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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN VIETNAM:  
A COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND  
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presented by

Huynh Van Hien

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

M. A.

degree in

TESOL

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN VIETNAM: A COMPARISON OF  
TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS**

**By**

**Huynh Van Hien**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN VIETNAM: A COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS**

**By**

**Huynh Van Hien**

**This research compares the beliefs and practices of teachers of English as a foreign language and their students' perceptions with regard to three issues in communicative language teaching: organizing and monitoring of group work activities, use of the first language (L1) in class, and focus of error correction. Three teachers and their students in three English-major listening/speaking classes at Cantho University in Vietnam were observed and videorecorded. After each observation, interviews with the teacher using a variation of stimulated recall with the videorecording were conducted to review the classroom activities and elicit teacher's beliefs. After all observations were conducted, a questionnaire was distributed to the students and a similar one to the teachers. Analysis of the data focused on episodes from recorded observations that exemplified group work organization, L1 use and error correction. Results showed more consistencies than inconsistencies between the teachers' beliefs and their practices regarding the three research foci. Substantial consistency was noted between the teachers' and students' preferences in terms of error correction. They also shared common preferences about the kinds of activities occurring in their classes. In addition, the teachers' comments on teaching methods were compared with those of the head of the English Department and the dean of the School of Education whose views were obtained from interviews. Results indicated consistencies between all of the participants. In contrast to Basturkmen et al. (2004), the current study found more consistencies than inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices. However, differences between technical and practical knowledge could be one of the reasons for the inconsistencies found in the two studies.**

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

In Vietnam, where English is a foreign language, using English inside the classroom is very important to students for the development of their proficiency because opportunities for them to use English outside the classroom are limited. Teachers in the English Department of Cantho University<sup>1</sup> are aware of that. Their professional training focuses on communicative language teaching and a “student-centered approach”, which considers the importance of students’ active roles in learning. At Cantho University, teachers determine what students need to learn as well as the ways in which the activities are constructed. However, in reality, not all of the teachers understand the approach in the same ways, and this informs their approach to teaching. The current study analyzed the beliefs and practices of three teachers in terms of three elements of communicative language teaching – group work organization and monitoring, the use of the first language (L1) in class, and the focus of error correction through videorecorded observations and subsequent discussions with the teachers using a variation of stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000). The results of the observations were compared with the teachers’ comments as well as the beliefs of the head of the English Department, who taught methodology courses to the three teachers, and the dean of the School of Education, who was responsible for all of the events at the school (until his recent retirement) and continues to be a lecturer of pedagogical theory. The department head could be considered a primary source of the teachers’ professional/technical knowledge, which contributes to the formation of their beliefs (e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004). In addition, teachers’ beliefs and their students’ perceptions were obtained through questionnaires at the end of the study.

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<sup>1</sup> I had taught at Cantho University for seven and a half years before I came to Michigan State University for my master’s degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. After my graduation, I will continue to teach at Cantho University.

What are teachers' beliefs? According to M. Borg (2001), teachers' beliefs refer to their pedagogic beliefs. This definition is related to what S. Borg (2003) called "teacher cognition" or teacher's thought, knowledge, and beliefs as well as their relationships to teachers' behaviors in language teaching classrooms. Teachers' stated beliefs are their stated ideas, thoughts, and knowledge about what should be done, and what is preferable (Basturkmen et al., 2004). In the study by Basturkmen et al. we can find the sources of two kinds of teachers' knowledge: technical knowledge (what teachers gain from their professional training) and practical knowledge (what teachers obtain from their experiences of teaching and learning languages).

According to Fang (1996), it is not unexpected to see both consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and their practices. Johnson (1992) found consistencies between English as a second language teachers' theoretical beliefs and their instructional practices during their literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. In contrast, Borko and Niles (1982), for example, reported that teachers' stated beliefs were not consistent with their ways of grouping students for instruction. More recently, Basturkmen et al. (2004) reported consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' stated beliefs and their practices in three ESL classes. They noticed that the three teachers participating in the study were inconsistent regarding error correction. All three teachers felt that errors should be corrected when message comprehension was at stake; however, the researchers felt that most of the errors the teachers corrected in a single-class observation were focused on form versus meaning. This may reflect the ease with which one can notice and deal with certain types of errors in real time. S. Borg (2003) suggested some factors such as principals' requirements, classroom and school layout, school policies, students' low English proficiency, workloads, and tests prevented teachers from keeping their beliefs consistent with their practices. Graden (1996) found that the reasons were the lack of time and appropriate materials, students' poor performances, and students' lack of motivation. Bailey (1996) and Richards (1998) concluded that sometimes teachers were

inconsistent because they wanted to make modifications to increase students' participation in the classroom.

