Developing Classroom English Competence: Learning from the Vietnam Experience

Edited by Donald Freeman & Laura Le Dréan

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Phnom Penh

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IDP Education (Cambodia) and *Language Education in Asia* (LEiA), with support from National Geographic Learning, are pleased to present *Developing Classroom English Competence: Learning from the Vietnam Experience*. This monograph is about the *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) program in one of the over 25 countries in which it has been implemented. EfT, which aims to specifically improve teachers' classroom English proficiency, is a component of the *ELTeach* professional development program. *ELTeach* offers integrated coursework and assessment in each of its two components and is a collaboration between National Geographic Learning (a part of Cengage Learning) and Educational Testing Service.

The launch of the monograph is at the 13th Annual CamTESOL Conference, an initiative of IDP Education (Cambodia). The conference theme, *Building a Regional Community: English Across Platforms*, is echoed in EfT's online accessibility, which draws both rural and urban teachers into more successful participation in the profession. It is our hope that this book shows what is necessary in a large-scale online professional development program to effectively support teachers on the ground in the English language classroom.

Our sincere thanks to the editors of this monograph, Donald Freeman of the University of Michigan, Michigan, U.S.A. and Laura Le Dréan of National Geographic Learning. They successfully organized and managed the project on a tight timeline, despite the already busy schedules of all involved. We are grateful to Donald Freeman, Anne Burns of the University of New South Wales, Australia and Anne Katz of the New School, New York, U.S.A. for compiling the monograph. Our gratitude also goes to the authors for all of the research and writing offered in their chapters. We thank the panelists who contributed their perspectives and insights in Donald Freeman's chapter, "Learning from the *English-for-Teaching* Experience in Vietnam: Insider / Outsider Perspectives": Dr. Pham Thi Hong Nhung, Deputy Rector (Graduate Studies & Research), Hue Foreign Languages University; Dr. Bao Kham, Rector, Hue University, College of Foreign Languages; Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Vu, Dean, English Department, Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy; and Dr. Tran Phuoc Lin, Deputy Head of Research & Development Department, SEAMEO RETRAC.

We greatly appreciate the thousands of teachers who participated in the Eft program in Vietnam. Their efforts in learning how to better teach English using English, represented in the data in the monograph, will be of benefit to policy-makers, administrators, researchers, and teachers, in addition to students well beyond those in their classrooms.

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The Argument for Developing Teachers' Classroom English Proficiency

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The world of English language teaching (ELT) continues to expand as increasing numbers of national education systems around the world include compulsory English language programs as part of their basic education structure. Such growth reflects a time of increasing global connection and development in which English proficiency is seen as an entry qualification to further social and economic gains. However, despite widespread reform efforts to improve ELT, reports suggest that few of these English programs produce learners who have developed “a useable knowledge of English” (Weddell, 2011, p. 3). This monograph highlights one national education system—in Vietnam—that has approached the challenge of developing its students' English language proficiency by adopting a new way of thinking about improving English language teaching in public sector classrooms, with encouraging results. This new approach, developed through a collaboration between National Geographic Learning and Educational Testing Service, is based on an alternative model of English competence, called *English-for-Teaching* (EfT), that provides teachers with the linguistic skills useful for implementing lessons, interacting with students, and managing classrooms.

General Versus Classroom Proficiency: How Are They Different?

Effective English teachers are expected to possess a range of pedagogical skills and knowledge to enable them to create and deliver lessons that encourage student learning. For example, they need to be able to manage instructional time, utilize current methodologies, and understand and apply principles of learning to foster the development of their students' abilities. In addition, they are expected to deliver a good proportion of their lessons in English, providing models of English language use and opportunities for their students to interact in English. Yet evidence from many classrooms suggests that teachers rarely use English even when they have demonstrated knowledge of the English language on English language tests (Butler, 2004; Sešek, 2007).

In an era defined by educational standards, the design of many English language programs, learning materials, and assessments is based on a model of English language proficiency illustrated by general

language proficiency frameworks. In this monograph, we refer to this view as *general English proficiency*. In the ELT setting, the most frequently chosen framework is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR describes language learners' needs to develop communicative language ability, defined in terms of three kinds of language competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic. Scales of language development illustrate learners' progressive mastery of language forms, from familiar words and simple phrase structures to extended texts; of language functions such as description and argument; and of communicative tasks, from more basic ones, such as exchanging greetings, to more complex tasks involving subtasks and linguistically complex texts, such as presenting a logical argument in an appropriate style. However, descriptions of *specific content* are not included in the many exemplars that make up the various scales of the CEFR. This is understandable since the descriptors were designed to apply across different learning contexts and content areas.

The content that is inferred in the CEFR is structured to progress from familiar, concrete, and predictable types of situations to more abstract ones requiring greater integration and control of language skills. For example, learners at lower levels of proficiency (A1-B1) are only expected to utilize language related to immediate personal relevance, such as their family members and their immediate concrete surroundings. However, rarely do teachers in general English language programs develop language skills that would specifically equip them to carry out their daily instructional tasks in the English language classroom. This is especially salient if they enter these programs at lower levels of language proficiency.

Instead of relying on general descriptions of language use as the content for teacher learning, the EfT framework adopted an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lens to identify specialized language that teachers would find useful in the classroom. It is this description of language use, situated within the specific context of the language classroom, which defines what we are calling *classroom English proficiency*. There are two aspects of ESP that guide the design of language programs that aim to equip teachers with English they can use in the classroom. The first is authenticity of task—how closely do the tasks in the learning materials match the tasks teachers are expected to perform? The second is recognition of the connection between language knowledge and specific content knowledge—how can teachers' background knowledge contribute to language ability (Douglas, 2000)?

The framework for the EfT model, based on classroom English proficiency, was developed in consultation with a global panel of

English language teaching experts. In line with an ESP approach, the panel developed an operational structure as well as an inventory of typical teacher tasks and classroom topics derived from national curricula, student textbooks, and relevant classroom-based research, thus ensuring both the authenticity of tasks and the integration of content knowledge in the EfT model. (A more comprehensive description of the development process can be found in Freeman, Katz, Garcia Gomez, and Burns [2015]).

Developing Classroom English Proficiency through EfT

In the EfT framework, the language knowledge required by teachers is embedded in the specific situation of the classroom: teachers must be able to use language that will enable them to interact with students as students engage in specific tasks, and teachers must also be able to access and deliver via their lessons the content represented in the national curriculum and present in student materials and teacher's guides. These demands on teachers require specialized language knowledge, not general language proficiency. From the situated EfT framework, three functional domains of classroom language use were identified:

- Managing the classroom,
- Understanding and communicating lesson content, and
- Assessing students and giving feedback.

Figure 1 illustrates how these domains are positioned within the EfT framework.

Figure 1. Functional domains of classroom language use.

Each domain consists of an inventory of typical teacher tasks with descriptions of the kind of language functions needed to enact the task as well as specific language exemplars for teachers to use. For example, under the domain of understanding and communicating lesson content, one typical task is setting up an activity. To do this task, teachers might provide instructions and explanations for the activity. Specific language that would help teachers perform this task includes examples such as *Match the questions and answers. Take turns to read the paragraph. Underline the words you don't know.* The learning materials and assessment used in Vietnam are based on this model of classroom English proficiency.

The first two chapters that follow describe the context for educational change both regionally within countries in the Lower Mekong Basin as well as at sites throughout Vietnam.

- In Chapter 2, Nuangpolmak frames the relevance of the work in Vietnam within a description of the regional need for improving English proficiency throughout the five countries of the Lower Mekong Basin in response to the economic competitiveness generated within the ASEAN Economic Community. She then outlines one effort to address this need through an ELT project designed to improve communication skills among government officials across the region and based on an English for Specific Purposes approach.
- In Chapter 3, Manh, Nguyen, and Burns narrow the geographic lens to the specific policy context of ELT reform in Vietnam. Acknowledging the growing need for increased English competence, they describe a major policy initiative to improve teacher language proficiency as well as critical issues facing implementation efforts utilizing general English proficiency models.

The next four chapters explore the design and impact of the Eft course, based on a model of classroom English proficiency, which has been implemented throughout Vietnam.

- Katz, in Chapter 4, examines how the course is conceptualized around the aim of creating a widely accessible teacher development program for large numbers of English teachers. The chapter presents the course design, based on an ESP approach, and discusses the design and alignment of the companion assessment.

- Shifting to analyses of implementation data, Freeman, in Chapter 5, provides a series of snapshot descriptions of the teacher participants in the course, their teaching contexts, and their performance in the EfT course and on the *TEFT Assessment (Test of English-for-Teaching)*. The chapter describes their experience in the course and on the course assessment and includes comments on completing the course.
- In Chapter 6, Freeman extends this analysis of teacher data by examining patterns of teacher participation and performance. Using data collected through the course's Learning Management System and the testing platform, the analyses create inferential models that illustrate the power of comprehensive training and assessment data that are fully aligned. These data are illuminated by qualitative comments collected from Vietnamese colleagues and, together with the quantitative data, provide insight on large-scale reform efforts.
- In Chapter 7, Pham describes the results of a case study that investigated how teachers used English to teach English, comparing teachers who had completed the EfT course with those who had not. Her findings suggest how the course may be influencing teachers' classroom practices.

In the closing commentary, Burns highlights the major themes from the chapters, and suggests how this work in Vietnam may be of value to ELT reform efforts in other regions and countries.

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Improving Professional English Proficiency in the Lower Mekong

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In a region with such linguistic diversity as Southeast Asia, English is not only a means of communication with foreign entities outside the region, but also a common language unifying the ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples within the region (Hashim & Low, 2014). This has been especially true since the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in December 2015. As the official language of ASEAN, English has a crucial role in both economic and political domains. This chapter illustrates a collaborative effort to improve the professional English proficiency among government officials of five ASEAN countries in the Lower Mekong Basin to ensure equitable economic development of these countries within the broader ASEAN region. The English support project described in this chapter, similar to the *English-for-Teaching* (Eft) course, has adopted an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach in the design of its language training program to address the situated needs of the potential learners.

ASEAN Integration and the Importance of English

To provide the context for the situated need for the improvement of English proficiency, this first section gives a brief overview of the rationale behind the AEC and the roles of English in such integration. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 by Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, mainly to maintain peace and stability within the region. Brunei Darussalam joined ASEAN in 1984, followed by Vietnam in 1995, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. Economically, ASEAN is seen as a region with ample resources and opportunities. In addition to its strategic location in Asia with diverse destinations for exports, the region enjoys strong foreign investment and progressive policies on open trade and investment (Chia, 2013). Furthermore, the population of over 622 million in the region forms a large consumer base, with over half of the total population under the age of 30 contributing to the current and future workforce (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

However, since the 1980s, the region has faced increasing economic pressure from global bodies such as the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) and the unified market of the European Union (EU), and from Asian economic powers such as China (Chia, 2013). To respond to these threats, ASEAN economic integration was proposed to create “a single market and production base through free flow of goods, services, investment, skilled labor and freer flow of capital” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015, p. 5). ASEAN, as an integrated market of the former ten small markets which were trading separately, can now trade more competitively in the global market. Furthermore, ASEAN posits itself as “a neutral platform for the major powers to meet so as to avoid the dominance of a single power within the East Asia region” (Chia, 2013, p. 7). To facilitate a smooth integration, the AEC also seeks to develop common practices, frameworks, and standards, including mutual cooperation in those areas that promote the expansion of market base, sourcing of goods, and employment in areas such as agriculture and financial services, infrastructure and connectivity, and cross-border transportation (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

As English proficiency is an “unstated assumption in ASEAN documents” (Dudzick & Nguyen, 2015, p. 42), several ASEAN countries, particularly those that use English as a foreign language, have developed initiatives to improve their population’s language capacity. For example, many universities in Thailand have started to offer undergraduate programs, predominantly in the field of hospitality and tourism, with English as the medium of instruction (Sinhanet & Fu, 2015). In Indonesia, universities are exploring the possibility of offering English for Professional Purposes courses co-taught by English teachers and engineering lecturers. (Araminta & Halimi, 2015). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia has mandated a reform in English language education that includes the earlier introduction of the English language from Grade 4 and updating national English textbooks (Tweed & Som, 2015). These enthusiastic efforts from governmental and educational bodies reflect the significant status of English both as a means of communication in social (e.g., tourism) and business domains (e.g., trading), and as a tool for advancement (e.g., overseas education and / or career change) resulting from the increased mobility of goods and people facilitated by the AEC integration.

The Need for Improved Professional English Skills in the Lower Mekong

Within the ASEAN Economic Community, the five member states of the Lower Mekong subregion, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, share growing concerns about the gap in English language proficiency that may put them far behind the rest of

ASEAN in terms of competitiveness. There are several factors that warrant the need for improved professional English skills in this subregion: to promote equitable economic development and competitiveness within ASEAN, to increase capacity-building of human resources, and to strengthen the political presence of the Lower Mekong countries.

First of all, to pursue equitable economic development and competitiveness in all member states as suggested in the AEC blueprint (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015), the disparities in linguistic proficiency between the Lower Mekong subregion member states and the other ASEAN member states need to be addressed. According to Kachru (1998, p. 93), countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam are referred to as belonging to “the outer circle,” in which English is used as an institutionalized second language, while the rest of the ASEAN member states, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, fall into “the expanding circle,” where English is primarily used as a foreign language. Five countries in this so-called expanding circle share the same geographical proximity to the Lower Mekong Basin, which contains a wealth of natural resources fundamental to the livelihoods of their populations and their economic prosperity.

Secondly, to build human resource capacity, the population of the Lower Mekong subregion needs to be equipped with professional English skills to increase job opportunities both domestically and regionally. Compared to workers from English as a Second Language (ESL) countries such as Singapore and the Philippines, those from the Lower Mekong subregion have, on average, much lower English proficiency (EF English Proficiency Index, 2016). Factors such as limited exposure to English (Hashim & Low, 2014), lack of resources, large class sizes, inadequately trained teachers (Crocco & Bunwirat, 2014), inappropriate teaching methodologies (Baker, 2008), and mismatches between policy and practice (Choomthong, 2014) have all been blamed for the failure to improve the English skills of graduates and workers. With the AEC Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs), which promote the free flow of labor in the fields of engineering, nursing, architecture, surveying, accountancy, tourism, medicine, and dentistry, the disparity in English proficiency is a further potential obstacle to career opportunities (Crocco & Bunwirat, 2014).

Most importantly, there is a critical need to enhance the English proficiency among state officials to minimize the political disadvantage of the Lower Mekong nations on the regional stage. The advent of the AEC brought about a single market, and to facilitate this economic integration, ASEAN government representatives at all levels need to use English as a means of negotiation and collaboration. This has led to

another challenge for the five Lower Mekong nations, where highly competent English-speaking officials are scarce (Stroupe & Kimura, 2015). The limitations in language ability could disadvantage the Lower Mekong government officials in accessing information (Crocco & Bunwirat, 2014), articulating opinions, and participating actively in debates and discussions (Dudzik & Nguyen, 2015).

In short, there is a pressing need to improve the English proficiency of professional personnel and government officials in the Lower Mekong subregion to bridge the language proficiency gap and increase the subregion's economic development to catch up with the rest of ASEAN.

