings through hearing their speaking abilities and thus not only give them practice in speaking, but help improve their writing skills as well.

#### **5.1.10. Changes needed for communicative approaches rather than grammar-translation methods to become the norm**

According to the students' questionnaire, 90% of students believe that it would be useful to practise English at an English speaking club. 66% agreed that they would like to practise English on an excursion, with 63% wanting to practise on campus (see Table 5). It is clear that these students wish to learn English for communicative purposes, and expect to have English environment to be able to practise as much as possible to attain their goals.

In Centre 1 an English Speaking Club (ESC) is provided every week on Saturday. The ESC is the place where students practise speaking English and have the chance to exchange ideas and receive useful English learning experiences from one another. In addition, it is the place for students to relax after a hard study week. However, during the rest of the week, even though the centre has slogans to encourage students to use English in the building such as "Let's speak English", "Only English in the building", students still speak Vietnamese even when teachers are in the classroom. Therefore, the centre should consider the ineffectiveness of such slogans and consider issuing some strict regulations instead. For example, if students use Vietnamese inside the building, especially in the classroom, they will face being fined. This centre has never organized field trips for students. In addition, the centre could focus on helping students understand the importance of learning English not only for their future job but for accessing knowledge and travel as well. In order to provide practical help, at least students could be given the chance to attend the language laboratory room more often so that they could watch some movies, documentaries about working places and travel destinations in which people have to use English. By doing this, students may be given a more practical motivation to focus on in their study.

### **5.1.11. Other improvements the private centre could make to better meet students' English learning needs**

As the students' purposes for learning English are mostly to be able to communicate in English to get a good job, they want to be assessed so that they know what level they are. Therefore, the centre should test them on what they have studied in the classroom as well as in real life situations, with 93% of students wanting this (see Table 10). For this reason, the teaching materials should be considered to match with what they are being tested.

The result of the students' questionnaire showed that students prefer to be corrected immediately in front of their classmate with 77%, and immediately, quietly with 61%, and to be corrected later in front of everyone with 26%, and later in private with 13% (see Table 7). It is clear that although students are shy to volunteer to speak up, they expect to be corrected if they are doing things wrong, they want to learn the right things right away. And it is also part of Vietnamese culture in which there is a saying 'you cannot do any thing without teacher's assistance'.

In this centre 93% of students prefer their work to be corrected by their teacher, 47% by other students, and 23% by themselves (see Table 8). Therefore, it is true that every student expects their teacher to correct tasks, because teachers are a reliable resource with enough knowledge to help. However, the second choice is their friends. In this case teachers could create opportunities for students to work in pairs / groups before expecting to hear their answers. Then teachers could confirm the correct answers and give reasons for such corrections as well.

As this centre does not appear to be meeting its students' needs in many ways, it could build up a networking centre to help teachers understand more about students' perceptions and needs. The Board of Directors could also consider changing or adjusting their policies to meet both teachers and students' requirements. The centre could develop a clear policy on recruiting new staff, both local and foreign, and pay

teachers reasonable salaries in order to have an on-going stable of richly experienced staff.

## 5. 2. Case study 2

Data from the second case study includes a student questionnaire for 77 students, interviews with reading and grammar teachers, an interview with the centre manager, and two classroom observations.

### 5.2.1. Student questionnaire

The aim of the student questionnaire was to understand English students' attitudes, especially their motivations for English learning and methodological preferences for best achieving their goals in English learning in Vietnam. The data collected showed us that students had clear purposes in learning English.

**Table 11: Summary of results gained from students' responses on purposes of learning English (Case study 2)**

Item 2 Purposes of learning English ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *			
	1	2	3	4
a. get a good job	71%	21%	3%	0%
b. assist my current job.	18%	43%	32%	1%
c. further my overseas study.	13%	29%	44%	8%
d. give me more fun and personal satisfaction.	9%	22%	40%	22%
e. pass compulsory subject and exam.	18%	23%	31%	26%
f. make my family pleased.	8%	12%	34%	25%
g. other	6%	4%	77%	8%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Results showed that a majority of 92% (71% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing) of students wanted to study English to get a good job, 61% (18% strongly agreeing and

43% agreeing) wanted to assist their current jobs, and 42% (13% strongly agreeing and 29% agreeing) wanted to further their overseas study. A further 31% (9% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing) wanted to study for pleasure, and 20% (8% strongly agreeing and 12% agreeing) wanted to make their family pleased. As in Centre 1, Centre 2 showed that most students have motivations to study English for getting a job, with a lesser 41% (18% strongly agreeing and 23% agreeing) needing to pass compulsory subjects and examinations (see Table 11). This indicates that although many were studying another major at university, they saw English as a tool to help them gain future jobs. They believed that local labour resources would need English in the future which could lead to well-paid jobs. Like students at Centre 1, students at Centre 2 realized that learning English is to use it for oral communication.

At 67%, students believed that it was good for them to work in pairs (19% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing), with 75% preferring to work in small groups (56% strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing), and 51% in the whole class (19% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing). Especially, 56% strongly agree that working in small groups provides the best chance to practise English, while only 10% (6% strongly agreeing and 4% agreeing) agreed with working individually (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Summary of results gained from students' responses on students' work (Case study 2)**

Item 3.1 In class, it is good for students to do work ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. individually.	6%	4%	32%	27%	30%
b. in pairs.	19%	48%	25%	5%	3%
c. in small groups.	56%	19%	18%	4%	3%
d. in a whole class group.	19%	32%	42%	4%	3%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

These answers provided strong evidence of students' perceptions of the kind of language teaching they prefer. Like students at Centre 1, students at Centre 2 reported they need to focus on interactive classroom activities to help them build up confidence leading to using English freely.

Students at Centre 2, like those at Centre 1, also thought that learning at school was not enough; 79% wanted to have more homework to improve their English (43% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing) (see Table 13). This figure showed that students were motivated to study for themselves. They needed to study to enrich their knowledge of English to be ready for work in an increasingly positive socio-economic phase. This point is explained in the interpretation of Table 3 (students' responses on homework).

**Table 13: Summary of results gained from students' responses on homework (Case study 2)**

Item 4.1	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
Homework is useful	43%	36%	17%	1%	3%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

As in Centre 1, 52% of students in Centre 2 showed that students wanted their teachers to use English only in the classroom (18% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing). In addition, 88% (52% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing) agreed with using English more than Vietnamese, while 9% (4% strongly agreeing and 5% agreeing) agreed with using English less than Vietnamese (see Table 14). Therefore, students believed that learning English in an English environment is valuable so that they could achieve their goals of communication. They preferred their teachers to use English to address them and to pay attention to speaking skills and listening skills and knew that listening and speaking skills played important roles in their daily life as well as in their workplace. However, students would like their teachers to help them in terms of ‘bilingual support’ if necessary according to Nunan’s suggestion (1988).

**Table 14: Summary of results gained from students’ responses on teachers’ use of English (Case study 2)**

Item 5.1 In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. English only.	18%	34%	32%	13%	3%
b. English more than Vietnamese.	52%	36%	6%	1%	4%
c. English less than Vietnamese.	4%	5%	31%	27%	32%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

A majority of 85% of students believed that an English speaking club was the best place for them to practise English (60% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing). A further 72% believed that excursions could help them improve their English (32% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing) and 42% indicated that practising English on campus would help them improve (10% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing) (see Table 15). These statistics, like those at Centre 1, also shows that ‘theory goes along with practice’ and that students need an English environment to learn and use the language in order to improve their integration into the English language and culture. As discussed in the interpretation of Table 5 (students’ responses on place to practise English), students considered English speaking club as the best place to practise English.

**Table 15: Summary of results gained from students’ responses on place to practise English (Case study 2)**

Item 6.1 It would be useful to practise English ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. on an excursion.	32%	40%	22%	5%	0%
b. at English speaking club.	60%	25%	12%	3%	1%
c. on campus.	10%	32%	43%	10%	4%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Preferences also confirmed the value of speaking English, with 79% (31% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing) agreeing that talking with other students was important. In addition, 70% (34% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing) agreed that they prefer to learn English through television, videos and films, with 72% (27% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing) agreeing with radio and music, and 67% (29% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) agreeing with repeating what they had heard. Further to this 52% (25% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing) agreed with reading and taking notes, and 64% (22% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing) agreed with learning grammar rules



(see Table 16). These percentages showed that students believed in the importance of many learning styles to improve their English, especially in speaking and listening skills. Most agreed that talking English with other students helped them to improve their English better, while only 13% (4% strongly agreeing and 9% agreeing) agreed that they preferred learning English by copying what their teachers wrote on the board. This means that copying from the board was no longer considered as a good way to proceed. Students focus on communication, thus, teachers could consider and meet their learning preferences in order to motivate their learning as well as helping them achieve their goals as mentioned in the interpretation of Table 6 (students' responses on learning style).

**Table 16: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning style (Case study 2)**

Item 7.1 I like learning by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. copying from the board.	4%	9%	39%	30%	18%
b. listening and taking notes.	23%	43%	25%	5%	4%
c. listening and completing a task.	19%	45%	25%	6%	4%
d. reading and taking notes.	25%	27%	39%	6%	3%
e. repeating what I hear.	29%	38%	27%	4%	3%
f. talking to other students.	31%	48%	17%	1%	3%
g. learning grammar rules.	22%	42%	30%	3%	4%
h. television/video/films.	34%	36%	25%	4%	1%
i. radio/music.	27%	45%	25%	1%	1%
j. written materials.	18%	44%	32%	4%	1%
k. pictures/posters.	12%	47%	32%	5%	4%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Responses showed that 83% (61% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing) of students agreed with being corrected immediately in front of everyone, 58% (36% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing) agreed with being corrected quietly and immediately, while only 34% (3% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing) agreed with being corrected later, at the end of the activity and 21% (5% strongly agreeing and 16% agreeing) agreed with being corrected later, in private (see Table 17). These percentages, as in Centre 1, show that students want to learn the right things right away, without caring about people surrounding them. Another way to say this is that it demonstrates Vietnamese culture in which the young are ready to accept the adults' lessons and matches with a Vietnamese saying 'Thất bại là mẹ thành công' which can be translated as 'Failure is the mother of success'. This reflects that students have strong purposes for learning English. In order to help students understand the way of building up their confidence and oral communication skills, teachers could explain and show them some researchers' findings on error correction as mentioned in the interpretation of Table 7 (students' responses on mistake correction).

**Table 17: Summary of results gained from students' responses on mistake correction (Case study 2)**

Item 8.1 The best way to correct students' errors is ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. immediately, in front of everyone.	61%	22%	9%	4%	4%
b. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone.	3%	31%	45%	13%	8%
c. later, in private.	5%	16%	43%	19%	17%
d. quietly, immediately	36%	22%	23%	10%	8%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Although students believed that talking with friends helped them to study English better, they wanted their work to be corrected by teachers. Here, 84% (55% strongly

agreeing and 29% agreeing) preferred being corrected by teachers more than friends, 41% (10% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing) preferred friends, and 49% (23% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing) agreed with correcting their own work (see Table 18). Like Centre 1, the percentages in Centre 2 showed that students rely very much on their teachers, reflecting the culture in which it is believed that teachers are knowledge transferors and classroom controllers. At this point, teachers could conduct peer correction and guide students to debate to find out answers. This is likely to help students develop their confidence and communication skills.

**Table 18: Summary of results gained from students' responses on work to be corrected (Case study 2)**

Item 9.1 I prefer my work to be corrected by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. other students	10%	31%	36%	14%	8%
b. the teacher	55%	29%	12%	3%	3%
c. self	23%	26%	42%	5%	4%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Again, 88% of students indicated that in learning English, talking with and listening to other students plays an important role (53% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing). This indicates their focus on English language listening and speaking skills. They realise that listening and speaking skills can help them with other skills, and that those skills can increase their chances of finding good jobs. A considerable 65% (14% strongly agreeing and 51% agreeing) agreed that grammar exercises play an important role in mastering English (see Table 19). However, from the observations, students did not have the chance to work with peers. Therefore, teachers could provide student activities which require more interaction. Even though 65% of respondents thought that in learning English, grammar exercises play an important role, these exercises can still be conducted in terms of the three dimensions (form, meaning, and use) (see Figure 1) outlined in Section 5.2.6.

**Table 19: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning strategies (Case study 2)**

Item 10.1 In learning English, .....plays an important role	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. role play	18%	39%	38%	3%	3%
b. language games	23%	43%	30%	3%	1%
c. songs	30%	42%	27%	0%	1%
d. talking with and listening to other students	53%	35%	8%	4%	0%
e. memorizing conversations/dialogues	22%	39%	35%	1%	3%
f. grammar exercises	14%	51%	26%	5%	4%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Also, 87% of students believe that assessment tasks need to be set up in relation to real life English situations (66% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing). This also means that students require teachers to provide practical English to use in daily life. In addition, 65% of students rely on their teachers to understand their English level

and evaluate their performance through setting up written tasks (22% strongly agreeing and 43% agreeing), and 73% oral tasks (31% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing) (see Table 20). This suggests that students consider oral tasks are of greater value than written ones in assessment tasks.

**Table 20: Summary of results gained from students' responses on assessments (Case study 2)**

Item 11.1 Assessment is important with ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. written tasks set by the teacher.	22%	43%	27%	4%	4%
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	31%	42%	19%	5%	3%
c. checking your own progress by making tapes,	12%	25%	53%	6%	4%
d. setting up real life English situations.	66%	21%	6%	4%	3%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Again, as in Centre 1, Centre 2 shows that students want to achieve their goals of using, not just learning English. They want to use English at work and in daily life as well. Therefore, it was logical that students want to study English in these fields and will be tested in accordance. At the same time they also want teachers to use communicative approaches so they can use what they have learned to communicate in English with other people.

### **5.2.2. Teacher interviews**

Both teachers understood the reasons their students were going to English classes. Most were mainstream students from universities which required them to have a B level certificate in English in particular or another language in general, in order to graduate. These students had chosen to attend English classes in order to pass their examinations.

Students were at different level of English because there was no placement test to evaluate students and put them in the right place. This meant that they could jump up to any level they wanted and even select the teacher they liked. They believed that the centre manager had to consider this matter in order to help teachers and students feel comfortable while sitting in an English class with appropriate levels and relevant input. This freedom was believed to bring students good results and help teachers enjoy their teaching hours.

As levels varied greatly, teachers conducted lessons at the lowest level in order to keep the numbers of students in class. Their materials were rather old and in bilingual mode (American Streamline version). Almost every single item was explained and illustrated inside the textbook; meaning that students did not have to brainstorm much and became less active in tasks. This was also the reason that teachers had to find other materials to help and modify the main textbook. Teachers gave students homework which motivated their learning process, and from that students could spend some time at home to revise what they had studied at school.

Despite students missing out on English practice, the grammar teacher believed that the instructions in her class were clear. She used Vietnamese most of the time in the hope that students would understand the lesson well. However, although the researcher agrees that grammar is difficult to explain to students there are many other techniques that could have been used in order to help students improve their communicative skills while learning the appropriate grammar mentioned in Section 5.2.6.

The reading teacher clearly understood that the purposes of all her students were to get the B level certificate to meet their universities' requirements. In this way, she was able to design and choose extra materials and work to help her students achieve their goals. This teacher believes that teaching language means teaching the four macro skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, this does not mean that the teacher has a duty to transfer knowledge of English to students, but requires students' participation and contribution in acquiring the language. Indeed,

the observation of the reading period showed that students were encouraged to answer her questions time and time again. However, students' responses were not always as expected, as some were too shy to join in activities. However, if the teacher had allowed time to work in groups / pairs first to share understandings and build confidence in advance, all students could have been involved.

The reading teacher always used a variety of different ways of teaching in the class. She believed that students were rather lazy, that they did not often prepare lessons before coming to their classes. In addition, she took advantage of the bilingual textbook to conduct the lesson in an English environment instead of letting students copy down words in their exercise book. By doing this, she helped students reduce their reliance on Vietnamese and stimulated their participation. The reading teacher also encouraged and motivated students to participate in lessons so they would keep going to school in the hope of achieving what they wanted. She understood that if students were forced to do much work, they would stop attending English classes. However, students did not try their best to participate in activities because they knew that there was no official examination to evaluate their efforts. Again, the teacher also mentioned that students' entry English levels were completely different one from each other, making the teaching and learning of students very difficult.

The reading teacher believed that the teaching facilities played an important role in teaching. Although she knew what she needed to help students to achieve their goals, the centre did not supply enough teaching facilities, just a cassette player. Thus, teachers could not conduct teaching activities well which impacted on students' learning outcomes. The reading teacher explained that teachers could only remain in the school for courses as long as students want to study with that teacher. When mentioning going to the English speaking club, she pointed out that students hesitate to practise their speaking skills in spite of her encouragement. She said that students were afraid of not having enough ability to communicate.

### **5.2.3. Manager interview**

The manager of Centre 2 confirmed what the teachers had said in regard to there being no placement test at the beginning of each course. She said that although this can cause difficulties for teachers and students' learning processes, they were permitted to enroll in whatever level or class they wished. She also confirmed that these students were mainly learning English in order to take B level certificate in order to meet the requirements of their own universities and support their jobs in the future.

This manager believed that in allowing students to make their own choices about attending the classes and charging low fees, the center's learner numbers increased. As a result, it seemed that this centre just focused on how to attract students and make more profit. It did not appear to be concerned about the students' results or the teachers' hard working hours spent dealing with challenges of disparate English levels or old bilingual teaching materials. Nor was she concerned that this might reduce teachers' willingness to contribute more effectively.

The manager explained that although there had been a change in teaching materials in the past, it failed in attracting more students. Nevertheless, the centre organizes annual meetings for all teachers to contribute to or give feedback on the curriculum and syllabus, as well as remind them to follow and cover the centre's curriculum. She said that the centre listened to and considered all teachers' contributions, in order to build up a bridge to connect the centre and the teachers in a way that can provide students with a service that meets their needs. The manager further explained that in future the teachers are going to co-operate with the center's academic manager to design materials suitable to their students' needs. This will acknowledge that the teachers understand their students and master the curriculum gap to help the centre design more relevant teaching materials.



#### **5.2.4. Classroom observations**

In her grammar lesson, the teacher went straight into the classroom and started the lesson without introducing herself or giving any information about the main purpose of the lesson. This made the students unclear about further steps in the lesson. If the teacher had introduced or linked the activity to the main point of the lesson, time could have been saved for both teacher and students. In addition, students would have been able to contribute to the classroom activities and provide more examples.

Observations showed that up to this stage, even though students had reached intermediate level, the teacher still used Vietnamese to explain grammar points. This practice indicated that students were not familiar with thinking in an English context and expected to convert the meanings from Vietnamese into English. Consequently, when the bilingual book was used, students always looked at the easy version – Vietnamese. They did not try their best to focus on English nor be patient in understanding the meanings and following the teacher's explanations, because everything was there in the book.

The grammar teacher did not create any opportunities for students to practise in pairs / groups. Instead, she asked students to give examples of the structure she presented. Although this was a good strategy, it was hard for students to answer as requested because they were not confident enough to answer in front of the class. If she had given students time to prepare themselves in pairs / groups, they would have been able to produce their own sentences. She also gave students exercises in which they filled in missing words and converted sentences into different structures to suit specific situations. This approach also gave students the opportunity to translate Vietnamese sentences into English, helping them to become familiar with the structures. However, she did not ask students to practise orally before writing the sentences in their workbooks, which deprived them of the opportunity to become familiar and confident in using them. This would also have relieved the teacher of the problem of asking students if they had any questions to ask in front of the whole class when they were too shy to speak up and show their weaknesses. If they had been

given work to do in pairs / groups, they would have been able to develop their confidence first before giving answers individually. Overall, students in the grammar class did little but copy from the board into their exercise books, for more than half of the lesson time, and the teacher did not use English for oral explanations, even in her lesson introduction.

Unlike the grammar teacher's unstimulating opening to her lesson, the reading teacher warmed up her class by telling a funny story that was linked to the lesson. This not only helped students to have a general idea about what they would be studying, it also brought in a friendly atmosphere encouraging students to get involved in the lesson. As most of these evening students had been working or studying in another mainstream school or university, in the day they had come to the English class tired. Therefore, the teacher built up an easy going atmosphere to help keep students interested and involved. She then asked if students had done their reading homework to prepare for the lesson. This helped students get the whole picture with something in their minds before they started the lesson. They could understand the lesson easily when the content of the reading was addressed the second time. As a result, students responded to the teacher's questions which were asked in various ways including in Vietnamese language, getting involved right from the start of the lesson. This teacher was patient in encouraging students to use English by feeding them with new words as needed. This is in agreement with Bao Dat (2007) who pointed out that teachers should provide students with more vocabulary to enable them to conduct class discussions. As students in this class were given the chance to build up sentences with words from the reading text, they were able to learn new words in context, especially words used in real life situations. Helping them learn new words in this way allowed student to know how to use the words and remember vocabulary more easily.

The reading teacher encouraged her students to use English to ask questions instead of Vietnamese, forcing students to think in English. By doing this, they would be able to remember longer than if everything was fed to them. However, because students read the material first they pronounced it incorrectly. Unfortunately, this resulted in

either mispronunciation from the other students or the teacher correcting every single word that was pronounced incorrectly. This problem could have been helped if the teacher could have read the material once to model the language and then had students read it again.

Overall, students seemed to be passive as they did not volunteer to take part in classroom activities themselves and the teacher had to assign them to do the activities. Moreover, neither teacher gave students time to work in pairs / groups before asking them to give answers. It may have been easier if the teacher had given them instructions to work in pairs / groups to find out answers as required, giving them the chance to practise speaking and listening skills. Moreover, the teachers could have had a more enjoyable time in their classrooms they would not have had to work most of the time to direct all the activities.

The seven sub questions outlined in Chapter (1.2) are addressed as below:

### **5.2.5. Students' reasons for learning English**

According to the teachers in Centre 2, most of their students want to study English with the purpose of achieving B level as one of the requirements for graduating from their universities. Their manager agreed that these students want to sit for B level English after studying English to a level where they feel confident, or after they have taken part in a preparation class for the exam. Others are studying English for their current job which requires level B or even a level A certificate for a promotion and/or salary increases. Do Huy Thinh (2006) points out that at the state organization English (among other foreign languages) is viewed as one of the elements that determines which employees are to be promoted or paid at a higher rate.

In Centre 2, students want to enrich their knowledge of English in order to get a job in the future, with 92% strongly agreeing and agreeing through (see Table 11); they also want to assist their current job, with 61% (see Table 11). Passing a compulsory subject and examination showed there was 41% agreement (see Table 11). In regard to this item university students have two options for learning English, one is to

complete the required English hours and the other is to obtain a national language certificate level B. Also, they would like to further their overseas study opportunities with 42% strongly agreeing and agreeing (see Table 11). Clearly, comparing the results in Table 11 with the teachers' and manager's opinions, there are several more reasons that students wish to study English than they realized. Therefore, there is some conflict between what the teachers understand about their students and what their students actually aim to achieve. However, with 92% strongly agreeing and agreeing that they want to learn English for a job; it will happen as soon as they graduate from their universities. Finishing their university is the short term goal, and getting a job in the future and studying overseas is their long term goal.

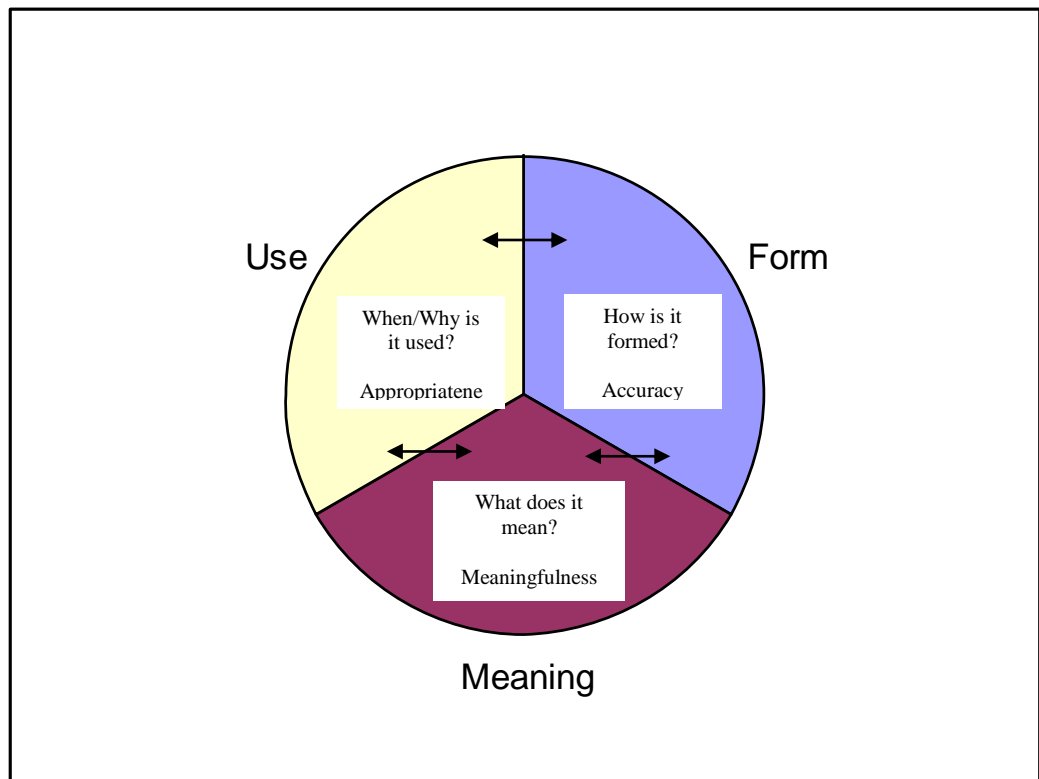
### **5.2.6. Teaching methods used in the centre**

The manager in Centre 2 believed that his teachers were using student-centered approaches. Indeed, the reading teacher also believed that the student-centred approach was currently being used to help students use English, especially in gaining speaking practice. She encouraged and motivated her students to participate in classroom activities using English and also tried to use English in the classroom with the hope of creating an English environment. However, this teacher also found her students to be rather lazy and lacking in confidence; they did not try their best to participate in all activities. This was because her students were using a bilingual textbook and looking at the Vietnamese version to try to understand the context of the reading. Students also were aware that there was no official exam to assess them at the end of each term, so they were not challenged to try harder. In addition, according to the classroom observation, students were passive in speaking up in the classroom unless they were directly asked. This teacher should have created opportunities for students to share ideas and discuss their opinion in advance in group or pair work before asking them to provide answers. By doing this, she could have helped her students get over shyness and feel confident in their work.

The observation data also indicated that the grammar teacher used Vietnamese most of the time whilst teaching. She believed that grammar was difficult to explain in

English and students might not understand the issues perfectly and did not create any opportunities for students to practise their speaking skills. On this point, however, the researcher does not agree with teaching methodology. As Larsen-Freeman (2007, p.51) suggests, grammar structures need to be taught in terms of three dimensions including form which establishes the accuracy of the structure, meaning which addresses its meaningfulness, and use which shows its appropriateness in situations (see Figure 1). The teacher could have built up the situation using English sentences, allowing students to work with the structures through the context until they understood the structures well; especially with students at intermediate level. This matches with the Vietnamese saying “theory must go along with practice”. The researcher concludes that this teacher could use English in the classroom for any situation, and from that students can establish their own patterns.

**Figure 1: Interactions of Language Form, Meaning and Use** (cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p.51)



### **5.2.7. Students' perceptions of the kind of language teaching needed**

It is clear that in Centre 2 students' preferences differ from what their teachers are doing in the classroom. These students, like those in Centre 1, expect to have opportunities to work in small groups, with 75% strongly agreeing and agreeing; in pairs with 67% strongly agreeing and agreeing; in a whole class group with 51% strongly agreeing and agreeing; and individually with only 10% strongly agreeing and agreeing (see Table 12). These students expect to work in groups / pairs so that they can share information and learn from each other, as well as build confidence in their communication skills.

Students at Centre 2, like those at Centre 1, would also like to do homework, with 79% strongly agreeing and agreeing (see Table 13). Furthermore, as in Centre 1, students at Centre 2 prefer teachers to speak English more than Vietnamese, with 88% strongly agreeing and agreeing; English only with 52% strongly agreeing and agreeing, with English less than Vietnamese being only 9% strongly agreeing and agreeing (see Table 14).

At Centre 2, 70% of students like learning English by watching television / video / films, 79% like talking to other students, 72% like radio and music, 67% like repeating what they hear, and 64% like learning grammar rules. Furthermore, 88% believe that an important part in learning English is talking with and listening to other students, and 72% like learning with songs, and 66% like learning with language games (see Table 16). These responses on learning style are similar to those at Centre 1.

According to the teachers at Centre 2, each class is supplied with a cassette player, nothing else. Therefore, students have no chance to watch films or movies. From observation, the teacher in charge of a grammar session used 90% Vietnamese in the classroom which was not appreciated by the students, and far from the students' preferences (see Table 14). Moreover, the teachers did not set up pair work or group work for students to practise even though their students prefer to work in groups /

pairs to have the chance to talk and practise what they have learnt. Furthermore, even though the centre manager organizes an annual meeting for the staff in which teachers can make their contributions, be reminded of the curriculum and provided with new information, there appears to be a huge shortfall in their understandings of their students. Despite the centre being willing to listen to the teachers at all times, it appears that there are gaps between the students, the teachers and the manager.

Centre 2 does not focus on providing adequate teaching facilities as they do not supply classrooms with television, VCRs or DVDs, even though the students expect them to. There is no group leader to synchronise the teaching and there is no one observing what the teachers are teaching. It seems that the centre manager believes in the teachers' management skills and considers whether they are successful or not based on the number of students in the class. Centre management just reminds teachers to follow the centre's curriculum. Clearly, students' needs would be better met if teachers could organize lessons to include group work or pair work so that they could develop motivation to work together communicatively. When students work together in pairs and groups, they feel happy because they can use English while learning at the centre. From there, they will try their best in class and the lesson will become more interesting.

#### **5.2.8. Teachers' perceptions of how best to assist students**

Interviews and observations showed that the teaching approaches of the grammar teacher and the reading teacher were very different. For example, the grammar teacher did not provide any introduction to her class and spoke mainly Vietnamese during the lesson. She believed that grammar points need to be explained in Vietnamese so that students can understand the structures clearly.

In contrast, the reading teacher spends up to two or three sessions on getting to know students and understanding their purposes for learning English. From there, she can help students meet their needs. She also understands that she needs to help them with the four skills of English. However, in order to help them succeed, students need to

try their best to study at home as well as get involved in classroom activities. She said she finds her students to be rather lazy. They do not prepare for the lesson before going to class because they can use their bilingual textbook to read and understand the meaning in just a few minutes. She believes that this is the reason they have little motivation in preparation. She minimizes copying from the board so students have time to listen to her explanation. She also knows that students need to start writing with some practical, simple sentences; therefore, she uses some model structures that students can follow. Moreover, she has to use English and Vietnamese in the classroom, otherwise they may go away and not come back. She continually varies her ways of teaching to keep them on track. She is not only teaching, but also encouraging and motivating them to study as they are still young. She also helps students practise some useful sentences which they can use in daily life in the hope that they can remember them longer and make them their own. She does not follow the Streamline textbook assigned by the centre. She, of course, keeps on track with what students want to study and chooses other teaching materials keep them interested. For example, this teacher gets one piece of hot news for students to discuss, or creates a situation such as an English Speaking Club in which they can join in for discussion. She also searches for other textbooks to make her teaching hours more interesting.