In the current study, the focus is on teachers' beliefs and practices, and their students' perceptions of three features of English language classrooms in Vietnam in which the teachers have adopted a communicative language teaching approach. These include organization and monitoring of group work activities, the use of the L1 in the classroom, and error correction.

Teacher training in the English Department of Cantho University emphasizes that group work is a beneficial classroom interaction pattern in communicative language teaching (e.g., Brown, 1991; Davis, 1997; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long & Porter, 1985). However, informal observations led me to believe that teachers at Cantho University were not sufficiently informed about or comfortable with their roles in managing group work activities (e.g., organization, giving instruction, time management, goal setting, monitoring, and so on).

Davis (1997) classified foreign language teachers into two groups: novice teachers (who try to use group work but lack experience and do not gain much success using group work) and more experienced teachers (who do not believe much in group work as a result of their failures using this kind of activity). He then suggested a model to help teachers implement group work in the classroom. He also pointed out that some students liked working by themselves rather than in groups because they were accustomed to a teacher-centered atmosphere, thought that group work was a waste of time, and did not want their classmates to be their instructors. The results of Davis' study were similar to those of McDonough (2004) who investigated a Thai EFL context at the university level. McDonough reported that even if students improved their production of the second language (L2) forms as a result of participation in pair and group work activities, they did not consider these activities useful for them as language learners because they thought they would learn their classmates' errors, especially grammar errors. However, McDonough found that some students thought group work was a good means to study oral skills. In a study with Japanese students, Smith (2001) reported that the students thought if there were too many group work

activities in class they would not have time to talk to their teachers. The students suggested variation in grouping and an appropriate amount of time for each activity. These results have demonstrated the importance of the ways teachers organize group work activities.

Paulston and Britanik (1995) suggested a framework for the designing and monitoring of group work which consisted of pre-class preparation, in-class pre-task activity, feedback and/or evaluation. This framework is useful for teachers attempting to use group work activities in their language classes. Flowerdew (1998) drew teachers' attention to cultural perspectives regarding group work. To her, group work activities were appropriate in oriental settings but teachers should adjust their teaching styles to be congruent with students' cultural backgrounds. This recommendation is similar to that of Nunan (2003) who suggested considering cultural diversity and the impact on politics and practices in Asian countries.

Another issue often discussed in terms of communicative language teaching is the use of the L1 in class. Prospective teachers at Cantho University are encouraged to use the target language in the classroom from the lowest levels of proficiency. However, the department allows Vietnamese (the L1) to be used to ensure comprehension of specific details such as grammar points that might not otherwise be understood. Explanations of abstract concepts may also involve use of the L1.

In a study with thirteen foreign language teachers whose L1 was English, Duff and Polio (1990) found that the L1 was used in class because of insufficient development of L2 proficiency, L1 and L2 differences, the purpose of study (i.e., for exams), and so on. In a follow-up study, Polio and Duff (1994) found that most teachers used the L1 for classroom administrative vocabulary, grammar instruction, classroom management, and so on. These studies examined the use of the L1 and the L2 in a foreign language context, which is similar to English teaching in Vietnam.

Cook (2001) argued that the use of the L1 is unavoidable in a foreign language classroom. He agreed that the L2 offers certain advantages such as making language classroom

communication “real” (p. 405), but the L1 can be used for communicative tasks as well. To him, the criteria to evaluate the success of using the L2 should be different from those of using the L1. He suggested that the L1 could be used when conveying and checking the meaning of words or sentences, explaining grammar, organizing tasks, and testing.

While agreeing with Cook about the benefits of using the L1 in second and foreign language classes, Turnbull (2001) pointed out some disadvantages to permitting the use of the L1. He recounted some of his own experiences as a teacher of French as a second language. A lot of his students thanked him for not using the L1 (English) in class. He expressed concern about the teachers’ overuse of the L1 if they are allowed to use it.