Addressing the Need: The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) English Support Project

The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), proposed in 2009, marks a commitment between the United States and the governments of the five nations in the Lower Mekong Basin to promote collaboration in building and sustaining local human resource capacity in the six key areas known as the LMI pillars, namely health, connectivity, agriculture, environment, education, and energy. Based on each country's comparative advantages and / or national interests, the five LMI partners were assigned a pillar to co-chair (lead collaborative efforts) with the United States. To illustrate, health, connectivity, agriculture, and environment are co-chaired by Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam respectively, while Thailand co-chairs the two remaining pillars.

One of the goals of the LMI is to enhance the competitiveness of the Lower Mekong nations in regional and global markets through mutual cooperation and knowledge sharing. English skills are seen as vital to communication and collaboration between subregional scientists, researchers, and policy-makers to achieve this goal. Thailand, as a co-chair of the education pillar, has been working closely with the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok since 2011 to develop technical / professional English skills among government officials and experts in all six fields of the LMI pillars.

The LMI English support project, titled Professional Communication Skills for Leaders (PCSL), was designed as an intensive and highly specialized training program to improve the participants' ability to communicate effectively in international meetings and to conduct effective oral presentations on topics in their fields of expertise. Additionally, the project aims to promote opportunities for networking among experts within and across the

different fields. With its narrow focus, this English training ideally serves mid- to upper-level government officials and / or researchers whose main responsibilities are involved in the fields of the LMI pillars.

The Development of Professional Communication Skills for Leaders (PCSL) Project

From the onset, the design of the PCSL project has focused on three main aspects: an ESP approach for language training, realistic simulations for language practice, and collaborative tasks to promote the sharing of expertise across fields / nations. All of these aspects are realized through the design of three modes of training: face-to-face intensive seminar courses, distance learning via webinars, and a simulated conference, known as the PCSL forum.

An ESP-Based Approach

Target-situation analysis. To design an ESP syllabus, an analysis of the target situation should be conducted to define the language tasks that are required in such a situation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This is because an ESP course is usually “fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners” (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, p. 125). In the case of the PCSL project, the learners are LMI government officials and the specific need is to be able to participate actively and communicate effectively in regional / international conferences. A detailed analysis of the target situation for PCSL learners is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Analyzing the Communicative Tasks Embedded in “Participation in a Conference”

A Target Situation Analysis Framework	PCSL’s Target Situation Analysis
<i>Why is the language needed?</i>	A working language between LMI counterparts; A means of communication in international meetings
<i>How will the language be used?</i>	<i>Medium:</i> speaking (oral presentations, discussions, conversations); listening (lectures and talks); reading (articles and documents); writing (biographies and abstracts) <i>Channel:</i> face-to-face, virtual (online)
<i>What will the content areas be?</i>	Six LMI Pillars of cooperation: health, connectivity, agriculture, environment, energy, and education
<i>Who will the learners use the language with?</i>	Government officials and policy-makers from LMI member countries (non-native speakers); Regional colleagues within / across fields of expertise (non-native speakers); American specialists from various support agencies who are based in the region (native speakers); Other experts and researchers (non-native and native speakers)
<i>Where will the language be used?</i>	Regional and international conferences
<i>When will the language be used?</i>	Concurrently and / or immediately after the training

Note. The Target Situation Analysis Framework is from Hutchinson & Waters (1987, pp. 59-60).

After completing the analysis, the PCSL academic team, comprised of US English Language Fellows (ELF, highly qualified ESL teachers who serve language learning projects initiated by U.S. embassies) and local English instructors from leading universities and language training organizations in the Lower Mekong subregion, developed the PCSL training program to address the situated need of “professional communication skills” within the scope of these language purposes:

- To participate actively in both formal (meetings and discussion panels) and informal exchanges (personal conversations);
- To understand information presented in both spoken (lectures and talks) and written forms (articles and documents);
- To establish and maintain professional networks;
- To give oral presentations on a field-specific topic; and
- To produce conference-related documents (a professional biography and a presentation abstract).

Skills versus content. To enable government officials to successfully carry out these defined communicative tasks in real life, the PCSL training program focuses on subordinate skills and knowledge necessary for the achievement of the core tasks. Skill building is central to the design of the PCSL syllabus while the focus on field-specific content is secondary. As many ESP course designers have faced the dilemma of not being able to fully address varying subfields within a particular discipline, it has been suggested that a general component, a “common core,” be taught as the main focus of an ESP class, complemented with activities that allow learners to work within their specialized fields (Brown, 2016, p. 11). In a similar vein, as the PCSL program was intended for government officials from the six LMI pillars, it was more practical and feasible to develop a skill-focused curriculum, yet allow room for content-driven input and / or field-specific activities. For example, to enable the officials to participate actively in discussions, language skills such as expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, and offering and requesting clarification must be taught. Thus, the PCSL common core lesson centers on the teaching of these language skills with the addition of pillar-specific content as input during the practice stage. Table 2 outlines the operational design of the PCSL syllabus with an illustrative example of a communicative task and the kind of language all participants would need to learn, as well as suggested activities for participants from specific pillars.

Table 2
The Design of the PCSL Syllabus on “Active Participation in Meetings and Discussions”

Target Communicative Task	Enabling Skills	Common Core Lesson*	Pillar-Specific Content
Participating actively in meetings and discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expressing opinions ▪ agreeing and disagreeing ▪ offering and requesting clarification 	<p><i>Example:</i> Learners are introduced to phrases of four language functions: asking for opinions, sharing an opinion, asking for clarification and / or confirmation, and providing clarification.</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> Learners practice using the phrases when asking for and sharing opinions with others on topics related to the pillar (e.g., for the health pillar, the topic may be “universal healthcare for all citizens”).</p>

Note. The Pillar-Specific Content is from LMI PCSL Core Curriculum Training Materials.

Simulated practice. The second aspect of the PCSL design is the opportunity for meaningful language use in the form of simulated practice. Simulation is an artificial creation of a real-world situation in the classroom context (Ma, 2009). Unlike a role-play activity, a simulated practice task does not necessarily require learners to pretend to be someone else. Given a simulated environment that resembles their real-world target task, the learners can take part as themselves. There are several opportunities for simulated practice within the three main formats of the PCSL training.

Face-to-face seminar. Firstly, each of the six cohorts of pillar-specific government officials separately participates in a 30-hour intensive seminar. On the last day of the PCSL seminar, each participant must give an oral presentation on an expert topic. This simulation aims at preparing officials for the target situation where they present their work at a conference. To deliver a good presentation, each participant must utilize the subordinate skills learned in class, such as basic pronunciation and public speaking. Also, the participants are encouraged to apply what they learn to write a good abstract of

their presentation and their own professional biography for a class-presentation handbook much as they would do for a real conference.

Distance learning. Upon completing the face-to-face seminar, each cohort enters the second stage of the training, which aims to provide practice of the skills via webinars. Thailand, as the LMI host nation for the education pillar, runs synchronized online training for all LMI participants who have attended pillar-specific seminars. Through this distance learning, which is designed as virtual-conferencing, the participants not only solidify and enhance the skills learned in the seminars with real-time feedback, but they also use language authentically via online communication / networking across pillars and among various nationals.

Forum. The PCSL “forum” is essentially a mock conference. This simulated event aims to further reinforce the skills learned and provide a venue for authentic language use. There are two forums a year, one after the first three cohorts have completed both face-to-face seminars and distance learning and one after the next three have finished. Forty-five PCSL seminar participants—three per pillar from each LMI country, selected based on exceptional performance or marked improvement—attend each forum, which is held in Bangkok, Thailand. At this three-day event, the participants can network with their pillar counterparts from other nations and have meaningful discussions on topics in their fields. To participate successfully at the forum, the attendees must apply all skills learned in the seminar and distance learning to navigate various tasks in this mock conference. For example, the participants can employ techniques such as back-channeling, using rejoinders, and asking follow-up questions to maintain active conversations. In addition, effective listening strategies must be activated if the participants want to make the most of guest speakers’ talks.

Collaborative tasks. To address the LMI goal of fostering collaboration in building and sustaining local human resource capacity in the six pillars of cooperation, another design feature of the PCSL training is a collaborative learning environment. This design aspect is realized through a format that allows government officials from different disciplines and countries to learn and network together both in person and online. In particular, the final task at the forum requires collaboration both in terms of field expertise and language ability to successfully create a group poster presentation. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2007), the dynamics of collaborative learning lie in “positive interdependence” (p. 16), which implies a shared responsibility among group members to reach a mutual goal, and “promotive interaction” (p. 16), in which members encourage and facilitate each other’s contributions through “assistance, exchange of

needed resources, effective communication, mutual influence, trust, and constructive management of conflict” (p. 17). These features of collaborative learning are believed to create strong social support and mutual respect (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012) among the group members, in this case, the PCSL participants, which extends beyond the class context into professional cooperation.

Conclusion

The LMI English Support Project, Professional Communication Skills for Leaders, was a response to the need for improved English proficiency among mid- to upper-level government officials, including scientists and researchers, to facilitate the economic development of the Lower Mekong nations and to promote knowledge sharing and collaboration in and across the six LMI pillars of cooperation. The design of the PCSL training adheres to the broader goals of the LMI Education Pillar in developing language training programs that place an emphasis on English for Specific Purposes, exploring new ways to utilize technology to provide distance learning and training and to promote communication between government officials across all pillars (LMI Working Groups, 2011). With the ESP approach to syllabus design, the training is able to focus specifically on the situated need for language use, namely participation in a conference. With the various formats of training, the participants also receive abundant simulated practice where skills are augmented and reinforced. Most importantly, the spirit of collaboration embedded in the training helps contribute to the sustainable economic development of the Lower Mekong subregion.

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Teacher Language Proficiency and Reform of English Language Education in Vietnam, 2008-2020

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Vietnam has recently witnessed a rapid shift from a domestic economy to one participating in regional and international markets. A number of foreign enterprises, corporations, and international organizations have chosen Vietnam as a potential destination for investment or for establishment of regional offices. Also, with the attainment of full membership in such trade organizations as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), Vietnam has become internationally prominent. This expansion of external trade relations has led the country to become more deeply involved in the processes of globalisation and internationalisation.

However, globalisation has brought various challenges to Vietnam. One of them is English language competence. In this respect, Baldauf (2012) indicated that “language proficiency is a core skill required to meet internationalisation requirements” (p. 1696). Under pressure of regional and international economic competition and fear of being left behind in the process, the Vietnamese government has expressed a strong political will and commitment to enhance the foreign language communicative competence of young Vietnamese graduates by introducing the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project (NFL2020) (Le, 2015; Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007). For the successful enactment of this project, NFL2020 has focused on teachers’ English language proficiency, which has become a critical topic in Vietnam. In this chapter, we review recent policy developments with a particular emphasis on the implications for language teacher English language proficiency.

National Foreign Languages 2020 Project

In 2008, the government in Vietnam promulgated the policy entitled the “National Foreign Languages Project 2008-2020” (commonly known as NFL2020, Decree 1400, or Project 2020). The intended outcome of NFL2020 is to provide Vietnamese students of all educational levels with “a good command of foreign language” (Decree 1400, 2008) so that they can confidently compete in regional and global markets (Bui & Nguyen, 2016). The overarching goal of the policy is singled out in the following statement:

by 2020, most young Vietnamese graduates of professional secondary schools, colleges and universities will have a good command of foreign language which enables them to independently and confidently communicate, study and work in a multilingual and multicultural environment of integration; to turn foreign languages into a strength of Vietnamese to serve national industrialization and modernization.

(Decree 1400, 2008, p. 1)

More specifically, the aim is that at the general education levels of primary (Grades 1 to 5), lower secondary (Grades 6 to 9), and upper secondary (Grades 10 to 12), students should achieve A1, A2, and B1 levels respectively on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The advent of NFL2020 has radically impacted language education in Vietnam. It is considered a driving force for educational language change (Nguyen, 2011), innovation, and transformation (Le, 2015) throughout the nation. Two of the most significant changes brought about in English language teaching are access and pedagogy (i.e., who should learn English, at what age and level in the educational system, and what methodology should be adopted [Baldauf, 2012]). In terms of access, the policy has lowered the starting grade for learning English to Grade 3, rather than the previous implementation at Grade 6. From 2018-19, a nationwide 10-year English program (from Grade 3 to Grade 12) is proposed, and the use of English as a medium of instruction for other subjects, such as mathematics, is also strongly encouraged. In relation to pedagogy, a communicative language teaching approach has become the policy backbone intended to accomplish an innovative curriculum at the three educational levels of primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary school. Students, who are central in the teaching and learning process, should receive maximum exposure to English for communication in the classroom and in daily life.

Language Teachers in Focus

To achieve the stated goals, NFL2020 has placed a major focus on the number and quality of English language teachers through the tasks of recruitment, training, and retraining. More specifically, NFL2020 aims:

- to review and assess the pool of foreign language teachers . . . at all education levels, especially at general education institutions, thereby formulating master plans and plans on recruitment, training and retraining of teachers annually, up to 2010 and 2020,
- to implement plans on training, retraining and recruitment of foreign language teachers of different education levels . . . to supplement teachers and standardize their training levels. To open courses on, and grant certificates of, training skills to those reaching prescribed foreign language levels and wishing to become foreign language teachers . . .

(Decree 1400, 2008, p. 3)

Obviously, considerable emphasis is placed on the recruitment and training of qualified English teachers to match the workforce demands, educational structures, and levels of professionalism required for NFL2020 goals. The policy also proposes that the assessment and re-training of the current teaching force should be accelerated and standardized through in-service professional programs or open courses in order to improve teaching quality.

Policy Mandates for Teacher Language Proficiency

Within the NFL2020 policy, communicative approaches have been introduced into the language curriculum with the intention of developing and strengthening students' communicative competence (Le, 2015; Le & Yeo, 2016; Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen, 2016a; Nguyen, 2016b; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007). This innovation in language curriculum is accompanied by the expectation that teachers will use English in the classroom so that students are frequently exposed to the target language. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued regulations to embed teacher language proficiency development in further teacher education and curriculum policy initiatives.

In 2014, the MOET issued a legal document, No 792/BGDĐT-NGCBQLGD (Ministry of Education and Training, 2014a), entitled the *English Teacher Competency Framework* (ETCF), which embraces five domains: (a) knowledge of language, language learning, and curricular content; (b) knowledge of language teaching; (c) knowledge of language learners; (d) professional attitudes and values in language

teaching; and (e) practice and content of language teaching. Figure 1 sets out the components of the ETCF:

Figure 1. The framework of ETCF (Dudzik, 2008, adapted from Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005 and Ball & Cohen, 1999 as cited in NFL2020, 2014, p. 19).

The purpose of the ETCF is to provide English teachers with information about what they need to know and do to be effective teachers. The framework is also “a tool for teachers and trainers to identify specific areas for training and self-study and to acquire expertise over time” (NFL2020, 2014, p. 17). Language proficiency relates to the first domain of the ETCF; against the Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework (VLPF), primary and junior secondary teachers must attain Level 4 to 6, and upper secondary teachers must attain Level 5 to 6 (see Table 1 below).