Because students' levels of English are different within the same class due to their not being any placement test, the reading teacher has to keep the lowest level of students on track; otherwise they may go away and not come back. She also gives students homework to increase motivation. She also mentioned the issue of one teacher taking charge of the same class for the whole course. When students go up to a higher level the teacher also goes up with them, as long as the students want to remain with that teacher. However, she prefers to encourage her students to enrol with another teacher so that they can have the chance of listening to different accents. Furthermore, because the centre allows students to freely enrol in the class they want to study and there is no placement test, teachers experience some difficulties in managing the disparate levels of student ability, and students do not feel confident in working with



people from different classes. Consequently, they do not have any chance to be active in using their speaking skills.

### **5.2.9. Extent to which communicative language teaching approaches are valued and used in the classrooms**

In regard to the grammar teacher not creating any opportunities for students to practise in pairs / groups, it might be better if she allowed time for them to work in pairs / groups so that they could better remember the structures given. This would also help them find motivation to improve their English. When the teacher only asks students to give examples based on the structures explained in front of the class, it is embarrassing for them to give answers as requested because they have had no chance to practise together first. Moreover, using Vietnamese to explain grammar points is not appropriate as it does not create an English environment in the classroom for students. It seems that the grammar teacher still uses the traditional way of teaching, letting students write, copy down from the board and do exercises even though her students prefer other approaches as they indicated in their questionnaire responses.

The reading teacher warms up her class by telling funny stories which link to the lesson to be studied later, establishing opportunities to encourage them to use English. When students are shy at the start, step by step they can build up their vocabulary and join in the activities. The teacher also reads every sentence in the reading text and explains the meaning of the context, encourages students to use English to ask questions instead of using Vietnamese so that they can remember the words longer. At first students cannot take part in all activities because they are not familiar with the situation, but later they become used to the English environment and can reproduce and participate in activities using the English language.

In general, the teachers at Centre 2 misunderstood their students' preferences in the way of learning, particularly in regard to working in pairs or groups in order to develop communicative skills. Therefore, these teachers should consider and follow

their students' needs and social requirements in order to gain more fruitful results in both teaching and learning.

#### **5.2.10. Changes needed for communicative approaches rather than grammar-translation methods to become the norm**

At Centre 2, 85% of students believe that it would be helpful to practise English at an English speaking club, 72% on an excursion, and 42% on campus (see Table 15). However, although students believe it would be useful to go to the English speaking club to practise English more and their reading teacher encourages them to do so, they are afraid of going there because they believe their English is still at a low level. The thing here is that students know this might help them with their language learning, they cannot do it just because they lack confidence due to not having enough opportunities to practise in pairs or groups in class. As teachers are the ones responsible for training students to see the world of English right inside the classroom, they could set up communicative English environments in their classrooms, so that students gain confidence and not see any difference between their classroom and an English speaking club. The teachers could also organize field trips for students to practise English studied in the classroom, including shopping trips and excursions with native English speakers / visitors. Moreover, the centre could consider the effectiveness of slogans around the building such as “Let’s speak English”, “Only English in this building”. The centre could also impose restrictions on students using Vietnamese inside the building, especially in the classroom. Teachers could create activities for pairs and groups before asking students to give answers individually. If students are expected to give answers individually, they could have time to work together first to build up their confidence. For the grammar period, the teacher could think of other ways of teaching instead of just letting students copy things from the board, with both teacher and students wasting time instead of practising speaking and listening.

### **5.2.11. Other improvements the private centre could make to better meet students' English learning needs**

As there are no placement tests before students start their class, difficulties arise for students and teachers. Furthermore, because students can jump to any level they want and study with any teacher they like, teaching and learning is badly affected. Therefore, the centre could consider controlling the situation with placement tests and graded classes in order to help teachers and students feel more in control of teaching and learning. By doing this, students will be exposed to different voices and get better results. As the material is bilingual and rather old with explained, students are bored and lazy. Therefore, particularly as there is only a tape or CD in the classroom, the centre needs to supply students with more facilities such as TVs with DVDs, overhead projectors, and language laboratory hours. The centre could also consider issuing end of term tests to motivate students to study, because if they know they have to sit for an examination at the end of each term they will have to study more seriously. In Vietnam, students think that if they do not have good results, their friends and family members might not respect them because results are publicized on campus, which makes them try their best to do well. According to the students' survey at Centre 2, 83% would like to be corrected immediately, in front of everyone (see Table 17) indicating that teachers need to work out ways to selectively correct students on points that will benefit the whole class.

As 84% of students at Centre 2 want to be corrected by teachers with 84%, and only 49% by themselves (see Table 18), teachers should selectively correct students when they make mistakes. As 87% of students would like teachers to set real life English situations for assessments, oral tasks with 73%, teachers need to find more ways to do this (see Table 20). Furthermore, as the end of term test needs to be conducted both in written and oral forms, the centre needs to co-operate with teachers to design suitable materials that simulate real life English situations.

### 5.3. Case study 3

Data from the third case study includes a student questionnaire, interviews with listening and speaking teachers, an interview with the centre manager, and two classroom observations.

#### 5.3.1. Student questionnaire

In focusing on students' attitudes, particularly their motivations in achieving goals of English learning in Vietnam, data showed that 93% (59% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing) wanted to study English to get a good job, and 59 % (31% strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing) wanted to study further overseas. Another 52% (14% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) wanted to assist their current job, 27% wanted to enjoy their pleasure, and 49% wanted to pass their compulsory subjects at university. In accordance with Vietnamese cultural norms, 21% (agreeing) wanted to learn English only to make their family pleased (see Table 21).

**Table 21: Summary of results gained from students' responses on purposes of learning English (Case study 3)**

Item 2 Purposes for learning English	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. get a good job.	59%	34%	7%	0%	0%
b. assist my current job.	14%	38%	45%	3%	0%
c. further my overseas study.	31%	28%	34%	0%	7%
d. give me more fun and personal satisfaction.	3%	24%	59%	7%	7%
e. pass compulsory subject and exam.	21%	28%	34%	17%	0%
f. make my family pleased.	0%	21%	34%	31%	14%
g. other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

From the questionnaire data, it is apparent that most students are motivated to study, with 49% considering passing compulsory subjects and examinations important. This means that these students were studying a major at university. Therefore, English is a tool to help them ensure their future employment (93%). In addition, learning English for going abroad (59%) was the second highest purpose for attending English classes at this centre. Students, like those at Centre 1 and 2 clearly believed that since Vietnam has entered the WTO, foreign companies, and investors have increased, meaning that there will be increasing employment opportunities for people with English, and that local people could now find well-paid jobs in Vietnam.

Students believed that it was good for them to work in pairs at 72% (10% strongly agreeing and 62% agreeing), in small groups at 83% (45% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing), and the whole class at 52% (21% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing). With 45% of respondents strongly agreeing that working in small groups provides the best chance for them to practise English, only 20% (3% strongly agreeing and 17% agreeing) agreed with working individually (see Table 22).

**Table 22: Summary of the results gained from the students' responses on students' work (Case study 3)**

Item 3.1 In class, it is good for students to do work ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. individually.	3%	17%	28%	21%	31%
b. in pairs.	10%	62%	21%	7%	0%
c. in small groups.	45%	38%	17%	0%	0%
d. in a whole class group.	21%	31%	38%	7%	3%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

These responses indicate that students' perceptions of the kind of language teaching they wish for at this centre are similar to those at Centre 1 and 2. They all want to work with interactive classroom activities to help build up confidence and develop

their speaking ability. Therefore, teachers need to focus on these issues in order to help students achieve their goals.

Students, like those at Centres 1 and 2, also thought that learning English at school was not enough; 83% wanted to have more homework to improve their communication skills (45% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) (see Table 23). With such percentages, it seems that students have a strong motivation of study themselves. They need to study to enrich their knowledge of English to be ready for work in an increasingly positive socioeconomic era. Therefore, teachers can provide homework for students to do but it should be about oral practice such as role play, presentation, and so on so that students feel more motivated and improve their oral communication.

**Table 23: Summary of results gained from students' responses on homework (Case study 3)**

Item 4.1	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
Homework is useful.	45%	38%	14%	3%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Student responses showed that 55% prefer their teachers to use only English in classroom (34% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing), 86% English more than Vietnamese (41% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing), and only 14% English less than Vietnamese (none strongly agreeing and 14% agreeing) (see Table 24). Therefore, as in Centres 1 and 2, students prefer learning English in an English environment so that they can gain their communication goals. They prefer their teachers to use English and to pay attention to speaking and listening skills.

**Table 24: Summary of results gained from students' responses on teachers' use of English (Case study 3)**

Item 5.1 In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. English only.	34%	21%	34%	10%	0%
b. English more than Vietnamese.	41%	45%	10%	3%	0%
c. English less than Vietnamese.	0%	14%	38%	34%	14%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

A majority 85% of students believe that English speaking clubs are places for them to practise English (28% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing), with 76% believing that they should practise English on campus (17% strongly agreeing and 59% agreeing), and 65% seeing excursions as effective in developing their English (31% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing) (see Table 25). As in Centres 1 and 2, statistics showed that “theory goes along with practice”; students again preferred an English environment to learn and use the language. They paid attention to communication skills and wanted to practise English as much as they could, especially at English speaking club as mentioned in the interpretation of Table 5 (students’ responses on place to practise English).

**Table 25: Summary of results gained from students’ responses on place to practise English (Case study 3)**

Item 6.1 It would be useful to practise English ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. on an excursion.	31%	34%	34%	0%	0%
b. at English speaking club.	28%	55%	17%	0%	0%
c. on campus.	17%	59%	21%	3%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Students’ preferences for ways of learning English are confirmed with 89% (34% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing) agreeing with the value of talking to other students, and 89% (17% strongly agreeing and 72% agreeing) agreeing with listening and taking notes. In addition, 83% (38% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing) agree that they prefer learning English from television, video and film, 79% (41% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) agree with radio and music, and 62% (21% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing) agree with repeating what they heard. Further to this, 62% (10% strongly agreeing and 52% agreeing) agree with reading and taking notes, but a surprising 86% (48% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) agree with learning



grammar rules whereas only 24% (3% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing) agree with learning English by copying what their teachers write on the board (see Table 26). Students, like those at Centres 1 and 2, noted that doing integrative work helped them to improve their English better whereas copying from the board was not considered as a good way to learn English. It seemed that the students had come to prefer communicative approaches since their centre had applied it. Therefore, educators and teachers should consider these preferences and redesign appropriate and relevant policies to include communicative methods in order to meet learners' needs and changing social requirements. In order to understand students' learning preference, the rapport between teachers and students should be built mentioned in the interpretation of Table 6 (students' responses on learning style).

**Table 26: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning style (Case study 3)**

Item 7.1 I like learning by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. copying from the board.	3%	21%	38%	28%	10%
b. listening and taking notes.	17%	72%	10%	0%	0%
c. listening and completing a task.	10%	52%	31%	7%	0%
d. reading and taking notes.	10%	52%	34%	3%	0%
e. repeating what I hear.	21%	41%	38%	0%	0%
f. talking to other students.	34%	55%	10%	0%	0%
g. learning grammar rules.	48%	38%	14%	0%	0%
h. television/video/films.	38%	45%	17%	0%	0%
i. radio/music.	41%	38%	21%	0%	0%
j. written materials.	24%	55%	21%	0%	0%
k. pictures/posters.	24%	24%	52%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

From the data collected, the researcher realized that 76% (59% strongly agreeing and 17% agreeing) of students agreed with errors being corrected immediately in front of everyone. However, 79% (41% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing) wanted to be corrected quietly and immediately, with 41% (7% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing) wanting to be corrected later, at the end of the activity, and 21% (7% strongly agreeing and 14% agreeing) preferring to be corrected later, in private (see Table 27). These percentages showed that students, like those at Centres 1 and 2, needed to learn the right things right away. They did not care about the person surrounding them which reflects Vietnamese culture of young people being ready to accept lessons from adults. They readily accept that they may not always remember what they have learned and need to be corrected, many being willing to be corrected in front of their friends.

**Table 27: Summary of results gained from students' responses on mistake correction (Case study 3)**

Item 8.1 The best way to correct students' errors is ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. immediately, in front of everyone.	59%	17%	14%	3%	7%
b. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone.	7%	34%	52%	7%	0%
c. later, in private.	7%	14%	55%	14%	10%
d. quietly, immediately	41%	38%	17%	3%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Although students believed that talking with friends helped them to study English better, 81% wanted their work to be corrected by their teachers (62% strongly agreeing and 24% agreeing), 41% wanted to be corrected by friends (none strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing), and 45% (17% strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing) wanted to correct their own work (see Table 28). This means that these students, like those at Centres 1 and 2, still rely on their greatly respected teachers. This suggests that Vietnamese students want to learn perfect English and accept being corrected immediately after they make mistakes. For this, students should be explained the way of peer correction mentioned in the interpretation of Table 8 (students' responses on work to be corrected).

**Table 28: Summary of results gained from students' responses on work to be corrected (Case study 3)**

Item 9.1 I prefer my work to be corrected by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. other students	0%	41%	41%	14%	3%
b. the teacher	62%	24%	10%	3%	0%
c. self	17%	28%	41%	10%	3%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Similar to Centres 1 and 2, 83% of students at Centre 3 indicated that in learning English, talking with and listening to other students plays an important role (28% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing). They focus mainly on listening and speaking skills, and believe that these skills can assist in learning the other skills to increase their chances of gaining good jobs. In the meantime, 86% of students also focused on grammar exercises (38% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing) (see Table 29) indicating that teachers should help students learn grammar through oral communication activities. This figure shows that students prepare for their English assessment which has grammar points, or students have a habit of learning English by doing grammar exercises under the general education system.

**Table 29: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning strategies (Case study 3)**

Item 10.1 In learning English, .....plays an important role	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. role play	10%	31%	48%	7%	3%
b. language games	28%	48%	24%	0%	0%
c. songs	21%	59%	21%	0%	0%
d. talking with and listening to other students	28%	55%	17%	0%	0%
e. memorizing conversations/dialogues	31%	34%	31%	3%	0%
f. grammar exercises	38%	48%	10%	3%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Similar to students in Centres 1 and 2, 97% believed that assessment tasks should be set up in context of real life English situations (76% strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing). On this basis, students want teachers to provide practical English which they can use in daily life. In addition, 76% also rely on their teachers' acknowledging their English levels and evaluating their performance, with 76% preferring them setting up written tasks (21% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing) and 76% preferring oral tasks (28% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing) (see Table 30).

**Table 30: Summary of results gained from students' responses on assessments (Case study 3)**

Item 11.1 Assessment is important with ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. written tasks set by the teacher.	21%	55%	21%	3%	0%
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	28%	48%	21%	3%	0%
c. checking your own progress by making tapes,	17%	24%	48%	10%	0%
d. setting up real life English situations.	76%	21%	3%	0%	0%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Students at Centre 3, like those at Centres 1 and 2, wanted to do something in real, everyday life. Again this emphasized that these students want to achieve their goals of using English in real life situations. Furthermore, it was logical that they wanted to study what was being assessed related to practical English. They also want their teachers to use communicative approaches that can be applied in real life situations where English is used to communicate with other people. This approach may increase students' motivation and help students achieve their communication skills.

### **5.3.2. Teacher interviews**

Both teachers in Centre 3 understood the source of their students and spent time in understanding their purposes for learning English such as going abroad, as well as

meeting their universities' requirements and their future work. However, in conducting his class the listening teacher found some difficulties due to the disparate levels of English. Therefore, he had to find a way of teaching to match them all by following the level of the majority of students. He also designed some extra programs to supplement the teaching materials supplied by the centre. From that, he believed his students were more motivated to attend class and participate more actively.

The listening teacher explained that he was allowed to skip parts of the prescribed lessons that were not relevant or did not attract students' attention. By doing this, he felt confident and flexible in focusing on a quality of teaching that met students' demands. He understood that teaching is an art which is changing along with the current society in Vietnam. He also stated that the centre frequently organized workshops in order to build up bridges across the centre and between students and teachers. From that, teachers had opportunities to adapt their ways of teaching basing on new modern teaching techniques. Furthermore, as the centre received students' feedback from teachers, both centre management and teachers were able to cooperate in responding to students' wishes.

In Centre 3 teachers focused on encouraging students to brainstorm and discuss the lesson content in English, meaning that they would be able to remember the language longer. The listening teacher believed that this practice improved the English fluency of the students. For this reason, he used English to explain and ask questions as often as possible. However, he did not explain why he failed to create any opportunities for students to work in pairs / groups to share their understandings.

The speaking teacher believed that her students really wanted to improve their speaking and listening skills. Therefore, she used English in the classroom to create an English environment in which students first listened and then reproduced. Moreover, she created a variety of activities to attract her students' attention. The speaking teacher explained that learning in groups helped her students to be relaxed and follow the lessons more easily. She said that by involving them in groups her students were able to find excitement in the lesson.

In short, teaching at this centre was organized as team teaching where each teacher had to cover one aspect of the macro skills in each class. Students co-operated in carrying out tasks successfully and fluently, but not in accuracy, matching the purpose of the centre which was that students would gain maximum English communication. Both teachers were flexible in meeting their students' needs, showing that the centre was flexible and let teachers have the right to decide what to do, provided that the students felt happy to attend all English classes.

### **5.3.3. Manager interview**

According to the manager of Centre 3, students come from nearby universities with just a small number working and coming for other reasons. This centre organized placement tests and interviewed students before they attended classes. This helped both the teachers to conduct their teaching more effectively and the students who were able to study at a suitable level of English. However students still had the chance to choose the teacher they wanted to study with. The manager explained that the centre aimed to focus on the quality of teaching and also attract students by following what they wanted. However, by doing this, it opened itself up to some extra challenges.

The centre focused on teaching the four macro skills, and teachers used English for explanations in order to create an English environment for students. Both foreign and local teachers took charge of classes. As teachers had to use English as often as possible, students improved their listening and speaking competence much better than they were able to in other centres. This suggested that his teachers focused on student-centered methods that encouraged the communicative skills of students.

The number of students in each class was not over twenty, which gave teachers the chance of attending to the needs of all, assisting each student as needed. This made classroom management easy and the teacher was able to apply student-centered methods with opportunities for discussion and development as needed.

The manager explained that the most important aspect of running his centre was the workshops on teaching methods as well as the feedback from both teachers and students. This allowed teachers to share their experiences and to remember their responsibilities. It also gave them confidence in performing communicative activities in their classrooms. By listening to students' demands as well as teachers' feedback, the centre could consider and adjust its policies to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

In order to carry out their objectives, even though, the school fee was higher than at other centres, the number of students was increasing. This suggested that parents and students believed in the centre's superior training quality. They were willing to spend money on what they wanted to achieve. The high school fees enabled higher teachers' salaries which encouraged them to devote more to their jobs. Furthermore, the teaching materials and facilities were better than at other centres meaning that teachers could focus more on their quality of teaching.

The manager explained that because students paid high school fees, parents made a lot of demands on the centre. The centre has built up a connection with students' families and informs families of students' progress. This has established a strong and deep belief in all aspects of the centre from the parents' side. For example, teachers had to mark the class roll every day and when students were absent from class, the administration staff had to make a phone call to find out the reason, and offer help to parents if students were less than eighteen years old. In addition, the centre has built up a cohort of staff capable of using English in the working environment, giving students a good impression of the centre and good role models to follow.

#### **5.3.4. Classroom observations**

In this centre the listening teacher not only started the class with some warm up activities, but also checked the students' attendance, indicating that the centre was running its programs responsibly. The listening teacher also checked their homework in order to help them be motivated to study. Then the teacher explained the meanings of some new words before listening to the lesson tape. This activity helped students



to have an idea about the exercise as well as confidence in joining in classroom activities. At no time were students allowed to use dictionaries, instead they had to either guess or ask word meanings.

Following the listening, the teacher asked students relevant questions. He also asked them to explain how they got their answers, thus helping them to develop their English communication skills. If students could not answer the questions, the teacher told them the answers. In this class it seemed that the teacher paid attention to the quality of his teaching by getting students to work effectively, rather than worrying about the time set for the lesson.

Although the listening teacher tried his best to stimulate students to always use English in the classroom, at times he used Vietnamese to help them follow what was going on. In fact, students were encouraged to use English even though their answers were not all correct.

In contrast to the listening teacher, the speaking teacher failed to give clear instructions to her students. This resulted in some students asking other students what they were supposed to be doing, and others not being able to do the tasks grammatically in order to build up meaningful sentences.

The speaking teacher was very relaxed about the structure of the lesson, preferring to be flexible in meeting her students' needs. For example, she let students play games in which they could study grammar points, but did not explain what the purpose of the game was or what grammar points they needed to use. Prior to setting up a game, she also did not give any rules, preferring to let all students join in and enjoy the activity in order to revise grammar points they had studied in previous lessons. She encouraged students to read sentences they had composed using the 'if clause' while other students listened and discussed the meanings. In this activity, all students were also involved in choosing which sentence was the best.

In this speaking class the teacher let students work together to find meanings, and then lesson from the game. She consolidates the lesson to make sure what students

had learned. In this way she was able to give students more time to practise. Overall, the speaking teacher focused on fluency rather than accuracy in speaking English. Indeed, this teacher focused on students achieving fluency in communicating, and encouraging their confidence by not interrupting them or overcorrecting them at any time.

The seven sub questions outlined in Chapter (1.2) are addressed as below:

### **5.3.5. Students' reasons for learning English**

According to teachers at Centre 3, their students wanted to study English mainly for the purpose of enhancing their study program at their mainstream university and for overseas study. They said that they focus on speaking and listening skills as most are students, with only a few who are currently working. The manager agreed with the teachers saying that they are mainly day time students from other schools who come in the evening to study English. They know that they need to improve their four skills of English, and it is easy to see that their speaking and listening improve, as a result. Accordingly, they reveal preferences for knowledge of English in order to get a good job in the future, with 93%, and to further their overseas study, with 59%. They want to pass compulsory subjects and exams which are in accordance with 49%, to assist their current job, with 52% (see Table 21). The questionnaire data showed that as in Centres 1 and 2, students' highest purpose of learning English in Centre 3 is to get a job.

As, it is clear that students' short term goals are to enrich their knowledge of English for further overseas study and pass compulsory subjects at university, with long term goals of getting good jobs in the future, they need to improve their speaking and listening skills. Unlike Centres 1 and 2, in Centre 3 these understandings are shared not only among students, but also among their teachers and the manager of the centre. The researcher concluded that not only did the student feel happy to attend their English classes, but that teachers were wholly devoted to their teaching careers, and their manager ran his business in accordance with the needs of all stakeholders.

### **5.3.6. Teaching methods used in the centre**

In Centre 3, the manager believes that teachers are currently using student-centered approaches to help students have maximum opportunities to practise developing the skills they need. In order to do this the centre uses team teaching, with every class having at least two teachers; one is a foreign teacher, the other is local. Each teacher has to cover different parts of the materials and uses English to explain lessons so that students can have the chance to learn in an English environment and develop their skills easily, especially listening and speaking skills. Although, the teachers have to follow the teaching materials supplied, they also have the right to create extra materials to attract students' attention. According to the student questionnaire, like students at Centres 1 and 2, students at Centre 3 would like to work in small groups, with 83% strongly agreeing and agreeing. They would also like to work in pairs, with 72% strongly agreeing and agreeing. For working in a whole class group, 52% of students strongly agreed and agreed. They do not like working individually, as only 20% agreed with working individually (3% strongly agreeing and 17% agreeing) (see Table 22).

Centre 3 is equipped with a computer and a data show in each room to help students understand their tasks and more easily get involved in the lesson. For the listening period, students are able to listen while they are looking at the situation, or even observe the whole segment before they give answers. In speaking sessions, students enjoy the freedom to change the class atmosphere by asking the teacher to organize games such as when practicing the 'if clause'. In this way students can really enjoy the lesson, with all participating in activities using the four macro skills of English. Clearly, students at Centre 3 are lucky because they have a good environment to enrich their knowledge of English. Not only are the learning conditions excellent, but the teaching is of a high standard in which student-centred approaches are used.

### **5.3.7. Students' perceptions of the kind of language teaching needed**

As with students at Centres 1 and 2, students at Centre 3 would prefer teachers to use English more than Vietnamese with 86%; only English with 55%; and English less than Vietnamese with 14% (see Table 24). These results confirmed that students' perceptions at the three English language centres confirm that mainly English language input should occur in the classroom.

Students in Centre 3 believe that teachers' instructions are very important and that these should be given in English step by step so that they can easily follow. Moreover, as in Centres 1 and 2, students in Centre 3 want to do more homework, with 83% (see Table 23). As teachers in this centre use English most of the time to explain issues in the classroom, and provide relevant homework, it is clear that they know what their students need, and also meet their students' demands. Therefore, there is no doubt that this centre is running its business well. The manager agrees that the number of students in his centre is increasing, even though the school fees higher than most.

Questionnaire results tell us that students have strong motivation to learn English and that they know how they prefer to learn. Students like learning English by talking to other students with 89%; and 89% agreed with listening and taking notes. In addition, 83% of students agreed that they prefer learning English from television, video and film; 79% of students agreed with radio and music; and 62% agreed with repeating what they have heard; only 24% of students agreed that they prefer learning English by copying what their teachers write on the board; 62% agreed with reading and taking notes; and 86% agreed with learning grammar rules (see Table 26).

Overall, students agree with using English in any way that can help them gain their goal. However, although students prefer a communicative approach, they also believe that learning grammar rules helps them build up structures which they can remember if they have the chance to practise them. Understanding the structures and rules also helps them feel confident in their conversation. Results revealed that in learning

English, 86% believe that grammar exercises play an important role (38% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing), and 83% believe that talking with and listening to other students is enjoyable (28% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing) (see Table 29). It seems that students have studied grammar points and sat for examinations about grammar rules at their own schools, so, they still have the habit of doing grammar exercises. As the teachers and the manager mentioned, students are from mainstream schools where they still do tests consisting of translating grammar rules into Vietnamese and then translating back into English. Students also believe that talking and listening play an important role, meaning that working in pairs / groups discussing on certain topics will help them improve their command of English. Therefore, although teachers should create conditions that are conducive for them to discuss and present topics in front of the class, they also need enriched patterns so that they can build up good structures.

### **5.3.8. Teachers' perceptions of how best to assist students**

Teachers at Centre 3 understand the reasons their students are learning English, and they also receive directions from their manager, on the skills and topics they must cover to help their students achieve specific goals and meet the centre's objectives. Teachers have the right to skip parts of the materials assigned to teach other parts which they believe may more attract students' attention. As an observation, teachers can skip parts which are not suitable, and let students do other parts designed by their teachers. For example, the reading teacher designs and creates extra interesting materials and CDs to help students study more easily in addition to using the centre's materials. Because both manager and teachers focus on the quality of learning of the students, classrooms are also equipped with a data show and a computer in each room. They believe that teaching aids are important to learning English in particular. It also helps teachers feel relaxed while teaching, because both teachers and students can get involved. Furthermore the centre staff are required to use English which makes a model for students to follow and makes them feel that they are in an English speaking environment. The reading teacher asks students not to use dictionaries while in class in order to maximise their attention time. Instead, students can ask the teacher

the meanings and while they are asking, they are also using English. The speaking teacher lets students use English for playing a game using the ‘if clause’ while focusing on fluency not accuracy; she does not interrupt students while they are making mistakes while talking in order to let students feel confident while doing work. However, this is not in agreement with what students prefer, which is being corrected immediately (see Table 27). The centre often organizes workshops on new teaching methods for teachers in which the manager demonstrates new teaching techniques. This action helps teachers remember their duty while teaching for the centre and have more confidence in performing activities in the classroom. They also have opportunities to share their experiences at these workshops. Apart from encouraging teachers’ feedback, the manager also collects students’ demands so that he can consider and adjust to meet their needs. The manager believes that a student-centered approach helps students in their learning of the four skills, therefore, he always reminds teachers about using this approach. From the observation data, teachers in Centre 3 always do warm ups their classrooms to create an interesting atmosphere before starting the lesson because students are a bit tired from classes at their mainstream schools or from work. In this way, for just a few minutes teachers help them forget about being tired. Furthermore, teachers check students’ attendance everyday in order to build up responsibility between teachers and students as occurs in mainstream schools. In this way students develop good perceptions of going to the English centre as a serious place.

### **5.3.9. Extent to which communicative language teaching approaches are valued and used in the classrooms**

As mentioned earlier, the manager of Centre 3 encourages teachers to use communicative approaches in their teaching and as a result, teachers are using this approach in general. However, each teacher uses it with different levels of success. They use it flexibly, generally creating an English environment for their students. Teachers broadly understand how to use communicative approaches in their

classrooms and go some way towards fulfilling Liu's assertion that it "is defined in terms of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning" (Liu, 2007, p.30).

Teachers in Centre 3 use English to communicate with students, following students' preference (shown in Table 26, Item 7.1.b) in which 89% agree and strongly agree that they like learning by listening and taking notes. Moreover, the centre also pays attention to teaching aids which matches with students' preferences (shown in Table 26, Item 7.1.h) where 83% agree and strongly agree that they like learning by television/video/films. On the other hand, the listening teacher does not let students work in pairs / groups to discuss answers before answering his questions individually. From observation data of this period, the teacher always lets students listen to CDs up to three times. After each time he asks students to answer questions related to the listening part, and if they cannot respond he plays that part again. He expects students to understand and explain what they have learned from the listening. At this point, students answer directly to the teacher without having time to discuss the answers. In this case, it may be better if students were given time to discuss in pairs / groups before they gave out answers. However, he consistently uses English to explain or give clues, which provides students with an English environment. This teacher designs his own program to attract students so that they can hear the sounds, see the pictures, and read the questions, but he does not set up any issues for them to discuss. The researcher believes that even though it is a listening session, this teacher needs to let students articulate their conclusions after listening. By doing this, they could use the words and structures they have just heard on the CD. It seems that this teacher does not realise that students also need to listen to each other speaking in a listening lesson. Therefore, it would be good if he gave his students time to repeat the conversations on the CD to improve their speaking skills and pronunciation. In addition, he might guide students to write a summary which summarizes what they have heard, and later they could swap their papers and read them aloud. Generally speaking, this teacher is not fully understanding the communicative approach, even though compared to teachers in Centers 1 and 2, he is much better.

In Centre 3 the size of each class is standardized at international level, with up to 20 students in each class which has two teachers altogether. Each teacher takes charge of particular parts of the program which helps students have the chance to hear different accents. Normally, there is one English native teacher taking responsibility for speaking skills showing that the centre pays attention to its students' needs so that they will be enabled to use English in real life situations as a means of genuine communication. The researcher also found that this centre runs its business rather well.

#### **5.3.10. Changes needed for communicative approaches rather than grammar-translation methods to become the norm**

As in the percentage rates of students' preferences at Centres 1 and 2, 83% of students of Centre 3 believe that it would be helpful to practise English at an English speaking club, on campus 76%, and on an excursion 65% (see Table 25). This point strongly confirms that students have a goal of developing their communicative skills.