Besides group work design and management, and the use of the L1 in the classroom, the focus of error correction was also examined in the current study. Basturkmen et al. (2004) investigated episodes of incidental focus on form via classroom observations and stimulated recall. They also compiled profiles of the teachers summarizing their beliefs on error correction and how these compared with observable behaviors. They found inconsistencies between the teachers’ beliefs and their classroom conduct. For example, the teachers stated that error correction should not interfere with the flow of communication, but in class, they corrected form errors, generally through recasts (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) even though they did not cause a breakdown in communication. Burt (1975) argued that correcting all errors was not necessary to maintain the success of communication. She found that correcting global errors (i.e., those that disrupt comprehension of whole sentences and break down communication) is more important than correcting local ones (i.e., those that affect single units of sentences but do not usually cause miscommunication). She also found that adult learners are reluctant to be corrected especially in front of others (e.g., in a classroom). Chun, Day, Chenoweth, and Luppescu (1982) found that social relationships influenced the correcting of errors among speakers. They believed that social constraints prevented strangers from correcting each other’s errors. This may have implications for learner-learner correction in the classroom. Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) focused on



learner uptake following error correction. They reported that uptake in student-initiated focus on form was at higher levels and higher success than teacher-initiated focus on form. Lightbown and Spada (1990) noted that form-based instruction helped achieve linguistic knowledge and promote performance at a higher level, and focus-on-form activities and correction in context were useful in primarily meaning-based instruction.

### Research Questions

The current study was motivated by the following questions:

1. Are teachers' beliefs consistent with their practices in terms of methods of organizing and carrying out group work activities, L1 use in the classroom, and error correction?
2. How do teachers' beliefs compare with those of the department head with regard to group work in language learning, L1 use, and error correction?
3. How do teachers' beliefs compare with those of the dean of the School of Education?
4. What are students' preferences with regard to their use of the L2 in class?
5. What are students' preferences with regard to the effectiveness of group work as a language-learning tool and their preferences for error correction?
6. Are teachers' beliefs compatible with those of their students with regard to the effectiveness of group work, L1 use in the classroom, and error correction?

I hypothesized that

1. The teachers' beliefs would not always be consistent with their practices in terms of L1 use in class. From my informal observation of the teachers of the English Department of Cantho University from my perspective as a teacher, they organized group work activities quite often, but they did not really manage the opportunities for every student to speak out in their groups. Teachers would also refrain from correcting students' form and meaning errors when they talked.
2. Teachers' beliefs and those of the head of the English Department and the dean of the School of Education would be similar because the teachers had been the head's students in his

methodology courses; and the dean was among the ones who encouraged the use of group work in the school.

3. Students would like working in groups and they would think that group work is one of the best ways to help them cooperate with their classmates; however, not all of them would be active in groups. Based on my teaching experience in this context, I hypothesized that students would want their grammar errors to be corrected after they finished speaking, but they would prefer their errors in pronunciation to be corrected right after they were made. Because these students are English majors, they are particularly concerned about the accuracy of their pronunciation.

4. Most students would probably think that using the L1 in class is necessary to help them understand their teachers and their friends. Some of them would prefer to use only English in class, but they would use the L1 when they had problems understanding their teachers and their friends.

5. Teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the use of the L1 in class and error correction would not be the same; but they could share attitudes toward group work activities.

## Chapter Two

### The Study

#### Method

##### *Participants*

A total of 3 teachers of English at Cantho University (CTU) in Vietnam who taught listening and speaking classes using a communicative language teaching approach, and a total of 64 students in their three classes participated in the study. One teacher had 11 years of teaching experience, one had 8 years, and the other 4 and a half years. Three of them hold a BA degree in English teaching. One of them (the one with 11 years of teaching experience) was studying for an MA in English Teaching Methods at CTU. The first two teachers taught second-year students; and the last teacher taught first-year students. Table 1 summarizes their length of time working at CTU, amount of experience in English language teaching, the classes they taught, and the number of students they taught at the time of the study.