In 2010, the MOET promulgated Decision 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT (MOET, 2010), and in 2012, Decision 01/QĐ-BGDĐT (2012b), and Decision 5209/QĐ-BGDĐT (2012a), which set out new language curricula for primary, junior secondary, and high school levels, respectively. Teachers must satisfy the minimum requirements for language proficiency, that is, B2 for primary and junior secondary

teachers, and C1 for high school teachers, to be eligible to teach these levels.

In 2014, to avoid confusion and systematize the identification of the different language proficiency levels used in the national education system, the MOET issued Circular 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT (2014b) on the VLPF. This framework, which was officially adopted and developed from the CEFR, includes six levels of language proficiency, each with detailed descriptions. Table 1 summarises the different levels of the VLPF as benchmarked with the CEFR.

Table 1
Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework (VLPF)

	VLPF	CEFR
Elementary	Level 1	A1
	Level 2	A2
Intermediate	Level 3	B1
	Level 4	B2
Advanced	Level 5	C1
	Level 6	C2

To promote the VLPF, the MOET issued Decision 729/QĐ-BGDĐT (2015a) on the test format to be used for measuring language proficiency, which is known as the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP). Decision 730/QĐ-BGDĐT (2015b) provided guidelines on the implementation of VSTEP. A VSTEP test comprises four sections covering speaking, listening, writing, and speaking, as characterised in the samples in the appendix. Given the VSTEP task types and aims, it can be inferred that the VSTEP focuses on general English language proficiency and that this type of proficiency is measured through the four traditional language skills.

To administer VSTEP, the MOET developed a series of documents (826/TB-BGDĐT, 896/TB-BGDĐT, and 42/TB-BGDĐT, as cited in Announcement 3755/BGDĐT-GDĐT [MOET, 2016]) that authorised ten institutions to conduct the test in different parts of the country. English teachers are encouraged to sit the VSTEP with these test providers because of the low cost and accessibility as compared with those of other international test providers.

Realities of Vietnamese Teacher Language Proficiency

Since language policy in many nations tends to be “the outcome of top-down, assumption-based, and hasty policymaking” (Hu, 2007, p. 373), it tends to be accompanied by a surge in demand for qualified language teachers. Bailey (2007) asserted that “the proficiency level needed by teachers is often an issue of supply and demand” (p. 301). In such a policy context, teachers with limited language proficiency or little training might be employed as school language teachers in times of short supply. This situation seems to be unfolding in the Vietnamese context in response to the rapid introduction of NFL2020. For example, Bui and Nguyen (2016) and Le (2015) noted the shortage of qualified teachers at all levels in the education system, while others, such as Nguyen (2017) argued that the quality of English teachers is a critical issue for the effective implementation of NFL2020. Empirical research also reveals that English teachers’ language proficiency in Vietnam is significantly lower than the minimum levels advocated (Hayes, 2008; Le, 2015; Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen & Mai, 2015).

Nguyen (2013) disclosed that more than 87% of the 80,000 English teachers in state schools have low proficiency as measured through the nationwide assessment in 2011-2012. Eighty-three percent were primary school teachers, 87% were junior high school teachers, and 92% were high school teachers. These teachers were deemed underqualified to teach English (Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Mai, 2015). The high levels of underqualified language teachers were considered “alarming numbers” (Nguyen, 2017, p. 9) and “shocking results” (Nguyen & Mai, 2015, p. 1831). Therefore, many local educators started to believe that NFL2020’s goals were unrealistic and impossible to achieve (Bui & Nguyen, 2016; Le, 2015; Le & Do, 2012).

Noticeably, however, as was announced in a recent NFL2020 conference (NFL2020, 2016), for the period 2014-2015, the percentage of English teachers who met the language proficiency requirements increased sharply, from approximately 13% (in 2011-2012) to 54% (in 2014-2015). Specifically, 55% of primary, 56% of junior high, and 48% of high school teachers satisfied the required language proficiency levels. In other words, the percentage of underqualified teachers dramatically decreased from 87% to 46% after just three years. The differences in teachers’ language proficiency between the school years 2011-2012 and 2014-2015 are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of Teachers Who Met Language Proficiency Requirements: 2011-12 and 2014-15 (Nguyen, 2013; NFL2020, 2016)

	2011-2012	2014-2015
Primary school teachers	17	55
Junior high school teachers	13	56
High school teachers	8	48

There were a number of possible reasons for this significant improvement on the VSTEP. In 2011-2012, the MOET required teachers to take the VSTEP to evaluate their proficiency and obtain baseline information for professional development as part of NFL2020. English teachers were not well-prepared or familiar with this kind of test (Le, 2015). However, in 2014-2015, concentrated in-service language enrichment courses involving 400 training hours were offered to English teachers of all educational levels (Pham, 2013 as cited in Dudzik & Nguyen, 2015). These training programs were often run by different agencies, such as universities, colleges, departments of education and training, and the British Council (Le & Yeo, 2016). In addition, the VSTEP was officially introduced to teachers at this stage, and intensive VSTEP test-preparation courses, which provided test practice and strategies, were available throughout the country. Moreover, English teachers were pressured to meet the required standards. Nguyen and Thanh (2015) revealed that teachers in many regions were threatened with dismissal if they did not meet the language proficiency requirements. Arguably, these factors contributed to the significant increase in test achievement in 2014-2015.

For the period 2016-2020, NFL2020 plans to continue working toward its goals of standardizing teachers' language proficiency. In a recent interview, the MOET stressed that English teachers must meet the standard requirements (Phan, 2016). The minister emphasised the importance of quality English education. He further stated that teachers who do not achieve the minimum standards will be retrained. They are likely to lose their teaching positions if they do not meet the English proficiency standard. The most recent strategic policy objectives set for teacher language proficiency from 2016-2020 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Goals for Teachers to Meet Language Proficiency Requirements from 2016 to 2019 (NFL2020, 2016, p. 11)

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Primary school teachers (%)	50	70	85	100
Junior high school teachers (%)	60	70	85	100
High school teachers (%)	50	65	85	100

As can be inferred from Table 3, the priority for NFL2020 in its goal of developing teaching capacity in Vietnam seems to be developing teachers’ language proficiency.

Critical Issues for Teacher Language Proficiency in Vietnam

At least two critical issues can be raised from the discussion in this chapter on teacher language proficiency in the Vietnamese context.

First, assuming that 100% of English teachers meet the standard language proficiency expected by the year 2019, these outcomes are likely to “soothe the surface cut without touching the deep root of the problem” (Nguyen & Mai, 2015, p. 1840). Whether improvements in teachers’ general language proficiency equate with competence to teach English, and whether the required level of language proficiency means that teachers can use the language effectively for classroom instruction remain debatable. To understand “the deep root of the problem” (p. 1840), it is imperative to conduct empirical research at different levels of the educational system.

Second, some scholars are concerned that the VSTEP tests may not accurately assess teachers’ language proficiency (Dudzik & Nguyen, 2015). As there has been “little or no validation of tests developed and used within and across the institutions” (p. 49), variations in test administration and scoring are inevitable among the authorized test providers, which also raise issues of fairness and justice. In addition, test inputs are a matter of concern. Dudzik and Nguyen (2015) asserted that “some institutions employ longer or more tests than others, while some use one or two standardized assessment instruments (for example, the listening and speaking sections of Cambridge, IELTS, or TOEFL tests in place of instruments created by the various testing institutions)” (p. 49). Therefore, even though teachers may achieve the mandated proficiency level, one may question whether the measures of these teachers’ language proficiency are reliable, or more importantly, whether these teachers can effectively use English for teaching purposes. These scepticisms echo the urgent need for future empirical research.

Conclusion

The chapter has described the NFL2020's goals and its policy requirements for teachers' minimum language proficiency in Vietnam. It has then considered the current realities of teachers' proficiency and the NFL2020's initiatives to improve these conditions. In conclusion, although the NFL2020 has placed a major focus on standardizing teachers' language proficiency, the effective use of English in the classroom is under-researched and still of much concern.

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Appendix
Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP)
Description
(VSTEP <http://vstep.vnu.edu.vn>)

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Time	40 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	12 minutes
No of Qs	3 tasks: 35 multiple choice questions	4 tasks: 40 multiple choice questions	2 tasks	3 tasks
Task types	Test-takers listen to short exchanges, instruction / announcements, conversations and longer talks and then do the multiple choice questions	Test-takers read 4 texts on various topics relevant to level 3/B1-level 5/C1, around 1900-2050 words in total, then do the multiple choice questions	<p>Task 1: Time limit: 20 minutes. Length: 120 words at least. Weighting: 10/30 Test takers write a(n) letter / email in response to a(n) given letter / email.</p> <p>Task 2: Time limit: 40 minutes. Length: 250 words at least. Weighting: 20/30 Test takers write an essay on a given topic, using his / her experience and knowledge to support his / her arguments.</p>	<p>Task 1: Social Interaction. Test-takers have to answer three to six questions of two different topics.</p> <p>Task 2: Solution Discussion. Test-takers are provided with a situation and three proposed solution options and are required to give opinions about the best solution and counter-arguments for the others</p> <p>Task 3: Topic Development. Test takers develop a given topic. They can use the ideas provided in the form of a mind-map and / or use their own ideas to develop the topic, followed by some further questions</p>

Aims	To test different listening sub-skills from level 3/B1 to 5/C1: listening for specific information, main ideas, opinions, purpose, inferences	To test different reading sub-skills from level 3/B1 to 5/C1: reading for specific information, main ideas, opinions, purpose, inferences, meaning of words	To test written interaction skills and written production skills	To test various speaking skills: interaction, discussion and presenting a topic to an audience
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The Intervention:

The Design of the *English-for-Teaching* Course

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The *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) course was designed around one central goal: to create a teacher development program that would guide large numbers of English teachers through a learning experience to equip them to use English to teach English in their classrooms. This aim is not unique, as any examination of public sector professional development programs throughout the ELT world would suggest. Typically, such training programs focus on developing teachers' general English proficiency with the assumption that increased language proficiency will lead to increased language use in the English classroom. Unfortunately, little evidence suggests that these programs are meeting with much success (Butler, 2004; Elder & Kim, 2014). Taking a different approach that has produced encouraging results, the EfT course has combined a number of design features that set it apart from previous efforts to transform English language education, and incorporated them into an online learning experience to provide widespread access to teachers globally.

Online Learning for Wider and More Equitable Access

The course delivers course content via an online platform, a medium that offers teacher participants maximum convenience and flexibility when participating in professional training. It is designed as a self-access, individually-paced learning experience; as a result, teachers can log on and study as long or as little as they deem necessary and at times that are convenient to them. Because participants are, typically, working professionals within national public sector schools or in pre-service teacher training programs, this flexibility allows them to organize their study routines to suit their own needs and to fit into their daily schedule. The online format also means that teachers in both urban and rural settings with access to the Internet have equal access to the course, an equity feature that facilitates dissemination of professional development offerings throughout wide and disparate geographical areas within a nation. In areas where Internet access is more limited, teachers have found creative solutions such as asking Internet cafes to stay open longer hours to accommodate their schedule.

Integrated Research-Based Course Design

The EfT course is structured as a multi-part systematic approach to learning. The instructional core consists of an online set of course materials spread over 45 units and focused on classroom language. Before beginning the course, teachers complete a Pre-Course Planner that asks teachers to rate their confidence in using English to do a range of classroom tasks. When they finish the survey, they receive a personalized Path of Learning that suggests units to focus on based on their self-rating. Though all units and topics are represented on the summative assessment, this pathway helps teachers to plan and organize their time to maximize efficiency. It also acknowledges teachers as competent professionals who are familiar with their own practice and can recognize both what they know and what they still need to learn. At the end of the course, teachers' learning is documented in an online summative assessment aligned with the content and task types found in the course materials. The last component is a reporting system to track progress through the course and document achievement at the end. These integrated components of the program as well as the course design work together to support teachers in learning useful language for implementing the national curriculum in the classroom, receiving ongoing feedback on their progress in learning, as well as developing the confidence they need to use the language they are learning on a daily basis.

The course design is congruent with research on the features of effective online learning that lead to more positive outcomes. These features include designing content so that the training materials are relevant and applicable to the classroom; engaging participants in sustained practice of the content; and monitoring participants' activity throughout the course (McCrory, Putnam, & Jansen, 2008; Murray, 2012; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). The following sections illustrate how elements of the program meet each of these criteria.

Classroom-based language that provides relevant content. The content for the course is based on the functional use language model presented in Chapter 1 of this monograph. In this chapter, we show how the model is implemented in the design of the course. While most teacher language programs focus on developing general English language proficiency, the EfT course is concentrated on a specialized subset of language knowledge and skills used in classroom teaching. This approach encourages teachers to build on what they already know about teaching as they learn language that they can use to enact their daily lessons.

Each day during their lessons, teachers engage in multiple activities to deliver instruction. They take attendance, explain grammar points, give instructions for how to do a task, and check student work. Through analyses of classroom language used to enact those many types of tasks, the course developers identified three major functional domains to inform the selection of language content for the course:

- Managing the classroom
- Understanding and communicating lesson content
- Assessing students and giving feedback

Each domain represents multiple tasks that occur moment-to-moment in the classroom. Table 1 shows how each functional domain is linked with sample classroom tasks and possible language that teachers could use to carry out those tasks. For example, one way teachers communicate the lesson content is by setting up a learning activity. Teachers may do this by providing students with instructions and explanations on how to do the activity. To enact that task, a teacher may say, *Look at the picture. Use your notes to write a paragraph.* These language exemplars may not be the only options possible to communicate an intention, but they provide teachers with a basic set of tools they can use to carry out classroom routines and interact with their students.

Table 1
Classroom Tasks and Language Exemplars

<i>English-for-Teaching Domain</i>	<i>Classroom Routine / Teacher Task</i>	<i>Nature of language involved</i>	<i>Language Exemplar</i>
Managing the Classroom	Organizing students	Directions to students to settle down and begin work	Please go to your seat. Work with a partner.
Understanding and Communicating Lesson Content	Setting up a learning activity	Instructions and explanation for doing an activity	Look at the picture. Circle the correct word. Use your notes to write a paragraph.
Assessing students and providing feedback	Responding to student oral output during a role play activity	Feedback on target language, e.g., grammar, vocabulary, register	That's right. Nice work. Look at the example in the chart again. Those are great ideas.

The course materials introduce teachers to targeted language from each of the three domains and provide multiple chances to practice the language in varied task activities. That language is then incorporated into a lesson format. Each unit of the course opens with clear learning objectives and is followed by an animation of a classroom scenario in which the target language is presented. In this way, the use of specific language is demonstrated within the context of teacher and student interaction as dynamic exchanges that enact typical activities occurring daily in the classroom. In the sample screen shot in Figure 1, Ms. Choi is directing her students in several ways. First, she asks them to take their seats and then gives them instructions about how to carry out the reading task that is part of the day's lesson. At the end of the sequence, she gives them directions for getting ready to go to lunch. Her language is directed at times to the whole class and to individual students, including one who has interrupted her flow of instructions. Because the course is self-paced, teachers can listen to the sequence as many or as few times as they would like.

Figure 1. Screen shot of *English-for-Teaching*, Section 2, Unit 3.