As the administration staff in Centre 3 are encouraged to use English inside the building, teachers always use English. Therefore, students realize that they are learning in an English environment, and find that on campus they can practise English effectively. Students also believe that improving English means practising English as they agree that the English speaking club helps them practise speaking skills. If they use English, they can remember it longer, therefore, it is appreciated that teachers use English to transfer knowledge, and from that the students understand step by step so they can use it themselves. Again, teachers in Centre 3 can set up new situations in which students have time to discuss and find out solutions. Furthermore, teachers minimize their students' time of writing down from the board and understand that students can work better when they can talk in pairs / groups to compare their answers in order to practise their English skills naturally.



### **5.3.11. Other improvements the private centre could make to better meet students' English learning needs**

In Centre 3 there is a discrepancy between teachers' and manager's information. According to the teachers, even though there is an interview at the beginning of the course for new students in which they sit for a test and the centre allocates them to a suitable class according to their English level, they still have a chance to choose teachers they prefer to study with. Therefore, there are mixed levels in classrooms and teachers have to help students at the lowest level. The teachers believe this is a waste of time because some high-level students can get bored. In this case, the centre should not let students choose the teachers they like, or just do this as long as there is a class suiting their level available. As the data shows, students want to practise their speaking and listening skills, but there is no English speaking club located on campus. Therefore, the centre should organize one on campus so that students can come on weekends for example. They would feel confident because it would be located in a familiar place, and the speakers could be teaching or administration staff. Furthermore, as going on excursion is not a common activity for in Vietnam, in order to be different from other centres the centre could organize excursions after students have studied related topics.

As found in data collected from Centres 1 and 2, 76% of students at Centre 3 prefer to be corrected immediately in front of every one, 79% strongly agreeing and agreeing with quietly, and 41% of students prefer to be corrected later in front of everyone, and 21% strongly agreeing and agreeing with being corrected in private (see Table 27).

Therefore, teachers should correct students' mistakes while they are building sentences, because if they repeat their mistakes several times they can set up a wrong habit. Furthermore, as 86% of students prefer their work to be corrected by their teachers (see Table 28), the teachers can encourage students to discuss before providing their answers. After that teachers confirm the right answers and give the reasons as well. Students also like to be assessed at the end of their course to help

them know what level they are. Especially, they prefer to do assessments in real life situations. Therefore, the centre should test them with what they study in the classroom, particularly when what they are studying is also practical (see Table 30).

#### **5.4. Summary of main similarities and differences between the three centres**

In this section, a summary of the main similarities and differences between Centres 1, 2 and 3 is provided in a grid. This format has been chosen as it is easy to read and to refer to in understanding the key similarities and differences found in the three case studies of English language centres in Vietnam. The following chapter will then be able to address these issues in order to draw up a draft ideal English language centre to present to a team of ELT experts for critique as below.

### Summary of main similarities and differences between centres

Criteria	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3
1. Main reasons for learning English	Students are mainly carrying a purpose of enriching English language in order to get a good job, maintain their current job, and further overseas study.	Students mainly have aspirations of getting highly paid work, ensure their current job, and pass compulsory subjects and exams.	As for centre 1 and 2
2. Teaching methods are being used in the centres	Student-centred approach is currently encouraged to use but cannot be applied due to objective reasons. The reading teacher focused on explaining the meaning of the texts in English, the writing teacher used half Vietnamese and half English. They both did not give any opportunity for students to practise as well as produce the language orally mentioned in Section 5.1.6.	Student-centred approach is believed delivering at the centre but it is not in reality. The reading teacher seemed to use English to explain the meaning and encourage students to produce English. The other used Vietnamese language most of the time to explain grammar points. They both did not provide any opportunity for students to participate in discussion activities mentioned in Section 5.2.6.	Team teaching is currently operating at the centre which is equipped with a data show in each room. Two teachers observed used English to communicate with students. They expected students to think and work out the answers individually which means that students did not have time to share their ideas in groups or pairs before giving the answers mentioned in Section 5.3.6.
3. Students' perceptions of the kind of language	Students strongly agreed that teachers should use English in the classroom and they preferred to	As for centre 1	As for centre 1 and beyond that they consider that grammar rules help them build up sentences and

teaching they need	participate in integration activities.		structures stably.
4. Teachers' perceptions of how best to assist students to achieve their language goals	English language environment is good for students to be in with; therefore, using English to explain the lessons helps students improve their listening skills and encouraging students to understand issues in English contexts helps their fluency.	The reading teacher believes that teacher should understand students' purposes and desire of learning English and use relevant teaching materials which can meet students' interests. She addressed that English language environment is good for students; therefore, she tried to use English as much as she could in the classroom. The grammar teacher believes that grammar needs to be explained in Vietnamese so that students can understand the points quickly and easily.	The listening teacher created extra work which he believed meeting students' interests and needs thanks to the availability of teaching facilities. He also requested students to use English to ask for the meaning if not sure, not to rely much on the dictionary. Speaking teacher focused on fluency aspects.
5. Communicative language teaching approaches are valued and used in classrooms	Teachers had to follow the teaching syllabus which focused on exam purpose. Students had no chance to participate in speaking activities.	The reading teacher is flexible in choosing the materials of teaching. She can either lightly go through or skip what are not relevant to students' interests and helps students with what they are interested. The teachers both did not provide	Teachers were partly delivering the communicative approach at its certain level. Students did not have time to figure out their answers in pair / group work. Teachers expected students' individual responses.

		students with any opportunities to practise their communicative activities in pairs / groups.	
6. What needs to happen for communicative approaches rather than grammar-translation methods to become the norm?	Integration skills need to be conducted and English needs to be used on the campus.	As for centre 1 in order to build up confidence for students in oral communication mentioned in Section 5.2.10.	As for centre 1 and centre 2, teachers should set up situations in which students can participate in pairs or groups to work out answers.
7. What other improvements can private centres make to better meet students' English learning needs?	Assessments will be conducted as what students have studied including four macro skills. A network centre for students and teachers will be built to bridge students' perceptions and centre's operation.	Placement and the end of term tests should be applied at the centre in which includes oral parts. Teaching materials have to be updated and not bilingual version. Teaching facilities are also paid attention to.	Placement test results should be remarked and used probably for its purpose. English speaking club should also be set up for students to have a place to practise their communication skills. Teachers also need to focus on both fluency and accuracy aspects.

## **5.5. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 5 deals with analysis of the case study results based on the three English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City. In particular, the researcher discusses the findings of each English language centre through classroom observations, responses to questionnaire by the students, and reports from teachers' and managers' interviews to point out the centre's strengths and weaknesses. It also compares and answers the seven aspects of the key research questions outlined in Chapter (1.2). Furthermore, this includes similarities and differences among three English language centres in order to form a foundation for the draft ideal language centre. The findings show that almost all students have the same purpose of learning English, to qualify for their job. They prefer communicative approaches in which they would like teachers to create opportunities for them to work in pairs / groups to communicate with their peers in real life situations. They also prefer their teachers to correct their mistakes right away in order to understand their mistakes and improve. However, the observations show that students are not really active in classroom practice except those at Centre 3. They also indicate that teachers mostly use traditional methods of teaching even though they have good attitudes towards understandings of communicative approaches. In the next chapter, the researcher uses the findings to form a foundation for the draft ideal English language centre consisting of four fundamental elements as follows: students' purposes of learning English, centre management, teaching staff, and students.

## **CHAPTER 6 – DRAFTING OF IDEAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE AND EXPERTS’ COMMENTS**

As discussed in the previous chapter and summarized in Section 5.4 (pp. 153-155) students going to English language classes in Vietnam mainly have the purpose of qualifying for a good job either in the present or the future. If they are current students of other mainstream schools, they would also like to improve their exam results. The students’ questionnaires showed that they would like to focus on communication skills, but the observation data showed that students were shy to respond to their teachers’ requests. In addition, teachers mostly used traditional ways of teaching in which teachers were at the centre, controlling most of the class time despite using some English to explain lessons in the classrooms. Generally speaking, teachers did not create any opportunities for students to work in pairs or groups discussing and exchanging ideas before presenting answers. For these reasons, in order to draft a plan for an ideal English language centre, the researcher has been led to consider four key issues. The first issues are teachers’ roles and students’ roles in the classroom context. Teaching materials are also paid attention as both native English speaking and bilingual textbooks were used in the classrooms. The third issue arises from data unveiling a difference between what managers believed about their teachers’ current teaching methods and what teachers were really doing in their classrooms. Furthermore, as data indicated that centres where students paid higher school fees produced students with superior communication skills, the need was indicated to have a close look at centre management. Consequently, in order to better provide the basis for drafting an ideal English language centre that meets students’ needs as well as their social requirements in the context of Vietnam, these four key issues of students, teachers, teaching materials and centre management, need to be discussed.

### **6.1. Key issues identified in the three case studies**

In the analysis of data pertaining to the three case studies undertaken in this research, it became apparent that four major issues needed to be taken into account. These four

issues included roles of students, functions of teachers, teaching materials and management styles. Therefore, in order to provide a sound basis for designing an ideal English language centre in Vietnam, these issues are firstly discussed in detail.

### **6.1.1. Roles of students**

Observation data unveiled a range of differences between three English language centres in Vietnam. Where students paid higher school fees they were found to receive better teaching facilities, as well as greater opportunities to use English orally. In fact, students at Centre 3 had to pay significantly higher school fees compared to Centres 1 and 2 in order to receive excellent communicative learning outcomes in a school with superior learning facilities, teaching techniques, and of course, central management. Nevertheless, in this Vietnamese cultural context, students tended to be somewhat passive in participating in classroom activities. This aspect does not assist students' roles as negotiators (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and managers of their own learning processes (Hedge, 2000). In addition, students tended to integrate between and among themselves using Vietnamese, rather than with their teachers in English (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). For example, students seemed to be not ready to respond to teachers' questions when they raised questions for the whole class and expected to receive answers. Therefore, students need to be encouraged to build up their confidence, motivation and positive attitudes towards communicating in English (Liu, 2007 and Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

In order to become proficient in communicative English, students should be encouraged to strongly participate in classroom activities using communicative approaches in which teachers and students use the target language and students' activities are the focus rather than the teachers. As Littlewood (1984) stated, it is students who need to take more active roles in the classroom in order to achieve communicative competence. Students need to be led by appropriate teacher's instruction on what and how to do communicative classroom activities. Students should forget the idea that 'silence is golden' which although it may be correct in other situations, it is not in language learning. Students should aim to use English in



communication without any hesitation related to fearing mistakes. They should try their best to adapt to these new approaches quickly so that they can co-operate with their teachers to conduct learning and teaching effectively.

Although learning materials and teaching methods are important factors affecting students' learning processes, students' motivation and willingness also play an important role in their study success. Students should be aware of their goals now and in the future, bearing in mind the role of English as a means of communication in their region in particular. Students should realize that learning English at private centres is just for extra study of only limited time which can only help them to a certain degree. Therefore, they should spend more time learning English not only at school but also in self study at home, using English as much as they can, using appropriate way of learning as suggested in the questionnaire responses. This is in accordance with suggestions from O'Dwyer (2006, p.234), Raof and Yusof (2006, p.148), and Han (2007, pp.13-15) who point out that English language classes assist students in building up their confidence in their study process.

### **6.1.2. Functions of teachers**

Through six classroom observations at three different centres, the researcher observed that some teachers still use traditional teaching methods in their teaching periods. They still control their classes almost all of the time to explain the lessons, even conducting them in Vietnamese. They did not use a communicative approach and students did not have the opportunity to work in pairs or groups, thus failing to integrate and share information and opinions in any way. However, some teachers at least seemed to understand the benefits of using English in the classroom. They believed that teachers should use English in the classroom to create an English environment in order to help their students achieve their goals of learning English. Hence, it is essential that teachers learn to use communicative approaches in their teaching sessions. However, although they should use English in the lesson, this does not mean that they use English most of the class time just to control classroom activities. Instead, they should guide their students and then create opportunities for them to practise and use the target language

(Lewis, 2002, p.47). Jacobs and Hall, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001 also agreed that one way to maximize opportunities for students to develop English language proficiency is to use collaborative or cooperative learning activities in the classroom. They should feed students with vocabulary and knowledge related to the topic prior to students' discussion, and follow up activities after to ensure that no one is falling behind. Green et al. (2002) suggested that this can be done through brainstorming and mind mapping. Teachers need to make sure that in teaching and learning English, they include the four skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing conducted in this order. When students can master their listening and speaking skills, they can feel confident in the others. Also, if students feel confident, they will be excited about going to English classes regularly to improve their English more.

Researcher observations showed that students were not responding to teachers' questions promptly, whereas teachers' perceptions concluded that students were lazy and passive in their classroom activities. In response to this issue, teachers should make sure that students have enough language to provide answers before asking for responses (Green et al., 2002). Teachers should create opportunities for students to discuss and share their ideas first, as according to Jacobs and Hall (2002, pp. 52-53), these opportunities help students' confidence in speaking up. In addition, in order to eliminate the issue of students not promptly responding to their teachers' questions in a friendly atmosphere. Teachers need to consider students as their friends so that they do not feel stressed while communicating. As Lea et al. (2003, p.322) point out, with an "increased sense of autonomy in the learner, interdependence between teacher and learner, mutual respect within the teacher learner relationship", students can openly share their achievements and requirements.

In accordance with students' preferences, they should be given extra homework to do including projects that are relevant to the topic being studied in the classroom, to be completed it in pairs / groups. Results of these should also be reported at the end of the course. Mangubhai (2006, p.50) has a similar point saying that one of the ways to motivate students to improve their knowledge of English is by asking them to do extra

work outside school hours, such as using teaching videos or listening to audiotapes in English. Beside their work at school, they can spend more time with friends to search, discuss and complete extra projects so that they can have opportunities to share their ideas, express their opinions and debate with each other during their work together (Jacobs and Hall, 2002, pp.52-53).

Personal communication showed that teachers understand and know about using communicative approaches to help students achieve their goals effectively, but they are unable to apply it due to high student numbers, poor teaching facilities, inappropriate teaching materials, and a rigid school syllabus. In agreement, constraints affecting the application of communicative approaches into Vietnamese classrooms have been identified by Le Van Canh (1999) and Pham Hoa Hiep (2005) as large class size, lack of teaching and learning facilities, pre-determined syllabus frustrating to teachers, and teaching materials from English speaking countries. As these constraints remain in the majority of English language schools in Vietnam, something needs to be done to improve the situation. In fact, in the first two English language centres researched in this thesis, teachers mostly used traditional methods for the same reasons. Even though their students' preferences were otherwise, they either did not know how, or were unable to change their teaching style. In this case, in order to be able to implement communicative approaches, teachers should strongly contribute their opinions to the board of directors in their school, and work together in being flexible and innovative in organizing more communicative classroom activities.

Good classroom practice depends on a learning environment using English integration teaching methods, good teaching facilities and teaching materials, and educated management. The differences were easily seen between a centre with fewer than 20 students equipped with updated facilities and centres with up to 50 or 60 students equipped with few or only simple facilities. Students at the former are able to produce the target language orally, but students at the latter could not. Through the teacher interviews, the researcher learned that they considered their students' perceptions unjustified, insisting that students were lazy, passive and unconcerned about their study

just liking to copying and take notes from the board; observation results were the same, indicating that teachers could not implement CLT in their classrooms. However, the questionnaire data found that there was a gap between the teaching methods and students' learning preferences for communicative approaches to help them improve their skills. Apparently, teachers either did not understand or did not care about their students' preferences. As Richards (2001, p.51) pointed out, "... a sound educational program should be based on an analysis of learners' needs. Procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as needs analysis". In this study, the analysis showed that teachers should create opportunities for their students to work in pairs / groups so that they can improve their communication skills and feel confident in oral interactions. This is in accordance with Brandl's principle #5, "Classrooms are organized so that students work together in small co-operative teams, such as groups or pairs, to complete activities. In second language learning environments, students work cooperatively on a language-learning task or collaboratively by achieving the goal through communicative use of the target language" (Brandl, 2008, p.18). In support of this, Han's study (2007) of Vietnamese EFL students' perspectives found that when students were asked about their preference between whole and small group discussion, 19 out of 21 participants mentioned that they like to work in small group discussion and by that they have more time and opportunities to share their ideas.

In regard to the teachers' responses that students are passive and lazy, one question is that if students are not concerned about their study, why do they spend money and time to go to school and sit there for hours every day? Clearly, they really want to learn, but they are bored with the methodology presented. Therefore, the researcher believes that teachers' evaluation of students' behaviors should be reconsidered. They should understand that Vietnamese culture has been influenced by Confucianism (Le Van Canh, 1999) which teaches that teachers are the only ones who can help students, and this affects students' attitudes. In understanding this, teachers need to work harder to help students relax their attitudes in order to benefit from change. Han (2007, p.16) makes a similar point that students do not have confidence in group discussion because of their cultural and educational background, which may affect their participation in

the classroom environment. Therefore, as teachers do not give their students time to work in pairs / groups using vocabulary resources to empower them, students are unable to catch up and are too shy to ask for help. Instead, teachers should use methods that provide students with opportunities to speak in an interesting classroom environment which is encouraging for students. Han (2007, p.21) agrees that students should be given opportunities to read the texts first to have a general idea of the topic and develop their vocabulary prior to class discussion. Teachers should not have to focus on a strict teaching curriculum because English is a language which is best studied using a range of activities and situations which are practised again and again. Brandl also explained that the, "... advantage of repetition is that it helps with freeing up memory" and "... learners need many opportunities for retrials, which makes the strategy of task recycling necessary" (2008, p.182).

From observations, the researcher found that teachers closely followed the teaching curriculum rather than checking to see that students understood before proceeding to the next stage. Most of the teachers tried to cover the curriculum but did not create a 'fun atmosphere' in class, and students did not feel relaxed and comfortable. Hence, teachers should stimulate students' learning motivation by using English in the classroom and using games to encourage students to talk in English. Yalden (1983) concludes that in order to help language learners obtain their goals of communication, learners should "be encouraged to participate in interpretation, expression, and negotiation" (p.73). Students should be assessed on their actual capability of using the target language and teachers should make it clear that the purposes for students' learning English are for communication. Therefore teachers should pay attention to both fluency and accuracy, even though students prefer being corrected by teachers just because they are still influenced by the traditional way of teaching which focuses primarily on accuracy.

In addition, teachers should encourage all students to participate, as when they pay more attention to good students and less to quiet students, the passive students have no chance to participate; consequently they continue to be passive. The students'

questionnaire responses showed that they expect to have opportunities to interact in English with friends. One teacher seemed to understand the needs of her students rather well, and stimulated them to talk and use English in the classroom, but she still controlled too much of the class time. According to Richards and Rogers (2001), this negates the aim of CLT. He says that “Classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing” (p.165).

Students’ responses showed that they prefer their teachers to speak English more than Vietnamese. This means that local Vietnamese teachers should make minimal use of Vietnamese in explaining what students do not understand. They need to understand if they use short cuts to save time, their students will forget the language they have been presented. As Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.11) pointed out that, “.... a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learners’ native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action”.

### **6.1.3. Teaching materials**

Teaching materials play an important role in the learning and teaching environment and should be relevant to students’ interests containing practical meaning in various fields so that they can apply it while studying. As Brandl (2008, pp.12-13) pointed out in principle #3 on input needs to be rich, “In the classroom environment, this (input) can be achieved through the use of a wide range of materials, authentic and simplified”. A similar point is made by Raof and Yusof (2006, pp.144-145) as “the more the learners are exposed to real world tasks the better language users they will become”.

Observations showed that Centre 2 has been using bilingual teaching materials which reduce students’ focus and attention. This is one of the reasons students were being led to ignore their teachers’ explanations, because they believed that they could just read and understand its content. However, this easy road would not assist in their learning

English as a language of communication, nor would they have any means of reinforcement to remember what they understood.

As materials used by Centres 1 and 3 are only from English speaking countries with related contexts, academic groups specializing in designing task-based, authentic textbooks based on Vietnamese contexts and foreign cultural concepts need to be formed. Such groups need to focus on needs relevant to Vietnamese daily life situations, because students' prior knowledge of these situations helps them to understand the content quickly. As Pham Hoa Hiep (2000, p.23) explained "modern teaching methods should be applied with a close and careful consideration of the cultural values of Vietnam". Bao Dat (2008, p.276) made a similar point saying "local texts need tremendous improvement". In addition, local book designers need to pay attention to the design principles of "(1) learning tasks are meaningful and (2) learning tasks are communicative" (Brandl, 2008, p.183). Of course these teaching materials should also be related to Vietnamese working environments in which there is a remarkable source of foreign investment.

#### **6.1.4. Management styles**

In classroom observations the researcher noted that classroom facilities are generally very basic, except in Centre 3 where superior facilities have a noticeably positive effect on teaching and learning quality. Centres 1 and 2 have only one cassette player in each classroom which teachers tended to use to give their voices a rest in large classrooms (which included around 50-55 students at the beginning of the course). Furthermore, in these two centres students sat at unmovable tables which prevented teachers from conducting group work and pair work with students. As discussed earlier, these class sizes affect the interaction between teachers and students as well as between students and students. Students in these two centres lacked the chance to familiarize themselves with modern teaching aids such as the overhead projectors and slide projectors, CD and DVD players that interest students. Hence, their centre managers should consider and regularly upgrade their teaching facilities in order to meet increasing learners' demands

along with social requirements. The Vietnam MOET (2008b) issued Instruction No.7984/BGDDT-GDTrH on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, which states that teachers should focus on the four macro skills of language in order to improve communication skills, as well as create various teaching styles to make sure students have opportunities to use the target language. It also states that training organizations must be equipped with teaching facilities, particularly visual and audio equipment to assist in improving the four macro skills.

As learning through visual methods helps students know and remember how to use a language more effectively, students should have a library to access in their own study time to borrow books, to access the internet for learning purposes and to use computers with some language learning programs installed. This equipment would more readily represent the current economic market and information and technology era.

Through interviews with the teachers, the researcher learned that placement tests are an initial tool to evaluate and place students at their appropriate learning levels. However, in reality not many English language centres organize placement tests for students (Doan Truc & Cam Lu, 2005) and if they do these test results do not necessarily reflect the learners' needs and social requirements. As a result, most students sit in mixed level classes because of other reasons including being permitted to choose their preferred teacher and time of class or choosing to be in the same class as their friends. However, to gain the real value of placement tests, students should be placed in a class at their level of English rather than deciding for themselves. In addition, students' placement test should consist of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with results stored to compare with at the end of the course test to assess students' progress. To do this, managers, teachers and students need to fully understand the value of the placement tests, and use them properly to attain full value in meeting students' needs and ensuring the successful teaching and learning of English.



All centre managers interviewed believed that their staff were using communicative approaches, but in reality only some were using them partially, and the others not at all. Ideally, this learner-centred communicative approach should be carried out in an English language classroom environment. As Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.193) point out, this method provides opportunities for naturalistic language acquisition while at the same time enables the teacher to focus learners' attention on particular vocabulary and language structures. Therefore, managers should monitor their teachers and make sure that teaching staff are consistently using student-centred approaches to help students have maximum opportunities to develop and practise the skills they require (Xiao, 2006, p.74). If their teachers are in need of in service training to help solve their problems in carrying out these approaches, the manager should organize this.

In order to run an English language centre, one of the important factors to consider is the quality of teaching staff. As Lewis (2002, p.47) points out, teachers are the main factor affecting the effectiveness of students' learning because they "manage students and the environment to make the most of opportunities for learning and practicing language". The researcher discovered through interviews that there was serious competition among English language centres in this area. Most English language centres invite teachers to teach English as casual positions; so teachers can organise their teaching flexibly. As a result they are often offered teaching positions at other centres with higher bonuses. Therefore, in this situation centre managers need to consider how on-going staff contribute and devote themselves to the centre's work and the development of other teaching staff skills in order to maintain consistency in teaching staff. Doing this may enable the centre to open more English courses to meet the growing social requirements.

The centre should make sure in its recruitment policy that the potential staff understand how to conduct communicative teaching approaches. More practically, potential and new staff should be given time to observe senior teachers' classes in order to be able to follow the teaching styles that the manager believes best help meet students' needs and the development of the centre. Furthermore, there should be channels of

communication linking the centre management with teachers, students and as appropriate, the students' parents. This channel should be established to keep both sides updated with necessary information for maintaining high standards in the teaching and learning process so that the students gain good results. Having built up a good reputation, the centre could then set up a job service network to help students in need of work.

Responses to students' questionnaires together with classroom observations and teachers' interviews point out that students should have a common place where they can practise English regularly, namely an English speaking club. This is consistent with Donarski's (2009) concept that an executive manager could consider recruiting new staff to help Vietnamese students improve their speaking skills by setting up an English speaking club. His research showed that due to the current way English is taught at schools in Vietnam, students are able to develop their communicative skills; so students need extra learning hours that focus on communicative skills. At English speaking clubs they can practise with different people who have the same motivation to learn English, and be able to share the experience they gain at school and at work, and even in their daily lives. Such activities need to be organized with the support of the centre manager who assigns staff to take charge of the discussion topics, guest speakers, and excursions as required. In this way students will become more confident in using their English.

Administration staff, teachers and students should use English on campus in order to create an English environment where students and teachers become familiar with using English. They will be required to communicate in English to create an English language environment to help students feel confident in communicating English on campus. According to Toh (2003, p.64), teachers should all cooperate in setting up English environments in which students can work together using English orally. The more students hear and visualize in English, the more confidently they will reproduce the language. Furthermore, as a survey conducted by Liu and Zhang (2007, p.161) found that nearly two thirds of students believe "the foreign teachers' class is friendlier and they have less stress in class compared with Chinese teachers classes" because

they “interact more with their students”, managers need to consider employing some skilled foreign teachers to assist in the development of communicative approaches among staff and students. Liu and Zhang (2007, p.163) also point out that the development of fluently face to face interaction, greatly builds confidence in communication.

With an emphasis on the communicative ability of students, managers need to regularly update their policies on ongoing and end of course assessment. The purpose of this is to ensure that students’ performance is monitored during their studies of the four skills. Ideally, they should be tested in real life authentic English language situations in accordance with the Vietnam MOET (2008b) which states that assessment and evaluation are based on language knowledge, cultural understanding and the four macro skills. Testing criteria requires listening and speaking competence to be higher than reading and writing, so teachers and students should focus more on these skills in their teaching and learning. Also, assessment should be explained right at the beginning of each course and conducted as scheduled. As the end of course test is an important factor that stimulates Vietnamese students’ efforts, they will work harder if they know that they are going to sit for a test. This is because Vietnamese people are afraid of being judged poorly and having a loss of face.

School fees should be considered in terms of the quality of teaching. As there are differences among English language centres, it is good that each language centre is allowed to manage in its own way in accordance with Instruction No.7984/BGDDT-GDTrH issued by the Vietnam MOET (2008b). This encourages schools to use their own manageable funds to provide students with modern facilities for language learning programs that promote communication skills as well as internet services. Managers can choose their teaching materials and staff and organize courses as long as they can attract students. However, from observations, the researcher learned that in classrooms with fewer students, communication skills were more possible and students were able to use English for interaction more often. Added to this, school fees paying for better teaching allowances positively affects teachers’ performances which then influences

students' achievements. Furthermore, high school fees can be used to attract English native teachers to conduct teaching hours, as well as providing them with enough time to prepare suitable classroom lessons. In general, higher school fees may lead to better students' performance when teaching facilities are focused, teaching methods are better, and numbers of students in each class are fewer.

In summary, although the Vietnam government has recently recognized and highly valued the role of English in the current era through policies focusing on communicative skills (Government of Vietnam, 2008; MOET, 2008a, 2008b), teachers are not yet fully implementing to carry out communicative approaches in their classrooms. Data showed that although some of the observed teachers at the three private language centres were attempting to use communicative approaches, they had not yet fully mastered the approach. However, it showed that communicative approaches are definitely moving away from traditional grammar translation methods. Therefore, in order best to assist this movement, there should be a strong will of communicative approach implementation using a combination of the four key factors including teachers, students, teaching materials and centre management.

## **6.2. Draft of ideal English language centre**

In conducting three case studies to understand the learning and teaching practices at three private English language centres, the researcher is able to suggest solutions to improve the effectiveness of English foreign language instruction among the private sector providers in Vietnam in general. From this a model English centre to meet students' demands and social requirements in particular will be built up. In comparing these studies, the main factors facilitating and or constraining the provision of effective English classes are determined. Results of these three case studies revealed that each centre has its own way of management including teaching materials, facilities, classroom organization, and teaching methodologies. However, the purposes of going to English classes were very similar. In gathering all aspects from the three case studies

and discussing them in relation to relevant literature, this chapter builds up an ideal draft centre in which the researcher believes teachers of English in Vietnam can help students achieve their goals most effectively, to present to a panel of Vietnamese experts for further feedback. This draft involves proposals for the four key aspects of language centres in Vietnam: students' purposes of learning English; centre management; teaching staff; and students.

### **6.2.1. Students' purposes of learning English**

Since the 'Open Door' policy was issued, there has been a changing emphasis on learning and teaching English in Vietnam. According to Do Huy Thinh (2006), 90% of all students now choose to learn English as a compulsory foreign language subject at schools in Vietnam. Other options for this subject including French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and German are not so popular. Nguyen Minh Hien (2004), former Minister of Education and Training, pointed out that English should be the primary foreign language taught in the national education system. Tran Linh (2007) revealed that more students at general school level were choosing to study English as a compulsory subject in preference to other foreign languages, having become the prime language of trade in globalization. As well as school students, Nguyen Thanh Cong (2007) showed that English has been established as the most common foreign language, resulting in a mushrooming of language schools and many people rushing to language centres to enroll in English classes. Nguyen & Buckley (2005) indicated that as "English has replaced French and Russian as the dominant foreign language", the demand for quality English language teachers has burgeoned. Furthermore, since Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), the number of people going to English classes at night time has increased markedly as Do Huy Thinh (2006, p.8). This is due to the need for workers and students to speak English in their work places. Thanh Xuan and Tan Thai (2007) describes students and parents queuing in a snake shaped line to enroll in English classes hoping to gain a place due to more foreign companies investing in Vietnam who intend to use local labor which is cheap compared to that of their own country. In these working environments, English has become the common language of communication. Nguyen Thanh Cong (2007) shows that it is no longer easy to find a

job with only a degree. Graduates need a foreign language, whether it is English, French, Japanese, or Korean but English is preferable. Besides, as Cam Lu (2004) and Thuy Ngan (2004) point out, achieving a national certificate of English is one of the requirements for both undergraduates and postgraduates to enhance their employment prospects. Thanh Xuan and Tan Thai's (2007) article mentions that students achieving national certificate of English level B will gain exemption from compulsory English at university. According to Vu Thi Phuong Anh (2007), level B is equal to IELTS (International English Language Testing System) level 4.0-5.0, which is a basic operational level of the language. Do Huy Thinh (2006) points out that at state organizations English such qualifications are viewed as one of the criteria for employee promotion and pay rises. In these circumstances, Vietnamese education officials discuss the importance of English at school age when English can be used as the language of instruction in schools. Nguyen Thien Nhan (2007) addressed that the Vietnamese government aimed to improve the quality of English teaching within the next ten years so that Vietnamese university graduates would be fluent in English, and all general school graduates would be able to communicate in the language by 2020.