Table 1

##### *Teacher and class information*

Teacher <sup>2</sup>	Time working at CTU (years)	Teaching experience (years)	Degree teacher holds	Class taught (students' levels of English proficiency were provided by the teachers)	Number of students
Nam (male)	11	11	BA in English teaching	Second year (Upper intermediate)	24
Binh (male)	8	8	BA in English teaching	Second year (Upper intermediate)	23
Linh (female)	4 ½	4 ½	BA in English teaching	First year (Lower intermediate)	17

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<sup>2</sup> The names of the three teachers are fictitious. None of them had been to an English-speaking country.

At CTU, the English Department is one of 10 departments in the School of Education. There are two groups of students majoring in English. One group is pedagogical students who will become teachers of English in upper high schools (grades 10 – 12). Students in the second group generally will work in other fields such as translating and interpreting, or with foreign invested or joint venture companies. Some of the students in the second group also study 8 credits of teaching methodologies and may become teachers of English as well. The students involved in the current study were among the second group. Like other students in Vietnam, those in this study had to pass the national entrance examination to become university students. The L1 of the teachers and students is Vietnamese.

#### *Materials and Procedure.*

To carry out this research, I conducted classroom observations and met with the teachers following the observations using a variation of the stimulated recall protocol (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and the students (see Appendices A and B) following the observations and recall sessions, interviews were also conducted with the head of the English Department and the dean of the School of Education.

*Classroom observations.* I observed the class of each of the three teachers three times, one hour each time, with five to seven days between classes. All classes were videorecorded. A digital camcorder with a built-in microphone was placed at different locations in the classroom throughout each observation. Besides videorecording, I moved a mini audio recorder to different tables throughout each class to record the teachers' and students' voices during the classes, which did not disrupt their conversations.

*Interviews with the teachers using stimulated recall.* After each class observation, I had a meeting with the teacher who was observed, and interviewed him/her in a separate room at the English Department Library. These meetings were audiotaped. The procedure used in the current research involved a departure from the traditional stimulated recall protocol. During the post-observation sessions with the teachers, I instructed them to stop the video of the class at any time

in order to make a comment; however, I also posed specific questions to them to elicit their beliefs about classroom activities and teaching philosophy, which differs from typical applications of stimulated recall. I placed the digital camcorder in front of the teacher and me. Before playing the videorecording of the class, I asked the teacher to share with me the objectives of the lessons, and provide a general assessment of his or her class. I told the teacher that the purpose of using the recording was to remind both of us what had taken place in class. I told the teachers they could speak Vietnamese if they thought they would feel more comfortable, but all of them said they wanted to speak in English. At the end of each meeting, the teacher was given the opportunity to make additional comments.

*Questionnaires for teachers and students.* After the third and final observation of each class, I distributed a questionnaire to the teacher who was given the choice of either the English (see Appendix A) or Vietnamese version. All chose the English version. Another questionnaire was distributed to the students. To ensure students' understanding, their questionnaire was in Vietnamese (see Appendix B for the English version). There were twelve similar items in each questionnaire. Item 1 concerned the kinds of activities usually taking place in the listening/speaking classes I observed. Items 2 and 3 asked the teachers and the students which kinds of activities among the ones mentioned in Item 1 they thought were effective for teaching and learning listening and speaking, and the reasons for their choices. Items 4 and 5 addressed the frequency and effectiveness of group work. Items 6-10 concerned the criteria for a successful group work activity. Item 11 dealt with the percentage of English used in class, and Item 12 was about teachers' and students' preferences for error correction.

Participants were instructed to read over the questionnaires before responding. Since the students involved in the study were first-year and second-year students whose English proficiency was still limited, to obtain their most accurate responses, they wrote their responses in Vietnamese. While the teachers answered their questionnaire, I went over the items on the questionnaire for the students one by one. I read the item and explained in Vietnamese how to

write the answer but I did not lead them to any specific response. For example, to explain Item 1, I told them that the questionnaire asked them to check all options that applied to their class, so they could check more than one option but it did not mean they had to check more than one. I gave them some time to respond to each item. I gave them more time if they asked for it before we moved to the next item. This procedure ensured comprehension of the process and kept students on task. Finally, I thanked the teacher and the students, and left the classroom.