Assessment content aligned with the course content. The focus on classroom language is also found in the assessment teachers take at the end of the course. The *TEFT* Assessment (*Test of English-for-Teaching*), developed by Educational Testing Service (Young, Freeman, Hauck, Garcia Gomez, & Papageorgiou, 2014), documents course learning in each of the three functional areas. It is composed of a variety of task

types, including multiple choice questions and open-ended questions, which require test takers to listen, speak, read, and write, often in integrated formats that include more than one skill area. Because the course materials and assessment have been developed from a common design blueprint, the task types and language choices found in the assessment mirror the tasks and content utilized throughout the instructional materials. In addition, the progression of assessment items follows the arc of a lesson, from beginning to end rather than in some randomized order. In the sample reading item in Figure 2, the test question asks teachers to choose how they will respond to the piece of student writing displayed in the middle of the screen shot. Along with the student's response, they are given the homework instructions that prompted the student writing, as well as the language chart that is part of the homework assignment. By reading all of these texts, teachers gather the information they need to answer the test question.

Reading
Questions 1.1 of 1.1
Assessing Student Work

Directions: Read the homework instructions, the language chart, and Student B's response. Then choose the correct statement.

HOMEWORK INSTRUCTIONS

Write three sentences about what you did yesterday. You must use all three verbs in the past in the language chart below.

LANGUAGE CHART

Today (present verbs)	Yesterday (past verbs)
have	had
go	went
play	played

STUDENT B'S RESPONSE

Yesterday, I have breakfast at 7:00 AM. Then I go to school in the afternoon. I play with my friend Lucas.

Choose the correct statement:

- ☐ The response has incorrect verbs.
- ☐ The response is off topic.
- ☐ The response does not have the correct number of sentences.

Back Mark for Review Next

Computerized Assessments and Learning

Figure 2. Sample TEFT Assessment item for assessing student work.

As with the learning materials, in this language test, the language skills being assessed are embedded within teaching tasks that represent the kind of work that a teacher typically does in the classroom. Thus, teachers are being assessed on their knowledge of

classroom language as it functions within the familiar context of classroom tasks and activities.

In reporting results, the assessment documents teachers' achievement according to a global framework of performance outcomes represented in Figure 3. The framework is organized according to the three functional areas: managing the classroom, understanding and communicating lesson content for students as included in instructional materials, and providing oral and written feedback. Band descriptors illustrate achievement at three levels for each of the functional areas by describing what typical test takers know and / or can do through language at each band level. Test takers receive a score report that includes a total scaled score which is placed at a point on a continuum across the three levels of the bands. In this way, the score represents achievement in specific features of language use related to the course content. In addition, test takers receive score information on language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as scores that show how well they performed on items related to each of the three functional areas.

<p>The TEFT assesses test takers' command of English to complete three types of essential tasks in <i>English-for-Teaching</i>:</p>	<p>Band One (Range 405-440):</p> <p>Typically, test takers in Band One can do some of these essential tasks. For example, they can:</p>	<p>Band Two (Range 465-500):</p> <p>Typically, test takers in Band Two can do a range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:</p>	<p>Band Three (Range 565-645):</p> <p>Typically, test takers in Band Three can do a wide range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:</p>
<p>Managing the classroom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete some classroom management tasks (though they demonstrate relatively limited command of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete a range of classroom management tasks and demonstrate a good command of most of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete a wide range classroom of management tasks and demonstrate a very good command of all of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program
<p>Understanding and communicating lesson content for students as included in instructional materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand short, written and spoken instructions for classroom activities (though they may have difficulty identifying key information at times) • locate some key information in reading and listening texts • combine and copy language to create simple new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give some short, very simple instructions for classroom activities • read instructional materials aloud intelligibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand some lesson goals and a range of multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities • locate most of the key information in reading and listening texts • combine and produce language to create a range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give a variety of activity instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand a wide range of lesson goals and multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities • locate all of the key information in reading and listening texts • consistently combine and produce language to create a broad range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give a wide variety of activity instructions accurately and intelligibly
<p>Providing oral and written feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify student written errors and correct them when clear reference models are provided • identify a relatively limited range of spoken errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a range of students' spoken and written errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a wide range of students' spoken and written errors in order to consistently provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback

Figure 3. TEFT Assessment band descriptors.

Sustained practice of the content. The online course portion is designed to consist of 30 to 40 hours of self-paced instruction that includes introducing language within the context of familiar instructional sequences and giving teachers multiple opportunities to practice the language they are learning through a range of tasks. Because users work at their own pace and spend varying amounts of time on the units, often based on individual Paths of Learning, actual online times vary. Each unit of instruction consists of four kinds of activities: preview, learn, practice, and reflect. *Preview* activities offer an overview of each unit and *learn* activities present the target language for the unit within a classroom setting. *Practice* activities provide teachers with the opportunity to use the target language. Included among practice activities are speaking tasks that, using speech recognition software, give teachers immediate feedback on their pronunciation. Teachers have the option of repeating the practice activities until they are satisfied with their performances. At the end of each unit, teachers can review the language they have practiced in the unit by means of *reflect* activities.

During implementation, additional sustained engagement is provided via a support component that can be operationalized through a range of mechanisms, from face-to-face events such as workshops, group meetings, and informal check-ins to asynchronous connections through social media. The events can be ongoing or intermittent depending on site-specific and participant needs. In contrast to the online component, which delivers the course content and thus ensures that teachers can access the same content at any time and place, the support segment, whether face-to-face or online, offers a social environment for professional and personal interaction where teachers can process their experiences of the course. It provides teachers with opportunities to practice what they are learning, engage in problem-solving as they progress through the course, and foster connections by means of a support network with fellow teachers. Of equal importance, the support component helps teachers localize course content as they discuss how to extend what they are learning to their own teaching context, often with guided questions.

Monitored activity through ongoing feedback. Both teachers and sponsoring agencies can access ongoing feedback about teachers' progress. Since teachers are responsible for moving through the course, self-checks within and at the end of the course units provide frequent feedback so that teachers know what they have mastered and what they still need to practice, helping them develop confidence that they are learning the course content. Because the EfT software includes a Learning Management System for tracking teachers' engagement,

teachers can also review their progress in the gradebook section of the system to see which activities have been completed, the scores, the amount of time spent, and so forth. All activities can be redone as many times as teachers would like. These monitoring tools likewise help teachers build a sense of the task types and criteria that will be used in the final assessment since the *TEFT* Assessment is aligned to the course content.

The Learning Management System also provides information that district or regional coordinators from the sponsoring organization can use to monitor teachers' time on task within and across each unit as well as their achievement levels and, thus, support them as needed.

Conclusion

As the demand for English teachers who can use English to teach English continues to expand, the need for programs that can support teachers' language development also grows. The EfT course provides an example of how effective design features that support teacher learning can be incorporated into an operational model with promising results.

- **Relevant content:** Instructional materials and summative assessment are based on a functional model of the language that teachers use daily in the classroom. The language they are learning is immediately applicable to their needs in teaching English in English.
- **Sustained practice:** Because the course is self-paced, teachers have multiple opportunities to practice what they are learning online. Supplementary support groups provide additional practice opportunities.
- **Monitored activity:** As teachers work their way through the course, they receive ongoing feedback on practice activities so they can track their progress and review, as necessary, areas for further growth. Additional monitoring is provided by coordinators from sponsoring organizations.

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***The English-for-Teaching Course in Vietnam:
Who Took It and What Did They Learn?
A Description of Participants and Their Experience***

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It provides me with modern effective techniques in teaching. I have learned many useful expressions to use while teaching in class such as giving instructions, giving feedback, checking homework and exercises . . . I was really inspired after I had finished my training.

– Teacher, Ho Chi Minh City

Starting in June 2013, Vietnamese policy-makers and government decision-makers began to adopt a new strategy to address the particular issue of improving teachers' classroom English proficiency. As described in Chapter 3, the umbrella approach to MOET goals had supported improvement of teachers' proficiency through providing general English courses, which were usually offered face-to-face through group instruction. The assumption has been that this type of conventional instruction would lead to more teachers teaching English in English. However, the results to date seem to have been questionable, as measured by general proficiency tests (see discussion by Manh, Nguyen & Burns in Chapter 3), and in the classroom (as Pham describes in Chapter 7). Between June 2013 and March 2016, a significant aspect of the reform got underway with 4,353 Vietnamese teachers completing the *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) course, a specialized training course focusing on classroom English proficiency (described in Chapter 4). Of those who finished the course, 94% sat for the *TEFT* Assessment (*Test of English-for-Teaching*), which is fully aligned with the course content and administered independently by Educational Testing Service (ETS). As the opening quote suggests, teachers seemed to see a direct connection between the language they were studying in the course and what they were doing in their classrooms.

This chapter examines the foundations of that connection, beginning with a review of descriptive statistical data that describe who the participating teachers were, including demographic information such as their ages, genders, and first language, as well as professional information about their training and the grade levels they

teach. We then looked at how these teachers perceived their general ability in English. These self-ratings express a judgment that is simultaneously social and linguistic. The social element of self-confidence with the language generally influences how a speaker makes use of the linguistic resources at their disposal in different contexts of language use (see Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; also Dörnyei, 1998). Lastly, we examined teachers' experiences in the course, looking at their test performances as well as evaluative comments at the end of the course.

The course is based in a broad policy-related premise that when teachers become comfortable, conversant, and confident with classroom English, they are more likely to use it in teaching. This view frames general English as a set of language resources that underlie and support the specific uses of the language that teachers have to negotiate in teaching. This relationship between teachers' views of their own general English proficiency and the specialized classroom language, which is presented and practiced in the course, goes to the core issue of improving classroom English proficiency.

The descriptions in this chapter of the teachers and their teaching contexts provide a basis for this thinking. The comparisons drawn are based on these descriptive statistics, and no significance testing was attempted. The chapter is organized in a group of nine "snapshots," each of which is anchored in a question that contributes to an overview of descriptive information about the teachers who took the course and who sat for the test. These data, and the analyses derived from them, are not meant to be a fully representative national sample of public sector English language teaching in Vietnam. In Vietnam, as in many countries, such data are minimally available nationally, particularly to this depth and analytic complexity. However, the data do present an extremely useful view on the unfolding reform. The analyses document a composite of English teachers in Vietnam—their backgrounds, their training in the course, and their performance on the assessment—and anchor the inferential models and analyses discussed in Chapter 6.

Snapshot 1. Personal Characteristics: Who participated?

This snapshot outlines the personal characteristics of the 4,353 teachers who participated in the EfT course. These teachers were selected by the schools they work at and the list was submitted to specialists from regional Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) for final decision. These participants were mostly women (77%); all listed Vietnamese as their first language. The majority (90%) were between the ages of 26 and 45. They included a range of

teachers from those who are new to the classroom (39%) to those who are fairly established in teaching (50%), as amplified in Snapshot 4.

Snapshot 2. Professional Preparation: How were they prepared?

When asked about their initial training and professional preparation, only 8% reported having no professional training in English language teaching. Just over half (51%) had between one and four years, which likely represented time in undergraduate forms of initial training. Forty percent of teachers reported having received five or more years of training.

The next two snapshots examine participants’ teaching experience—their current teaching situation and their previous teaching experiences.

Snapshot 3. Teaching Experience: Where do they teach?

The course is designed to present classroom English used in public sector schools, focusing on upper primary through secondary school. In understanding how the course functioned, it is important to know where participants were teaching—schools and grade levels—to better understand the uptake from the training.

We asked participants about the educational institutions in which they were teaching at the time they took the course. A large majority of participants (86%) reported they taught in public schools, which is consonant with the program’s goals. An additional 6% taught in private schools, 6% reported working in government, and 2% said they were not teaching English. Teachers also reported the grade levels at which they were teaching. Just under two thirds of the participants (61%) taught at the primary and / or middle school levels, which is again consistent with the design. Figure 1 illustrates the full range of grade levels taught.

Table 1
Participants by Grade Level Taught

Grade level	%
Primary / elementary	25%
Junior high / middle	36%
Senior high / secondary	24%
University	11%
Other	4%

Snapshot 4. Teaching Experience: What teaching experience did teachers have before taking the course?

A large majority of teachers (84%) reported five or more years' experience teaching. This information, taken in conjunction with their reported ages (90% between 26 and 45 years old) and with the fact that 51% reported one to four years of initial training, suggests that participants are likely established in their teaching.

The previous four snapshots capture the participants in the Eft course with information about their backgrounds and professional work experience. The following two snapshots focus on the topic of English. As part of the assessment process, participants were asked about their background in learning English. Analysis of this information, which is self-reported, helps to document the relationship between participants' views of their general English proficiency to better understand how these might relate to developing classroom English proficiency.

Snapshot 5. Experience Learning English: How long had the teachers studied English?

Just over three quarters of participants (77%) reported having studied English for at least nine years. This period would likely represent starting to study English in primary or middle school and continuing through university. Seventy percent of the respondents reported they began studying English in middle school or earlier; only 10% said they did not begin English until university.

Snapshot 6. General English Proficiency: How did they rate their general English proficiency?

When they were asked to rate their general proficiency, a very low percentage of participants (6%) rated their English as "basic," the lowest available option. The most common rating was "upper intermediate" (61%). Just over a sixth (17%) rated their English as "advanced." Research on self-assessment suggests that people generally tend to underrate their performance, particularly in language use (Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer, 2010; Harris, 1997), so while there are four distinctions (basic-intermediate-upper intermediate-advanced), most teachers chose the "upper intermediate" self-rating as a relatively safe level.

With the background descriptions in these six snapshots, we turn to how participants spent their time in the course. As discussed in Chapter 4, the course creates parameters around the English teachers' use to carry out this defined group of classroom activities. The course is

organized in three functional areas: managing the classroom, understanding and communicating lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback. The *TEFT* Assessment, which was developed based on the same framework as the course materials, documents test takers' language performance on these same classroom tasks. The course content and test are thus completely aligned with one another and participants are expected to complete both; neither the course nor the test is available independently.

Snapshot 7. Teachers' Experiences in the Course: How long did participants spend on the course? What areas did they concentrate on?

The course materials are designed to be self-access so that teachers can spend the time they feel they need to understand the content being presented. Through the course's Learning Management System, we were able to document how teachers spent their time as they worked with the course materials. About half of the participants spent between 17 and 37 hours on the course in total, with the median participant spending 26 hours. The outliers, who represented around 3% of participating teachers, spent at least twice as long on the course as the median participant. Overall, participants spent differing amounts of time, which is as expected, and their experience fell within the range of time for which the course materials are designed.

As described in Chapter 4 and also mentioned just above, the curriculum is organized into three functional areas: managing the classroom (Managing), understanding and communicating lesson content (Understanding), and assessing students and giving feedback (Feedback). Data from the course's Learning Management System and on the test platform allowed us to examine the relationship between how participants spent their time in each of these functional areas in the course and how they performed in the areas on the *TEFT* Assessment. These relationships are discussed in Chapter 6.

Figure 1. Time spent by functional area.

As might be expected in a self-access design, teachers varied considerably in how much time they spent on each of the three functional areas, as shown in Figure 1. For each area, on average, the maximum spent per unit was about 10 times as long per unit as the minimum. Teachers spent 39 minutes (median time spent) on the Managing units; 28 minutes on the Understanding units, and 25 minutes on the Feedback units. Three quarters (75%) of the participants spent at least 25 minutes per Managing unit, but only around 50% spent the same amount per Feedback unit.