Another stimulation to the use of English in Vietnam is the overseas Vietnamese support from relatives. It was estimated that in the year 2007 US \$ 5.5 billion was transferred into Vietnam through the official banking system, compared with US \$4.7 billion the previous year, showing an increase of 157 times since 1991 and achieving a 37% average yearly growth rate (VNMedia, 2007). These amounts include donations to relatives and educational investments. Through that resource and their own hard work, families have helped improve the economy. Furthermore, once they have enough to survive, Vietnamese start thinking of investing in their children's education, with some sending their children to further study overseas; but good English language is necessary for this. Therefore, before these people go aboard they need to enrich their knowledge of English as much as they can in Vietnam, which has resulted in a mushrooming of English centres. Nguyen and Buckley (2005) indicated more and more English centers are opening, especially in the big cities where some centres are only a few blocks away from each other. However, although they advertise in various

colorful and attractive ways in order to attract customers, people need to carefully research the quality of their teaching.

In summarizing questionnaire data, mostly students of English centres are mainstream students of other schools, with 83% being under 25 years old, matching with 86% jobless (see Tables 31 & 32).

**Table 31: Summary of results gained from students' responses on their ages (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Age	Percentages
under 25	83%
25-35	15%
36-45	2%
46 and over	0%

**Table 32: Summary of results gained from students' responses on their occupations (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Occupations	Percentages
jobless	86%
job	14%

According to data analyses, 88% of students want to study English for the purposes of getting a good job (63% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing), 43% for furthering overseas study (19% strongly agreeing and 24% agreeing), 55% for assisting their current job (16% strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing), and 37% for improving the study program at their mainstream schools (14% strongly agreeing and 23% agreeing) (see Table 33). The percentage of students wanting to pass in a compulsory subject is not high, because students believe that learning English at a language centre is to improve their listening and speaking skills which are not the focus in written examinations at mainstream schools. Therefore, it is clear that students want to enrich their communicating English to get good jobs as a long term goal.

**Table 33: Summary of results gained from students' responses on purposes of learning English (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 2 I am learning English to	Strongly agree → strongly disagree				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. get a good job.	63%	25%	9%	1%	3%
b. assist my current job.	16%	39%	41%	2%	2%
c. further my overseas study.	19%	24%	46%	6%	5%
d. give me more fun and personal satisfaction.	6%	24%	48%	15%	7%
e. pass compulsory subject and exam.	14%	23%	41%	18%	9%
f. make my family pleased.	3%	16%	42%	22%	17%
g. other	6%	2%	34%	3%	2%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

As Vietnamese people realize the importance of English language as a key way to open their door to a bright future, finishing their school is a short term goal, and getting a job in the future is a long term goal. With these goals in mind, they need to improve English listening and speaking skills at an English language centre to supplement the limited English language teaching provided at mainstream schools.



In addition, with Vietnam's recent socio-economic development requiring creativity and dynamism and Vietnamese people's aspirations, we who are concerned about the nation's development acknowledge "Mười năm trồng cây. 100 năm trồng người" which translates as "For a ten year benefit we plant trees. For a 100 year benefit we educate our people" (President Ho Chi Minh's well known statement). Therefore, an action plan needs to be developed that helps students meet their demands, especially in improving their English enrichment in a way that contributes to the nation's continuous and stable development. In order to do this, we should consider the following factors of both centre management and teaching staff as the basis for a draft ideal English language centre that might improve the quality of teaching and learning English language in Vietnam. This will be followed by an expert panel's commentary aimed to assist in refining this proposed model.

### **6.2.2. Centre management**

In looking at the variety of activities and responsibilities that are under the auspices of centre management in private English language providers, the researcher has selected ten areas of consideration based on observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document reviews. These include: (1) enrolment office; (2) placement tests; (3) teaching design; (4) teaching facilities; (5) teaching materials (6) recruitment criteria; (7) centre parent contact; (8) relation of students, teachers and manager; (9) English speaking club; and (10) Student employment.

#### **6.2.2.1. Enrolment office**

In the enrolment office, registry staff not only need to undertake a special course in customer services, but they must understand the broad curriculum, and supporting syllabus in order to provide all the information potential students require. They must present themselves cleanly and neatly and have a good command of English in order to attract customers. Furthermore, the registry office should be located in a place which is easy to access and appear to be spacious and friendly. Ideally, copies of the curriculum of the centre should be available in this office and slogans encouraging students to use

English clearly displayed. Photographs of the teaching staff with their qualifications and experience should be displayed as well.

When centres are presented well, people can believe in them and feel more comfortable in involving in paying fees to attend courses. The registry not only does the enrolment but also helps students and their parents by providing full information prior to enrollment in any courses at the centre. They should make sure that even at busy times there are enough official registrars to conduct the job smoothly. In general, registry offices must be decorated formally, because they are evaluated as the face of the centre. Students and their parents have their first impression as they enter this office, so the registrar has to keep them committed to the centre from as soon as they arrive.

The reason that slogans around the walls of the building encouraging students to use English, is that this helps potential students to know they will be encouraged to study English effectively at the centre. Furthermore, these practical expressions or idioms for use in daily life will make a deep impression that will help students remember to use English as often as possible in their daily lives.

#### **6.2.2.2. Placement tests**

Placement tests are one of the most important elements used to evaluate students' levels of English and should be considered seriously in determining entry levels for students. As Vu Thi Phuong Anh (2007) points out, unclear classification in entrance examinations affects the quality of teaching due to students being placed in the wrong class and making it hard for teachers to cope. However, if the results of placement tests are accurate, English teachers will have a general picture of the students' level and which skills they need to be enriched. Therefore, all students need to be given a sound placement test to assess their language level, followed by an interview to discuss their needs and interests. They can then be placed in a class that matches their language level and needs. Students also need to be aware that there is an end-of-course test. The results of which will be compared with their placement tests in order to evaluate their progress. Therefore, both the manager and teachers need to understand the value of

placement and assessment tests, and conduct them properly in order to attain full value in meeting students' needs and ensuring that the teaching and learning of English has been successful.

In centres that rely on placement tests prior to each course, students are placed according to their relevant levels. Students do not have a choice of teacher in this case, as teachers are responsible for particular subjects and levels. The centre manager is the person who needs to control this issue and arrange the timetable accordingly.

### **6.2.2.3. Teaching design**

The centre manager should make sure that teachers are aware of the teaching designs used at the centre. Teachers should be encouraged to use student-centered methodologies that provide students with maximum opportunities to practise and develop the English skills they require. Managers should also organize team teaching, with every class having at least two teachers. Each teacher needs to cover different parts of the curriculum and use different materials. Centres that organize this kind of team teaching significantly help students in their listening and speaking skills as they can hear different voices and experience different ways of learning. Furthermore, they can feel excited and interested in attending their English classes. Teachers will complete the whole teaching session easily, and students will be inspired to get over their laziness and boredom. By doing this, both teachers and students will be happy and gain maximum achievement in their jobs of teaching and learning. Thomas, MacLean and Greer (1997) point out the benefits of team teaching as reducing isolation, providing teachers with more confidence and assurance and helping teachers to assess the climate of their classroom. It also helps improve students' attitudes and emotions, and increases their intellectual capacities. In this way students can experience first hand a live model of collaboration which is currently a 'hot topic' in business and other industries in which they seek employment.

Teachers need to use English to explain classroom issues so that students have a chance to learn in an English environment and develop their English listening and

speaking skills. Furthermore, teachers need to follow the teaching materials supplied; as well as have the right to create extra more interesting programs that attract students' interest. As one of the teachers at Centre 3 with information technology ability revealed, he can make extra programs that really encourage students to keep students on track. Other teachers make sure that working in pairs / groups and discussing certain topics helps students improve their command of English. Therefore, teachers need to create more opportunities for discussion and presentation of topics in front of the class. At the same time they can assist students build up good structures for language use.

In accordance with central management policy, teachers need to use communicative approaches. They should not be allowed to use traditional ways of teaching as the grammar translation method is no longer permitted. Student-centred approaches must be always applied in teaching to help students succeed in their study. Each teacher must perfect certain skills, depending on their favorite major, and after each session, the teacher must complete a follow-up record in the teachers' log so that the teacher of the next session can know the way to continue.

#### **6.2.2.4. Teaching facilities**

In looking at teaching facilities for the ideal language centre in Vietnam, several aspects need to be considered. These include: movable desks to facilitate group work; small class size to allow teachers to provide individual attention; computer access to develop internet skills; DVD / CD players, cassette players and TV monitors to provide audio visual support; and student libraries to encourage students to study alone.

The need for authentic language practice involving group work has necessitated a change from the traditional rows of fixed desks suited to traditional classrooms in Vietnam. Instead, classrooms need to be equipped with movable tables which teachers can set up for group work or pair work activities in accordance with students' expectations where 79% of those surveyed agreed and strongly agreed that this was their preference. If in cases where English centres have already set up classrooms with long fitted tables (as seen in general education schools), teachers at least need to help

students develop the habit of changing partners every session to make sure that they do not stick together with the same person for days on ends, probably gossiping in Vietnamese. In this way, students can do authentic pair work activities, as 68% of students expect to work in pairs (20% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing), and 79% in small groups (54% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing) (see Table 34).

**Table 34: Summary of results gained from students' responses on students' work (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 3.1 In class, it is good for students to do work ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. individually.	5%	7%	37%	24%	22%
b. in pairs.	20%	48%	27%	4%	2%
c. in small groups.	54%	25%	18%	2%	1%
d. in a whole class group.	23%	30%	42%	3%	2%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Ideally, in order that teachers may attend to the needs of all students, the number of students in each class should not exceed twenty. In this way they have more time and a chance to practise and get teacher feedback. Appropriate class size is a very important element affecting the quality of teaching and learning as large classes can lead to impersonal relations between teachers and students, limit the range of instructional activities, cause management problems, and create a lot of difficulties in controlling the learning situation when attempting to apply communicative methodologies. Bailey and Nunan (1996) stated that a class of even twenty-nine is considered as too many, as not only does this number affect the quality of teaching; but it also affects the intake of knowledge by students. For instance, when there are 50 students in a class (as is common in Vietnam), teachers do not have enough time to contact each student or to specifically correct mistakes specifically. In addition, in a study of students' attentiveness in large classes, Blatchford (2003) identified that there are more

distractions and greater tendencies for students to be off-task while doing their work. In addition, Shannon (2005) concluded that it is very difficult to teach large classes because students have different abilities, styles and preferences. However, if large classes are unavoidable, one way to solve the problem of teaching is to break them down into small groups, with teachers move around the classroom to monitor students' progress, but this is extremely difficult when desks are fixed.

Ideally, when small class sizes are set, teachers have time to help individual students; they can understand which skills each student needs to improve. In reviewing an online exchange of teachers' opinions on ideal English class size in response to the question "Is there an ideal class size for teaching English abroad?" (Group of teachers, 2006), responses included the following statements:

- In my experience in the classroom, I find that about 10-12 students is great. (Teacher, USA, Nov. 2006)
- In my experience, when it comes to language classes, the smaller the better. Each student needs the opportunity to participate personally as much as possible. (Tech support, USA, Nov. 2006)
- I have found that smaller groups of children and adults are best. Adults really have a hard time learning new things, so the smaller groups really help them too. (Teacher, USA, Nov. 2006).
- In my experience, teaching in India where classes are packed with students between 35-50 students per class is really not desirable as it's not possible to have control over such large numbers of students. (Former teacher, USA, Nov. 2006)

In addition, in Australia, students expect small class sizes for English language learning as the norm. For example, the Brisbane North Institute of TAFE (2008) advertises, "general English classes focus on enabling students to use English effectively as a means of international communication". It advertised that teachers are all qualified and experienced to provide practical and effective learning. Classes are small averaging 15 students. To better address learning needs, lower level classes are

smaller. It provides individual learning plans, understanding that all students learn differently. Students participate in small groups to practise conversational fluency and various electives suit individual learning goals. Furthermore, in accordance with the suggested ideal English language centre of this study, this TAFE school provides both real life learning combined with traditional approaches to provide 'well-rounded' learning experiences.

Molnar (1999, p.48) lists six reasons why smaller classes for school children also have a positive effect on achievement as below:

- Children receive more individualized instruction: one-on-one help, small group help, class participation.
- Children misbehave less because of the family atmosphere and quick intervention by teachers.
- Teachers spend more time on direct instruction and less on classroom management.
- Classes include more 'hands-on' activities, though most instruction remains teacher – not student-centered.
- Students become more actively engaged in learning than do peers in large classes.
- Teachers of small classes 'burn out' less often.

In order to provide stimulating input for students, teachers should also be provided with internet connected computers, printers, CDs and cassette players. If these are available in a teachers' lounge where they prepare needed before they conduct their teaching. Teachers should also be encouraged to create their own updated teaching materials to attract students and involve them in topics that interest them.

English language centres should each have a library for students' use in order to study, read books and access internet for learning purposes. From this students can also borrow books to take home to enrich their English knowledge. In the current economic market in Vietnam, classrooms should also be equipped with learning facilities

including computers, cassette players, DVD / VCR players, TVs and a data show to provide authentic audio visual input. In the modern technology era, these facilities attract more students to come to English classes. Moreover, these facilities help them experience real, practical input that encourages them to use English in real life. They not only motivate students, however, they also motivate teachers to get involved with new ideas for teaching. As the prices of these learning and teaching facilities are not as great as they were in the past. It is not so difficult for centres to install them, particularly as they will attract more student fees. If it is possible, centres also need language laboratories with computers connected to the internet so that students have the chance to access websites and enrich their English online. These laboratories provide the best English learning programs for improving the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A good example of these facilities is provided at the Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Australia's leading provider of English language for multicultural settlement and employment services. AMES has been delivering services to over 40,000 people every year since 1951, expanding its services nationally and internationally (AMES, 2008). One example of the facilities provided at an AMES English Language Centre is at St. Albans in Victoria. This centre has two computer rooms equipped with various language learning programs such as 'Alphabet International', 'Interactive Picture Dictionary', 'That's life' and 'Call Story'. In these each student is given the chance to study using a computer for at least one hour per week. From these programs, students can practise English in real life situations, and remember them well. This centre is so well set up that more and more students are coming based on 'word of mouth' advertising alone.

#### **6.2.2.5. Teaching materials**

It is clear that teaching materials play an important role in motivating students to learn, especially when they are relevant to students' interests and learning purposes. With regard to textbooks, the ideal centre should not allow students to use bilingual texts, only English versions so that they have to brainstorm and try their best to remember themselves, even without assistance. One of the teachers at Centre 2 pointed out that their students used bilingual textbooks and were always reading the meanings of texts



in their own language. As a result they do not really pay attention to their teachers' explanations. However, this problem could be overcome if some of the more practical parts of these books were cut out and bound into booklets according to students' levels of English competence and put into the self access library. In addition, the centre could also employ an academic group specializing in compiling new teaching materials that are graded to students' needs. All books created at this centre would need to be licensed in accordance with international copy right laws and relevant extracts and carefully modified and cited before being put together and graded according to the themes and curriculum used. At lower levels the books need to include lessons with more conversations and short stories with a practical focus which can be applied in real life situations in Vietnam. When students can use English from the early days, they will have strong motivations to continue the following classes, and their enthusiasm will help ensure that the quality of teaching is improved as well. It is also possible that teaching staff (including native English speakers) will have extra knowledge of books such as specialized writing textbooks about situations, contexts, and culture in Vietnam. If there are such materials available, students will be able to improve their English more quickly.

#### **6.2.2.6. Recruitment criteria**

Teachers need to be recruited in accordance with recruitment criteria in which they prove that they understand what communicative approaches involve, and how they intend to use them. They will need to have appropriate qualifications in English teaching, and in the case of foreign teachers, at least a diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Centres should also consider having policies for employing ongoing contract teachers as senior teachers who contribute full time to the development and stability of the centre. They should be given a salary that allows them to devote themselves to a teaching career at the centre. The manager of the Centre 1 complained that there is big competition among centres offering high salaries to attract qualified teachers, so centres need to make sure there is a balance of local and foreign teachers in order to balance costs.

#### **6.2.2.7. Centre parent contact**

For young students in the Vietnamese context, centres need to build a bridge between parents and teachers so that they can inform each other of relevant news. Teachers and parents can then form a bridge in motivating students to study better. The parent / teacher contact can also help students attend the classes regularly, even if they are not in a good mood at the end of the day. As administrative staff receive class rolls from teachers every day, they can contact families of those who are under 18 years old and absent up to three sessions. Doing this shows parents and students the centre's responsibilities not only in teaching but also in expectations about attendance. Lists of students' telephone numbers should be updated regularly to ensure they can be contacted as necessary.

#### **6.2.2.8. Relations between students, teachers and manager**

In order to facilitate good relations with students, their feedback is one of the elements which cannot be omitted in running an English centre effectively. Centres need to give students' demands priority, so near the end of each course (about two weeks before it ends), students should be received a survey to contribute their feedback. This survey should mainly include questions related to teaching materials, teaching staff and classroom organization.

In running an idea English language centre, managers should always establish good relationships with teachers, providing regular workshops at the end of each course to share experiences of all aspects of teaching, management, and other issues that have arisen. Teachers can raise all issues that they think need to be adjusted to improve relations between students and teachers. Teachers are the people who are closest to the students and understand them more than the centre managers. As they know what students demand, managers should listen and discuss issues as they arise. One thing centres need to focus on is that their survival depends on happy teaching staff and students.

Apart from managers cooperating with parents / students and teachers, it is also possible to call for students to co-operate in conducting minor projects relating to the centre's development. The centre could support these activities, with teachers calling for students to participate in collecting data for projects. Furthermore, teachers could provide managers with updated information about new books and kinds of teaching materials available on the market.

In encouraging teachers to give their best to the centre, the manager needs to identify the target of training sessions to explain the teaching policies he wants applied at the centre. In doing this, he could call upon ongoing teachers to be involved in reshaping unuseful existing policies to develop new approaches in the centre. It is important here that they are properly remunerated to ensure that they do not take their valuable expertise to work in other centres to complement their income. In this way, their talents and time should be devoted to working in the centre to which they owe first responsibility.

#### **6.2.2.9. English Speaking Club**

For an English speaking club (ESC), centres should at least organize a common place for their students to come and practise English. This is in accordance with 86% of students believing that it is useful to participate at ESC (49% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing) in order to improve their communicative skills (see Table 35).

**Table 35: Summary of results gained from students' responses on places to practise English (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 6.1 It would be useful to practise English ...	Strong agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. on an excursion.	31%	38%	27%	3%	0%
b. at English speaking club.	49%	37%	11%	2%	1%
c. on campus.	15%	41%	36%	5%	2%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Ideally an English language centre should assign someone from its teaching staff to take charge of its ESC as part of their job. This coordinator could invite some willing and able students to co-operate in setting up a group and get feedback from students about how they would like their club to work, and what topics they would like to discuss each week. In this way, students can feel excited because they can see the effectiveness of using English. This also motivates them to study hard to get good results in their exams. Also students can develop strong relationships in the club, and support each other in their learning. In addition, the centre could sometimes organize cultural exchanges so that students have the chance to use English with new friends, or it could arrange for foreign speakers to present issues about current life in their home countries or internationally.

Discussion topics for the ESC should be related to themes currently taught at the centre so students can further practise what they study. A transcript of topics could also be sold to participants before presentation and the profits used to assist club expenses. The club would also carry the function of organizing fieldtrips for participants, which is in accordance with 69% of students who agreed and strongly agreed that it would be useful to practise English on excursions (see Table 35) so that the ESC will pay for itself, new participants could pay membership fees designed to cover the delivery of topics in advance. In order to have enough topics for the ESC, teaching staff could also

be invited to present topics of their choice with a focus on the themes in the curriculum. In this way the ESC could establish a topic bank. The ESC also needs to conduct regular surveys to collect members' opinions and suggestions for improvement so that the ESC becomes a place where they do not want to be absent and miss out on weekend discussions.

#### **6.2.2.10. Students' employment service**

In order to improve its ability to attract customers, the ideal English language centre could also organize a service where students can be introduced to jobs which are relevant to their English level. The service staff would be responsible for searching out jobs that are advertised to publicize to all students. This has benefits for both employers and potential employees. As they build up a relationship, company could also seek employees as they need them without paying agency commissions. In this way the centre can introduce students to work and more students would come to study with a clear purpose of learning English. This would also push students to have increased motivation to study, increase the fame of the centres' teaching quality and ability of students to find jobs. This tactics could even bring the advantage of companies providing scholarships for talented employees to attend the school.

#### **6.2.3. Teaching staff**

In looking at teaching staff for the ideal language centre in Vietnam, several aspects need to be considered. These include: using English inside and outside classrooms in order to create English language environments; gathering students' ideas, providing students with vocabulary and discussion time to improve communication skills; providing and correcting students' homework to stimulate their learning; setting up pair work and group work to help students practise and share opinions; preparing interesting activities and lessons to keep students on track; developing listening and speaking skills first in order to build up confidence; applying communicative approaches to help students achieve their goals; and examination content needs to be focused on speaking and listening skills.

Teachers should use English to explain their lessons and communicate with students, as well as inside the building and on the campus outside as students. Of those surveyed, (see Table 35) 56% agreed and strongly agreed that using English on campus was useful to them. Also, 59% (33% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing) agreed that they prefer teachers to use only English (see Table 36). While teachers still use mother tongue to explain meanings in class, they are not confirming with the wishes of students. Surveys showed that 78% of students prefer teachers to use English more than Vietnamese (45% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing) (see Table 36).

**Table 36: Summary of results gained from students' responses on teachers' use of English (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 5.1 In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. English only.	33%	26%	32%	7%	1%
b. English more than Vietnamese.	45%	33%	18%	2%	2%
c. English less than Vietnamese.	2%	6%	42%	23%	28%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Teachers should give students time to practise orally and discuss before writing, because 81% of students expect to discuss together with other students (36% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing) when they learn. On the other hand, only 14% (3% strongly agreeing and 11% agreeing) agreed that copying from the board is valuable (see Table 37). However, while students might not always like it, they do find it helpful when forced to use English on the campus.

**Table 37: Summary of results gained from students' responses on learning style (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 7.1 I like learning by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. copying from the board.	3%	11%	49%	24%	13%
b. listening and taking notes.	27%	45%	22%	4%	2%
c. listening and completing a task.	17%	43%	32%	6%	2%
d. reading and taking notes.	18%	33%	43%	5%	2%
e. repeating what I hear.	27%	39%	30%	3%	1%
f. talking to other students.	36%	45%	18%	1%	1%
g. learning grammar rules.	24%	41%	33%	1%	2%
h. television/video/films.	36%	41%	21%	2%	1%
i. radio/music.	29%	46%	23%	1%	1%
j. written materials.	22%	45%	30%	2%	1%
k. pictures/posters.	16%	42%	37%	3%	2%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

In addition, to study in class, homework which is corrected the following day is valuable, with 80% of students liking to do homework (41% strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing) (see Table 38)

**Table 38: Summary of results gained from students' responses on homework (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 4.1	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
Homework is useful.	41%	39%	16%	3%	2%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Teachers need to let students correct mistakes by using pair work and group work so that they can talk and compare their answers. Following this, 88 % of students believe that teachers should make sure which answers are right and which are wrong (60% strongly agreeing and 28% agreeing) (see Table 39).

**Table 39: Summary of results gained from students' responses on mistake correction (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 9.1 I prefer my work to be corrected by ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. other students	10%	33%	41%	10%	5%
b. the teacher	60%	28%	10%	2%	1%
c. self	16%	22%	51%	5%	5%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Before giving students topics to discuss, it is useful to brainstorm them to elicit vocabulary for general discussion. Teachers could then record what students have



discussed or debated, then play the recordings back to all students. This exercise could then be built into a lesson for the following day.

Teachers clearly need to have a good manner as well as good teaching methods. Learning a language is imitating whatever the native language speakers say so whatever teachers say or do in the classroom influences the students. The way of acting and the speech tones which teachers use to address their students both inside and outside the classroom affects their students' learning of both language and cultural norms. Similarly, teachers should build up good relationships with their students and minimize the traditional hierarchical gap between teachers and students. In this way teachers and students should consider each other as friends. Teachers need to learn to put themselves in their students' positions as a good relationship with them can build up their interest in learning. In order to build up an interesting and motivating atmosphere in their classrooms, teachers should treat all students the same, and be willing to help them. Doing this helps students feel relaxed, not stressed about going to class and happy to get involved in all activities.

Teachers should make sure that students attend classes by marking the roll delivered by the administration office. They should set up pair work (at least) and group work for students to practise and share their opinions as well as create extra activities and relevant teaching materials for lessons students find boring. Prior to each lesson, teachers should spend time revising relevant points about what students studied previously, including spelling, dictations, questions raised and answers recurred. Teachers should not worry so much about covering all materials as assigned but about students' understanding of what they have learnt. They need to be flexible in covering the more important aspects of sessions and design lesson plans based on levels of majority of students. Furthermore, as students become interested in particular topics, teachers could organize class excursions or request the manager to organize them after covering specific themes. Of those surveyed, 69% of students agreed and strongly agreed that it would be useful to practise English on an excursion (see Table 35).

According to the three student surveys, most students also attend universities or mainstream schools while some work in the day time, attending English classes after study or work. Therefore, they come to English class somewhat tired and lacking in concentration, even if they have high motivation, their energy is limited. For this reason, lessons need to be organized in a manner that is visually stimulating and able to be understood. Technically, lessons should include pictures and visual clues, and teachers need to create a happy atmosphere for all students.

Teachers should also provide students with projects suited to their levels. These can include finding information and assembling it, then writing up a report and finally presenting the project to the whole class. Doing a project is very practical and helps students develop skills and become confident in their work. Moreover, this will help prepare students who go overseas to study where doing projects is very common.

In teaching English, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing need to be taught separately. However, in the context of Vietnam, teachers need to create more opportunities for students to practise communication. Therefore, listening and speaking skills need to be developed first so that students will get over their embarrassment and become confident in their willingness to improve their skills. This order of learning is natural as children spend months listening and observing thousands of activities before they can utter a single word, then a phrase. Finally they can build up simple sentences to build on through imitating and speaking for years before they can go to school to learn reading and writing. There they also take time to improve other skills. When teachers understand this natural order of learning, they do not expect students learning English as a second language to start reading and writing at the start.

As some students are unclear about the importance of learning English, teachers need to find ways to help them understand through providing updated essential information about the significance of English language for communication. In the past, students have been taught to use English as a means of reading and writing rather than listening and speaking, so even though they may want to learn how to communicate verbally, they feel overwhelmed at the thought.

Therefore, teachers need to make sure which teaching methods can be applied most effectively. They cannot use the traditional grammar translation method any more, as this method severely hampers the development of skills they need and society requires. Unfortunately however, students at general education still study English using grammar translation approaches which is one of the main reasons they pay fees to private language centres in the hope of learning how to communicate. Do Huy Thinh (2005) shows that students complain that learning English at high school is wasting their time because both materials and teaching methods are so out of date. Viet Bao (2007) shows that students at high school complain that they still have to write four pages of such things as 'you are = anh là', 'garden = cái vườn' everyday, just copying down all that teachers write on the board. Teachers just use Vietnamese to explain the meaning of texts to students, and then write the answers to questions and explain grammar points. Dieu Thuy (2005) points out that students in general education just learn some grammar points by heart in order to deal with the examinations at all levels. After their examinations, students cannot remember anything due to not having any chances to practise. Therefore, even learning English for ten years at general education does nothing to prepare students to use the language for communication. Teachers do not set up group discussions or pair work.

These teachers need to do more to enable practise in real life conversations in accordance with 91% of students in this study who expect to be assessed by setting up real life situations (67% strongly agreeing and 24% agreeing) (see Table 40).

**Table 40: Summary of results gained from students' responses on assessments (Case studies 1, 2 & 3)**

Item 11.1 Assessment is important with ...	Strongly agree → Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. written tasks set by the teacher.	22%	44%	30%	3%	2%
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	29%	39%	27%	3%	1%
c. checking your own progress by making tapes,	14%	26%	53%	5%	2%
d. setting up real life English situations.	67%	24%	6%	2%	1%

\* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

In order to prepare students for real life communication, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) also needs to reconsider their current policy for English testing as the content and structure of the test paper only evaluates grammar and reading and writing. However, their purpose of testing is set out clearly: testing English is to test the use of English in real life or daily work. If the aim is to meet these stated goals in which people need to use English for their white and majority blue collar workers, the government needs to provide enriched skills in speaking and listening more than in reading and writing and change the examination content to strongly focus on teaching speaking and listening skills at mainstream schools.

Due to the poorly focused English classes and examination content in the MOET system, teachers at private English language centres also need to explain to students the method of teaching right at the beginning of each course so that they can understand that learning English is for communication not just for certificates. By doing this, students will feel more relaxed and confident in learning and using English both in the classrooms and in daily life. However, when students realize that English is not just a

score on a certificate, failure can sometimes be the signal of success. Therefore, when students have strong motivations to study and find that they are unable to communicate they need to be encouraged to stand up and rebuild their skills to achieve their ambition to communicate at an ideal private English language centre.

When these students try again and enrich their knowledge of English before they step into the MOET examinations (which do not include either listening or speaking and pronunciation), they find that in fact, when they do the examinations again. They cannot only achieve their goals; they can remember what they have learned. Furthermore, they will have developed a useful tool that will serve them well for the rest of their life.

As Vietnamese writing is based on the same Romanized script as English, reading does not present a huge problem. Therefore, for teaching reading, teachers should provide students with the use of reading strategies rather than paying disproportionate attention to vocabulary and grammar structures in the way that one of the teachers at Centre 1 did. Teachers should focus not only on skimming and scanning, but also on teaching students good strategies requiring students to guess, infer and extrapolate knowledge from the context in order to develop reading fluency. Students who are equipped with these strategies soon become more confident in their reading skills. The communicative student centred approaches discussed above can also be used in the reading class to combine all four English language skills. In addition, there should be a wide variety of activities to make the reading session comprehensible and enjoyable. Again, teachers need to be flexible in the way they cover the important parts of the session, particularly if there is not enough time. They should provide students a range of opportunities to practise reading strategies, and then discuss what they have read in pairs or groups. In addition, teachers should give students homework to do outside the classroom, and importantly, check their reading comprehension through setting up activities so that they are able to present the controlling ideas within the texts.

However, as many students are attending classes to help prepare for MOET examinations, teachers face difficulties when they need to address the poorly

designed curriculum assigned by the MOET. The structure of these exam papers is still framed in three parts (1) reading comprehension; (2) grammar points; (3) translate into English. That is why so many teachers ignore communicative approaches and still use grammar-translation approaches in which they can satisfy MOET's exam requirements causing students to be happy with their end of semester exam results. However, this conflict of interest between the practical usage and examination qualifications causes confusion with students and teachers not knowing which way to turn to achieve conflicting goals. They need to use the language for practical purposes, and they need the MOET certificates for their work resume.

Consequently, while considering the need for students to pass MOET exams, they should not stop using the communicative approach in delivery of the syllabus. At the beginning students might just listen and observe, but as they gain confidence they will begin to produce the language. Teachers should help them build up a new path in which they can achieve both goals. Teachers should not think that students are passive and lazy because they do not use English in communication or participate in activities, just waiting for teachers to deliver 'food'. In the same way that farmers will harvest what they plant, "teachers need to consider their students' goals and social requirements to achieve a good command of English. According to the answers recorded in response to the students' questionnaires, they prefer to study using a communicative approach in their private English language centre environment.