*Meetings and interviews with the head of the English Department and the dean of the School of Education.* I arranged separate interviews with the head of the English Department, and with the dean of the School of Education to obtain their opinions about the issues that the current study focused on and to see whether or not the English Department and the School of Education had policies to encourage the teachers to use certain techniques in their classes. The interviews were conducted in the head's and the dean's offices and were audiotaped. The interviews focused on their perspectives concerning teaching methods including group work, L1 use in the classroom and error correction for comparison with the teachers' beliefs and practices.

## Chapter Three

### Results and Discussion

In this section, results will be presented in the following order: (1) observations of each teacher with episodes taken from the observations, and stimulated recall interviews, and (2) the results from the questionnaires. Interviews with the head of the English department and the dean of the School of Education are reported in Chapter Four, and are compared to the results discussed in Chapter Three.

#### *Observations and stimulated recall interviews*

In this section I will provide an overview of each class observation of each of the three teachers. Then I will provide transcriptions of the episodes, in chronological order, that serve as examples for the discussion of all three research issues: organizing and monitoring group work activities, use of the L1 in class, and focus of error correction. Readers will note that the transcriptions show ungrammatical English. For each episode, I will introduce its context, and analyze what research focus or foci the episode concerns. In the following section, Stimulated Recall and Interview, I will refer to the episode again and compare what I observed in class to what the teachers explained to me in post-observation interviews.

#### *Nam*

Nam's class did not exhibit a lot of teacher-led discussion because the time I observed was the time his students were preparing for their final listening/speaking exams. Most of the time, Nam let his students work in groups.

- First observation: The students worked in groups, discussing the oral topics that they had been offered before, such as whether or not students should study at the college level after graduating from high school. They needed to come up with some topics they liked the best and prepare dialogues based on them. They were supposed to use functional language (e.g., asking for clarification, interfering, expressing (dis)agreement) in their discussion. The teacher helped them

when needed. Sometimes the students asked the teacher; other times, he asked them certain questions to be sure they understood some terms. The teacher did not correct any errors.

- Second observation: The students worked in groups, then in pairs to develop their dialogues, using ideas discussed in the previous class. Most of the time, the teacher circulated around the class, answering students' questions and/or asking them some questions to see if they were on the right track.

- Third observation: The students first worked in pairs to finish making their dialogues and to practice them. Then some pairs volunteered to conduct demonstrations by performing the dialogues in front of the class. The teacher and the other students provided feedback (e.g., on ideas, language use, grammar, pronunciation, etc.). The teacher corrected students' pronunciation and grammar errors after each dialogue. The teacher also provided the students with some useful expressions that they could use to make their dialogues more natural.

#### Episode 1:

This episode is related to the use of the L1, Vietnamese, in class. It took place in the first class I observed. The teacher asked the students to work in groups and discuss the topics from the list he had provided. Most students chatted in both English and Vietnamese.

S1: Tôi đây. Bạn tới đằng kia.

*Come here. You go there there.*

'Come here. You go there.'

S2: Dĩ nhiên rồi.

*Sure*

'Sure'

(After a while)

S3: Thầy kêu mình ngồi theo nhóm chọn cùng chủ đề.

*Our teacher wants us sit in group choosing the same topics*

'Our teacher wants us to sit in groups that choose the same topics.'



S4: Minh cần nghĩ là chọn đề tài nào rồi trao đổi ý với nhau.

*We should think what topics certain then exchange ideas to one another*

‘We should think of what topics to discuss first then we will share our ideas together.’

T: (did not say anything)

In this episode, students communicated when they were not involved in their groups yet. They exchanged the information just in Vietnamese. From my observation, this occurred very often. The students used Vietnamese exclusively as an organizational language.

In the post-observation interview, the teacher told me that he encouraged students to speak English in every situation and as often as they could. However, he said it was hard to monitor the students when he did not stand next to them. He also mentioned that they used their L1 because they did not think they were on task yet. This remark reflected what I saw in my class observation: when students worked in groups on a pedagogic task, they used English most of the time (85-90% of class time).

Episode 2:

This episode is also related to the use of Vietnamese in class and occurred in the first class when students were involved in group discussion. One student used Vietnamese for the names of some Vietnamese films.

S: “Những cô gái chân dài”, “Gái nhảy 1”, “Gái nhảy 2”

*Girls long legs, Dancers 1, Dancers 2*

“Long legged girls”, “The Dancers 1”, “The Dancers 2”

T: (did not say anything).