The last two snapshots focus on the impact of the course, examining participants' performance on the course assessment as well as their views of their experience.

Snapshot 8. Teachers' Performance on the Assessment: How did participants perform on the *TEFT* Assessment?

This snapshot is in many ways the most elaborate because it documents not only participants' total scores by band and what those band scores indicate about their classroom English proficiency, but also the subscores by functional area of classroom language and by conventional language skills. All of this analysis is feasible because of the close alignment between the course and the test.

Overall *TEFT* Assessment scores. As described in Chapter 4, overall scores are reported along a continuum of band descriptors that is organized by three levels and according to the three functional areas of classroom English. The band descriptors can be found in the

appendix. Ninety-two percent of participants scored in the upper two score bands, with 69% in Band 3 and 23% in Band 2. Six percent of the participants scored in Band 1, and 2% of participants fell below this level².

In terms of classroom English proficiency, these total scores indicate that the 69% of the teachers scoring in Band 3 would, according to the TEFT Assessment descriptors, be able to:

- Complete a wide range of classroom management tasks in English;
- Understand a range of goals and multi-step written and spoken instructions;
- Locate key information in reading and listening texts;
- Consistently combine and produce language to create a broad range of written and spoken examples of lesson content;
- Give a wide variety of activity instructions accurately and intelligibly;
- Identify a wide range of students' written and spoken errors to consistently provide appropriate written and spoken feedback.

(Young, Freeman, Hauck, Garcia Gomez, & Papageorgiou 2014, p. 6)

Subscores by functional area of classroom English³. We analyzed scores according to the three functional areas in the course (see Chapter 4). We found that teachers scored similarly in all three areas, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2
TEFT Assessment Scores by Functional Area

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
<i>Managing</i>	86	89	12
<i>Understanding</i>	84	86	9
<i>Feedback</i>	87	91	12

Subscores by language skill³. We also analyzed the scores by language skill. This view represents language use in terms of the conventional four skill areas. The subscores by language skill, which are reported on a scale of 40 to 70, were relatively stable among participants. Listening and speaking had identical mean subscores (60), as did reading and writing (62).

What *TEFT* Assessment scores and subscores say about teacher performance. The total scores show that 92% of the participants can function at least at Band 2 (see the appendix for a full description of the band scores). Over a half of participants (69%) can function at Band 3. The differences in functional areas of English classroom proficiency are relatively minor. Participants were strongest (87%) in the area of giving feedback, which may be connected to the one-on-one nature of monitoring students and providing them feedback. In contrast, teachers performed slightly less well in the other two areas of understanding and communicating lesson content and managing the classroom. Tasks in the last area are generally not directly supported by classroom materials. They often involve addressing and managing groups of students or the class as a whole, which can generate more open-ended language use. Perhaps for this reason, these tasks seemed to represent greater language challenges for many participants than those in the area of giving feedback.

Snapshot 9. Teachers' Responses to the Course

As part of the program, participants are asked to complete a short survey at the end of the course; participation is anonymous and voluntary. The survey asks about their experiences with the course, whether they found the contents appropriate and useful, and whether they would "recommend the course to a friend or colleague." Forty-five percent (1,965 respondents) of the 4,353 teachers who enrolled in the course between June 2013 and March 2016 completed this post-course survey. Their comments were positive about all aspects of the experience:

- 89% of the respondents said that the course would be "useful" or "very useful" for their teaching in the future;
- 80% noted that the "increased confidence" they felt in using English in the classroom was one of the things they "liked about the course";
- 81% described the course website as "easy" or "very easy" to use; and
- 88% said they would "recommend the course to a friend."

Post-course surveys of this nature often tend to attract comments from those who are either very pleased or displeased with a course or service. These responses, however, seem to be very strong in that they reflect the views of almost half the course participants.

Closing Thoughts

There is a great deal that can be explored through these data; some of these key questions are examined in the next chapter. Methodologically, the data set is itself very significant, however. It represents arguably one of the more sophisticated, in-depth data sets available to study teacher learning through professional development in English language teaching. In contrast, other data sets are often compiled through snowball or chain referral sampling, in which survey respondents are asked to send the survey on to others they know. This approach leaves undefined the broader universe that is being sampled since almost anyone can be included. In other cases, data are collected independent of the training experiences that are being studied, so that teachers are surveyed about topics that have not necessarily been part of their training. This approach to documentation generates data *about* the training and can often lead to erroneous conclusions. Finally, data on teacher performance, if it is collected, is usually gathered through post-training assessments such as general English proficiency tests. While these instruments may document general English knowledge, they offer little insight into the specific uses of classroom language.

The design of the EfT course and *TEFT* Assessment creates a database that differs in fundamental ways from these usual approaches. The data are generated through the processes of training (e.g., Snapshot 7, participants' time spent in the course) and assessment (e.g., Snapshot 8, teachers' performance on the test). Because the content of the assessment is completely aligned with the course, as discussed in Chapter 4, connections across these data sets can be analyzed, as is done in the next chapter (see Chapter 6, Figure 1). Even the demographic information, which is assembled through the Background Information Questionnaire when participants sit for the *TEFT* Assessment (e.g., Snapshots 1-6), is integrated into the assessment process. Only the course comments (Snapshot 9), which are collected some time after the assessment, are outside the training-assessment process.

There are several positives to this integration. It does not cost additional money to collect the data and, more crucially, it does not waste teachers' time in doing so. With time and money two resources critical in educational improvement, this represents an important benefit. Beyond this, however, the data are rooted in what participating teachers are doing in the course. The data are created as the teachers actually work through the course activities. In contrast, usual activities in the training room, such as taking attendance or having people sign in, are ancillary to the training itself. Furthermore, this attendance data only show that someone was present at the training;

the data do not show what the attendees did and how they spent their time while they were there. However, the data on how participants spent their time (Snapshot 7) offer a window into what teachers were doing in the course; they give a view of how and on which topics participants spent their time.

The point here is that the course is self-access, which means that these choices can be seen as capturing what mattered to participants. Because the course content is directly connected to how they use English in the classroom, participants' choices on how they spent their time in the course suggests, arguably, a map of what they believe they can and cannot do. Finally, because the content and design of the *TEFT* Assessment are fully aligned with the course, the test can reasonably be said to document potential classroom performance, as is argued in Chapter 7. How participants use their time to learn, along with the data generated as they do these activities, provides an on-the-ground view that is fundamental to understanding how reforms like the *English-for-Teaching* course can create change and improvement in classroom practice.

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²Test takers receive both an individual scaled score and a band score. The former represents how the individual has performed on the test; the latter represents that individual's performance in terms of broad aggregated patterns described in the band description. In this way, the scoring system provides information on the individual test taker's performance as viewed alongside these general band descriptions. It is possible for an individual test taker's scaled score to fall below the first band, which is called "No band." It is also possible for a score to fall between bands. Scores that fall between two bands are treated as having realized the lower of the two bands.

³Comparisons of subscores across functional areas can be informative; however, they should be treated with caution. As with any test, these subscores are less reliable than overall scores, for a variety of reasons, such as smaller numbers of test questions.

Appendix A
TEFT Assessment Band Descriptors

The <i>TEFT</i> assesses test takers' command of English to complete three types of essential tasks in <i>English-for-Teaching</i> :	Band One (Range 405-440): Typically, test takers in Band One can do some of these essential tasks. For example, they can:	Band Two (Range 465-500): Typically, test takers in Band Two can do a range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:	Band Three (Range 565-645): Typically, test takers in Band Three can do a wide range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:
Managing the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete some classroom management tasks (though they demonstrate relatively limited command of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete a range of classroom management tasks and demonstrate a good command of most of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete a wide range classroom of management tasks and demonstrate a very good command of all of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the <i>English-for-Teaching</i> program
Understanding and communicating lesson content for students as included in instructional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand short, written and spoken instructions for classroom activities (though they may have difficulty identifying key information at times) • locate some key information in reading and listening texts • combine and copy language to create simple new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give some short, very simple instructions for classroom activities • read instructional materials aloud intelligibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand some lesson goals and a range of multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities • locate most of the key information in reading and listening texts • combine and produce language to create a range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give a variety of activity instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand a wide range of lesson goals and multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities • locate all of the key information in reading and listening texts • consistently combine and produce language to create a broad range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content • give a wide variety of activity instructions accurately and intelligibly
Providing oral and written feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify student written errors and correct them when clear reference models are provided • identify a relatively limited range of spoken errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a range of students' spoken and written errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a wide range of students' spoken and written errors in order to consistently provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback

Learning from the *English-for-Teaching* Experience in Vietnam: Insider / Outsider Perspectives

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The Problem of Misalignment Between Training and Assessment

The *ELTeach* project in Vietnam has created a unique situation in which to examine and to better understand how large-scale interventions can support the development of teachers' classroom English proficiency. In many reforms of this nature, the training and the assessments used to determine achievement as a result of the training often focus on different things. General proficiency tests are given following general language courses in the assumption that the content of both are aligned, or methodology courses are "tested" using general assessments that do not correspond with the course content. Usually participants and even key stakeholders are not aware of these differences. The net effect of these misalignments can be consequential, however. For ministries and governmental agencies, the misalignment can skew analyses of data and results, often showing the "failure" of the training, although in fact the assessment does not fully or directly address that content. For training providers, the misalignment can provide a distorted sense of what has (or has not) been achieved, and thus of the "effectiveness" of the training. Perhaps worst of all, however, the misalignment between training and assessment wastes teachers' time. It often produces a deficit picture of what they "did not learn or could not do" from having participated in the training, which contributes to their sense of dissatisfaction with or uselessness of the training.

The design of the *ELTeach* project was purposeful in aligning the development of the *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) course content with the *TEFT* Assessment (*Test of English-for-Teaching*) through the use of a common framework (discussed in Chapter 4). This alignment generated a unique data-rich environment in which relationships between three sources of information could be studied: anonymized data on the teacher participants (their demographic and educational backgrounds, which is gathered in the Background Information Questionnaire when they take the *TEFT* Assessment); data on their experiences while studying the EfT course (which is available through the online course platform's Learning Management System [LMS]);

and data on their performance on the *TEFT* Assessment (which is gathered separately on the online testing platform). Chapter 5 details some of these relationships. As shown in Figure 1, the three data sources can be related to examine how subgroups of participants, depending on features of their background and experience, spent their time accessing and using the course's online learning environment, and how they performed on the *TEFT* Assessment.

Figure 1. Alignment of data sources in the *English-for-Teaching* course

This inferential modeling has allowed us to examine patterns in how teachers participated in the course and how they performed on the test. These analyses are phrased in terms of questions (see below) which open up a series of insights into specific aspects of Vietnamese public sector ELT teachers' classroom English proficiency through the intervention of the EfT course and suggest implications for professional development more broadly. The analyses of the Vietnamese experience suggest a unique set of larger questions about supporting professional learning and development through large-scale reform in ELT, which are taken up in the last chapter.

This chapter presents four questions and the inferential models that respond to them. Like any quantitative analysis, the discussion focuses on patterns that are evident in the data; it cannot speak to why these patterns might be happening, or indeed what they may mean in the context of the ongoing reform work in Vietnam. To make sense of the latter, we turned to a panel of Vietnamese colleagues who are expert in the NFL2020 reform and its expectations of improving teachers' classroom English proficiency (as discussed in Chapter 2). In a focus group conducted in Hanoi in October 2016, we reviewed the models and discussed their possible implications. Comments from these discussions are interleaved throughout the following analyses. Overall,

insights from both these quantitative and qualitative data point to how large-scale interventions can positively affect systemic reforms, like those envisioned in Vietnam.

Building the Analyses

The inferential analyses in this chapter examined the interrelations between data on the 4,353 participants, their work on the course, and their performance on the *TEFT* Assessment, as represented in Figure 1. Table 1 summarizes the relationships we examined before settling on the models discussed here. We tested each possible predictor against three types of *TEFT* Assessment scores—the total score, the score by functional area, and the score by language skill.

Table 1
Design of Predictive Models

Possible predictor	Types of <i>TEFT</i> Assessment Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade level taught• Years teaching English• Self-reported English level• Time spent on course activities• Geographical location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total <i>TEFT</i> Assessment score• Subscore by functional area of classroom language (<i>Managing the Classroom; Understanding and Communicating Lesson Content; Assessing Students and Giving Feedback</i>)• Subscore by language skill (<i>Speaking; Listening; Reading; Writing</i>)

The models discussed here are those that yielded significant findings. There are other models that did not yield such findings, which could itself be worth considering. However, this type of analysis can only address relationships that have been identified as significant²; we cannot draw implications from those that were not.

As outlined above, we tested four questions against this combined data set.

1. How did teachers who taught different grade levels perform on the assessment?
2. How did teachers with different years of experience perform?
3. How did the general English proficiency level that teachers reported relate to their performance? Specifically, how did teachers who reported lower general English proficiency engage with the course and perform on the assessment?
4. How did teachers from differently resourced areas around the country engage with the course and perform on the assessment?

The first two questions examine basic background to see whether teachers working at different grade levels (Question 1) or who have different amounts of teaching experience (Question 2) perform differently. The third question examines the relationship between teachers' general English proficiency and their performance. Here we drew on their self-reported ratings on general English proficiency, which are gathered in the Background Information Questionnaire at the start of the *TEFT* Assessment. Some might challenge self-reported data as a useful measure; however, we argue that its validity in the study of performance in language-based tasks has been established (see Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer, 2010; Harris, 1997; and others). The fourth question examines the issue of equity in the provision of training—do teachers in different parts of the country, who have different access to technology resources, fare differently? The following sections discuss each of these questions in turn.

Model 1. Grade Levels: How did teachers who taught different grade levels perform on the assessment?

This analysis showed that after teachers who teach higher grade levels had taken the EfT course, they generally performed better in all areas of the *TEFT* Assessment. To develop this model, we compared the 1088 primary school teachers against those who said they teach middle school, high school, and university. The mean score for primary teachers was 569, which fell just within Band 3. As shown in Table 2, teachers of each of the other grade-level groups scored higher than primary school teachers on the *TEFT* Assessment overall. When we examined the subscores, we found that high school and university teachers scored between 4 and 7 points higher in the language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, the more relevant comparison examined the subscores for the three functional areas of classroom language—managing the classroom, understanding and communicating lesson content, and giving feedback—which are explained in Chapter 4. Here the pattern shows interesting features.

Understanding and communicating lesson content is the functional domain in which teachers of higher grade levels did better on the *TEFT* Assessment, which may suggest that because the curriculum content at those levels demands more English, they have greater need for and opportunities to use it. The scores in Table 2 below show the differences between primary teachers and teachers at specific grade levels (all score differences are significant to the 1% level).

Table 2
Difference in TEFT Assessment Scores (Total and by Functional Area) Between Other Grade-Level Teachers as Compared to Primary-Level Teachers

As compared to primary teachers...	Total Score	Managing the Classroom	Understanding Lesson Content	Giving Feedback
Middle school teachers	+11	+0.5**	+1.5	+1
High school teachers	+56	+2.5	+6	+3.5
University teachers	+72	+2.5	+9	+3.5

Note. All scores differences are significant to the 1% level except **, which is at the 5% level.