#### **6.2.4. Students**

Students should adapt to new approaches conducted in classrooms by teachers mentioned in Section 6.2.3 quickly in order to gain their purpose of being able to communicate in English. It is hard to integrate the communicative approach, but it is the time to change the grammar-translation approach into a communicative one. Let us look back at how long students have studied English under general education and whether they can use English in daily life or not. The answer is as the result of 10 years enriching English knowledge does not go anywhere (Vu Thi P Anh, 2007; Kim Lien, 2006; Do Huy Thinh, 2005). In addition, students show their preferences for learning

methods which can help students to succeed in their language study. Therefore, students should try their best to adapt to the new approach easily and quickly so that they can co-operate with their teachers to conduct their learning and teaching time successfully which brings good results in language learning.

Students should be active, confident in an English learning environment. In the language learning process, students should forget the idea 'silence is golden'; they should speak up whether they know for sure or not sure. Students should communicate in English as much as they can in their classes without paying attention to what others think and how others judge them. Students should have positive thoughts.

Students should create an English environment and participate in such as going to the ESC to practise speaking skills. They should know that communicative skill is very important in studying a language as well as in social life and that it helps students obtain a strong motivation to explore their potential speaking ability. The results of the questionnaires show that 86% of students believe going to the ESC helps them improve their speaking skill (see Table 35). Time at school is limited, only 5-7 hours per week; so, students should spend more time participating in group discussion. They should consider English as a means of the communication; just using it to address their ideas like mother language, not a foreign language. Moreover, every participant is a friend and helps each other. From that, students can build up their confidence in their communication and try to forget the barrier.

Students should use English textbooks in which they have to read and understand in English. When there are words they do not know the meaning of, they should brainstorm to find out the meaning in the text or they should use English-English dictionary. There are some types of dictionaries which are relevant to their levels. Once they keep doing that way, they set up a path in mind, and then they can remember much better and longer.

Students should do exercises in the textbook; the answer key should be only used after all questions are solved. They should think about their learning purpose which is for their future, not for their teacher's check. One teacher of Centre 1 points out that students are rather lazy, they turn up to their classroom without finishing their work with many reasons or they just copy the answers from the answer key. Therefore, they should concentrate on their work seriously themselves, should not just open the answer key and circle the suggested answers without thinking of why and how they are like that.

They should understand that the time they are in the classroom is learning time; they should use English in the classroom to practise their speaking skills. Students should communicate even though what they say might be known by other students or even when they know they will make lots of mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Students should remember that 'to err is human'. They should consider English learning as one of their priorities. They should understand the purpose of going to English classes, and they should be serious in going to English classes. It means that they do not think that English centres have no classroom attendance regulations and that they can stay at home if they do not want to go to English classes. Students should not listen and write down what teachers display on the board without revision at home, and should not go to class with some excuses of being busy with their work, or with other school work or short of time. They should be active and participate in all classroom activities. Moreover, they should be creative and enrich knowledge not only at school but also in social life. They have to spend more time than usual learning English and study anywhere they can.



### 6.3. Expert Panel's Commentary

In this section there is a report of the comments from the Expert Panel. A copy of the draft ideal English language centre outlined in the previous Section 6.2 was sent to a group of Vietnamese experts (earlier mentioned in Section 3.4) for their comments. These experts were requested to complete a short questionnaire about suggested aspects of an 'ideal' English language centre. Four experts responded. This section presents both the discussions of the panelist's comments and suggestions. A summary of these comments is grouped in Table 41 below. The numbers reflect agreement and disagreement of the experts with the various aspects of the researcher's model.

**Table 41: Summary of panel's commentary**

Items	Agree	Neutral / Suggestions	Disagree
a. Students' purposes of learning English	3	0	1
b. Enrollment office	3	0	1
c. Placement tests	4	0	0
d. Teaching design	3	1	0
e. Teaching facilities	2	1	1
f. Teaching materials	2	1	1
g. Recruitment criteria	2	2	0
h. Centre parent contact	1	2	1
i. Relations between students, teachers and manager	1	2	1
j. English Speaking Club	2	2	0
k. Students' employment service	2	1	1
l. Teaching staff	1	2	1
m. Students	1	2	1

While in this section the focus is on the content of the Experts' comments, several important comments relate more to the structure of the model and are addressed in a later section.

### **6.3.1. Students' purposes for learning English**

In regard to students' purposes for learning English, three of the four experts in the panel agreed with the researcher's model. Experts' comments remind us that the number of students learning English in Vietnam, especially in big cities like Ho Chi Minh City, is increasing, and their needs for learning English emphasize the need for communicative language teaching approaches. In addition, Expert 1 focused on differing points of view on teaching English among educators and MOET, officials, and the learners themselves. Although some teachers, educators and MOET officials understand the social requirements and learners' needs as well as understand the teaching methods that can bring benefits to students, they find they are unable to apply them in their teaching and educational situations due to the difficulties outlined earlier in the previous Section 6.2.

Expert 1 stressed that in learning English, "learners rush to English language centres also implies big gaps / weaknesses in the teaching and learning of English at high, middle and senior schools and universities". Although Expert 4 disagreed with this comment, he did not disagree with the researchers' findings. However, Expert 4 did disagree with the researcher's reference to IELTS and the national foreign language certificate grading scales modifications to this point. This point will be noted in the redrafted ideal model. Like the other three panel members, Expert 2 drew attention to the ages of students, pointing out that many are not working but are studying. Further, Expert 2 noted that there are several other requirements in improving employment prospects, not simply English language proficiency.

### **6.3.2. Enrolment office**

Three of the experts agreed that the enrolment office plays one of the most important factors in developing an English language centre. Expert 1 added “as competition among language centres is now very intense, most of the centres in big cities invest a huge amount of money in both interior and exterior decoration to attract learners and their parents’ attention”. Expert 2 suggested that teachers’ photographs be attached to their ages, qualifications and experience so that students and parents have a general idea of which current teaching staff they can trust to study. Expert 3 believed that enrolment officers bring students and their parents’ trust too. However, Expert 4 was not sure about the effectiveness of the enrolment office stating “the enrolment office presents an ideal model of English centre might not be an excellent idea because they may be referring to infrastructure or something”. While all Experts mentioned the importance of the enrollment office as a starting point in building trust, Expert 1 noted the need for their maximum efficiency in ensuring that the centres’ profits are not diminished. Expert 2 pointed out the dilemma of displaying teachers’ photographs, while insisting that students should not be free to choose their teachers, but rather be assigned according to placement test results.

### **6.3.3. Placement Tests**

All four experts expressed the same point of view as the researcher in evaluating placement tests highly. Expert 1 pointed out that nowadays some centres understand the value of placement tests but are not strict about those tests. They “try to please the learners, especially adult learners who just want to bridge some gaps in their English proficiency rather than updating and upgrading their English systematically”. Expert 4 suggested that course placements based simply on proficiency may mean that school students are placed inappropriately and outside their age group.

Expert 2 pointed out that besides end of course tests being conducted at the English language centre itself, there should be some kind of international English language

tests organized for placing students. They implied that the centre could cooperate with a certain international institute in organizing such tests.

#### **6.3.4. Teaching design**

The three experts agreed with the researcher's point of view about teaching design, with Expert 1 confirming that students increase their speaking and listening skills if student-centred approaches are conducted and students have opportunities to negotiate with one another. Expert 1 also pointed out that “many teachers of English do not full understand how communicative approaches can be best applied in actual teaching” and “Vietnamese students ... expect their teachers to teach and guide them as much as possible. They come to the class to learn from the teachers”. Expert 3 suggested that there be an in-depth survey on the current teaching design in order to identify weaknesses and strengths in helping improve English teaching in Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh City. He also suggested collecting statistics on students' learning results under this teaching design.

Expert 4 believed that other methods besides communicative language teaching should be applied in teaching, because students have different purposes for learning English. However, as discussed in the findings of this thesis, students' needs for learning English are the same, with all wanting to learn English for communication in order to meet work and social requirements. Expert 1 also pointed out that students rush to English language centres trying to compensate for weaknesses in teaching and learning English at general education and tertiary levels in Vietnam. Expert 1 highlighted the gap between theory and practice in teaching design, suggesting that both teachers and students state preferences for communicative approaches. This is even when they have limited understandings of such approaches and confronted many practical and cultural barriers to their use. Expert 2 noted a particular difficulty with team teaching, suggesting it is not appropriate in Vietnam; while Expert 3 commented that for teachers and students to feel happy and relaxed in the classroom is not a useful measure of teaching and learning effectiveness. Expert 4 suggested that some students

may be studying English only to pass an exam, and communicative approaches may be less effective where knowledge of grammar is required.

### **6.3.5. Teaching facilities**

Expert 3 argued that the idea of class sizes of 15-20 students is not suitable in Vietnam because the majority of students cannot afford high school fees. Expert 4 was unsure about the need for so many teaching facilities while Dang's recent study found that class size of 20 students contributes positively to EFL teaching and learning (2006, p.602). He also commented on the layout of the draft model saying "class size and pair / group work could have been moved to class organization". However, in regard to class size Experts 1 and 2 agreed with the researcher's conclusion. As Expert 1 explained "it is more ideal to suggest lowering the class size to 17 students or less so that no student is left behind".

All experts seemed to be concerned that "most of the owners of English centres are not teachers! Their profit is always the top of all. So class size is accepted as a mixture of both educational and economic goals". Expert 2 then advised that teaching facilities should be divided into two parts: "classrooms" and "resource centres".

### **6.3.6. Teaching materials**

Experts 1 and 2 agreed with the researcher's point of view regarding teaching materials, while Expert 3 neither agreed nor disagreed and Expert 4 did not agree at all. In particular, the experts were concerned that copyright of materials should be paid attention to as Vietnam is now a WTO member. In addition, Expert 2 suggested that "teaching facilities" be named "syllabus design" which covers issues of both syllabus design and materials' selection.

### **6.3.7. Recruitment criteria**

Experts 1 and 2 agreed with the researcher regarding the recruitment criteria for teachers, while the others did not express agreement or disagreement, agreeing that teachers need to understand and conduct communicative approaches in classrooms to help students achieve communicative goals. Besides, Expert 1 pointed out the weaknesses of running English language classes in the Vietnamese context without TESOL qualification and teaching experience. Expert 2 would like the balance of foreign teachers and local teachers to be explained clearly. The ‘balance’ here can be understood in terms of certain teaching hours (at least one) for foreign teachers in each class at the English language centre. It may not always mean that students receive half their hours with local teachers and half with foreign teachers during their study time.

### **6.3.8. Centre parent contact**

Expert 1 agreed “it is a good practice to have a regular contact or teacher-parent interviews with the purpose of ensuring learners’ progress”, while Expert 4 believed that as a lot of students are adults, there is no need to contact their parents. Expert 2 suggested “center’s communication channels” should instead be built on having two aspects to centre parent contact and relations of students, both with teachers and manager. These channels have the function of bridging the teaching and learning meetings to one point through communication between both the centre and the parents and teachers. Therefore, on this point the researcher has retained the original point of view on contacting students’ parents if they are under 18 years old, with students over 18 years old being informed of their learning progress in the same written form as the student’s report.

### **6.3.9. Relations between students, teachers and manager**

Two experts neither agreed nor disagreed with the researcher regarding the issue of relations between students, teachers and manager, while Expert 1 agreed that the centre

should “establish good relationships with teachers to ensure that they demonstrate their worthy teaching as expected. This is a way to attract more learners to the centre”. In addition, the centre needs to pay attention to the learners’ needs to retain or increase the number of students. Expert 2 also suggested that there be communication channels to collect feedback from students and teachers. The main instigator of these channels is the centre management in charge of all activities, not the teachers or students. In the case of calling for support for teachers or students, “there must be a detailed plan / framework to first hand specify the rights and responsibilities of each party” (Expert 2).

### **6.3.10. English Speaking Club**

Experts 1 and 2 agreed with the researcher regarding organizing an English speaking club at the English language centre. They evaluate its roles highly in helping students to achieve their learning goals of meeting social requirements. Expert 1 stated that this is “...a good way to boost learners’ confidence and maintain their relationship”. The other experts did not show their agreement or disagreement on this issue. However, Expert 4 believed that English speaking clubs are “part of extra curriculum activities”. In addition, Expert 1 advised that on ESC’s activities with the presence of teachers should be part of the contract, so that all students can participate in the activity as scheduled, otherwise they will not be happy to join in: “unless this aspect is included in the contract few will pay for such activities as they are time consuming”.

### **6.3.11. Students’ employment service**

Experts 2 and 4 agreed with the researcher’s point of view on providing employment services at the centre, stating “I do not have much to comment on this part because it is a good idea” and “this sounds like a good recommendation”. Expert 4 also pointed out what kinds of jobs should be introduced, because “not all jobs require English skills” and or “English courses do not provide students with enough skills to be ready for jobs that do”. Expert 1 showed his disagreement on this issue by stating that jobs are

irrelevant to learners because “most learners are still high school and university goers”. On this point the researcher would like to make clear that even though they are university students many have part time weekend jobs which are suitable for students. Furthermore, for those who are still not working, they can see advertised jobs as a motivation to study. Furthermore, Centre 1 revealed that most learners at the centre are not high school or university goers, they had finished year 12 but failed in their university entrance examinations. These people are also ready for work if they can get a job.

### **6.3.12. Teaching staff**

Expert 1 agreed with the researcher regarding teaching staff, while the other three experts did not show either agreement or disagreement. However, they did give some suggestions on this issue. Expert 2 stated that listening and speaking are not the only two skills; students need to have reading and writing in their learning English. In some special courses, learners may need to improve specific skills. He also believed that if teachers establish friendly relationships with their students, they cannot conduct their classroom teaching well. He said the best way is that teachers and students should respect each other. He stressed that the centre is the one to organize excursions for students, not teachers. The reason for this is due to the need to plan for minimisation of risky situations such as accidents on the way. Expert 4 suggested rearranging the outline of the model, stating that the teaching staff and teaching design sections overlapped and should be combined with recruitment section as well. Also, Expert 4 suggested that excursions should go into extra curricular activities.

Like Expert 2, Expert 4 argued that the four skills of English should not be taught separately. Unfortunately, the researcher had not explained this issue clearly enough and should have explained more clearly about how language skill input is enriched by being presented in the order of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the same way a child develops his / her language. The researcher does not agree with Expert 4’s statement, “Adults can read and write long before they can listen and



speak”. However, the researcher can agree with Expert 4 if he meant that adults can read and write in their own language before they can listen and speak in a foreign language like English. Nevertheless the researcher strongly believes that in learning English as a foreign language, teachers should help students develop listening and speaking skills before the other skills so that they can communicate first.

The researcher disagrees with Expert 4’s statement that “CLT is the required approach in high school and things are changing a lot”. This suggests that Expert 4 has ignored the article (Viet Bao, 2007) “Learning English at school is just ... exam” and Do Huy Think’s quote (2005) “Students have complained that learning English at high school is wasting time”. However, the researcher agrees with Expert 4’s point of view that “CLT is the required approaches in high school because it matches with the MOET policy”. Nevertheless this is only as policy that is not strictly applied in practice at schools due to reasons discussed earlier. The researcher agrees that things are changing in CLT in Vietnam, but not enough because the researcher’s observations have suggested that even though these observations were conducted at English language centres which have always believed that students’ communication skills are important, CLT has not been used consistently at any level.

In addition, the reason the researcher has used some references, that do not directly reflect English language teaching and learning at English language centres in Vietnam is that there has been little research on English language centres and all students have been affected by the practices cited, and these have influenced their current attitudes. Therefore, the researcher has drawn on other research about English teaching and learning in Vietnam and elsewhere to build up a foundation for analysis in the context of Vietnamese experiences.

### **6.3.13. Students**

Expert 1 agreed that students should be active and participate in classroom activities, but Expert 4 did not believe in students’ abilities to self-create an English speaking

environment. Here the researcher wishes to clarify that students need to be encouraged to use English in their communication on the campus or elsewhere, or go to an ESC to participate in group discussions in order to provide motivation for improving their speaking skills. In English as in Vietnamese or any other language, there are different levels of using the language, ranging from beginners to advanced. Students absorb relevant language input and can produce it at their own levels. Furthermore, they can learn from listening to others with high levels. Students should not use Vietnamese while they can use English in their classroom activities. They should use English for greetings, asking for a request, offering a request, and exchanging ideas in the classroom or on the campus at least, in accordance with their English language level. By doing this, the researcher believes that students can create their own English speaking environment. Furthermore, students should note that the time for learning English at the centre is short, so they should be active and find out as many as ways of learning this language in social life as much as possible through the internet, music, work, and with friends. Experts 2 and 3 neither agreed nor disagreed on this issue. Lastly Expert 2 suggested rearranging the model layout in which this part to be added to a section “students’ purposes in learning English”, with a new sub-heading.

## **6.4. Summary of chapter**

In Chapter 6, key issues are identified and discussed in relation to current literature relating to teachers, students, teaching materials, and management, in order to draw up a draft model of an ideal language centre. This model focuses on the four prime aspects of purposes of learning English, centre management, teaching staff and students. Consequently, a draft ideal language centre is built up in order to meet students’ needs as well as their social requirements in the context of Vietnam. Furthermore, it also discusses an expert panel’s responses to suggested aspects of this draft ideal language centre. In chapter 7, these comments and suggestions are needed to modify, adjust and redraft the model of an ideal English language centre.

## CHAPTER 7 – MODEL OF AN IDEAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE

Following the compilation of a draft ideal English language centre designed to meet the demands of students in the context of Vietnam, a panel of experts in the field of ELT contributed their responses and valuable suggestions. As a result of this input, the original draft proposal has been modified to create a redrafted model in fulfillment of the aims of this thesis. In this chapter results of the expert panelist's valuable comments and suggestions about the draft ideal English language centre (based on three case studies and a review of relevant literature) have been incorporated to form a “Redrafted ideal English language centre” and discussed below.

The outline of the redrafted model from the draft model in accordance with four experts' valuable advice is summarized in Table 42 below. Whenever an original idea is changed, the researcher mentions the experts' suggestions or comments contributing to this change. Even when indicators show the experts' disagreement however, this does not mean that they disagree with the whole section; they just partly disagree with part of it while agreeing with the rest. Experts' comments have been put into the chart in number form rather than percentages. Overall, the number of experts disagreeing was consistently lower than that of those agreeing with points presented in the original draft.

**Table 42: Redrafting of model**

<b>Draft model</b>	<b>Redrafted model</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. Students' purposes of learning English	1. Reasons and purposes of learning English  - Reasons of learning English  - Purposes of learning English	
2. Centre management - Enrolment office	2. Centre management  - Enrolment	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placement tests</li> <li>- Teaching design</li> <li>- Teaching facilities</li>   <li>- Teaching materials</li> <li>- Recruitment criteria</li> <li>- Centre parent contact</li>   <li>- Relations between students, teachers, and manager</li>   <li>- English speaking club</li> <li>- Students employment service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Registry staff</li> <li>+ Registry office</li> <li>- Placement tests</li> <li>- Teaching design</li> <li>- Teaching facilities</li> <li>+ Class size</li> <li>+ Resources</li> <li>- Teaching materials</li> <li>- Recruitment criteria</li> <li>- Centre's communication channel</li> <li>+ Centre and parents or students</li> <li>+ Students and centre</li> <li>+ Teachers and centre</li> <li>- English speaking club</li> <li>- Students employment service</li> </ul>	
3. Teaching staff	3. Teaching staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The influence of teacher on students</li> <li>- Teacher and students' relationship</li> <li>- Teaching techniques</li> <li>- Extra activities</li> <li>- Testing</li> <li>- Marking</li> </ul>	
4. Students	4. Students	

## **7.1. Reasons and purposes of learning English**

In this redraft of “students’ purposes of learning English” (refer to Table 42 above), the researcher has considered the feedback of the Vietnamese panel of experts and modified the model accordingly.

### **7.1.1. Reasons of learning English**

Since the ‘Open Door’ movement, there has been a changing emphasis on learning and teaching English in Vietnam. As Nguyen and Buckley (2005) pointed out, “Since Viet Nam opened its doors to foreign investors in 1986 and began its reintegration into the world community; English has replaced French and Russian as the dominant foreign language.” Accordingly, Nguyen Minh Hien (2004), former Minister of Education and Training, stressed that “English should be the primary foreign language taught in the national education system”. Nowadays, many students learn English as a compulsory subject, followed by French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and German, with approximately 90% of these studying English (Do Huy Thinh, 2006).

Nguyen Thanh Cong (2007) notes that many people are rushing to language centres to enroll in English classes and language schools are mushrooming, with Do Huy Thinh (2006, p.8) saying “In the past ten years, English has developed with an unprecedented speed”. Furthermore, this speed has continued to grow strongly since Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007, with people increasingly going to English classes at night time. In fact, Thanh Xuan and Tan Thai (2007) describe students and parents queuing to enroll in English classes from 3 am in the morning to avoid disappointment because there were not enough places for all.

This demand is due to students’ belief that there are increasing numbers of foreign companies investing in Vietnam who need cheaper local labor. English is thus becoming the common language used to communicate with foreign investors. Nguyen Thanh Cong (2007) found that it is no longer easy to find a job with only a degree, as graduates also need a foreign language, preferably English. Indeed, achieving a

national certificate of English A, B, or C is not only one of the requirements for undergraduates and postgraduates, but to enhance employment prospects. Here, Vu Thi Phuong Anh (2007) points out that level A is equal to IELTS up to 4.0, level B is equal to IELTS 4.0-5.0, and level C is above 5.0. As Cam Lu (2004), Thuy Ngan (2004) and the reading teacher's interview of Centre 2 (2007) point out, English is a requirement for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to qualify. In addition, Thanh Xuan and Tan Thai (2007) mention that students who achieve national certificates of English at B level will be exempted from a compulsory English university subjects.

Again, for those who are working for state organizations there will be increased income in obtaining a national certificate of a certain language in general, English in particular. As Do Huy Thinh (2006) points out, state organizations view English as one of the elements deciding promotions and pay increases. This indicates that the government is encouraging people to consider English as a necessary factor in their study. Therefore, in such circumstances Vietnamese education officials stress the importance of English as the language of instruction in schools. The Vietnamese government aims to improve English teaching in the next 10 years so that Vietnamese university graduates will be fluent in English, with all general school graduates being able to communicate in the language by 2020 (Nguyen Thien Nhan, 2007). However, as Expert 4 admits, "We Vietnamese also know very well that university graduates get a certificate of B level but they cannot communicate in English".

Many overseas Vietnamese not only invest in Vietnam, but generously support their relatives (VNMedia, 2007), sending an estimated 5.5 billion dollars in 2007 through the official banking system, with 4.7 billion the previous year. This had increased 157 times since 1991, achieving a 37% yearly average growth rate. Through this resource of relatives' hard work and generosity, families have also improved their living conditions. Therefore they have started thinking of investing in their children's education either locally or overseas; some sending their children for further study overseas with a goal of accessing the latest technology. As English language is necessary to study overseas, the need for English language is even more important.

Nguyen and Buckley point out (2005) that “English language centres have been mushrooming around Ho Chi Minh City at a rate of about 100 new centres per year, according to the HCM City Department of Education and Training”. Riding along some streets in big cities there are centres only a few blocks away from each other, advertising in various colorful and attractive ways to compete with each other.

### **7.1.2. Purposes of learning English**

According to data analysis in the three English language centres, students are preparing for their future, with 86% of them jobless (see Table 32). They believe they can have a better life if they enrich their knowledge of English. As Expert 1 confirmed “English is the passport to a good job and stable life”. It is clear that the purposes of their learning English (see Table 33) are getting a good job, with 88% agreeing and strongly agreeing. As students, they also need to meet their university requirements, with 37% agreeing and strongly agreeing. Students believe that English can help them at work in both local government organizations and organizations which are partly or whole foreign capital, with 55% agreeing and strongly agreeing. Moreover, “the need for overseas study is increasing in Vietnam. Statistics revealed by some companies supplying overseas study services also indicate the increase of overseas students year by year” (<http://chao-vietnam.blogspot.com>). Many Vietnamese people dream of having a chance to go overseas not only for further study, with 43% of students agreeing and strongly agreeing, they also go for travel and possible emigration, which can be seen in 8% agreeing and strongly agreeing. So, in studying English, meeting the present requirements is the learners’ short term goal, getting a good job is the long term goal.

In addition, data collected from teachers and managers’ interviews shows that teachers and managers do understand their students’ purposes of learning English. Most students of English centres are also mainstream students of other schools, with 83% under 25 years old and 86% jobless, according to the questionnaires distributed to students of the three centres (see Tables 31 & 32). These students are not only learning

English for their current and future use, they are also supplementing the English language teaching of their mainstream schools.

Vietnamese people realize the importance of English language as one of the main keys to open doors in order to mingle with the world outside and support their jobs. As Expert 1 confirmed, “most language centers in HCMC attract people wishing to improve their ability to use English at work. So, it is true that these learners are the majority”.

## **7.2. Centre management**

As shown in Table 42, following discussion about an ideal English language centre in the context of Vietnam, some additions and modifications have been made in recommendations for centre management.

### **7.2.1. Registry staff**

In order to have well informed registry staff, they need to undertake a special course in customer services. They also need to understand the curriculum, syllabus of each class in order to provide all information to potential students. In addition they need to be of clean and neat appearance in order to attract customers. Registry staff need to have a good command of English, consultancy skills, and understanding of clients. This is because the registry not only does the enrolment but also provides students and their parents with full information before they first enroll in any courses at the centre. As Expert 3 pointed out, “Enrolment officers should show their ability to give good advice. My belief is that this professionalism helps create trust among clients.”

### **7.2.2. Registry office**

As three experts agreed that the registry office plays one of the most important factors in developing an English language centre, this office should be located in a place which is easy to contact. The atmosphere at the registry office should be spacious, not crowded, and ideally there should be some slogans displayed to encourage students to



use English. Moreover, copies of the curriculum of the centre should be available in this office. Photographs of the teaching staff should be displayed with their qualifications, experience and major subjects, as Expert 2 suggested that in this way customers can have a general ideal of the teaching staff at the centre. The staff board helps learners and their parents have a belief in the centre so they can feel more comfortable in getting involved with the centre. Furthermore, at busy times there should be enough official registrars to smoothly conduct the job. In general, the registry office should be decorated formally, because it acts as the face of the centre, with students and parents having their first impression as they enter. As Expert 1 added, “competition among language centres is now very intense and most of the centres in big cities invest a huge amount of money in both interior and exterior decoration to attract learners and their parents’ attention. This is a way to prove that these centres are doing well.”

There also should be some slogans around the walls of the building which encourage students to use English, help them to know how to study English effectively, and even offer some practical expressions or idioms for use in daily life. If students see them every day, they will make a deep impression and students will be able to use them in daily life themselves.

### **7.2.3. Placement tests**

Placement tests are one of the most important elements for evaluating students’ levels of English. They should be considered seriously in determining entry levels as all four experts agree with the researcher. Vu Thi Phuong Anh (2007) pointed out that unclear classification in the results of entrance examinations affects the quality of teaching and places students in the wrong class which then affects their learning badly. All students need to be given a placement test to assess their language level, followed by an interview to discuss their needs and interests. Only then are students strictly placed in classes that match their language levels and needs. As Expert 1 commented some centres understand the value of placement tests but they “try to please the learners, especially adult learners who just want to bridge some gaps in their English proficiency

rather than update and upgrade their English systematically”. Students’ results should be stored and released to the teachers so that they will have a general picture of the students’ proficiency and which skills they need to enrich. Students also need to be aware that there are the end-of-course tests that are compared with of the placement test results to establish student progress. As Expert 2 added, “The comparison between placements test results and end-of-course test results seems to be worth considering”. Therefore, both the manager and teachers need to understand the value of placement tests, and conduct them properly to attain full value in meeting students’ needs and ensuring that the teaching and learning of English is successful.

The placement test should be designed according to the same structure as the end of course test in which there are the four micro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This should be held early in each course in order to put students in their relevant levels of English. As Expert 3 confirmed, “I strongly agree that placement tests are important and should be taken by prospective students. The results of these tests should be used as evidence and / or a basis for their advice in addition to placing them in the right course”. Students should not have a choice of the teacher taking charge of their tuition, because they have specific subjects to conduct. The centre manager or person in charge is the person who understands the way the timetable is organized.

#### **7.2.4. Teaching design**

The centre manager needs to make sure that all teachers are aware of the existing teaching policies of the centre. As established earlier, teachers should be encouraged to use student-centered approaches which help students have opportunities to practise and to develop the English skills they require. Managers should also organize team teaching to coordinate classroom delivery with two teachers working together with a single group of students as Centre 1 and Centre 3. According to Quinn and Kanter (1984), team teaching is "simply team work between two qualified instructors who together make presentations to an audience." Thus every class has at least two teachers, each covering different parts of the curriculum and using either the same or different

materials. The ideal centre needs to incorporate team teaching to not only help students in their communicative skills, but also expose them to different voices. Thus students will feel excited and interested in attending English classes. As teachers will be more efficient, students will experience laziness and sleepiness less frequently. Teachers will be more relaxed and students more happy, gaining maximum achievement in their jobs of teaching and learning. As Thomas, MacLean and Greer (1997) point out, the benefits of team teaching reduce isolation, provide teachers with more confidence and assurance, help teachers to assess the climate of the classroom as well as students' attitudes and emotions, and assist students' intellectual capacities. Importantly it also helps students to experience first hand a live model of collaboration, currently a 'hot topic' in business and other industries.

From the analysis, it is true that teachers need to use English to explain every single issue in the classroom so that students have a chance to learn in an English environment and develop their communicative skills easily. According to Arnold and Fonseca (2007, pp.117-118) teachers of EFL / ESL classes use the target language in classroom communication for both classroom management and pedagogical interventions. In addition, the target language used in classrooms also helps students use language in authentic or semi- authentic ways to interact with others. Although the teachers need to follow the teaching materials supplied by their centre, they also need to be encouraged to create extra more interesting teaching materials that attract students' interest. As one of the two teachers at Centre 3 revealed, thanks to his information technology ability, he can make extra programs that help keep students on track. In addition, it is generally considered (Brown, 2007b, p.188; Lingley, 2006, pp.124-125; Richards, 2001) that teaching materials should be developed or adapted in order to meet the particular needs of specific groups of students. Teachers should make sure that working in pairs / groups and discussing presented topics help students improve their command of English. Therefore, they should create more opportunities discussion and student presentations in front of the class.

Again, centre managers need to strongly urge teachers to use communicative approaches in teaching. Teachers should not be allowed to use traditional ways of

teaching such as the grammar translation method. Student-centred approaches should always be applied to help students succeed in their goals. When classrooms are equipped with movable tables, teachers can easily set up group work or pair work activities, as 79% of students expect to work in small groups (see Table 34). In the case of running English centres that have ready set up classrooms with long and fitted tables as in general education schools, teachers need to at least help students develop the habit of changing partners every session to make sure that they are not stuck with the same person continually. In this way, students can do pair work activities at least, as 68% of students expect to work in pairs (see Table 34) and 81% expect to talk to other students (see Table 37).

Each teacher has to cover certain skills depending on their allotted major. After each lesson, the teacher needs to fill in the follow-up record in the teachers' log book so that the teacher of the following session can decide how to continue.

### **7.2.5. Teaching facilities**

In this section, teaching facilities have been divided into subsections to include class size, resources and teaching materials.

#### **7.2.5.1. Class size**

In regard to class size, the number of students in each class should not exceed twenty students to allow more time for them to be taken care of and to practise. As Experts 1 and 2 agreed with this, with Expert 1 adding, "It is more ideal to suggest lowering the class size to seventeen students or less so no students are left behind". In paying attention to students' study progress, class size is a very important element affecting the quality of teaching and learning. As observation data showed, students at Centre 3 which has a policy of not more than twenty students in each class, performed English language communication better than the other centres. Large classes lead to impersonal relationships between teachers and students, limit the range of instructional activities, cause management problems, and create a lot of difficulties in controlling the students'

learning situations and applying the communicative methods so highly valued in teaching nowadays.