In the post-observation interview, the teacher explained to me that he allowed his students to speak Vietnamese when there were some terms that they could not explain in English. So in this case, if students spoke Vietnamese, it was acceptable. He also said that when they had some complicated words, to save time and to make it easier to express their ideas, the students could speak in Vietnamese.

### Episode 3:

This episode is related to the use of Vietnamese in class and error correction among students. It was taken from the second class I observed. Students were discussing in groups to share ideas that help build dialogues to prepare for their final listening/speaking exam.

S1: (switched between English and Vietnamese while discussing; mispronounced “mature” by putting the stress on the first syllable)

“mature” là noun.

*mature is noun*

““mature” is a noun’.

S2: (repeated the word and mispronounced the word in the same way)

S1: (tried to self-correct)

mature... mature...mature. I’m sorry.

(still mispronounced the word. After saying this, S1 wrote down the phonetic transcription of the word).

S1&S2: (repeated the word several times. They both look at the phonetic transcription and tried to pronounce it correctly.)

S1: (switched between English and Vietnamese)

Adjective thì nó phải đứng ở đây chứ.

*Adjective so it has to stand here here*

‘It is an adjective; so it has to stand here.’

(made an arrow to show where “mature” should be in the sentence; her partner wrote “enough mature”. She drew an arrow to indicate that “mature” must be in front of the word “enough”).)

S2: Yeah!

S1&S2: (laughed).

T: (was not standing next to them at that time).

In this episode I think the two students had a successful discussion and they helped each other correct their errors. I rarely saw this type of exchange in this class. Instead, most of the time students ignored their partners' errors.

In the interview, I asked the teacher if he thought his students tried to help each other. He told me that this was what he called "peer-coaching". Then he explained to me that he always encouraged his students to correct each other's errors and he had already prepared their "psychology" for error correction. He said that everyone makes errors and if he or other students corrected the speakers' errors that would mean they wanted to help improve their use of English. I told him that in his class I did not see his students correct each other's errors very often. He explained, "It was because they focused too much on communicating meaning".

#### Episode 4:

This episode was related to error correction. It happened in the third class I observed. In this episode, two students constructed a dialogue as a demonstration of how the oral exam would go. Other students and their teacher were listening. The students' job was to listen and take notes on their classmates' dialogue; to write down any errors they recognized and to provide comments after the dialogue. In fact, the teacher did not take any notes while his students were talking.

S1: (announced to class)

We discuss about topic 28: Should students wear uniform to school or not<sup>3</sup>?

(began the dialogue)

I don't like to wear uniform you know. I think students shouldn't wear uniform to school because I think uniform is very inconvenient, especially in raining.

S2: In raining?

S1: Yes.

S2: Can you give me some supporting ideas?

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<sup>3</sup> In Vietnam, wearing uniforms to schools is compulsory in primary and high schools. Some universities also want their students to wear uniforms.

- S1: I think in high school, the girls must wear long dress. And if you wear white, long dress, you must wear with high shoes. It's very inconvenient. It's easy ...It can cause accident easily. School boys must wear white shirt and blue trousers with white shoes. Although they wear sports shoes, they cannot play sports after school. So, I don't think students should wear uniform to school. How about you?
- S2: Oh, I have some ideas similar to you. You know that when I was studying in high school, we must going to school by uniform. I must wear áo dài (*long dress*) to school and you know when I drive my bicycle and because áo dài is very long, and I have an accident... I have a trouble with it...
- S1: Your áo dài stuck in the bicycle?
- S2: At that time I was naked. (laughed).
- S1: Naked?
- S2: Yeah.
- S1: Did you go with your friend or boyfriend?
- S2: Yes. And my boyfriend... he is a..His shirt got stuck and he was naked too.
- (Everybody laughed)
- S1: Do you have any problem with him?
- S2: I was very nervous. It was really terrible. But now when I was...(laughed) when I am a student I want to go to school with uniform.
- S1: You want to go to university with uniform? Why?
- S2: And I think students should wear uniform to go to university because I think wearing uniform is beautiful and it is formal. When people look at you, they will know where you are studying and where you are from. And I think if you wear uniform to go to university you will have a good behavior.
- S1: Good behavior (Yes). But I think the most important thing when you come to Cantho University is study, right? When you wear uniform you must thinking a...how can we

make our uniform more beautiful. For example, the girls must wear long dress and they try to make their dress more beautiful by slender material or their áo dài was too tight and it's very uncomfortable to study.