Overall, this analysis suggests that, having completed the *EfT* course, teachers' classroom English proficiency appears to correspond appropriately to the grade levels they are teaching. This finding may also reflect a sort of "chicken and egg" phenomenon: that teachers with stronger English language skills either seek employment or are assigned to teach at the higher grades, or that teaching at higher grades usually involves teachers in more regular and consistent use of English.

Panel comments. Regarding the first model that examined prior teaching experience and performance on the *TEFT* Assessment, the panelists observed that content in English becomes progressively more complicated linguistically as it moves through grade levels to university-level teaching, which means that teachers have more opportunities (or perhaps need) to use their language resources to communicate. In contrast, teachers at lower grade levels generally do not have as many chances to practice and use such a variety of language. Relatedly, they commented on the analyses that seemed to show that command over the domain of managing the classroom does not vary greatly by level taught, which suggests that there are core functions

and tasks that any teacher needs to communicate in English. The panelists also wondered about the differences in TEFT Assessment performance between participants who described themselves as middle school versus high school teachers. They thought it could be related to an “unclear distinction” between these designations, which were self-applied, particularly understanding at which grade level “middle school ends and high school starts.”

Model 2. Teaching Experience: How did teachers with different years of experience perform?

In preparing this model, we grouped the 4,353 teachers who had taken the EfT course into three categories according to the number of years they had been teaching English. The first group reported no experience; the second group, which we termed “early career,” reported between 1 and 4 years; and the third group, called “experienced,” reported 5 or more years in the classroom. The analysis compared the experienced group against the other two groups on the premise that greater classroom experience might support or even anchor classroom English proficiency. Table 3 below summarizes these comparisons:

Table 3
Difference in TEFT Assessment Scores (Total, by Functional Area, and by Language Skill) Between Other Teachers as Compared to Teachers with 5+ Years of Experience

Score Type	No Experience	1-4 Years Experience
Total Score	-20***	+12***
<i>By Language Skill</i>		
Listening	Not significant	+1**
Speaking	-2**	Not significant
Reading	Not significant	+1**
Writing	-2.5***	+1.5***
<i>By Functional Area</i>		
Managing the classroom	Not significant	+0.6***
Understanding and Communicating Lesson Content	-2.5**	+1***
Giving Feedback	-1.5*	+1***

Note. Significance levels are represented as *=10%; **=5%; ***=1%.

That is not what emerged, however. We found that early career teachers tended to score highest on the *TEFT* Assessment: 12 points higher as compared to the experienced teachers, and 32 points higher than those who reported no teaching experience (likely those who were new to teaching, or new or recently assigned to teaching English). The subscores revealed only small significant differences. The teachers reporting no teaching experience scored between 1.5 and 2.5 points less than the experienced group on the various subscores (general language skills as well as functional classroom areas), and the differences for several skills (listening, reading, and managing the classroom) were not significant. However, the early career group scored slightly higher than the experienced group in each subskill area (between +0.6 on managing the classroom to +1.5 on writing); interestingly, the difference in the speaking skills subscore was not significant.

One possible explanation for these findings could be that teachers, like anyone, use what they know as a basis for learning. The early career group (those with 1 to 4 years' experience) may be integrating the functional classroom language from the *EfT* course into their developing understanding of classroom teaching. Since their pre-service training is also more recent than those in the experienced group (with 5 or more years' experience), they may be more familiar and comfortable with general proficiency in English.

Panel comments. When the discussion turned to how years of experience are reflected in *TEFT* Assessment performance, the panelists made several observations: First, that new teachers, those with one to four years' experience, are often "eager and dedicated . . . drawing from their training courses, which can lead to strong results." They observed that experienced teachers, with more than five years in the classroom, tend to be "established in what they do in class and need continuing opportunities for development." However, as one panelist put it, "When you know the work, you look for the phrases to do it." Several panelists pointed out that there needs to be a more nuanced way to look at experience, particularly among those teachers who have taught more than five years, and to understand how "different professional courses can meet the needs of teachers at different stages of their careers."

Model 3. General English Proficiency: How did the general English proficiency level that teachers reported relate to their performance? Specifically, how did teachers who reported lower general English proficiency engage with the course and perform on the assessment?

These models examined what is arguably the core of the issue: the complex relationships between general and classroom English

proficiency. This relationship has been broadly thought of as one of whole to part, in which classroom English is seen as a subset of general language. The longstanding view seems to be supported by the common assumption that the more proficient the teacher is, generally the better³, so it has long been an article of faith that teachers need to study general English to strengthen their classroom English use. This analysis, and indeed the conceptualization of EfT discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, does not dispute that there is an interrelation between the two. However, it does disrupt and recast that relationship.

The model did show that teachers who rated their English as “advanced” performed better than other teachers in all areas of the *TEFT* Assessment. As noted earlier, we used self-reported perceptions of English to make this comparison for several reasons. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a great deal of discussion in the current situation in Vietnam about general English levels, and indeed Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) directives state—and the English Teaching Competency Framework details—the levels of general English that teachers are expected to have in order to teach. In the face of this explicit policy guidance, one could argue that participants might tend to overrate their general proficiency level. However, the context seems to mediate against that view. Teachers were reporting their general English level as part of the Background Information Questionnaire, which was collected online at the test center just before they sat for the *TEFT* Assessment. Under these circumstances, it seems more likely that they might assume their rating would be tested, which would lead them to report accurately. Further, because of this widespread discussion of levels, it seems that teachers had access to a widely used set of these general levels, which are often tied to employment more generally.

The teachers who rated their English as advanced scored 57 points higher on the test overall, as shown in Table 4 below. Their subscores in general language skills were 4 points higher in listening and 5 points higher in speaking, reading, and writing.

Table 4
***Difference in TEFT Assessment Score Between Those Who Rated
Their English as “Advanced” and All Other Teachers***

Score Type	Point difference in TEFT Assessment score
Total Score	+57
<i>By Language Skill</i>	
Listening	+4
Speaking	+5
Reading	+5
Writing	+5
<i>By Functional Area of Classroom Language</i>	
Managing the Classroom	+2.4
Understanding and Communicating Lesson Content	+7
Giving Feedback	+2.7

Note. All score differences are significant to the 1% level.

Here, the subscores in functional classroom language are perhaps more interesting. While it is important to note that these subscores tend to be less reliable given the fewer number of items that support the score calculation of each area, they do nevertheless point to the possibility that this specialized classroom language may not simply be a direct reflection of general proficiency. As shown in Table 4 above, teachers who rated their general proficiency as advanced scored only 2.4 points higher on managing the classroom and 2.7 points higher on giving feedback; however, they scored 7 points higher on understanding and communicating lesson content. One interpretation of this difference inverts the relationship between classroom language and general proficiency. It suggests that teachers who rated their general English as advanced did not score appreciably better than other teachers in two areas specific to classroom language use: managing the classroom, which involves directing student participation, and giving feedback, which focuses on teacher-student interaction. However, they did score better than other teachers—a seven-point difference—in understanding and communicating lesson content. This difference may reflect that curriculum content is usually expressed in general English,

and thus teachers with higher general proficiency may find it more accessible.

To further probe which factors seemed to predict how teachers would perform on the *TEFT* Assessment, we ran three correlations. Using the assessment score as the outcome variable, we looked at (a) the grade level teachers taught; (b) their years of teaching experience; and (c) their self-reported level of general English proficiency. For each variable, we factored in the time they spent studying the course content. Of these three variables, only one—how teachers rated their own general English—showed predictive value. Spending more time on the course content was reflected in improved scores for teachers who rated their general English as advanced as well as those who rated their general English as basic. This relationship is best captured graphically in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. How teachers with “basic / intermediate” vs. “advanced” general English levels (self-reported) performed on the *TEFT* Assessment as a function of the time they spent on the course.

The vertical line in Figure 2 indicates the average amount of time spent on the course. Up to this point, teachers who had rated their own general English as basic or intermediate scored an average of 18 points higher for every additional 10 hours spent on the course. There were also diminishing returns, however; beyond around 40 hours, the additional time spent was not associated with higher scores.

This model suggests the predictive value of the teachers’ own reported level of general English, which, in turn, raises questions about the value of pretesting, which is often a feature of general proficiency training to place participants at certain language levels. If the overall

goal of such programs is to improve language fluency, and if outcomes can be predicted based on asking participants to rate their own language proficiency, then what is the logic in investing time and financial resources in such additional pretesting regimes? Since teachers' own sense of their general English is directly reflected in these data on their *TEFT* Assessment performance, it could well be argued that such pretesting / placement schemes are not necessary, given such a self-access learning environment followed by an assessment. The analyses here indicate that teachers will spend the time as they see necessary to improve their command of classroom language use, which assessment results document.

Panel comments. The third model that probed the complicated interrelation between general and classroom English proficiency provoked an interesting discussion. Panelists, some of whom had direct experience with the EfT course as trainers, commented that general proficiency seems to support teachers in working with content but not necessarily with functional classroom language. As one said, this is "not surprising because general English may be good but that doesn't necessarily mean they know how to use English as teachers in the classroom." The study reported in Chapter 7 seems to bear this point out. Regarding the validity of self-evaluation, the panel agreed that "most teachers are likely to be honest about self-rating," particularly in view of the widespread familiarity with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels.

In discussing the concept of classroom English proficiency, panelists made several comments that tie together ideas about classrooms as specific contexts of language use and teachers' professional confidence. One panelist observed that many teachers "know most of the words, but don't know the collocations specific to classroom use," and another commented that teachers "may not be confident that it's the right language to use, so having it in a course gives participants confidence. Further, the global assessment also gives teachers confidence that they are using the right language." Expanding on the idea of professional confidence, a panelist said, "The language needs to be automatic. Teachers need to feel that 'I know the stuff and I believe it works, so I use it automatically.'" Because the course presents language in the context of teaching, which is familiar to participants, they have the sense that "there are no new words, and the language is within their level."

Model 4. Geography and Equity: How did teachers from differently resourced areas engage with the course and perform on the assessment?

The last model examined the questions of access to the course as a learning opportunity. Vietnam, like many countries, faces the challenge of how to deliver effective professional development to teachers across a variety of geographical settings, who in the case of EfT, have different access to online technology. To test this model, two subsets were created according to geographical area at the advice of Vietnamese colleagues: Participants from “urban” areas were drawn from Ho Chi Minh City, while those from “rural” areas came from Yen Bai, Phu Yen, Soc Trang, Hau Giang, and Long An provinces. As in the previous modeling, we examined *TEFT* Assessment performance as a function of the time participants spent studying the course. Teachers who lived in urban areas scored 48 points higher on the test overall, and did better in all subareas of the assessment. However, teachers who lived in rural areas tended to spend slightly more time on the course (30 hours average versus 28 hours average for urban teachers), and their test performance improved as a function of the time they spent. These rural teachers made gains according to the additional time they spent similar to the gains in the scores of teachers from urban areas as shown graphically in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Total *TEFT* Assessment scores by hours spent and urban / rural region.

The vertical line in Figure 3 shows the average amount of time the teachers in the project spent on the course. Up to this line, the urban teachers scored approximately 50 points higher for every additional 10

hours spent on the course. Beyond 28 hours, the additional time was not associated with higher scores for urban teachers.

This analysis supports the general finding that teachers, regardless of where they live and work, know what they need to learn and will make the effort and spend the time to learn it. It is encouraging to see that accessibility does not appear to impede professional development across geographical regions. This finding is particularly important given that government's stated commitment to provide accessible training for teachers in all areas of the country.

Panel comments. Turning to issues of accessibility and the fourth model that compared cohorts of teachers from urban and rural areas, the panelists were struck by the “very similar levels of improvement” shown by both groups. Noting that many provinces in Vietnam include both urban and rural areas, they suggested that the program can potentially provide more commensurate access across contexts and thus create more equitable opportunities for professional development. Further, the program’s online, self-access platform, combined with its formative assessment features such as the Path of Learning at the start of the course, promote “flexibility and self-monitoring and mean that teachers can repeat what they are not sure of.” As one panelist noted, the course offers “equal access to the content and teachers are able to apply the content while teaching, [which encourages] [their] different learning styles and needs.” “They can access it any time and apply it immediately,” the panelist noted; it is the “accessibility to the program that gives these results.”

Putting the Models Together: What do the combined analyses say about improving Vietnamese teachers’ classroom English competence?

These analyses point to several conclusions about the development of classroom English proficiency among Vietnamese teachers, which are summarized here. Teachers benefit from *differentiated training*, which can be provided through self-access *learning opportunities* in an online curriculum. In fact, this seems to be a feasible and efficient means of *reaching the national policy objectives* in NFL2020, discussed in Chapter 2. The concluding discussion briefly elaborates each of the italicized points.

Differentiating training. Meeting the needs of specific groups of participants is a broad goal of most professional development provision. However, this type of differentiation can be difficult to accomplish, particularly when working with large numbers of teachers across diverse geographical and teaching contexts. The level of analysis possible with the data from the project allows us to examine how

different groups benefited from the self-access training in the EFT course. In these models, we see that, having taken the course, participants performed differently on the *TEFT* Assessment as a measure of classroom English proficiency according to the grade levels they taught (Model 1), their years of teaching experience (Model 2), and how they rated their general English (Model 3). As features of their backgrounds, these three variables point to the benefits of differentiating support for professional training for these groups of teachers.

Learning opportunities. The teachers' experience with the course clearly suggests that conventional, one-size-fits-all approaches to professional development may not be as effective as a self-access model such as EFT. While there is evidence to support this view in each of the models, Model 4, which compared by geographical area teachers' access to and use of the course materials and their *TEFT* Assessment performance, provides further insight into this view. While locally offered face-to-face training is a familiar, widely practiced approach to providing professional development, it may not address the needs for continued access and practice of teachers in rural and under-resourced areas. The analysis shows that rural teachers who reported weaker general English, and who then spent more time studying, participated fully in the course, which was reflected on the test. Their performance suggests that the self-access design of the course functions effectively to create professional learning opportunities for teachers in rural, under-resourced areas.

Reaching policy objectives. All in all, the course was successful in providing participants the structured opportunity to study and to improve their classroom English proficiency in line with Vietnam's policy objectives. For training providers, the performance data available from the course and the assessment show what teachers at individual, cohort, and regional levels can do with English in the classroom. At the same time, these data can be used to indicate specific directions for future support and training. The rigor of analyses that are available from the participant, course, and performance data in the intervention (see Figure 1) opens new levels of accountability in training provision. Perhaps most crucially, these data are generated through the training and assessment processes themselves. Resources are not spent on establishing benchmarks, when that same data can be made available through the implementation of the intervention. This positions Vietnamese policy-makers to draw on data and evidence, rather than conventional opinion, in supporting the improvement of teachers' classroom English proficiency.

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² “Significance” here indicates how likely it is that a relationship would be found in the general population of teachers were they to take the EfT course. The levels are reported at the 10% level (one asterisk), 5% level (two asterisks), and 1% level (three asterisks). Thus the level shows that there would be a 90%, a 95%, or a 99% likelihood, respectively, that the relationship between predictor and test score would be found in a future group of similar participants. For example, a relationship at the 10% “significance” level suggests that there would be a 90% chance that the same relationship would be found in a future group of similar participants.