Bailey and Nunan (1996) stated that a class of 29 or more is too many, as not only does the number of students affect the quality of teaching, but it affects the intake of knowledge by the students. For instance, when there are too many students in a class; teachers do not have enough time to contact them individually or correct their specific mistakes. In addition, Blatchford (2003) found that in large classes there were more distractions and tendencies for students to be off-task while doing their work. Shannon (2005) concludes that it is very difficult to teach large classes because students have different abilities, styles and preferences. However, when large classes are unavoidable (as often occurs in Vietnam), one way to solve the problem is to break students down into small groups, while teachers move around the classroom and monitor their progress. Ideally however, class sizes should be set at twenty students maximum so that teachers have time to help each student and understand which skills each one needs to improve.

The following section is little different from the section sent to the panel of experts (see pp.173-174). This is because no specific changes were recommended to be made to this section. Opinions on ideal English class size were shared between a group of teachers in a 2006 online exchange. Their responses to the question “Is there an ideal class size for teaching English abroad?” are, for example, “In my experience in the classroom, I find that about 10-12 students is great” (Teacher 1), “In my experience, when it comes to language classes, the smaller the better. Each student needs the opportunity to participate personally as much as possible” (Teacher 2), “I have found that smaller groups of children and adults. Adults really have a hard time learning new things, so the smaller groups really help them too” (Teacher 3), and “In my experience, teaching in India where classes are packed with students between 35-50 students per class is really not desirable as it’s not possible to have control over such large number of students” (Teacher 4) (Group of teachers, 2006).

According to the homepage of Brisbane North Institute of TAFE (2008), “general English classes focus on enabling students to use English effectively as a means of international communication”. It advertised that teachers are all qualified and experienced to provide practical and effective learning. Classes are small averaging 15 students. To better address learning needs, lower level classes are smaller. It provides individual learning plans, understanding that all students learn differently. Students participate in small groups to practise conversational fluency and various electives suit individual learning goals. Furthermore, in accordance with the suggested ideal English language centre of this study, this TAFE school provides both real life learning combined with traditional approaches to provide ‘well-rounded’ learning experiences.

Molnar (1999, p.48) lists six reasons that smaller classes have a positive effect on achievements as follows: (1) children receive more individualized instruction: one-on-one help, small group help, class participation; (2) Children misbehave less because of the family atmosphere and quick intervention by teachers; (3) Teachers spend more time on direct instruction and less on classroom management; (4) Classes include more ‘hands-on’ activities, though most instruction remains teacher - not student-centered; (5) Students become more actively engaged in learning than do peers in large classes; and (6) Teachers of small classes ‘burn out’ less often.

In addition, it should be noted that Cambridge University which is one of the strongest institutions in the world helping students to prepare for the internationally accredited First Certificate in English examination (FCE) and Certificate in Advanced English examination (CAE), limits their classes to a maximum of twelve students.

#### **7.2.5.2. Resources**

In order to provide maximum advantages to its students, the ideal English language centre should also provide internet connections, computers, printers, CDs and cassette players in a teachers’ room in which they can prepare their lessons and access quality teaching materials. Teachers are also encouraged to create more teaching materials which they believe can motivate students and provide opportunities to work with

computers assigned to develop all four macro skills and practise their pronunciation with pictures illustrated. Therefore, the ideal centre should have a library for students to study, read books and access internet for their learning purposes. Here they can borrow books to take home and enrich their English knowledge. At least students should have a chance to access such programs at a library or Independent Learning Centre (ILC) during their extra learning hours. In this way students should be encouraged to access the internet to look for information websites to complete assigned projects and use the internet to connect to the world outside. In this way students can access a worldwide English environment even though they have limited access in their daily life activities.

In the current economic market and information and technology era, classrooms need to be equipped with learning facilities such as computers, cassette players, DVD/ VCR players and data shows in accordance with the preferences of 77% of students (see Table 37). From these, students have a chance to improve their English with situations in real life while familiarizing them with new technology. Thus they will enjoy attending English classes help them in real, practical ways that motivate both students and teachers. As the prices of these facilities are not as great as they were in the past, it is important that the centre install them to support students and teachers in a practical way. If possible, the centre should also install language laboratories with computers connected to the internet so that students can enrich their English online.

In installing the best available English learning programs, students can easily improve all four macro skills. A good example of such facilities is used by the Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES), Australia's leading provider of English to migrants. Over the years this service has expanded and now works locally, nationally and internationally to deliver English to individuals, community groups and business clients (AMES, 2008). For example, one AMES centre in St. Albans has two computer rooms equipped with various language learning programs including 'Alphabet International', 'Interactive Picture Dictionary', 'That's life', 'Call Story', 'Workwords', and 'That's work'. Each student is given the chance to study with a computer for at least one hour per week to practise English in real life situations. Furthermore, each

classroom has an ‘interactive whiteboard’ to assist both students and teachers to work together. All computer learning programs are accessible to students, with teachers accessing and illustrating English, and pronunciation exercises. More practically, students can touch, move, and match activities via their interactive whiteboard. Importantly, the excellent quality of both teaching and facilities is attracting more and more students due to extensive word of mouth advertising.

#### **7.2.6. Teaching materials**

As relevant teaching materials play an important role in motivating students to learn, the ideal centre should provide English textbooks and not allow bilingual texts. Only English versions should be used so that students have to brainstorm and try their best to remember what they read. As Expert 1 added, “bilingual textbooks are not encouraged in terms of teaching and learning English here in Vietnam”. As one of the two teachers at Centre 2 complained, students using bilingual textbooks always read the meanings of the reading text in their language and do not pay attention to their teachers’ explanation. This causes students to become passive and inattentive. As students pay more attention when teaching materials are interesting and relevant to their interests, Tomlinson (2008) recommends that “... materials for learners at all levels must provide exposure to authentic use of English through spoken and written texts with the potential to engage the learners cognitively and affectively” (p.3). He points out that “helping learners to notice features of the authentic language they are exposed to can facilitate and accelerate language acquisition” (p.4) and “helping learners to participate in meaningful communication in which they are using language to achieve intended outcomes is essential for the development of communicative competence” (p.5). In order to provide suitable materials to assist in this, teachers may choose to compile some practical booklets to suit different levels of English competence so that students do not have to spend money buying expensive text books outside. Instead, they can prepare properly cited booklets which include selected lessons available for sale from the centre’s administration.



In order to provide suitable teaching materials, the centre will need an academic group that specializes in selecting teaching materials. As Expert 1 agrees, “If well-trained and experienced teachers are well-paid for such a job, I think they are able to do it”. All books compiled at the centre need to be correctly cited to meet international copy right laws, with relevant extracts put together according to the students’ levels in accordance with the curriculum and themes set up for the teaching term. At lower levels the books need to include lessons that contain more conversations and short stories which have a practical focus that can be applied to real life situations. If the centre has teaching staff that includes native English speakers, their knowledge of English may mean that they can specialize in writing new textbooks about authentic situations and contexts suiting the culture of Vietnam, “...adapting every lesson toward more relevant contexts of Vietnamese life” (Bao Dat, 2007, P.216) while following good principles in designing effective teaching materials in accordance with Crawford (2002, pp.84-87), Savignon (2002), Cunningsworth (1995, p.7), and Scarcella and Oxford (1992). This would then satisfy the needs of students who expressed that topics they study should be related to their daily life, present society, job opportunities, techniques of learning English and economic environment. As Kilickaya (2004) concludes, “authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom”. So, when such materials are available, students are enabled to improve their English more quickly.

As earlier mentioned, more students have a purpose of getting a good job in future than for other reasons. Since Vietnam joined WTO in 2007, the number of foreign companies investing in Vietnam has continued to increase, leading to more employers needing local labor resources. Students in particular have good chances of gaining work for these foreign companies, especially if they can communicate in the international language of English. However, even when employees can communicate in work exchange, they may find difficulties in understanding the culture of the recently arrived company. Therefore, employees can receive more benefits if they also understand their employers’ cultural values. For this reason, text-book designers should

present the differing cultural values that may arise in the workplace by including these intercultural factors into workplace settings in Vietnam so that students will have the advantage of interpreting behavioral differences and expectations correctly.

In supporting communicative approaches, a variety of teaching materials should be used, especially those that are text-based or textbooks. As Razmjoo (2007, p.127) notes, “textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions-public schools, colleges and language schools-all over the world”. According to Brown (1994, pp. 67-68), communicative language teaching textbooks need to follow a notional functional syllabus with each unit designed in the structure of work dialogues, conversation practices with classmates, role plays, multiple choice exercises on functional conversations, single sided dialogues, discussion activities, and community practices. According to Hedge (2000, p.36), the role of textbooks which offer grammatical and functional frameworks that provide for the common needs of the learners, allow learners to make preparation for lessons in advance which is matching with a point that students preferred to do homework with 80% agree and strongly agree (see Table 38), and support a creative spinning off in the classroom into various interesting activities.

### **7.2.7. Recruitment criteria**

The first priority in teacher recruitment is qualifications; teachers should hold at least a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English for local teachers, and at least a diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) for foreign teachers. Expert 1 advised that foreign teachers should have both teaching experience and an understanding of Vietnamese culture to support their resume. Recruitment criteria should first of all include that teachers have a strong practical knowledge of communicative teaching practice. Expert 2 suggests that “this can be done by having teacher candidates conduct a demonstration class”. The ideal centre should also consider the policy of employing ongoing contract teachers who act as senior teachers who contribute their time and career to the centre. The manager of the Centre 1 explained that there is a high level of competition among centres offering high salaries

to attract qualified teachers, therefore good teachers should be paid suitable salaries which they can rely on when they devote themselves to a teaching career at a particular centre. Centres also need to make sure that there is a certain number of foreign teachers who not only help students to directly experience English native speakers, but also help establish a strong belief that teaching at these centres provides the best options.

### **7.2.8. Centre's communication channel**

In this section, the communication channel available in an ideal English language centre need to include: the centre and parents or students; the students and the centre; the teachers and the centre; an English speaking club; and a students' employment service.

#### **7.2.8.1. Centre and parents or students**

The ideal English language centre needs to build communication channels with students or parents of students under eighteen so that they can be informed about their learning progress and the latest news. This kind of channel can motivate students to study better; they can find out what they have already achieved and understand what they need to focus on in future. With students under eighteen, teacher parent interviews could be conducted periodically each term of the course. These channels can also encourage students to attend classes regularly, even when they are tired at the end of a hard working day. Administrative staff also need to receive class rolls from teachers every day so they can contact parents of those who are under eighteen, and remind students who are eighteen or over if they are absent from class more than three times. Doing this will show both parents and students that the centre is being responsible not only in their teaching, but also in their expectations of students' participation. Lists of students' telephone numbers should be updated regularly to ensure they can be contacted if necessary.

#### **7.2.8.2. Students and centre**

Feedback from students to the centre is another element that cannot be omitted in running an English centre effectively. Centres need to give students' demands priority, as Expert 1 explains, "most centres give attention to their learners' needs". About two weeks before each course ends, students should receive a survey form to provide their feedback. This survey should include questions mainly related to teaching materials, teaching staff and classroom organization. This data is then analyzed to draw up on students' needs and requirements as well as opinions for further improvement of class delivery. Expert 1 agrees "it is a good practice to have a regular contact or teacher-parent interviews with a view to ensure the learners' progress."

#### **7.2.8.3. Teachers and centre**

The manager of an ideal English language centre should always establish a good relationship with teachers, providing regular workshops at the end of each course in which teachers can share their experiences and teaching methods with each other as Centre 1. They can raise any issues that they think can be adjusted to improve any aspect relating to students, teachers and the centre. Teachers are the people who are closest to students so they understand students more than the manager and know what students demand. Therefore, teachers can discuss updated information such as new books or teaching materials available in the market with managers. Data collected from the students' survey could then be compared with the teachers' feedback and discussed at the workshops. One thing the manager should keep in mind is that the centre is run on the foundation of its teaching staff and students. After the regular workshops, teachers should then receive feedback on decisions made prior to the beginning of the new course following. In this way, the centre has communication channels that match the students' demands, the centre's aims and the teachers' goals of excellence in teaching. As Expert 2 said, "the centre is the bridge that makes the teaching and learning meet at one point".

Another aim of regular workshops is for managers to identify targets for training sessions that assist in ensuring that the teaching policies of the centre are followed correctly. Moreover, the manager can clarify that teachers are allowed flexibility in their choice of materials, and extract relevant resources to replace ones that students do not like, as long as both students and teachers get involved in classroom activities. To be sure these contributions are effective, the centre should consider consulting the ongoing teachers to be involved in reshaping existing and developing new approaches in the centre. Again, these teachers need remuneration that ensures they do not think of doing extra jobs elsewhere to complement their income and have enough time to devote themselves to this work.

### **7.2.9. English Speaking Club**

For an English speaking club (ESC), the centre should organize a common place for students to at least come and practise as 86% of students believe that this is a useful way to improve their communication skills (see Table 35).

Ideally the centre should assign a member of teaching staff to take charge of the ESC as part of their job. As Expert 1 argued, “unless this aspect is included in the contract, few teachers are willing to take this responsibility as they are not paid for such activities and it is time-consuming.” This coordinator could invite some willing and able students to co-operate in setting up the group, and to get feedback from students about how the club will work as well as topics for each week’s discussion. With an ESC students can feel excited to see the effectiveness of using real life English, which motivates them to study harder to get good results. Furthermore, students can develop strong relationships in the club and support each other in their learning. As Expert 1 added, “It is seen as a good way to boost the learners’ confidence and a way to maintain their relationships.” In addition, the centre could sometimes organize cultural exchanges so that students have the chance to use English with new friends or foreign invited speakers who come to present issues that include current life in their home countries.

The topics of the ESC should be related to themes which are currently being taught at the centre so that students can practise what they study. Transcripts of these topics could be sold to participants prior to the discussion, and the profits could be used for club expenses. The club should also carry the function of organizing fieldtrips for participants, in agreement with 69% of students who agreed that it would be useful to practise English on excursions (see Table 35). Participants could become regular members of the ESC by joining and paying in advance for the entire course of topics, and receive a 15% discount. In addition, in order to have enough topics, the ESC teaching staff could be invited to write about topics of their choice, focusing on the themes in the curriculum or otherwise. In this way, the ESC can establish a topic bank. Furthermore, the ESC needs to conduct occasional surveys to collect members' opinions on how to improve the ESC so sessions become so popular that one cannot be absent, even though they take place on weekends. The centre should also consider providing refreshments after the presentations so that the topics can be discussed further. As Expert 2 said, 'it is a good idea'.

#### **7.2.10. Students' employment service**

As many students are learning English with a view to future employment, the ideal centre should organize a student service where students can be introduced to some jobs including casual, part time, and even full time, depending on their need and English level. The service staff would be required to search for jobs which are advertised or make connection with local employment providers, and publicize them to all students. This would have benefits for both employers and employees, with companies finding employees as they need and not having to pay commission through agencies. If the centre can introduce students to work, students could come to study with a very clear purpose of learning English in an expanding economic era. Moreover, the student service could set up a job service network containing a list of students who require certain jobs while still enriching their English. The network would collect students' information including their skills, experiences, and education to help them create their own resumes ready to be released to the job providers. This would not only push

students to have increased motivation to study, but the centre would gain a good reputation only for teaching quality, but also for introducing jobs to students.

### **7.3. Teaching staff**

In the previous section, the researcher discussed the features of successful central management in terms of running language centres in general, and an ideal English language centre in particular. In this section however, the researcher focuses on the teaching staff, looking at the influence of teachers on students, teachers and students' relationships, as well as teaching techniques, testing, marking and extra activities.

#### **7.3.1. The influence of teachers on students**

As discussed earlier, teachers need to use English to explain their lessons and communicate with students. They also need to use English both inside the building and on the campus, as 56% of students surveyed considered that it is useful to practise English on campus, and 59% preferred teachers to use only English. While teachers can use the mother tongue to clarify meanings when students do not understand, 78% of students surveyed prefer teachers to use English more than Vietnamese (see Table 36). However, Bao Dat (2007) concluded that when teachers use their mother tongue to provide instructions, the process of generating target language input is negatively affected.

A part from having the ability to use appropriate teaching teachers also need to have a good personality, methodologies however, this is because learning a language is imitating whatever teachers or native language speakers say and do. Indeed, the way teachers behave in the classroom has a certain influence on the students as “a common phenomenon in communicative interaction between parent and very young child is recasting of some of the child's utterances by the parent(s)” (Tomlinson, 2007, p.141). The way of acting and speaking of teachers both in and outside the classroom can affect their students, as learning a language is also learning its cultural norms. In addition, Tomlinson (2007) believes that teacher recasting of learners' utterances may

help learners benefit most if they pay attention to both meaningful content and linguistic form. He points out that teachers recasting with well formed and appropriate utterances helps learners to communicate more effectively and appropriately. Students can imitate the models presented by teachers after meaning focused activities, and the number of models can be reduced after that.

### **7.3.2. Teacher student relationships**

Teachers should build up a good relationship with students in order to minimize the gap between teachers and students. Dornyei and Murphey (2003) note that a teacher knowing a student's name, and the student knowing that the teacher knows it, is extremely important for that student's constructed identity in that class. Teachers and students should consider each other as friends, putting themselves in their students' positions while teaching. As a good relationship with students can also build up their interest in learning, teachers need to do everything to build up an interesting and motivating atmosphere while paying attention to students' needs and assisting them as Dang's recent study found similar result (2006). Arnold and Fonseca (2007, p.111) also point out that when teachers give students constructive feedback on their work, either in written or oral form, the students feel that their teachers know and understand them. In addition, when teachers praise students' work and listen to them, they can be more flexible to adjust what they are going to teach in accordance with students' needs. Moreover, teachers should treat all students the same, and be willing to help them. As Kelly et al. (1995) add that an empathic relationship between teachers and students can also be built by having conversations with students before the class begins. This helps students feel relaxed, about going to class and happy to get involved in all activities Nunan (1988).

Teachers need to be clear about the purposes of students' learning English and shape their teaching methods accordingly. For example, teachers need to continually mention the importance of English, because even students who are attending English classes have some incentives, they may be unsure of how important English is to their future.



Therefore, teachers should transfer all updated or essential information about the importance of communicative English language learning to their students.

### **7.3.3. Teaching techniques**

Teachers at an ideal English language centre need to understand that the term “communicative approach” does not stop at the stage of using English in class. As the reading teacher at Centre 1 explained “I have to use English all the time”, thinking that this was all it required. However, Littlewood et al. (1996) points out that if teachers talk too much in class time, students lose their opportunities to improve their communication skills. Therefore, teachers should create English environments in which students use four macro skills. Teachers of course use English in class, but they also make sure that students use English to contribute to the activities. As Lewis (2002, p.47) points out, teachers have to “manage students and the environment to make the most of opportunities for learning and practising the target language”. Students should share ideas in pairs / groups and understand the situations in English contexts without converting from Vietnamese into English. Therefore, teachers should create natural English settings which are embedded in students’ minds, so that they can produce English naturally.

Students’ questionnaires revealed that teachers should have the role of providing students with knowledge around an issue under discussion as well as any new vocabularies prior to any activities to ensure that students have enough knowledge to absorb the lesson content. Here, Green et al. (2002) recommend that teachers pre-teach vocabulary related to topics students are going to study, through brainstorming and mind mapping. By doing this, students are able to fully participate and express their ideas in discussion. Therefore, in making sure everyone joins in the discussion, teachers should give students time to practise orally and discuss before reading or writing in accordance with the preferences of 81% of students. On the other hand only 14% of students agreed that copying from the board was valuable. However, even though a few students may not always like it, students benefit when forced to use English in class. Bao Dat (2007) found that following the use of communicative

teaching, 73.75 % of students improved their oral communication. They were able to speak without fear of making mistakes. They also believed that communicative teaching methods stimulate them to participate in classroom discussion and create good interactions and relationships between them.

The provision of homework for students that is corrected by the teacher the following day is in accordance with 41% strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing (see Table 38) that homework is beneficial. Teachers can let students correct mistakes in pairs or groups so that they can talk and compare their answers. Finally, teachers should check which answers are appropriate, in accordance with 88% of students who agreed that they prefer their work to be corrected by the teacher (see Table 39).

Before giving students topics to discuss, it is useful for teachers to brainstorm them for vocabulary and general discussion. As Bao Dat (2007) pointed out, it is good practice to invite students to write down topics they have knowledge of as well as related words to express their ideas. From there, teachers can provide them with more vocabulary to enrich class discussions. Teachers can record what students discuss or debate and play back selected parts to all students. As a lesson for the next day, teachers could spend time correcting any mistakes recorded.

At the start of the class, teachers make sure that students attend classes by marking the roll delivered from the administration office. Before students begin the lesson, teachers should spend time going over what they have studied the previous day including spelling, dictation, raising questions and receiving answers. Furthermore, they should regularly set up pair work at least and preferably group work for students to discuss and share their opinions. Teachers should also be able to create extra activities and tasks in place of lessons that students do not like to study provided they are relevant to their level. In addition, teachers should not worry too much about covering all materials assigned, but more about students' understanding what they have learnt. Teachers should design the lesson plan based on the level of the majority of the students in class and be flexible in covering the important parts of the session if there is not enough time as mentioned in Section 7.2.8.3.

According to students' surveys, students at most centres are also students of mainstream schools while some are working and attending English classes after they finish their study or work. Therefore, they come to English class somewhat tired and unable to concentrate. Even if they have high motivation, their capacity may be limited. Teachers should understand this issue and conduct their lessons in a manner that is visually appealing and able to be understood. Thus, lessons should include pictures and visual clues, and teachers should create a happy atmosphere for all students in the classroom.

In teaching English, listening, speaking, reading and writing need to be taught in this order. Listening and speaking skills need to be developed first so that students can keep on track with mastering all aspects of the language in a natural order. Here, students might be embarrassed and uncomfortable, but later they will become confident and improve their skills faster. Teachers need to focus on listening and speaking skills more than the other language skills as occur in the language development of children who see and understand what is said before they learn to speak. They only later develop the ability to master the written language and read (Tomlinson, 2007, p.2). Indeed, a child spends months listening alone, observing thousands of activities before he utters a single word, then a phrase. Finally, after being helped, encouraged and imitated thousands of times, he can build up a simple sentence. Then he keeps on imitating, speaking for years before he can go to school to practise reading and writing. There he also takes time to improve the new skills. When teachers understand this pattern, they do not expect students to learn English as a second language by starting with reading and writing as occurred in the past.

Teachers have to make sure which teaching methods can be applied to particular situations most effectively. They need to use teaching aids, videos, DVD players and cassette players in order to illustrate what they are teaching. They should also develop the skill of drawing to quickly picture new words that are hard to understand. In this way teachers are not only actors, but artists as well. Teachers in the ideal English language centre never use grammar translation methods as these cannot help students develop skills they need and society requires. Therefore, all teachers should cease

using traditional grammar translation teaching approaches and focus on enabling conversations which consist of real life situations. This is in accordance with students' expectations in which 91% expect to be assessed in real life situations (see Table 40).

In teaching reading, teachers should provide students with reading strategies rather than paying attention to vocabulary and grammar structures in the way that one of the two teachers at Centre 1 conducted his reading session. Teachers should focus on not only skimming and scanning, but also on teaching students strategies requiring them to guess, infer, and exploit knowledge to develop fluency. Students who are equipped with these strategies become more confident in their reading skills.

In applying student-centered methods in reading classes other English skills are combined with the reading skill. In addition, a wide variety of activities will make reading sessions more comprehensible and enjoyable. Therefore, teachers should give students a range of opportunities to practise using reading strategies, and then discuss it in groups or pairs in order to develop their communication skills. Here teachers should be flexible in covering the important parts of the session if there is not enough time. In addition, teachers should give students homework to do outside the classroom, and more importantly, check their reading comprehension through setting up activities in which students present the controlling idea of the text.

As some teachers are not sure about communicative approaches, they are inclined to cling to grammar-translation approaches in which they can satisfy requirements and help students achieve end of term exam results. Consequently, many students are confused with which way can best help them achieve their goals. However, these students are not able to participate in activities, such as speaking in front of people. In addition, their listening is weak because they have not had the opportunity of being in an English environment. Instead, even though it is difficult at first, teachers should help them build up a new path to help them achieve their goal. These teachers should not think that their students are passive and lazy because they do not use English in communication or participate in activities due to not having enough language and ideas to respond (Green et al., 2002). Instead, teachers should create opportunities for

students to discuss and share ideas before providing answers (Jacob & Hall, 2002, pp. 52-53). Furthermore, teachers who control most of the class time and explain every single point leaving no chance for students to brainstorm, search, discuss and exchange ideas in pairs / groups. If teachers are concerned about their students' goals and social requirements as a potential human resource, they should feed them with English language all the time so that they can master the language. As students have showed in the various answers recorded throughout this thesis, they prefer a learning approach that can enable them to communicate.

#### **7.3.4. Extra activities**

In regard to extra activities at an ideal English language centre, teachers can sometimes organize excursions individually, or they can request that the manager organize it after the students have studied a certain theme. Of those surveyed, 69% of students want to practise English on an excursion (see Table 35).

Teachers should also let students conduct projects according to their levels, calling on students' co-operation in conducting some minor projects relating to the centre's development. The centre should support these activities and the teachers should call for students to participate in collecting data for the projects. This can include finding information, putting it together, drafting and writing a report, and finally presenting the project to the whole class. Doing a project is very practical and helps students develop skills and become confident in their work in future. Moreover, it helps students who go overseas to study, because doing projects is a very common practice in overseas study.

In cases where teachers do not know the answer to students' questions, they should use the opportunity to direct students to resources where they can find information and at least work along with the students to find out the answers. These answers should then be presented to the whole group. If answers cannot be found, they should not be afraid of being losing face. Instead, teachers should suggest further materials or information websites for students to search themselves. By doing this, students and teachers can form a good relationship in which students consider teachers their friends and feel

comfortable to share what they expect to know with their teachers. Again, when teachers try to build up a collegial relationship with students, both teachers and students are free to develop their skills. The following example illustrates this point. When a normally talkative boy becomes speechless with a girl he has just noticed, this means that he is paying too much attention to the girl and what he wants to get from the girl. This creates a gap between him and her, so is not a normal friendship. In this situation his natural talents are stifled. However, if he simply treats her as an equal friend, both are able to communicate effectively.

### **7.3.5. Testing**

As the national testing systems in Vietnam only test written structures, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) also needs to consider the current policy of English testing in order to design more effective curriculum content. They need to construct test papers that focus on listening and speaking skills more than reading and writing skills to match with students' needs and social requirements. Their purpose of testing English is set out clearly as testing English for real life or daily work. Therefore, the MOET needs to seriously consider that the purposes of learning English in our current society are for people to use English in blue and white collar work. However, this is also only one reason people need to learn English; they may just want to enrich their skills in speaking and listening rather than in reading and writing so that they can access the outside world. Therefore, the structure of the national English language certificate levels A, B, C should be refocused to assess speaking and listening skills as well as reading and writing. Furthermore, ABC tests should be consistent with national English language certificate levels being organized systematically. Exam papers should be the same in structures and levels throughout the country and organized at certain scheduled times. With every centre having the authority to organize exams at different times, there are currently examples where students have failed in their examinations at one centre and passed at another a day or so later. If there is a new policy in testing criteria which requires communicative competence higher than reading and writing, would be forced to expect students to pay more attention to speaking skills. In turn,

students would be able to have English certificate that attract jobs, promotion, and even opportunities for overseas study.

### **7.3.6. Marking**

Educational officials should pay attention to the quality of the certificate students receive, the knowledge of language students achieve and not see the certificate only as a means to achieve promotion in the workplace or to graduate. Teachers should evaluate students' level of English seriously. It is said that failing is the signal of the success. Students might have strong motivation to study and if they fail this time, they will try their best to stand up and rebuild their skills to become qualified. Students will know how to measure the difficulties of the exam; they will enrich their knowledge of English before they step into the examinations again. When they pass, they feel proud of themselves for the hard time they have spent. Otherwise, they have a point of view of easy examinations, and then they do not focus on their study much. Therefore, educational officials should measure and adjust the content of the exam papers in order to match them with international levels.

In discussing, 'Teaching staff' a range of suggestions relating to teachers' classroom management have been made. Most importantly however, teachers need to be confident in conducting communicative approaches and understanding students' learning preferences and study goals in order to establish a sound basis for effective teaching in an ideal English language centre.

## **7.4. Students**

Although the previous section has discussed teaching management in the classroom, this section focuses on some practical suggestions that students can implement in order to stay away from traditional grammar translation approaches and adopt communicative approaches to gain good results in their study.

Despite having been grounded in traditional learning approaches, students should quickly adapt to new approaches in order to achieve their goal of being able to

communicate in English. Although it is hard to integrate the communicative approach at first, it is important to change the grammar- translation approach into a communicative one. Looking back at how long students have been studying English in general education, it is saddening to see how few can use English in daily life. Kim Lien (2006) points out that the result of seven years of enriching English knowledge under general education curriculum and even extra courses at English language centres does not go anywhere. In a survey of 200 students, 172 (86%) are not able or lack confidence in communicating in English with foreigners. In addition, students in this have expressed their preferences for communicative learning methods to help them succeed in their language study. Therefore, students should try their best to adapt quickly to the new approach so that they can co-operate with their teachers to conduct their learning successfully.

In order to allow time for this readjustment, students / students' parents should sign a form to agree that in their first few first months of learning English at the ideal English language centre they will not be in a hurry to achieve the learning outcomes they expect. They should understand that learning a foreign language requires time, patience, good environment and practice. They need to recognize that in the early months they might feel they are getting little out of each class; during the class time they might not understand what the teacher is trying to do. However, as they become familiarized, their observations and guessing through teacher's activities and illustrations will enhance their establishment in the new kind of language input path.

Students need to be active and confident in their English learning environment. In the language learning process, students should forget the idea that 'silence is golden'; they should speak up whether they know for sure or not. Students should communicate in English as much as they can in their classes without paying attention to what others think and how others judge them. According to Breen and Candlin (1980, p.110), the learners' role within CLT is the role of negotiator. Students should have positive thoughts as to succeed in learning is not only to depend on teachers' methods or centre's support, but also depends on learners' motivation and willingness. Students should spend extra self learning hours at home. As Hedge (2000, p.36) notes, students



need to develop more independent approaches such as searching and learning outside the classroom at home or in self-access facilities. In addition, students should revise what they have studied at school and look at notes they have written. They should read short sentences again and again once they know the meaning. By doing this, those sentences remain fresh in their minds to form a natural path of using English without hesitation.

Students should work to create an English environment by using English to exchange their ideas with friends or teachers, and participate in the ESC to practise their speaking skills. They should know that communicative skills are very important in mastering language. In this study the results of the questionnaires show that 86% of students believe that going to the ESC helps them improve their speaking skill (see Table 35). As time at school is limited, only 5-7 hours per week, students need to spend more time participating in group discussions. They should consider English as a means of communication and use it to address their ideas as a mother language, not a foreign language. Moreover, every participant is a friend, and friends help each other. From that, students can build up their confidence in their communication and try to forget any barriers.