S2: I think in a university you shouldn't wear áo dài. Uniform can be trousers or the shirt.

S1: I think it's impossible because student often play sport after school time. And when they wear uniform they can't play any sport at all. They must come home to change the clothes, et cetera. And other students, maybe, they are poor and they don't have the conditions enough or money to afford the uniform. I think the university and other school must allow students to wear anything they like.

S2: You say that you think uniform is expensive?

S1: I think if they are not expensive and some people are so poor so they cannot afford. If you don't have any convincing ideas I will think you are agree with me.

S2: I think your reasons are acceptable.

S1: (talked to the audience)

We should wear uniform to go to school or not. That's your opinion. Our group just give you some convincing idea. Thanks for listening.

(Audience applauded)

T: So what do you think every body? Any ideas? What do you think about their dialogue? State your opinions, please. Don't be afraid that your friends get offended when you give your opinions about their dialogue. Just think that when you state your opinion about what they have done, you help them to develop themselves. Please. What do you think: grammar, ideas, pronunciation, fluency, proficiency, something like that. (He pointed at the monitor<sup>4</sup> when she raised her hand): The monitor

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<sup>4</sup> In Vietnam, in every class, there is a monitor and some vice-monitors appointed on a one-year basis. They are usually excellent students in class academically. They are responsible for reporting to the supervisors important activities or events occurring in their classes.

- S3: I think A's (S1) pronunciation is quite good. I think A gives more ideas than B (S2)...And maybe they are afraid so their grammar is not good. B should speak louder.
- T: How about other people? What do you think?
- S4: Their pronunciation is...has some words were pronounced in the wrong way. However, their ideas were good.
- T: OK. They have interesting ideas. I agree with you. They mispronounced some words  
Yeah, we say "allow" not [alo]. Maybe A thought of the ideas so much and you forgot the grammar. For example, when you talk about something in the past, you should use the simple past tense. For example, I had to wear a uniform when I was studying in my high school. In the end, B said, "If you do not give me any convincing ideas and then I think you are agree with me".  
(said with a rising pitch): You are agree with me? [clarification request prosodically marked to draw students' attention]

Some students: No, "you agree with me."

- T: Yeah, "you agree" but not "you are agree". I know that you are very good at grammar but at the moment you were speaking about something, you stuck your mind so much to the ideas so much so you forgot the grammar.  
Another thing I would like to tell you here is that in order to convince somebody you need some convincing expressions you know...  
(Reproduced here verbatim from what the teacher wrote on the board while speaking):  
"That's more or less true BUT..." or "I guess there's some truth in your point BUT...",  
"I guess you could say that BUT..." You may say, "It is assumed that..." Or you may say, "Some people might think..." For example, you may say, "You know wearing áo dài to school, students may find it uncomfortable" That's what A says. B then can say, "It's more or less true but I believe this...this...this...this... When I wear áo dài t school I have to be gentle because people will look at me and they know where I come from" Or you

may say, “I guess there is some truth in your point but my idea is...or I believe that...”. You can also say, “You could say this...” Here you say “could” not “can”. That means I think your idea is okay but I have something more interesting”. And when you say, “Something is assumed” that means we haven’t got the correct information and I would like to provide you with some more information”. You get it? Or “Some people might think wearing áo dài or wearing uniform to school is good but to my mind...” then you state your opinion. You get that? And I think you can say... When don’t agree with your friend, you say (he wrote): “You couldn’t be more wrong...” “You don’t know what you are talking about...” But you can use only with your close friends. You cannot use this when you are talking to your teachers or your parents at home when you do not agree. Okay?

Ss: (laughed)

T: Once again, when you want to make your ideas stronger at first you have to repeat your friend’s/your partner’s ideas and after that you state your opinion. These expressions make your ideas stronger and more interesting. You get that? Another thing you should pay attention to is that when A states her opinion, B listens; and then B should give some ideas referring back to the point that A’s just spoken up. At that time you show your respect to her and show that you’re listening to her and you understand what she’s talking about. Okay? And when you state your opinion, I would like to see or to hear “your voice”, you know “your voice” in quotation marks. I would like you to be yourself, not someone else. Okay, you have your own sense of identity and you talk about things that when people read or look at that they know that is the way you are. Okay? Okay.