³ It is worth noting that this assumption may be rooted in the fallacy of native-speakerism (see Holliday, 2006), which itself supports a geocentric (and to some degree even racial) view of who “owns” English.

Appendix
TEFT Assessment Band Descriptors

The TEFT assesses test takers' command of English to complete three types of essential tasks in English-for-Teaching:	Band One (Range 405-440): Typically, test takers in Band One can do some of these essential tasks. For example, they can:	Band Two (Range 465-500): Typically, test takers in Band Two can do a range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:	Band Three (Range 565-645): Typically, test takers in Band Three can do a wide range of these essential tasks. For example, they can:
Managing the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete some classroom management tasks (though they demonstrate relatively limited command of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the English-for-Teaching program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete a range of classroom management tasks and demonstrate a good command of most of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the English-for-Teaching program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete a wide range classroom of management tasks and demonstrate a very good command of all of the managing-the-classroom vocabulary and phrases present in the English-for-Teaching program
Understanding and communicating lesson content for students as included in instructional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand short, written and spoken instructions for classroom activities (though they may have difficulty identifying key information at times) locate some key information in reading and listening texts combine and copy language to create simple new written and spoken examples of lesson content give some short, very simple instructions for classroom activities read instructional materials aloud intelligibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand some lesson goals and a range of multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities locate most of the key information in reading and listening texts combine and produce language to create a range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content give a variety of activity instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand a wide range of lesson goals and multi-step written and spoken instructions for classroom activities locate all of the key information in reading and listening texts consistently combine and produce language to create a broad range of new written and spoken examples of lesson content give a wide variety of activity instructions accurately and intelligibly
Providing oral and written feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify student written errors and correct them when clear reference models are provided identify a relatively limited range of spoken errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify a range of students' spoken and written errors in order to provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify a wide range of students' spoken and written errors in order to consistently provide appropriate, essential oral and written feedback

English-for-Teaching Training: Initial Impact on In-Service EFL Teachers’ Classroom Discourse: A Case Study

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In foreign language teaching contexts, the quality of teacher language is significant because the teacher is often the only linguistic model for students and so provides their main source of target language input (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Turnbull, 2001). To use language effectively in their classrooms, teachers need to achieve both a certain level of proficiency in the target language *and* pedagogical knowledge of how language can be used to support learning. This is partly because the classroom “will also have its own rules and conventions of communication, . . . very different from the norms of turn-taking and communicative interaction which operate in small, informal, social gatherings outside” (Cullen, 1998, p. 181). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, classroom English is actually a kind of English for specific purposes, the kind of language the teacher needs to use in the classroom, such as giving instructions, asking questions, and eliciting suggestions from students (Cullen, 1994; Freeman, Katz, Garcia Gomez, & Burns, 2015). While a teacher may have good general language proficiency, “she may not have command of the specific language to carry out what she knows how to do in the classroom *in English*” (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 130, original emphasis). In such circumstances, even native speaker teachers need to acquire specialized discourse skills to be able to use the language to perform various language teaching functions properly (Richards, 2010).

Vietnam’s In-Service Teacher Language Improvement Efforts: A Case Study

Although English has become the preferred foreign language at all educational levels in Vietnam (Pham, 2016; Wright, 2002), the level of teachers’ proficiency is one of the lowest among Asian countries where English is taught as a foreign language (Moon, 2009; Nguyen, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 3, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has recognized that a majority of students still cannot communicate well in English even after spending years studying at school and at university, although they may have accumulated a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (Ministry of Education

and Training, 2013a).

To address this issue, MOET introduced large-scale general English proficiency assessment and training and a number of methodology training programs for key teachers. MOET (2013b) delegated to universities the provision of classroom English training for a pilot group of teachers, starting in 2013. Teachers from primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools were selected by local Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) and sent to authorized institutes to be trained in classroom English language proficiency through the *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) course of Cengage National Geographic Learning. (See Chapter 4 for a description of the course.)

The study reported herein was designed to test the claim that the course helps English language teachers use English to teach English effectively by comparing the classroom discourse of two groups, one trained with the EfT course and one not. The study investigated (a) discourse functions used by teachers, (b) the frequency of using English to teach English, and (c) the variety of language use. The variation in general English proficiency levels of the participants who were trained in the course (as described below) also allowed initial comparisons to be made between the discourse of those with lower general English proficiency levels and those with higher proficiency levels after both were trained in the EfT course.

Methodology

Participants

A letter of request to participate in a study was sent to 50 teachers who had completed the English proficiency and EfT training courses provided by Hue University of Foreign Languages. Nineteen of the teachers agreed to take part in the data collection process and have their lessons recorded. All nineteen were in-service EFL teachers from provinces in Central Vietnam. They ranged from 25 to 47 years of age and had from 2 to 23 years of teaching experience. These nineteen teachers had been trained in general English proficiency at Hue University, one of the universities tasked to provide such training by MOET, after which their proficiency levels were assessed. Eleven out of the nineteen participated in the EfT course in 2014.

Of the eight teachers not trained with the EfT course, six were assessed as being at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 level and two at C1 level. Among the eleven teachers who were enrolled in the EfT course, three had obtained B1,

seven had reached B2 and one had attained C1 of the CEFR levels. See Table 1 for a profile of the participants.

Table 1
Participant Profile

Characteristics		Group with EfT training	Group without EfT training	Total
Gender	Male	3	0	3
	Female	8	8	16
Level of proficiency	B1	3	0	3
	B2	7	6	13
	C1	1	2	3
Total		11	8	19

Study Design

All participants were audio-recorded teaching one hour of class. The teaching session lasted from 35 to 45 minutes and focused on a lesson teaching new material rather than reviewing previous lessons. The lesson to be recorded was arranged in advance with the participants. Extracts of teachers’ talk were transcribed for comparison between the two groups.

Findings

Difference in the Frequency of Extending the IRF Follow-Up Move

The preliminary analysis of the transcribed data shows that, although there is no marked difference in terms of the discourse functions used by the two groups of teachers, there was a difference in the extent of the Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF; *Follow-up move* was originally called *Feedback move*) interaction exchange (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) between the two groups of teachers.

A close examination of the extracts of teacher talk indicates that the teachers in both groups used English to deliver instructional directions, classroom management functions, and feedback to learners. Among these functions, teachers in both groups most frequently used discourse to teach lesson content (e.g., to explain a structure, a word, or an expression), to give instructions for a learning activity, and to elicit a response related to the input (such as a question about a reading or listening comprehension text). The second most frequently found function in the data is discourse used to provide oral feedback to

student responses. This involves a teacher's evaluation of student performance (e.g., a student's answer to a question or response to a task). Classroom management is the least used function heard in the discourse of both groups.

Both groups of teachers used the IRF exchange frequently. The following excerpts illustrate a typical situation involving an IRF exchange and a typical extract of the exchange.

In Excerpt 1, the teacher initiated the exchange by asking the students about a picture presented in the teaching materials. After the chosen student provided a correct answer, the teacher affirmed the correctness of the answer and also repeated the correct answer.

Excerpt 1

<i>Initiation</i>	Teacher:	Where is Mary? ... Where is Mary? ...
Lien.
<i>Response</i>	Student (Lien):	In the supermarket ... She is in a
supermarket.
<i>Follow-up</i>	Teacher:	That's right. She's in a supermarket.

Although both groups of participants commonly use the IRF exchange, teachers who had participated in the EfT course tended to extend the follow-up move more often than those who had not participated in EfT training. The difference between the discourse of the two groups is illustrated in the examples below where two teachers, one from each group, were recorded teaching the same lesson, a reading comprehension passage. Excerpt 2 is from a teacher who did not do the EfT course.

Excerpt 2

<i>Initiation</i>	Teacher A:	What does she often have for dinner?
<i>Response</i>	Student:	Soup and vegetables uhm a lot of
vegetables.
<i>Follow-up</i>	Teacher A:	Right. Soup and a lot of vegetables.

Excerpt 3 involves a teacher with EfT training.

Excerpt 3

- Initiation

Teacher B:

What does she often have for dinner? . . .
Nga.
- Response

Student (Nga):

Soup and a lot of vegetables.
- Follow-up

Teacher B:

Correct . . . Why does she eat a lot of
vegetables? . . . Why? . . . Nam?

As seen above, while Teacher A chose to provide feedback to her student and also repeated the correct answer, Teacher B extended the follow-up move by both providing an evaluation of the student’s answer (*Correct*) and initiating another question (*Why does she eat a lot of vegetables?*). Leading from the information in the student’s answer, Teacher B further engaged the learner with input from the reading passage. The group with EfT training (11 teachers) provided 145 examples of IRF exchanges with the extended follow-up move while the eight teachers without EfT training provided only 25 examples of this strategy (see Table 2).

Table 2
Comparison of Number of Extended Follow-Up Moves in IRF Exchange Between Teachers With and Without EfT Training

	Group with EfT training (<i>n</i> = 11)	Group without EfT training (<i>n</i> = 8)
Lessons recorded	11	8
IRF exchanges	242	136
Total of extended Follow-up moves	145	25
Average times per lesson / teacher	13.2	2.8
Average percentage out of total IRFs	59.9	18.4

On average, teachers with EfT training chose to extend the follow-up move 13.2 times per lesson, while teachers without EfT training extended the move 2.8 times. Indeed, the teachers with the training chose to provide more than just evaluative information as they extended the follow-up move by reformulating their elicitations, requesting confirmation, checking comprehension, and asking for further reasoning, elaboration, and explanation.

This is an encouraging finding for teacher-led interactions because if the follow-up move in the IRF interaction is content-focused (i.e., with discourse functions) rather than only form-focused (i.e., with evaluative functions), then the IRF chain is more communicative and learner-directed (Cullen, 2002).

Given that not all teachers in the two groups taught the same lessons or the same grades and that the number of teachers and number of lessons recorded were limited, the difference in the frequency of the follow-up move expansion should be considered with caution. However, the remarkable difference suggests that EfT training does have an impact on teachers' discourse.

It is also interesting to note that the tendency to extend the follow-up move is found only in instructional discourse, not in classroom management. One possible explanation for this is that classroom management directions are usually clear to students, meaning that the teacher does not need to provide further verbal feedback.

Difference in the Frequency of Using English for Teaching English

Although the discourse functions used were the same for each group, the group with EfT training generally has lower general English proficiency levels (3 have B1, 7 have B2, and 1 has C1) than the group without EfT training (6 B2 and 2 C1; see Table 1). However, the group with the training shows higher frequency levels in using English to deliver various functions in the classroom.

Of 43 instances of Vietnamese being used in 19 recorded teaching hours, 37 instances were by the eight teachers without EfT training, and only four instances were by the group with the training (see Table 3).

Table 3

Comparison of Number of Instances of Vietnamese Used in Teaching Between Teachers With and Without EfT Training

	Group with EfT training (<i>n</i> = 11)	Group without EfT training (<i>n</i> = 8)
Number of lessons recorded	11	8
Total number of instances Vietnamese used	6	37
Average	0.4	4.6

On average, teachers without EfT training used their mother tongue 4.6 times per English lesson while teachers with EfT training used Vietnamese only 0.4 times per lesson. Among 37 uses of the mother tongue by teachers without EfT training, 28 were for pedagogical functions, that is, to explain words or structures, and nine were for classroom management. Among the 28 times the teachers used Vietnamese for pedagogical purposes, there were 13 instances of the teachers switching to Vietnamese after trying to communicate in English once or twice without success. In contrast, just one of the six times teachers with the training used Vietnamese in their classroom was for a pedagogical reason while the remaining five times were for classroom management purposes.

Previous research on Vietnamese primary teachers of English (e.g., Pham, 2013) has shown that even when teachers have a relatively good level of general English proficiency (CEFR-B2 and above), they still tend to code-switch from English to Vietnamese and that teachers with lower proficiency levels do the same twice as often. The current findings suggest that even when teachers have a limited general English proficiency level, they can still fulfill classroom discourse functions in the target language once they are proficient in classroom English. The findings do not suggest that the amount of rich, meaningful input provided by the group with EfT training is greater than that provided by the group without the training. However, the findings do show that even with lower levels of general English proficiency, teachers with the training can use English as their primary medium of communication while relying less on the use of their mother tongue.

Difference in the Variety of Language Use

While the group without EfT training relied primarily on a few expressions to deliver particular functions in the classroom, the teachers with the training employed a variety of structures and vocabulary. For instance, while encouraging students to answer a question (often from the textbook), the former tended to read the question aloud and invite students to answer by saying:

- A. Who can answer this question? Who can?
- B. What is the answer?

Questions A and B were frequently heard in the classrooms of both groups of teachers, but a wider range of expressions was found in the group with EfT training. Among the most commonly heard expressions were:

- C. Who can? Please raise your hand.
- D. Who wants to volunteer?
- E. Who knows the answer?
- F. Nam, do you know the answer to Question 1?
- G. Thuý, do you want to try Number 2?

When delivering feedback to incorrect answers, the teachers who participated in the EfT course used expressions that both provide evaluative information and encourage learners to try another answer. The following three expressions were heard by the teachers with the EfT course:

- H. That's a good try. Thank you, [student name]. But who has a different answer?
- I. Good guess, [student name]. Do you all agree? Who has a different idea?
- J. That's very close. Who else wants to try?

This kind of feedback is absent from the data of the group without classroom English training, who tended to provide mainly corrective feedback in response to students' incorrect answers. For example:

- K. That's incorrect / Wrong. Who has a different idea?
- L. Is that right, class? Wrong? That's not right. What is the answer?

In terms of language accuracy, the group without EfT training used a number of common expressions incorrectly. The most obvious case was of *Are you OK?* to mean *Do you understand?* on 21 occasions, as illustrated in the extracts below:

Excerpt 4

Teacher: *To invent* is to make something new . . . An inventor creates new things like television, telephone for the first time. Are you OK?

In Excerpt 4, the expression *Are you OK?* was used to check whether the students understood the explanations of the verb *to invent* and the noun *inventor*. However, in everyday English, *Are you OK?* is not used to

check comprehension but rather to check if someone is well or not. This expression was also employed incorrectly at the end of the teachers' instructions for a task or exercise, as shown in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5

Teacher: Now compare Picture A with Picture B and then describe the differences between two pictures. For example, in Picture A, there are how many cars?

Students: Two.

Teacher: Yes, two cars but there is how many cars in Picture B?

Student: One.

Teacher: Yes, one. Are you OK?

The incorrect use of *Are you OK?* was found only once in the data from the teachers with EfT training.

Discourse of Teachers with Different General English Proficiency Levels Within the EfT Group

As seen in Table 1, the group with EfT training has eleven teachers whose general English proficiency levels vary. This gave the researcher a chance to compare the classroom discourse of teachers with different levels of general English proficiency. The analysis indicates that there is no significant difference between these teachers in their frequency of using the mother tongue to teach English or in the variety of language use for classroom functions. There is a slight difference in the tendency to extend the follow-up move where the teacher assessed at a C1 level has the highest number of extensions of the follow-up move in IRF exchanges. However, with just one participant at C1 level, this difference is not significant and no conclusions can be drawn.

The expression *Are you OK?* used improperly to mean *Do you understand?* was used by a teacher at B1 level, but again, more data are needed before any conclusion can be drawn.