Students should use English textbooks which they have to read and understand in English. When there are words they do not know the meaning of, they should brainstorm themselves to find out the meaning in the text, or they should use an English-English dictionary. They can find some types of dictionaries that are relevant to their levels for this. They can also ask teachers for the meanings in English as the listening teacher at Centre 3 observed. When they continue in this way, they set up a path in mind, and remember much more and much longer.

Students need to do the exercises in their textbooks and the answer key should only be used after all questions are solved. They should think about their learning purpose which is for their future, not for their teacher's mark. One teacher of Centre 1 pointed out that students were rather lazy. They turn up to their classroom without finishing their homework for many reasons, or they just copy the answers from the answer key.

In this case, student should concentrate on their work seriously and not just open the answer key and circle the suggested answers without thinking of why the answers are so.

Students should understand that the time they are in the classroom is learning time and they should use English in the classroom to practise their speaking skills. They should communicate even though what they say might be known by other students, or even when they know they will make lots of mistakes in grammar and vocabulary. Students should remember that ‘to err is human’ and consider English learning as one of their priorities. They should fully understand their purpose of going to English classes, and be serious about it. As Brown (2007b, pp.94-95) points out, only their own self satisfaction and desire can help students get deeply engaged in their learning process and achieve their goals. This means that they do not stay at home when they feel tired and do not want to go to English classes. Furthermore, students should not listen and write down what teachers display on the board without revision at home, and should not go to class with excuses of being too busy to do their homework. Instead, they should be active and participate in all classroom activities. Moreover, students need to be creative in enriching their knowledge, not only at school but also in their social lives. They need to spend more time than usual learning English and study it in any way they can.

## **7.5. Summary of chapter**

Chapter 7 draws on the valuable comments and suggestions of expert panel members about the draft ideal English language centre based on three case studies and a review of relevant literature to redraft the ideal English language centre model. The original draft ideal English language centre is adjusted to respond to their particular comments about teaching and learning English in the Vietnamese context in order to improve the effectiveness of EFL instruction among private sector providers.

## **CHAPTER 8 - OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH**

In Vietnam, the push towards foreign language learning has become increasingly important, with English the choice of the vast majority of those who are learning a foreign language to assist their goals and / or meet government requirements. Consequently, growing numbers of English language centres are being established through out the country to meet these demands. However, although so many of these centres are being established, particularly in the big cities such as Ha Noi City and Ho Chi Minh City, this does not mean that they are all providing learners with effective teaching methods, teaching quality and management necessary for the effective English language learning in Vietnam. Therefore, in accordance with the aims of this thesis, the model of an ideal English language centre suited to maximizing the learning of English for practical communicative purposes and to meet the government requirements, has been proposed. Based on data collected from three English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City, this model was presented to a panel of English education experts in Vietnam for their suggestions. Panel members mostly agreed with the researcher's draft model and gave practical advice which was then incorporated into a final draft an ideal English language centre in Vietnam.

### **8.1. General discussion of the outcomes of the study**

Following discussion with the panel of experts leading to the final draft, it is clear that there should be some radical changes in the teaching, learning and managing of English language centres in Vietnam in general and in Ho Chi Minh City in particular. At the government level, the structure of the examinations for the national English language certificate levels A, B, C should be refocused on speaking and listening skills in a systematic way. Exam papers should be consistent throughout the country and be organized at certain scheduled times to bring consistency of delivery. In addition if

educational officials take the easy way out and only pay attention to the certificates as pieces of paper to present as a means to achieve promotion in the workplace or to graduate, nothing will change.

Clearly there needs to be a willingness of English language educators in Vietnam to focusing on communicative approaches. However, as Ellis (1994, p.60) pointed out, “communicative approach in its original form is unsuitable for Vietnamese conditions. Although there is a strong demand for communicative competence in Vietnam, it is not matched by adequate teacher trainings, communicative language materials and suitable learning environments... would require a radical change in the traditional teacher / student relationship in Vietnam”. Hence, the model of an ideal English language centre suited for adoption in Vietnam, addresses four main factors including centre management, teaching materials, teachers and students that need to be addressed.

Firstly, English language centre managers should understand both social requirements and students’ needs through communication channels to ensure successful program delivery. Managers should encourage and support their teachers to use communicative approaches in their teaching and provide suitable teaching facilities as needed. Managers should be flexible in the presentation of the required syllabus, allowing teachers to their classroom knowledge to provide suitable input. As Bao Dat (2008, pp. 276-277) concludes many teachers in his study, “dreams ..... in which the curriculum becomes decentralized enough to allow for the diversity of levels, contextually relevant content, teachers’ choice of what materials to use, as well as direct connection between language functions and the communicative needs of local communities”.

Secondly, teaching materials are a major factor contributing to the success of running an English language centre. These materials should be designed or chosen relevant to Vietnamese contexts in which students only learn how to apply the language in real life situations. They do not need to remember situations in native English environments which have no links to their reality, and are rarely used in Vietnamese contexts. Therefore, selected textbooks should emphasize reality and authenticity in generalised

contexts, and in the Vietnamese context in particular. Tran Thi Thu (2004, p.70) states “it is impossible to find an ideal textbook for learners in Vietnam, where most of the English textbook for learners in Vietnam, where most of the English textbooks used in private language colleges are imported from native speaking countries” and “one problem is the lack of authenticity of its texts in relation to the use of English in Vietnam”. In addition, students need to exclusively use English version books to help them brainstorm and practise English, making it easier for them to produce English without a time consuming conversion process.

In addition, textbooks should be designed around communication tasks, as students’ purposes for learning English in this study reveals that they do so for employment requiring a good command of English communication skills. Bao Dat (2008, pp.275-276) states that “materials need to guide the learners through the development of communicative skills in context rather than dwelling expansively on grammatical forms, reading comprehension and factual knowledge, as many courses presently do”. Furthermore, Expert 1 and Tran Thi Thu (2004, p.74) noted that students are rushing to English language centre to study English “for opportunities to improve their skills in interacting in spoken English” to fill the gap between English at general and tertiary levels and the communicative English taught at language centres. At general education and university levels, the way of teaching English mainly focuses on written forms.

Thirdly, teachers should strongly reject the traditional grammar translation teaching methods and replace them with communicative approaches. Teachers should continuously update their teaching methods and find the best ways to develop communicative skills using suitable teaching materials to students in an effective manner so that they can encourage students to freely communicate in English. Furthermore, students’ progress should be evaluated through their ability to successfully communicate in English as well as use grammatically correct written forms. Teachers should not feel bound by their recommended syllabus, preferring to use it as a guide for their language input. They should put themselves in the position of

their students, acknowledge their needs, interests and motivations, and decide what teaching strategies and materials are needed to help them achieve their goals.

Unlike those teachers who see themselves as controlling all classroom activities, teachers adhering to a communicative mode accept their students' reasons for being in their classrooms, listen to their students' preferences, and try to meet their needs. Students are main actors playing in all such classroom performances, with teachers acting as assistants in setting up tasks and evaluating results.

Teachers should encourage students to use communication skills in their classrooms with English as the target language both between teachers and students and among students in all classroom activities. Vietnamese should only be used as a support mechanism, not a replacement language with pair work and group work being constantly employed. Therefore, within reason teachers need to accept the noise of discussion and even moving of furniture to enable group discussion.

Finally, in order that the classroom operates smoothly when implementing the ideal model identified in this thesis, learners' wishes are the main consideration in deciding their learning conditions. Students need to be encouraged to achieve their goals now and in the future, and the roles of English generally. Students should be active in participating in communication activities in the classroom and create or seek other English environments to practise their communication skills. As Littlewood (1984) states, students should join in more classroom activities to achieve communicative competence. They should achieve the content of lessons actively; they should not wait for their teachers to feed them without filtering what they need and what they do not need. However, in order to do this, the model outlined in this study not only requires suitable teaching materials, but full cooperation between managers, registry staff, teachers, and students.

## **8.2. Limitations and suggestions for future policy, practice, and research**

The thesis has focused on how to improve the effectiveness of communicative EFL instruction in private English language centres in Vietnam. It has mainly described ELT in Vietnam through case studies of three private English language centres in Ho Chi Minh City, compiled using data from relevant documents, classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires. It investigated the weakness and strength of each English language centre in order to build up an ideal English language centre model. Here the researcher emphasized four elements he believed affected the success and failure of these English language centres, including teachers, learners, teaching materials, and centre management. In addition, although the ideal English language centre model has been built, it has not been put into operation to test its effectiveness. So, an action research on how a centre based on such a model could be implemented in part or in full, needs to be undertaken in the future.

However, the number of observing hours at each language centre was limited. The teachers were informed of the time for observation and they were also told the purpose of the observation and study. Thus, they may have prepared for the lessons better than they would have normally. Therefore, the researcher is wondering if the results reflect the reality of day to day teaching hours.

In addition, there might be a difference between senior teachers and junior teachers in implementing CLT in their classrooms. The former are trained and experienced in administering the old curriculum which focused much on GTM, making it extremely difficult for them to change, even with extensive retraining. The latter have been trained in slightly more communicative methodologies which focus on communicative approaches to meet and learners' needs.

As the literature review in this thesis suggests, the researcher has a strong commitment to communicative approaches in English language teaching. This commitment has

been confirmed by the findings in this study in which students, teachers, managers and experts agree. In particular however, the main stakeholders consisting of 79% of students revealed a preference for working in small groups rather than individually, in pairs or in whole classes (see Table 34). Similarly, 86% of students showed strong preferences for English speaking clubs (see Table 35), 81% for talking with other students (see Table 37), and a huge 91% wanted their assessments to be set up in real life English situations (see Table 40).

In conclusion, if Vietnam is to improve Vietnamese students' communication skills in accordance with the Instruction No 7984/BGDĐT (MOET, 2008b) requiring teachers to focus on four macro skills of language in order to improve communication skills, the MOET needs to assist in training teachers to be proficient in various teaching styles to make sure they have opportunities to use the target language. The MOET should redesign its curriculum and grading scales for test papers focusing on listening and speaking skills more than reading and writing, strongly and explicitly. Importantly, the model constructed in this study presents an ideal, and its implementation in part or in full will always be dependent on the particular social and economic conditions faced in Vietnam.

### **8.3. Possible constraints and feasible solutions**

The model of an ideal English language centre focusing on communication approaches has been built up. This developed from the acknowledgement by the researcher in assessment of current literature that communicative approaches are most suitable for English language learning and teaching in the current Vietnamese context. The researcher acknowledges that the communicative approach may not be widely accepted by all teachers and learners in Vietnam and that even when it is the preferred method may not be implemented because of several constraints. Additionally, when the communicative approach is implemented, there may be difficulties.



Teaching design and teaching techniques: where teachers are required to use English to explain issues and focus on listening and speaking skills with the purpose of improving oral communication skills, low level students may be disappointed because they cannot understand 100% of what their teachers say. Hence, this issue should be foreseen and clarified with students / students' parents before the course starts. Sometimes, teachers who are required to conduct communicative approaches in classrooms have been found by researchers (Le Van Canh, 1999; Pham Hoa Hiep, 2005) to go back to GMT because of the heavy workload imposed by communicative approaches. Therefore, managers should announce to staff that the purposes of training are to help learners to develop their oral communication skills and that teachers are allowed to be flexible with teaching curricula.

Resources: the centre is required to be equipped with modern facilities which cost more money from its expense budget than is usual. The main purpose is to help learners to achieve communication and if these facilities really help them meet their needs, why is investment not made in them? Moreover, students will pay back that investment in their future employment and in their contribution to society.

Teaching materials: teaching staff who are native English speakers can specialize in writing textbooks suitable in Vietnamese contexts. Contextual settings and ideas may first come from local staff and they can all work together to produce more appropriate materials. These staff should of course receive additional income for the extra work in preparing such materials.

Furthermore, this model of an ideal English language centre with small numbers of students in each class, modern teaching / learning facilities and recruitment of qualified teaching staff can cause school fees to increase. In this case, only those who can afford or who have a strong purpose for learning English may be able to attend. The centre will get much attention from students and students' parents saying "A good dog deserves a good bone" but it is the hope that the centre will provide a model for English language learning and teaching more generally.

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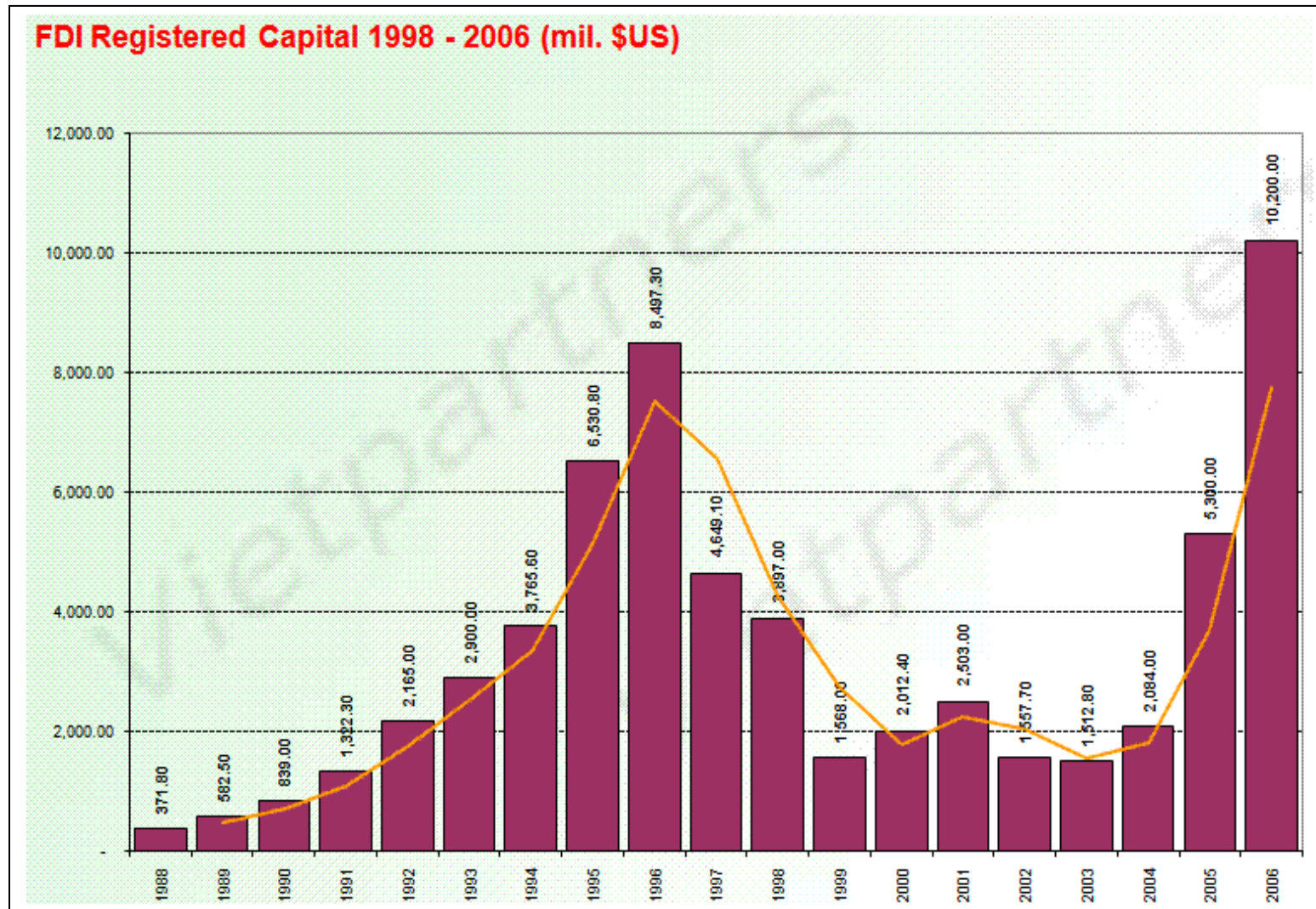
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**Appendix1:** FDI registered capital 1998-2006 (mil. \$ US) (Source: [www.vietpartners.com/Statistic](http://www.vietpartners.com/Statistic))



## Appendix 2

A brief description of the researcher's English results under the exam driven instruction under Vietnamese general educational system (Ranking 0.0 -10.0)

School years	Grade	Results	
		Semester 1	Semester 2
1984-1985	6	9.8	9.2
1985-1986	7	10.0	9.3
1986-1987	8	9.4	9.9
1987-1988	9	8.9	8.3
1988-1989	10	5.9	5.7
1989-1990	11	5.9	6.2
1990-1991	12	6.5	6.2

### Appendix 3a

([http://www.thuathienhue.edu.vn/khaothi/DETHI/tulieu/ontap/dethianh/Anhlop9\\_quan\\_ba\\_dinh\\_2004.doc](http://www.thuathienhue.edu.vn/khaothi/DETHI/tulieu/ontap/dethianh/Anhlop9_quan_ba_dinh_2004.doc))

Đề thi học sinh giỏi Tiếng Anh 9	
Trường học	Học sinh giỏi Quận Ba Đình - HN
Lớp học	9
Năm học	2004
Môn thi	Anh văn
Thời gian	120 phút
Thang điểm	10

#### I. Give the correct tense of the verbs in brackets (3pts)

1. You ever (1- be) to England? – Yes, I (2- go) there 3 years ago.
2. If she (3- work) harder, she (4- not fail) the exam last year.
3. It's difficult to get used to (5- eat) with chopsticks.
4. The chairman suggested (6- hold) another meeting next week.
5. I prefer (7- drive) to (8- be driven).
6. Would you mind (9- lend) me 5\$. I forgot (10- cash) a cheque.
7. I'd rather (11- stay) at home than (12- work) for him.

1-..... 2-..... 3-.....  
4-..... 5-..... 6-.....  
7-..... 8-..... 9-.....  
10-..... 11-..... 12-.....

#### II. Choose the best answer and fill in the blanks (2pts)

1. It was over 30 feet in length. That's how .....it was (length/tall/large/long)
2. He set up a new world record. He .....a new record.  
(did/player/created/found)
3. Secondary schools offer a wide .....of subjects (list/range/field/scope)
4. Since the .....of the motor car, road accidents have increased dramatically (approach/inauguration/initiation/advert)
5. I can't do that report today. I've got far too much other work to.....(catch up on/go in for/get away with/cut down on)
6. While you're away from the office on business trips, you will be given a

- daily.....of 25 pounds towards meals and accommodations  
(allowance/price/permit/money)
7. My brother has.....in the military (joined/entered/served/participated)
8. The discovery was a major.....for research workers  
(breakdown/breakthrough/break in/break out)

### III. Give the correct form of the words in the brackets (2pts)

1. My teacher.....me to take this exam (courage)
2. He has the.....to become a professional football player (able)
3. Give me something to drink please! I'm dying of.....(thirsty)
4. We try to bring our work to.....(satisfy)
5. The.....of the question was requested (repeat)
6. The teacher checks for regular.....(attend)
7. The roads are rough in.....areas, so it's hard to travel by road (mountain)
8. The people whose houses are to be demolished when the new road is rebuilt will be.....outside the city (house)

### IV. Fill in the blanks with suitable prepositions or adverb particles (3pts)

1. The exercise was.....the abilities.....most.....the class.
2. Students were angry.....being treated.....children.
3. The watch is still.....guarantee.
4. We can only guess.....her reason.....leaving.
5. ....being questioned.....the police, she was released.....charge.
6. Her father's illness cost a cloud.....her wedding day.

### V. Fill in the blanks with one missing word (3pts)

A doctor who worked in a village was very (1)..... because many people used to stop him in the street and asked his (2)..... In this (3)..... he was never (4)..... for his services, and he never managed to earn much money. He made (5).....his mind to put an (6)..... to this. One day, he was (7)..... by a young man who said to him "Oh doctor, I'm so glad to see you. I've got a (8)..... pain in my left side" The doctor (9)..... to be interested and said "Shut your eyes and stick your tongue (10).....of your mouth". Then he went away, leaving the man standing in the street (11)..... his tongue hanging out and a large (12)..... of people laughing at him.

### VI. Rewrite these sentences in such a way that it means exactly the same as the sentence printed above it (3pts)

1. We believe that he will become rich some day  
-> Our.....
2. Because of the bad weather, we couldn't go camping.  
-> The bad weather prevented.....
3. I walk away as calmly as I could so that they wouldn't think I was a thief  
-> In case.....
4. Keeping calm is the secret of passing your driving test.

-> As long as.....

5. His fondness for the game increases with his proficiency.

-> The more.....

6. The President is the statesman I admire most of all.

-> There is.....

### **VII. Make a complete letter (2pts)**

Dear Julia,

1. I/be/sorry/it/take/so long/reply/your letter.

2. You/please/know/I come/London/next weekend.

3. It/seem/long time/we/meet.

4. I/wonder/you/like/go/see/film/play.

5. There/be/new/Harrison Ford film/at/Odeon.

6. Perhaps/can go/meal/drink/afterwards.

7. Give/ring/later/week/arrange/more definite.

8. Look/forward/hear/you/soon.

## Appendix 3b

Gao Giong junior high school

\_\_\_\_\_, 2007

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Test on English

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: 45 minutes.

### I. Multiple choice: Choose the correct answer for each sentence (4 marks)

1. Can you tell me the reason for \_\_\_\_\_ the Mother's Day?  
a. celebrating      b. celebration      c. celebrate      d. celebrated
2. It's very nice \_\_\_\_\_ you to say so!  
a. in      b. on      c. of      d. for
3. I lived in Da Lat, \_\_\_\_\_ one of the most beautiful cities of Viet Nam.  
a. who      b. which      c. when      d. what
4. Kobe in Japan was completely \_\_\_\_\_ in 1995 by a huge earthquake.  
a. to destroy      b. destroy      c. destroyed      d. destroying
5. I am preparing for a picnic \_\_\_\_\_ my friends tomorrow.  
a. at      b. to      c. in      d. with
6. According to the \_\_\_\_\_, there will be sunny tomorrow.  
a. earthquake      b. weather forecast      c. volcano      d. tidal wave
7. The men and animals \_\_\_\_\_ you saw on TV last night are in Africa.  
a. who      b. which      c. that      d. none is correct
8. We are saving money \_\_\_\_\_ we want to buy a house.  
a. so      b. because      c. but      d. or

### II. Combine into one sentence, using "although or even though": (2 marks)

1. Lan failed in her driving test. She practiced for a long time.  
→ \_\_\_\_\_
2. The traffic lights turned red. He didn't stop his car.  
→ \_\_\_\_\_

III. Combine into one sentence, using “who or which”: (2 marks)

1. The visitors can see a lot of beautiful parks. The visitors come to London.

→ \_\_\_\_\_

2. We visited the house. It was built a hundred years ago.

→ \_\_\_\_\_

IV. Read the text and decide True (T) or False (F) for the below sentences: (2 marks)

In the United States, people celebrate mother's Day and Father's day. Mother's day is celebrated on the second Sunday in May. On this occasion, mother usually receives greeting cards and gifts from her husband and children. The best gift of all for an American mom is a day of leisure. The majority of American mothers have outside jobs as well as housework, so they often work very hard. On that day, it's also traditional for the large family group to get together for dinner, either in a restaurant or in their homes.

\* True/ False sentences:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Gifts are often presented to children by the mothers on the second Sunday of May.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. A day of leisure means American mothers don't go to work.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Taking care of children and washing clothes are 2 among American mothers' work.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Family members usually gather in this occasion.





### **Appendix 3c**

(Date) .....

Dear .....

My name is Son Thanh Le, a PhD student of the School of Education at Victoria University. The title of my project is " Teaching English in Vietnam: improving the provision in the private sector". The objective of this study is to find out the most effective approaches to teaching and learning English in Vietnam and further than that a model of an ideal English language is to be built.

In order to make it true, I am seeking for your permission to attend at your site for collecting data through interviews (two teachers and manager), observations (two intermediate English level), questionnaires for those students, and documents (policy, regulations, flyers, etc.). I also thank you very much if you please stick this message on the notice board in the teachers' room to seek for two volunteer teachers.

I appreciate your support in this important project. And please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone.

Yours sincerely

Son Thanh LE  
School of Education  
[thanh.le35@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:thanh.le35@live.vu.edu.au)  
(061) 0402 838 598

## Appendix 4: Questionnaire for students at English centres

Why are you learning English? And how do you prefer learning? Please give details required, and then circle a number ranked as follows

(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

1. Age: .....; Male/Female: .....; Occupation: .....

2. I am learning English to

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. get a good job.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. assist my current job.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. fulfil migration requirements.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. further my overseas study.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. give me more fun and personal satisfaction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. enjoy entertainment more.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. pass compulsory subject and exam.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. make my family pleased.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. other (what? .....)                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3.1. In class, it is good for students to do work .....

- |                            |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. individually.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. in pairs.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. in small groups.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. in a whole class group. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3.2. Choose the way you like most and explain why.

.....

.....

.....

4.1. Homework is useful.	1	2	3	4	5
--------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

4.2. What do you think would be the most useful type of homework for you?

.....

.....

.....

5.1. In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak .....

a. English only.	1	2	3	4	5
b. English more than Vietnamese.	1	2	3	4	5
c. English less than Vietnamese.	1	2	3	4	5

5.2. What do you think is the most useful and why?

.....

.....

.....

6.1. It would be useful to practise English .....

a. on an excursion.	1	2	3	4	5
b. at English speaking club.	1	2	3	4	5
c. on campus.	1	2	3	4	5

6.2. Where else would you find it useful to practise English and why?

.....

.....

.....

7.1. I like learning by

a. copying from the board.	1	2	3	4	5
b. listening and taking notes.	1	2	3	4	5
c. listening and completing a task.	1	2	3	4	5
d. reading and taking notes.	1	2	3	4	5
e. repeating what I hear.	1	2	3	4	5
f. talking to other students.	1	2	3	4	5
g. learning grammar rules.	1	2	3	4	5
h. television/video/films.	1	2	3	4	5
i. radio/music.	1	2	3	4	5
j. written materials.	1	2	3	4	5
k. pictures/posters.	1	2	3	4	5

7.2. Are there other ways that you like to learn and why?

.....

.....

.....

8.1. The best way to correct students' errors is .....

a. immediately, in front of everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
b. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
c. later, in private.	1	2	3	4	5
d. quietly, immediately	1	2	3	4	5

8.2. Choose one way you would like most and explain why.

.....

.....

.....

9.1. I prefer my work to be corrected by .....

a. other students	1	2	3	4	5
b. the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
c. self	1	2	3	4	5

9.2. Are there other ways that you like to have your work corrected and why?

.....

.....

.....

10.1. In learning English, ..... plays an important role.

a. role play	1	2	3	4	5
b. language games	1	2	3	4	5
c. songs	1	2	3	4	5
d. talking with and listening to other students	1	2	3	4	5
e. memorizing conversations/dialogues	1	2	3	4	5
f. grammar exercises	1	2	3	4	5

10.2. What is another activity you find useful? Explain why.

.....

.....

.....

11.1. Assessment is important with .....

a. written tasks set by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
c. checking your own progress by making tapes, listening to them critically and comparing.	1	2	3	4	5
d. setting up real life English situations.	1	2	3	4	5

11.2. Why do you think English assessment is important?

.....

.....

.....

12. What would you like to do in class that you do not do now?

.....

.....

.....

## **Appendix 5: Questions for interviews (Teachers)**

1. Who are the students in your class?
2. Why are your students learning English?
3. What do you think the best way to help students achieve their goals?
4. What constraints do you have? (in doing the above)  
(eg. materials/management/expectation/teaching techniques.)
5. What changes would you like to make to your teaching?
6. Which parts of the lesson were most successful? Why do you think it was so?
7. Which parts of the lesson were least successful? Why do you think it was so?
8. If it were possible for you to have some training, what type/content would you like to do?

## **Appendix 6: Questions for interviews (managers)**

1. Who are the students at this centre?
2. Why are your students learning English?
3. How does your centre help them achieve these goals?
4. What teaching methods do you expect your teacher staff to implement in their classrooms?
5. What factors have contributed to the success of your centre?
6. Have you got any feedback from students on the centre? If so, what is it?
7. Have you received any feedback from teacher staff? If so, what is it?
8. What is the difficulty in running the centre?
9. What changes would you like to make to your centre operation?



## Appendix 7: Observation sheet

Record the chronological events in terms of what the teacher does and what the students do during the lesson

What the teacher does	What the students do	Notes

## Appendix 8: Observation evaluation sheet

Evaluate the following points based on the observation sheet ranked as follow  
(1: none, 2: fairly well, 3: well, 4: very well)

1. Teacher's gender: .....; Age: .....
2. How well did the teacher establish a friendly  
classroom atmosphere? 1 2 3 4
3. How well did the teacher start the lesson and link it to the  
previous one? 1 2 3 4
4. How well did the teacher set up activities promoting  
communication? 1 2 3 4
5. How well did the students respond to the teacher? 1 2 3 4
6. How well did the students get involved in tasks? 1 2 3 4
7. How well did the teacher respond to the students' contributions? 1 2 3 4
8. How clear were the teachers' instructions to the students? 1 2 3 4
9. How were opportunities for the students to self-correct provided? 1 2 3 4
10. How were opportunities for the students to correct each  
other provided? 1 2 3 4
11. How well did the teacher attend to the students' errors? 1 2 3 4
12. To what extent did the teacher manage group/pair work? 1 2 3 4
13. How well did the teacher manage the time? 1 2 3 4
14. How well did the teacher use classroom resources? 1 2 3 4
15. To what extent did the classroom resources engage the students in  
meaningful interaction with one another? 1 2 3 4



## **IMPROVING THE PROVISION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Thank you very much for your willingness to contribute to this project. As we indicated earlier our PhD student has conducted extensive interviews and observations with staff and students at three centres in Vietnam and has developed case studies of those three centres.

He has now developed an outline for the “ideal” English Language Centre. We have included a copy here of that document and would welcome your comments on this draft document.

We very much appreciate your willingness to contribute to this research project. Please find attached also a short questionnaire for your completion and return to us by email by Monday 28 April, 2008 if possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact either co-supervisor Dr Tuan Nguyen ([Tuan.Nguyen@vu.edu.au](mailto:Tuan.Nguyen@vu.edu.au)) or myself if you have any questions or comments.

Again, please accept our thanks in anticipation for your support in this important project. We will be pleased to provide you with a small honorarium by way of our appreciation.

Yours sincerely

Professor Maureen Ryan  
School of Education  
Victoria University

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## Appendix 10

Issues	Expert 1		
	Agree	Disagree	Suggestions
Students' purposes of learning English	<p>Nice interpretations.</p> <p>It reflects the current status of teaching and learning English in Vietnam. The booming of English language centres in big cities show a high and real demand for English language proficient both blue and white collar workers, especially the latter who consider “English is the passport to a good job and stable life”.</p> <p>That learners rush to English language centres also implies the big gaps/ weaknesses in teaching and learning English at high schools middle and senior, and universities.</p>	N/A	<p>It would be better if the author points out the (mis)match of learning English from the teachers', educators' and MOET officials' views as well as from the learners' view.</p> <p>Nice interpretations except that the author has just mentioned the extrinsic motivation in learning English.</p> <p>It is easily learnt that most of learners at the research sites are university students (Tables 31-33). It does not really reflect the whole view of how English is learnt and taught in a present-day Vietnam, especially in HoChiMinh City</p>
Enrollment office	I agree with the author's interpretation. As competition among language centres are now very intense, most of the centres in big cities invest a huge amount of money in both interior and exterior decoration to attract learners and	N/A	<p>Nevertheless, they have to keep the registry and administrative staff to the minimum to ensure their profit. Additionally, registry officers have to work more intensively in “peak hours”, so it would be wise for the centres to ask some other experienced</p>

	their parents' attention. It is a way to prove at least that these centres are doing well.		staff to help relieve the expected workload then in respond to any inquiries from parents and learners.
Placement test	<p>I agree with the author's arguments. In fact, learners are given some informal placement tests. Some centres however may feel reluctant in doing so although they know it is a good way to measure how well the learners have progressed in their courses. Further, placement tests, if any, are usually administered at fixed intakes, yet learners are admitted at any time of the year. Therefore, placement test are not seriously appreciated. Centres sometimes try to please the learners, especially adult learners who just want to bridge some gaps in their English proficiency than to update and upgrade their English systematicallly.</p> <p>Placement tests are good in one hand, it increase the cost for the centres on the other hand. This should be examined from the cost-effect point of view. Most centres pay much attention to how to</p>	N/A	

	enhance their profit first.		
Teaching design	<p>If student-centred approaches are adapted, learners can gain a lot apart their lessons through negotiation, hence, increasing their speaking and listening skills.</p> <p>The suggestions made by the author are exact theoretically and most centres are aware of this factor. Learners may think the other ways. Unlike EFL learners in a native language environment as in Australia, UK or USA, Vietnamese learners are learning English in a medium devoid of native language interaction, so they feel more comfortable to learn with a “specific” teacher who they have acquired his or her accent. They fail to think that familiarising themselves with a variety of teachers’ accent will facilitate their communication the target language settings.</p> <p>As for communicative approach (CA) in English language teaching, when asked, all teachers will unanimously say that they are</p>	N/A	<p>I do not think teachers favour traditional ways of teaching, however, as a large number of learners at English centres are high school and university students who aim at gaining high marks at the final exams, so teachers are in a position to balance the learners’ long-term and short-term goals.</p> <p>Also, the suggestion that “teachers should use English to explain every single issue” does not sound practical and hence unrealistic methodologically and situationally at least in the Vietnamese context.</p> <p>As most of good teachers are visiting ones coming from colleges and universities, they are very busy to move around from centres to centres, therefore a sound arrangement of their timetable to do team teaching in some respect is good in theory only.</p>

	<p>adopting CA. In practice, many of them do not full understand how CA can be best applied in actual teaching!</p> <p>As a result, student-centred approaches seems alien to them. Culturally, student-centred approaches mean learners have more time and ways to individualize their learning. Vietnamese learners may, to certain extent, do not think high of this because they expect the teachers to “teach and to guide” them as much as possible. They come to the class to learn from the teachers!</p>		
Teaching facilities	<p>I agree. However, teaching facilities should be examined at both educational and economic perspectives in order to have a bird’s eyes view of how centres invest their money. Be aware that most of the owners of English centres are not teachers! Their profit is always the top of all. So class size are accepted at a mixture of both educational and economic goals.</p>	N/A	<p>Facilities should further be examined from the viewpoints of the owner of the centres too. Suggestions made without critical looks at this important aspect will certainly be off-ground.</p>

	It is more ideal to suggest that to lower the class size to “17 students or less so no students are left behind” although both managers and teachers all know that learning rises when the number of students in the classroom is reduced!		
Teaching materials	<p>I agree with the author regarding the teaching materials. If well-trained and experienced are well-paid for such a job, I think they are able to do. Although bilingual textbooks are not encouraged in terms of teaching and learning English here in Vietnam, they are very cheap and easy to use with some explanations of vocabulary and grammatical points. Learners find these useful and easy to understand while teachers find them time-saving.</p> <p>In practice, no compilation of different textbooks available at centres in Vietnam, partly because of copyright and partly because no teachers are willing to do so.</p>	N/A	
Recruitment criteria	<p>Exactly.</p> <p>Although nowadays a large number</p>	N/A	Proper training in TESOL is a must for both Vietnamese teachers and foreigner teachers.



	<p>of teachers of English, especially at colleges and universities obtain at least a BA in TEFL and some have a MA in TEFL or TESOL, just small number have been trained in an English-speaking countries. Some joint-programs do not effectively and efficiently turn out good teachers in terms of TESOL. The weakest link is a lack in reflective practice!</p> <p>Some foreigner teachers, native as they are, are not trained in TESOL. Some have some certificate/ diploma without due experience in teaching and culture and learning culture of Vietnamese learners. This limits their teaching.</p>		
Centre parent contact	It is a good practice to have a regular contact or teacher-parent interviews with a view to ensure the learners' progress.	N/A	
Relations with students, teachers and managers	Exactly. In an intense competition for profit, centres are making their best effort to recruit able and experienced teachers. These are usually offered high pay and centre managers prefer establish a good		Vietnamese learners are reluctant to raise their voice as to the teachers' modes of teaching. It is not culturally expected. It requires changes but slowly and cautiously.

	<p>relationship with teachers to ensure that teachers can demonstrate their worthy teaching as expected. This is a way to attract more learners to the centres.</p> <p>It is also a measure to retain learners, most centres give attention to the learners' needs.</p>		
English speaking club	I agree with the author about organizing English-speaking clubs for learners. It is seen as a good way to boost the learners' confidence and a way to maintain their relationship. Topics are the frequently used outside class.	N/A	Unless this aspect is included in the contract, few teachers are willing to take this responsibility as they are not paid for such activities and it is time-consuming.
Students' employment service		Remember that most learners are still high school and university goers, this service although is good for them turn out to be irrelevant.	
Teaching staff	<p>I agree with the authors. CA should be used through out the class contacts. This allows certain use of mother tongue, which is agreed by nearly 80% of learners.</p> <p>Teaching procedures are good as</p>	N/A	Adopting CA through out the lessons are ideal. It is culturally constrained in the Vietnamese context. This should be explained cross-culturally to see how Confucian-heritage environment affects the learning and teaching English in Vietnam.

	<p>suggested by the author as it complies with the TESOL teaching methodology.</p> <p>Naturally, speaking and listening are the top two skills. They are not always given due attention because of the exam washback (cf. Do, 2005)</p> <p>The exam system exerts a negative washback on learners and teachers. Product-based teaching are given more attention to than process-based. Besides, few teachers are aware of enhancing learners macro-skills through developing strategies in performing specific tasks.</p>		
Students	<p>I agree with the author's suggestions. Learners need to be active participants in class so as to achieve their goals.</p> <p>The suggestions are ideally theoretical though.</p>	N/A	<p>Knowledge of Vietnamese learners can help realize the author's suggestions. Most teachers of English in Vietnam are aware of these suggestions. Due to physical, teaching and learning and cultural constraints, these suggestions are easily said than done.</p>

			They have to be realized however through cross-cultural awareness of teaching and learning factors, knowledge, experience and devotion.
<p>Good piece of research! The suggestions made are “ bon volonté ’ ”, though. They need to be both practical and realistic or else they sound bookish.</p> <p>I thank the researcher for his (or her) good will and intentions regarding to the improvement of teaching and learning English at foreign language centres in Vietnam. Nevertheless, this piece of research needs however critically examining in different perspectives of education, language education, TESOL, cross-cultural awareness and even economics of investment in teaching and learning English in Vietnam from both the owners of centres and the learners.</p> <p>As for how Vietnamese young students are learning English, articles and books by Brian Tomlinson, and Bao Dat are strongly recommended, especially Bao Dat’s doctoral thesis on Learners’ Reticence (Leeds Metropolitan University).</p>			

Issues	Expert 2		
	Agree	Disagree	Suggestions
Students' purposes of learning English	Students' purposes in learning English were discussed comprehensively in this section with clear data and references, which left me not much to comment on.	N/A	<p>Followings are just minor ideas to contribute. Having said that, I think there are more reasons why a lot of people going to English centre. The author mentioned the fact that many Vietnamese are going abroad to study. However, studying is not the mere purpose of going abroad. They also immigrate or participate in labour export programs. These purposes might have been shown in the item "other" of Table 33. Even if this is not the case, I expect to see the researcher's discussion on that item (which got 8% responding strongly agree and agree).</p> <p>Table 31 shows that there are 83% of students whose age is under 25, which means that most of them are pupils or college students. Table 32 says 86% are jobless. This can be interpreted that students are jobless because they have not graduated. Therefore, to me, the two tables do not mean much in</p>

			<p>the analysis unless the researcher has more interpretation from data in the two tables.</p> <p>I think the author's comment and the quote are not relevant because Do (2006) was talking about "the past ten years" while the author was discussing the past two years ("Since Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization"). If the author wants to affirm that the increase of people learning English has been remarkable since Vietnam's WTO membership, I would need other references to be convinced.</p> <p>The author's statement that "For those who are working for state organizations there will be increased income in obtaining a national certificate of English respectably." is inaccurate. Obtaining a national certificate of a certain language (English, France, etc. or even languages of ethnic people in Vietnam) is just one of the many conditions to be promoted or paid more. The author should rephrase his</p>
--	--	--	---

			<p>statement in a way that does not change Do's ideas. (Do (2006) says English is just "one of the elements")</p> <p>In the last sentence, the author states that "we should consider the following factors which might improve the quality of teaching and learning English language in Vietnam." It seems to me that the author is inconsistent in what he wants to focus his discussions on: the development of an ideal centre, or the improvement of teaching and learning English in Vietnam? Throughout the discussions, such inconsistency appears many times and makes it difficult to figure out the main points. In my opinion, discussions on the big picture would be useful but they should be grouped into one section, or be related to the ideal centre in a clearer and less confusing manner.</p>
Enrollment office	N/A	I do not think it is a good idea to have teachers' photographs displayed at the enrolment office though it is done in some language centres. I think most teachers do not like it either because the photograph	<p>This section should have an introduction to guide readers since there are a lot of things discussed in it.</p> <p>I think there should be a part discussing the designing and</p>

		<p>displayed on a board looks like “most wanted criminals.” Besides, students choosing a language centre do not refer to teachers’ photographs to make their decisions. If it is advised to have teachers’ photographs displayed, I would need more explanation or references to be convinced. (for example, teachers’ photographs should be displayed along with a specification of their ages, qualifications, experience, hobbies, etc so that customers can have a general ideal of the teaching staff at the centre, not for customers to choose who will teach them.)</p>	<p>conducting of end-of-course tests at the centre. One way to do this is to discuss testing in the “Teaching Materials” (which, as I will suggest in later comments, should be turned into “Syllabus Design.” In terms of testing, apart from end-of-course tests, there should be proficiency tests for students to have a chance to get certificates. The centre should also cooperate with international organizations or schools in English speaking countries to organise international English tests or provide international education services. Apart from that, it is a good idea that the centre has scholarship programs to honour excellent students and support poor students.</p> <p>Students registering at the centre have to sign a kind of contract with the centre before paying fees. This contract specifies rights and responsibilities of both students and the centre, which guarantees that any issues arisen during the time students studying at the centre can be solved based on written proofs.</p> <p>It seems that there are two main points</p>
--	--	---	---



			<p>in this part, i.e. registry staff and office arrangement. However, because the researcher switched the main ideas so many times in this part that it was difficult to follow. The unclearness in the discussion gives me the feeling that the author wrote this with his flow of thoughts rather than from a carefully prepared layout. As said above, I think the researcher should have had an introduction of the main ideas (which might have been the registry staff and office arrangement), discussed them one by one and then, a conclusion is needed to close the discussion and lead to the next part.</p> <p>I also think there should be a waiting room in the enrolment office in case of busy time or when there are parents waiting to pick up their children. The enrolment office should have a regulation board which clearly states what must and must not be done within the campus, and a board of available courses at the centre.</p>
Placement test	<p>It is a good idea to provide teachers with placement test results.</p> <p>The comparison between</p>	N/A	<p>Although the researcher acknowledged the importance of placements tests for students who</p>

	placements test results and end-of-course test results seems to be worth considering.		<p>enrolled at the centre for the first time, it would also be useful to consider the designing of valid and reliable placement tests.</p> <p>However, I think it should be the result analysis rather than the result itself.</p> <p>However, because they are two different kinds of test, I think it is impossible to make a valid comparison.</p> <p>Students do not have a choice of teachers, then, again, why should teachers' photographs displayed, as discussed in the previous part?</p>
Teaching design	N/A	N/A	<p>A definition of the term "teaching design" should have been given to guide readers in understanding the researcher's discussion. Because there was not a definition or introduction of what was going to be discussed, I found it hard to focus and follow.</p> <p>I would like to know how team teaching can be carried out at the centre: a Vietnamese teacher teaming with a foreign teacher, or else? If team teaching is conducted by two</p>

			<p>Vietnamese teachers or two foreign teachers together, one of the disadvantages is that students might begin to prefer one teacher to the other. I think the researcher should discuss whether team teaching is advised in different situations: in general English classes, test preparation, ESP, etc, considering both advantages and disadvantages in each one.</p> <p>In this part, the author mentioned the benefits of team teaching with reference from Thomas, MacLean &amp; Greer (1997). However, it seems to me that the discussion and the reference do not go together. The researcher talked about the benefits of team teaching, saying that “Students can feel excited and interested in attending English classes. In addition, it helps teachers to complete the whole teaching session easily. It helps students have time to get over the laziness, along with the sleepiness.” Unless he provides other reference or data to support, I would consider his statements subjective.</p>
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			Teachers using English depends on class levels. Here I think the author fell into what is called the misunderstanding of communicative language teaching, i.e. using English all the time is a must.
Teaching facilities	I think this is the best part in the whole discussion in terms of richness of references. Apart from that, I think it might be a good idea to figure out the minimum area for each classroom of twenty students.	N/A	<p>This part should be divided into two main ideas: Classrooms and resource centres (multi-media laboratory, library, conference hall, individual learning centre, to name but a few).</p> <p>I think this should be “in the information &amp; technology era” rather than “economic market.”</p> <p>This sentence should be omitted because of its sense of business and irrelevance to topic of the discussion (though it specifies one of the advantages of equipping classrooms).</p> <p>Again, this sentence should be omitted because of its sense of business and irrelevance to topic of the discussion.</p>
Teaching materials	The first paragraph discusses the importance of using English versions of textbooks rather than bilingual ones. This sounds useful	But I think it is unnecessary because nowadays there are few textbooks available in bilingual versions. Moreover, centres nowadays do not use textbooks that were published	I think this part should be “syllabus design” which covers issues in syllabus design and material selection. If syllabi are designed in the first place, materials are not a complicated

		too long ago and they have their textbooks updated periodically.	<p>problem any more.</p> <p>The researcher discussed a way of compiling textbooks, i.e. collecting from many textbooks to make one for the centre. However, I think he forgot an ethical issue in doing this, i.e. the copyrights of the textbooks used to compile. A standard centre is where copyrights of materials are appreciated.</p>
Recruitment criteria	It is a good idea to make sure that teachers are able to conduct a class communicatively. Having said that, I think the researcher should specify how to do it. This can be done by having teacher candidates to conduct a demonstration class. The assessment of the demo class will be done by specialist board.	N/A	<p>The researcher should also specify qualification criteria for recruiting foreign teachers and Vietnamese teachers, and determine criteria for main teachers and teacher assistants also.</p> <p>In the last sentence, the author said that there should be a “balance” of local and foreign teachers for the centre. I am not quite sure about what “balance” is meant here. Does this mean the number of local teachers and foreign teachers should be of equal, or does it refer to their qualifications?</p>
Centre parent contact	N/A	N/A	These two parts (centre parent contact and relations of students, teachers and manager) should be grouped into one

			as “centre’s communication channels” which include communication channels between centre and parents, centre and students, and centre and teachers. There should be an information process department which enables those channels to operate smoothly. In this way, the centre is the bridge to make the teaching and learning meet at one point.
Relations with students, teachers and managers	N/A	As said above, the centre, not the teachers, is the bridge enabling teaching and learning to be effective. I do not think the centre should depend that much on teachers or students to carry out those things. The centre must always be the active factor in every of its activities. It must have a specialised department in charge of updating information or carry out such projects. Therefore, should there be a need to call for support from teachers or students, there must be a detailed plan/framework firsthand to specify rights and responsibilities of each party. In other cases, teachers and students can feedback to the centre of any issues through the	The word “seriously” should be omitted because it makes the sentence sound subjective. As said above, the centre, not the teachers, is the bridge enabling teaching and learning to be effective

		communication channels stated above.	
English speaking club	I do not have much to comment on this part because it is a good idea.	N/A	Having said that, I think the club should be English club which does not limit its activities in just speaking.
Students' employment service	I do not have much to comment on this part because it is a good idea.	N/A	N/A
Teaching staff	N/A	N/A	<p>As the sections above, this section (and the section followed, i.e. Students) does not have an introduction of what was going to be discussed, which gave me the feeling that the author's ideas are all over the place and I could not make out what was the purpose of that and what the discussion had to do with the ideal centre that he wanted to build.</p> <p>Table 36 shows that most students would like their teachers to speak more English than Vietnamese, which does not mean that teachers should use English all the time, as discussed by the author in Centre Management/Teaching Design.</p> <p>In this section, the researcher focused so much on advising teachers on teaching listening and speaking that he</p>

			<p>almost left out other skills which would be the core of such courses as Academic Writing, English for Special Purposes, Test Preparation, etc. It is preferable that the researcher divides this section into different parts discussing what teachers should do in different kinds of English courses.</p> <p>I think this should be “which answer is appropriate and which is inappropriate.”</p> <p>“Good personality” is subjective. What the author defined here as good personality might be opposed by others, and vice versa.</p> <p>I do not think the relationship between teachers and students can be that of friends. As soon as students see their teachers as their friends, the teachers can no longer conduct their teaching the way they want to.</p> <p>In my opinion, what the teachers and students should build is neither good relationship nor friendship. It should be respecting each other. This is just my personal idea, which makes it clear that this paragraph is written in a too subjective manner. I hope the author</p>
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			<p>would find other ways to suggest his ideas, avoiding such subjectiveness.</p> <p>This is not practical. Excursions should only be planned and carried out by the centre with the help from teachers. Teachers should never organize excursion by themselves, especially for young learners (because unexpected things might happen, such as accidents. If teachers organize the excursion themselves, accident probability might be higher, which will lead to very bad situations no one ever wants).</p> <p>“Their health may be limited” should be rephrased as “their learning can be affected by their health and emotional conditions.”</p> <p>It is not true that each skills have to be taught separately. Here the author is inconsistent because in later discussions he said the skills should be taught integratedly.</p> <p>Which skills to be taught first depends on purposes of specific courses and learners. If learners wants to improve their academic writing skills, listening and speaking are not their preference</p>
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			<p>(though these skills can be integrated into the lessons to help students in their acquisition). Therefore, the author should not only focus on teaching beginners or general English but he has to discuss the situation in teaching other kinds of courses also.</p> <p>I think this should have been “English as a foreign language” because the author is talking about the situation in Vietnam.</p> <p>I do not think teachers have to do this all the time because it seems to me that this piece of advice is suitable only for young learners who have not had a clear idea of their purposes. Moreover, table 33 shows that only 16% of the learners go to English centres in order to please their parents. If the author really wants to have this discussion here, he should make it clear that he is talking about young learners. The last sentence is unclear and seems to have no relation with what is discussed in the paragraph.</p> <p>This discussion strays from the topic of the section. The researcher can move this discussion to the section</p>
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			<p>discussing students' purposes in learning English in order to support the idea that learners go the centre to assist their English subject at school.</p> <p>This paragraph also digresses.</p>
Students	N/A	N/A	<p>Again, this section does not have an introduction or conclusion which make it difficult to follow. However, it seems to me that the researcher was discussing what students should do to learn best. In my opinion, this section should be joined with the first section "Students' purposes of learning English." The section should then be named "Students" with two main ideas: students' purposes in learning English and students' preferences (or whatever the researcher finds suitable). It is important that the researcher relates what he discusses in this section with the modal centre he wants to build.</p>
There should be a conclusion for the whole discussion.			

	<b>Expert 3</b>		
Issues	Agree	Disagree	Suggestions
Students' purposes of learning English	Most language centers in HCMC attract people wishing to improve their ability to use English at work. So, it is true that these learners are the majority.	N/A	N/A
Enrollment office	As far as enrolment office is concerned, I would look at some aspects relating to enrolment staff such as their consultancy skills, their understanding of clients, language trend and/or both target and learners' needs in order to help them enrol in the right course.	N/A	Enrolment officers should show their ability to give good advice. My belief is that this professionalism helps create trust among clients. I think the writer should investigate this factor to see how it might affect enrolment and how enrolment staff, in their part, provide centre managements useful information about clients in revising their programmes or work practices.
Placement test	I strongly agree that placement tests are important and should be taken by prospective students. The results of the test should be used as evidence and/or basis for their advice in addition to placing them in the right course.	N/A	N/A
Teaching design	Team teaching is good.	N/A	However, there doesn't seem to be any particular research or study on current teaching design practices in any particular language schools. The

			<p>writer describes “Each teacher has to cover different parts of the curriculum and use different materials”, which is still unclear about (a) how well these materials are integrated, (b) how meaningful they are, (c) whether or not the materials taught by a team of teachers help learners to recycle what they are learning/have learned, and (d) how teachers can share materials or collaborate.</p> <p>I really consider this important in helping learners to achieve their learning goals. This even matters most, not <u>ease or convenience</u> for teaching staff created as the result of teaching design (He writes “ In addition, it helps teachers to complete the whole teaching session easily. It helps students have time to get over the laziness, along with the sleepiness. By doing this, from the teacher’s point of view, they also feel relaxed every time they enter ....”)</p> <p>Also, I have a feeling that there are other reasons why “ Teachers and students are happy; they gain the maximum achievement in their jobs of</p>
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			<p>teaching and learning”. Are there any statistics on learners in language centers in HCMC or those who are involved in three case studies being happy and gaining benefits from this kind of teaching design? Otherwise, this comment is not convincing enough.</p> <p>An in-depth survey of the current teaching design practices is needed to identify weaknesses and strengths and/or factors that help obtain quality in english teaching.</p>
Teaching facilities	N/A	Ideal classes of 15 – 20 students are expensive in VN, and obviously not for the majority.	Are there any approaches to teaching English in large classes? These findings would be practical in the vietnamese english teaching context, and needed by most language centres in HCMC.
Teaching materials	N/A	N/A	I would be very careful about one suggestion, which is ‘the centre may choose some lessons or practical parts of books and bind them into a textbook according to the levels of English competence. Therefore, students do not have to spend money buying the whole book at bookstores

			<p>outside. Instead, they buy textbooks which include some selected lessons from different books at the centre's bookstore” .</p> <p>VN is now a member of WTO and copyright is a big issue. Also, compiled materials cannot be used for commercial purpose. Why don't teachers use handouts?</p> <p>I do expect to see professional suggestion about model or approach to designing materials.</p>
Recruitment criteria	N/A	N/A	N/A
Centre parent contact	N/A	N/A	N/A
Relations with students, teachers and managers	N/A	N/A	N/A
English speaking club	N/A	N/A	N/A
Students' employment	N/A	N/A	N/A

service			
Teaching staff	N/A	N/A	N/A
Students	N/A	N/A	N/A



<b>Expert 4</b>			
Issues	Agree	Disagree	Suggestions
Students' purposes of learning English	<p>There is some evidence of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The increasing importance of English in Vietnamese context.</li> <li>+ Some reasons why more and more Vietnamese students learn English.</li> </ul>	<p>- I would disagree with Vu (2007) in this case as there is no evidence for this statement. From my personal teaching experience, this is not correct as those students who come to me for an IELTS course get a certificate of B or C level but their English is very basic and it takes them at least 6 months to 8 months of hard work to get an IELTS score of 5 and above. We Vietnamese also know very well that university graduates get a certificate of B level but they cannot communicate in English.</p> <p>- 'Overseas Vietnamese support of their relatives .... but first good English language is necessary': I would disagree with this point as this money can come into investment and thus cannot be a strong argument for why Vietnamese students like to learn English to go overseas.</p>	<p>Improvements are needed for the following areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The literature for Vietnamese students' purposes in learning English could have been reorganised so that these purposes could have been more clearly pinpointed.</li> <li>- A lot of ideas in this section seems to be about the popularity of English, rather than the students' purposes in learning English.</li> <li>- More literature is necessary as daily newspapers may not seem to be a persuasive source for a PhD thesis.</li> <li>- Locate where this draft is in the thesis (literature review, data analysis or discussion) and structure the arguments accordingly.</li> <li>- Find out some evaluation criteria for an effective English/language course or language centre in the literature.</li> </ul>

		<p>- ‘In addition, with Vietnam’s recent socio-economic development requiring ... English language in Vietnam’: This does not seem to be a good concluding paragraph for this section as it does not point out the connection between findings about the purposes of learning English and the formation of “ideal” English language centres which is the aim of the section.</p>	<p>- Review the literature about language/English centres in other countries.</p> <p>- Point out the impact of findings about students’ purposes in learning English on the formation of “ideal” language centres. i.e. Most learners cited “to get a good job” as their main purpose in learning English. What kind of English will be taught to them general English or ESP?</p>
Enrollment office	- Enrolment office is often the students’ first contact point in a language centre.	- Starting an “ideal” model of English centre with enrolment office might not be an excellent idea. It may come under infrastructure or something.	- Perhaps the criteria of an effective language centre needs to be clearly defined before dividing this section into parts.
Placement test	Placement test is a good idea	N/A	<p>But it is not enough because it may not be effective for teaching and learning if you put year 8 school students in the same class with 30-40 year old businessmen or dressmakers.</p> <p>Again this could have come under admin or organisation issue.</p>
Teaching	Some teaching methods/approaches	N/A	- I think there is no strong argument

design	are mentioned		<p>for these advantages of team teaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define what is meant by teaching design in this thesis.</li> <li>- Support your arguments about teaching approaches with some literature.</li> <li>- Explain how these teaching approaches help the students in this project achieve their goals.</li> <li>- Since students had different purposes in learning English therefore some other teaching methods are necessary. For example, some students learn English to pass school exams, would CLT be a suitable approach? Would grammar be a core component in teaching?</li> </ul>
Teaching facilities	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This section is not a suitable place for class size and pair work and group work.</li> <li>- Table 34 could have been teaching design.</li> <li>- Class size and pair/group work could</li> </ul>

			have been moved to class organisation.
Teaching materials	N/A	This does not seem to make much sense as it may violate the copyright laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define the selection criteria for English textbooks in general and in the Vietnamese contexts in particular more.</li> <li>- Explain why those criteria are necessary in responding to the Vietnamese students' needs.</li> </ul>
Recruitment criteria	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are the same criteria used both for Vietnamese teachers of English and native speaker teachers?</li> <li>- Is it knowledge about CLT enough ?</li> <li>- Are language and teaching skills enough?</li> </ul>
Centre parent contact	N/A	Some learners do not need parents' support ( as lots of them are adults)	N/A
Relations with students, teachers and managers	N/A	N/A	This can be a sub section of another section.
English speaking	N/A	N/A	This could have been part of extra curriculum activities.

club			
Students' employment service	This sounds like a good recommendation.	N/A	Need to show what kinds of jobs are available for these students, considering that many of them do not have the necessary skills for a job or many courses do not provide them with enough skills for available jobs.
Teaching staff	N/A	<p>- 'Learning a language is imitating whatever the native language speakers say': Sorry I disagree with this.</p> <p>- 'There are four skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing which have to be taught separately': Sorry I disagree!</p>	<p>- There is a lot of overlapping between this part and teaching design.</p> <p>- This part could have been combined with teaching design, recruitment and restructured</p> <p>- 'Teachers can organize an excursion individually or they can request that the manager organize it after students study a certain theme. Of those surveyed, 69% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that it was useful to practise English on an excursion': This could have been part of the extra curriculum activities</p> <p>- 'Again, teachers have to focus on teaching listening and speaking skills more than the other language skills matching with the language development of human beings': What</p>

			<p>do you mean ?</p> <p>- ‘When they understand this pattern, teachers do not expect students learning English as a second language to start reading and writing at an early stage’: Adult students can read and write long before they can listen and speak.</p> <p>- ‘Teachers also make clear the purposes of students’ learning English and shape their teaching methods accordingly. For example, teachers need to mention the importance of English because even students who are attending English classes and have some reasons may be unsure how important English may be for them. Therefore, teachers are the persons who transfer all updated or essential information about English language learning to students. Students may like to use English as a means of communication but to do that they need to develop listening and speaking skills’: It does not make sense!</p> <p>- ‘ An article ‘Learning English at</p>
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			<p>school is just ... exam' (2007) uncovers that students at high school still have to write four pages of such things 'you are = anh la', 'garden = cai vuon' everyday. Students still have to copy down all what teachers write on board. Nowadays, students at general education still study with grammar translation approach. Do (2005) shows that students have complained that learning English at high school is wasting their time because both materials and teaching method are not updated': This is an exception as CLT is the required approach for CLT in high school and things are changing a lot.</p> <p>- 'Teachers use Vietnamese to just explain the meaning to the students, and then answer the questions and do grammar points. According to the newsletter of Hanoi National University (2005) students at general education just learn by heart some grammar points in order to deal with exams at all levels. After their exams, students cannot remember due to not having chance to practise. Therefore,</p>
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			<p>learning English for 10 years at general education does not help students in social life. The teacher does not set up group discussions or pair work. In contrast, teachers need to do more and enable more conversations which consist of real life situations as students expect to be assessed by setting up real life situations with 91% of those surveyed agreeing and strongly agreeing': This is irrelevant as it is not about teaching in language centres.</p> <p>'It is highly appreciated for teachers to apply the student-centered method to the reading class in which they can combine the other English skills with the reading skill': No connection between the student centred method and combining reading skill and other English skills ( which ones?)</p> <p>- 'However, teachers have their own difficulties when are they have to cover the curriculum assigned by the MOET. Moreover, the structure of the exam papers is still framed as 3 parts (1) reading comprehension; (2) grammar points; (3) translate into</p>
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			<p>English. There is no speaking or listening exam; there is no pronunciation part. Therefore, logically teachers ignore communicative approaches, they still use grammar-translation approaches in which they can satisfy school's requirements and students are happy with the end of semester exam results. Students are so confused with which way can help them achieve their goals. They are not able to participate in all activities, especially speaking in front of people. In addition, their listening is, of course, not keen because they did not have the opportunity of being in an English environment'. This seems irrelevant to teaching English in language centres.</p>
Students	N/A	<p>'Students should create an English environment and participate in such as going to the ESC to practise speaking skills': How can students create an English speaking environment?</p>	<p>'They should consider English as a means of the communication; just using it to address their ideas like mother language, not a foreign language. Moreover, every participant is a friend and helps each other. From that, students can build up their confidence in their communication and try to forget the barrier. Moreover,</p>

			<p>they should be creative and enrich knowledge not only at school but also in social life': It does not make much sense!</p> <p>- Testing could have been a separate part.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is not yet clear how the model is formed. Is it based on the research respondents' ideas or the author's own ideas or drawn from other authors and researchers?</li> <li>- There are lots of suggestions for an "ideal" language centre in Vietnam but the author has not been able to make them jelled together to form a good model of a language centre.</li> <li>- More literature, especially from research about teaching English in Vietnam could have been included.</li> <li>- The questionnaire findings and the author's own ideas are often mixed.</li> <li>- The interview findings could have been presented.</li> <li>- The management board often play an important role in running a centre. Should there be a section about them?</li> <li>- Develop and justify the set of criteria for evaluating a good language centre before elaborating it.</li> <li>- More discussion could have given to assessment.</li> <li>- What are the selection criteria for these language chosen for case studies?</li> </ul>			