Farrell (2015) asserted that a teacher should be recognized as effective by what she has learnt and can do in her own classroom. Preliminary findings suggest that, when trained in classroom English, non-native language teachers with lower general English levels can still fulfill major classroom functions to the extent required of a language teacher.

Conclusion

If the impact of professional development programs is to lead to change in the classroom (Guskey, 2002), then language improvement training should seek to bring about changes first in teachers' classroom discourse. This research has shown that, when trained with EfT, teachers with slightly lower general English proficiency (e.g., B1) can use English to fulfil all pedagogical functions in their classrooms. They also use a wider range of expressions in their classrooms. The teachers not trained in EfT do not necessarily teach English through English even when their level of general English proficiency is higher. They also tend to provide more evaluative feedback on the correctness of the student answer (form-focused) rather than on discourse functions (content-focused) although the latter is believed to be more beneficial to language learners (Cullen, 2002).

While many of the findings of the study are associated with and subject to the content of the EfT course, and so should be handled with care, the initial results of the positive impact of EfT training on the trainees' classroom discourse have confirmed that general language proficiency alone does not guarantee effective use of the language to teach the language and that EfT training does have an impact on effective use of language to teach language, regardless of teacher general English proficiency level.

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¹ Some of the data in this chapter appeared in the article “Diễn ngôn lớp học tiếng Anh sau bồi dưỡng sư phạm và hàm ý về chuẩn năng lực của giáo viên ngoại ngữ” (In-service teachers’ classroom discourse after *English-for-Teaching* training and implications for language proficiency standards of English language teachers) in the *Vietnamese Journal of Language*, 330 (November), 37-49. (2016).

Classroom English Proficiency: What Can Be Learned from the Vietnam Experience?

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Across the world, public education sectors are struggling to keep up with the burgeoning demand for English and the aspiration to bring the teaching of English to learners at all levels of the educational system. One of the major challenges, which must be met over short timespans as new policies are rapidly introduced, is the adequate supply and training of teachers (Andrews, 2003; Manh, Nguyen, & Burns, this volume; Nunan, 2003; Richards, 2010). It is clear that what might be called “20th century” (Burns, 2017) modes of delivering professional development to English language teachers, typically configured as face-to-face input in the form of presentations and workshops, accompanied by the expectation that teachers will then implement new modes of instruction in the classroom, will no longer suffice. Such training often has little impact because of its “brevity, prescriptiveness, and disconnection of theory with practice” (Yan & He, 2015, p. 2). Moreover, it is limited in terms of the number of teachers who can be accommodated at any one time, meaning that offering adequate training to the large numbers of teachers employed in public education systems consumes a considerable amount of time and human resources.

While there may still be scepticism in some quarters about the effectiveness of large-scale online training for teachers in comparison with “brick-and-mortar professional development” (Murray, 2013, p. 13), the chapters in this monograph offer convincing insights into the potential of online courses when they are customised to the needs of individual teachers. The chapters also provide empirical support that given certain underpinnings, online professional development can be very effective in contributing to language teacher learning. Notable among these underpinnings are:

- Close alignment of modes and content of training with assessment
- Teachers' perceptions of their general English proficiency
- Teacher self-selection of the language areas they want to improve
- Flexible approaches to time spent on learning tasks
- A summative assessment that documents what has been learned and identifies directions for further learning

The accounts provided in the chapters here offer evidence that the *English-for-Teaching* (EfT) course, which adopted these principles, proved to be successful in various ways. Consequently, a number of other insights and implications can be drawn from the data illustrated in the previous chapters to further support this approach:

- Personalised and personally determined learning appears to be motivating and effective.
- Teachers are able to self-analyse the language they need and can use it in the classroom.
- Teachers will make efforts to access training they believe to be personally relevant, even under conditions where resources may be scarce.
- The needs of teachers at different stages of development / training can be accommodated through a flexible approach to the time needed to complete tasks,

The various points itemized above provide both a prospectus for and a summation of the principles the developers of the EfT course had in mind (see the chapters by Katz, this volume). The next section delves into these insights and the lessons learned through an examination of some of the major themes that recur across the chapters in this book.

Key Themes and Lessons Learned

To close off the volume, the key themes are highlighted in the sections that follow as a way of synthesising some of the major messages. These lessons learned are very likely to have relevance for readers beyond the specific Vietnamese context of the research.

The Central Importance and Viability of Classroom English Language Proficiency

A major theme that permeates the previous chapters is the central importance of teachers' language proficiency in the language they are teaching. Teaching through the medium of English is increasingly being demanded through government policy, as is the case in Vietnam, but

also in other Asian countries, including China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and elsewhere (Nunan, 2003; Richards, 2017). However, there is major concern on the part of governments and institutions across the world about adequate levels of English teacher language proficiency. This concern is not only manifested through government policies to test and improve language proficiency; non-native speaking (NNS) language teachers are themselves acutely conscious of the need to be proficient enough to use the language in the classroom and desire to do so. The assumption appears to be that improvement in general English proficiency leads automatically to improved classroom teaching.

However, as highlighted in this volume (see Manh et al., this volume), and elsewhere (e.g., Coleman, 2011), government attempts to increase teachers' language competence through standardised general proficiency frameworks - such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - which are aimed at increasing teachers "command of English" (Freeman, Katz, Garcia Gomez, & Burns, 2015) have been largely disappointing and frustrating.

What is particularly foregrounded in this volume is a new direction in thinking about the challenge of improving teacher competence to teach English in English (but see also Shin, 2003), one that is guided by the concept of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), "where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain" (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013, p. 2). The specific purpose and the particular domain in this case are the language that is needed for the teaching that goes on in English language classrooms (see Katz's first chapter in this volume). This concept is one that brings into focus and links with other research developments as outlined in the following sections.

The Concept of Professional Communication and Classroom English Proficiency

Seeing teacher English language proficiency as integrally linked to the language teacher's need and ability to operate professionally in the classroom offers a new lens through which to negotiate the "problem" of improving teachers' language skills. This lens allows for conceptualizing the use of classroom English language in developmental rather than in deficit terms by affirming what teachers know about teaching. Teachers are no different from other professionals in their need to socialize themselves into the specific discourses and language uses of their work (see Nuangpolmak, this volume, where interestingly the issue of the development of professional communication skills for leaders in the context of ASEAN is also approached through an ESP perspective).

The identifiable specificity of the language needed for professional communication has long been recognised in other spheres of applied linguistics work (e.g., Bhatia & Bremner, 2014), but paradoxically seems to have received little or no attention in the field of English language teaching. As various chapters in the volume emphasize (see both chapters by Katz; both chapters by Freeman; Pham), the language needed by teachers to operate in the English classroom language is distinguishable from the generic language use implicated in most language proficiency frameworks, as much as it is distinguishable from the specific language used in other professions. This aspect of training in the particular discourses needed within the language classroom, rather than in the systems of the language, is typically absent in most teacher training programs (Gan, 2012). It should not be surprising then when such training fails to help teachers develop effective communication for English language teaching.

The Significance of the Concept of Knowledge-for-Teaching

A further theme relates to the nature of the knowledge needed for teaching (Freeman, 2016). For English language teachers, the ability to draw on their repertoire of English to teach effectively in the classroom is indisputable. In many locations, including Vietnam, the classroom is likely to be a major opportunity for learners to be exposed to English; thus, an important part of English teachers' responsibility is to use English to teach English. However, competence in English does not equate with quality language teaching or even knowing how to teach the language at all. Thus, courses that carefully direct their language content towards the kind of practical tasks required pedagogically in the classroom are likely to be more effective in enhancing practical knowledge about teaching, as illustrated in Pham (this volume). The data presented by Pham also highlight the serious need for research that investigates the impact of development in classroom language proficiency on the quality of English teaching. Pedagogical knowledge for teaching comes from the language the teacher knows and needs to use to manage the classroom, present and practice the content, and correct students. In other words, it lies in how language is used to teach, as Pham illustrates.

In this respect, a fundamental theoretical question that underpins the EfT course is: What is it that teachers need to know about their content area and be able to do in order to teach it effectively? (For elementary mathematics, see Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; for English language teaching, see Freeman, 2016). The knowledge required to teach a language consists not only of the knowledge of the language itself but also knowledge of the content and the students, as well as

how to teach the content. In relation to elementary school mathematics, Ball and her colleagues argued that this orientation “places the emphasis on the use of knowledge in and for teaching rather than on teachers themselves” (p. 394). This kind of knowledge constitutes knowledge-for-teaching and the EfT course builds upon this concept with a view to providing language for teaching that is purposeful for student learning. This volume provides strong evidence that teachers value training that is focused on and enables their actual classroom practice, rather than training that promotes generic and decontextualised ideas. The analyses in the two chapters by Freeman, for example, show that teachers are prepared to take up and use training in language that is classroom-focused.

The Impact of Teacher Confidence on Language Proficiency

The concept of teacher professional confidence emerges in these chapters as closely bound up with teachers’ proficiency in English. As we have argued elsewhere (Freeman, Katz, Le Dréan, Burns, & King, 2016), confidence is a crucially important base for second language teacher training. Again, the notion of confidence as a fundamental premise for teacher education may be underestimated in many training programs, but it is clear that it operated here as an important catalyst for potentially greater use of English in the classroom. Teacher confidence is interrelated with a sense of self-efficacy in carrying out one’s work effectively, a belief in the “capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 223). It is also related to the notion of professional confidence, a concept from nursing education that means not only having the competence to use skills but also the confidence to use them (Copeland, 1990).

Copeland argued that self-confidence is a learned concept “which develops over time through the constant reinforcement of positive behaviors” (1990, p. 7). As the various chapters in this volume show, through online learning that reflected the classroom context, teachers were able to practice the language they felt they needed as often as they wished and to try it out for themselves within their classrooms. Interestingly, as Pham (this volume) points out, even when participants had relatively low proficiency, they could exhibit a greater range of discourse through their exposure to a variety of possibilities for functional language use in the classroom during the course, which in turn opened up greater learning affordances for their students. This finding chimes with Chen and Chang’s (2006) argument that gains in confidence increase teachers’ capacity to learn and use new skills.

Professional confidence stands in contrast to the anxiety felt by many teachers in relation to the requirement to teach English in English. As Horwitz (1996) recognized two decades ago, while most non-native speaker language teachers are likely to feel degrees of unease when using the language they are teaching in their classrooms, those with high language anxiety will use it even less. She argued that teachers' discomfort is likely to lead to students also believing they cannot use the language effectively. Teacher language anxiety also affects self-confidence and instructional choices, as shown in more recent research that provides support for Horwitz's contention (Machida, 2016; Tum, 2015; Yoon, 2012). Confidence, it seems, is bound up with a sense of professional self-efficacy, and increases in confidence can lead to more effective teacher agency in the classroom, a stronger sense of identity as a language teacher, and greater autonomy in making instructional decisions (Senior, 2012).

The Importance of Aligning Course Work and Assessment

Teachers are not necessarily always assessed on what they learn in training courses. This is the case in the use of a general English proficiency test to measure teacher language classroom proficiency (see Chapter 3). An additional problem is that while language proficiency tests may focus on linguistic knowledge, they do not assess teachers' ability to use English effectively for classroom instruction (see Manh et al., this volume). The *TEFT Assessment (Test of English-for-Teaching)* is shown to follow principles of sound assessment through its focus on high content validity. In other words, the language that is presented in the EFT course is what teachers are assessed on in the *TEFT Assessment*, which combines with their own experiences of implementing the content in the classroom. Assessment is built into the learning that teachers do from the start, so that assessment has the ongoing potential to be both formative and summative. In contrast, where content validity is absent, as in general language proficiency approaches, teacher learning will inevitably focus on techniques for passing the test rather than on the development of functional professionally-oriented language.

The alignment of coursework and assessment also enables the collection of empirical data to be structured into the course from the beginning, as it maps what teachers actually do in the course itself and potentially in the classroom. An interesting insight from the empirical data presented in the two chapters by Freeman, and Pham (this volume) is the potential of the EFT course to pinpoint key areas where teachers have particular difficulty, such as managing the classroom. Once identified, these areas can then be taken further in classroom English

proficiency teacher training at local levels. It would be interesting, also, to see if the greater teacher difficulties in using English in the functional area of classroom management reported in Freeman's second chapter (this volume) is replicated in analysis of the course data in other locations. This analysis would provide valuable information about where training efforts could be focused in the future. Interestingly, in Chacón's (2005) study, too, teachers' self-reported language efficacy for classroom management and student engagement was shown to be less strong than for instructional strategies. Again, the specificity of the analysis of the classroom functional areas that could be obtained from the EFT data provides a contrast to general English proficiency testing analysis which provides no insight about where, particularly, teachers struggle to use English for teaching.

Conclusion

Overwhelmingly, teachers are committed to making classrooms and learning effective for their students but may be constrained by institutional accountability, required curricular frameworks and syllabuses, and local philosophies about taken-for-granted practices. What the chapters in this monograph show is that context-embedded professional development that can be related directly to the classroom is integral to teacher learning and to teachers' agency in enabling affordances for their students to learn. The data presented in the previous chapters show that teachers are able to select what they need to learn and to embed this learning into their own teaching contexts. The orientation to teacher education adopted in the EFT course aligns with recent theoretical developments in socioconstructivist approaches to teacher education (Burns & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2016; Johnson, 2006) which posit that learning is a dynamic activity that is embedded in cognitive, social, emotional, and physical settings and negotiated through learners' experiential and lived practices. Socioconstructivist approaches are primarily driven by concepts of developmental teacher learning (learning as a process) rather than by notions of deficit teacher learning and therefore the need for measurement and accountability (learning as a product).

Based on the findings from the research presented in the various chapters (see especially those by Freeman, and Pham), it can be argued that the concept of classroom English proficiency offers considerable saliency as a foundation for the EFT course. Viewing teacher language proficiency through the prism of an ESP approach facilitated the development of the functional forms of classroom language teachers require for their professional communication, as in the case of any other profession. In turn, the concept of knowledge-for-teaching, which also

anchors the EfT course, places emphasis on knowledge of the content teachers are teaching, as well as on the language used to teach that content. In addition, the analyses reported here show that teachers gain confidence when they practice and use language they need in the classroom. This increase in professional confidence related ultimately to the fact that there was close alignment between course work and assessment, so that if teachers spent time studying the content they could achieve greater success in the *TEFT* Assessment.

While focused on Vietnam, the demographics of the teachers who participated in the EfT course in age and experience of teaching English are likely to be illustrative of teachers in other Southeast Asian countries and probably beyond. In this respect, the contextual descriptions of current policies, goals and practices, and the empirical insights and findings presented in this volume should have considerable resonance for readers across the Southeast Asian region as they too contemplate the challenge of responding to the demands of the rapid expansion of English language programs and devise effective ways to meet this challenge.

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The language learning and teaching contexts in the Asian region are as varied and complex as the countries encompassed in this part of the world. Each context is defined by the history and culture of each specific country and the region as a whole and the language policies and languages involved, including a myriad of local, indigenous, colonial, and “global” languages.

In response to the ever-changing and challenging linguistic landscape in this area, in 2010, IDP Education (Cambodia) established *Language Education in Asia (LEIA)* as a forum to highlight and exchange research and insights into language education in this dynamic region.

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