(He raised his voice)

Another couple, please. Another pair, please.

(A pair went into the middle of class and performed another dialogue. The teacher and other students listened. The students took notes.)

In this episode, the students made a lot of errors in pronunciation and grammar. The episode shows an example of a prosodically marked recast (e.g., “You are agree with me?”), which was accompanied by a facial expression. There is also evidence of immediate uptake, specifically student-generated repair (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The teacher did not take notes when his students were talking. That might explain why the teacher just corrected some grammar errors after the students’ dialogue.

In the interview I asked him about this. He told me that he did not usually interrupt his students. Instead, he often waited until they finished. He also said that he interrupted his students only when they did not use appropriate words for a certain situation that they were discussing. He told me he usually took notes on students’ errors and corrected them later on. In this class, I saw that he was rather consistent with what he said when he did not interrupt his students while they were discussing. However, he did not take notes and he seemed to correct only the errors that he remembered.

The teacher mentioned that he usually corrected grammar and pronunciation errors. In this episode, the teacher did not correct his students’ pronunciation errors. In the next one, we will see that he corrected some pronunciation errors.

In this class I saw that when the teacher corrected his students’ errors, they did not seem to be embarrassed, which was exactly what he told me. He told me that since he had already prepared students in terms of receiving corrective feedback, the students understood that what he and their classmates did was to help them study better.

#### Episode 5

This episode took place in the third class. After another pair of students practiced a dialogue in front of their class, the teacher asked the students to give their comments. Several students took turns.

T (after students finished their dialogue)

So what do you think?



S: I think they have a good dialogue. Their ideas are good ideas /áidia/ ...

T: /aidía/ not /áidia/ ha. The stress is on the second syllable.

Ss: (laughed, friendly; S: smiled)

From this episode I saw that the teacher explicitly corrected students' errors in pronunciation. However, this did not happen very often in the classes I observed.

The teacher seemed to be inconsistent with what he told me. He told me that he did not interrupt students if their errors were not serious. In the above episode, the mistake did not appear to be serious but the teacher still interrupted the student. I was unsure if the student stopped talking because of that or if he did not have more ideas to share. However, the student smiled after being corrected. He did not seem to be embarrassed, which was a good description of student attitude in general in this class, and was consistent with what the teacher told me.

### *Binh*

Binh was a little bit behind the university's schedule. Although he taught students of the same major and level as Nam, he had some lessons left to be taught.

- First observation: The teacher started the lesson by asking students if they had any superstitions. After that he divided the class into several groups. Then, for most of the rest of the time, students worked in groups to discuss superstitions according to the categories the teacher had given them. Then, groups took turns presenting their ideas. After each group, the teacher and the students in the other groups asked them for more information. The teacher did not really correct a lot of errors. He corrected 10% of the pronunciation errors and one of the grammar errors.

- Second observation: The teacher began the lesson by introducing the topic of the lesson which was about making advertisements. He then let students work in groups to write some TV or radio advertisements. After the students discussed possibilities and came up with some ideas for their advertisement, they performed a role-play in front of the class. After each group, the teacher and the other students gave comments. Sometimes, the teacher corrected errors.

- Third observation: There were two main parts of the lesson. First, a group of students presented a lesson about how to use some functional language (e.g., expressing agreement, and giving comments). The teacher gave comments. Then he introduced the topic of a new lesson which he would teach in the following class. Again, most of the time, the students worked in groups. The teacher corrected approximately 30% of the pronunciation errors, primarily through recasts, and 40% of the grammar errors, usually with explicit correction at the end of the activity. Following the recasts of pronunciation errors, students generally repeated the correct pronunciation.

#### Episode 1:

This episode occurred in the first class I observed and concerned the use of Vietnamese in class.

In this episode, after the teacher introduced the topic of the lesson (superstitions) and asked the students to work in groups, they started to form groups.

S1: Mình chọn chủ đề về mê tín.

*We choose the topics about superstitions.*

‘We choose topics related to superstition.’

S2: (talked to a male student who was standing next to her and taking a chair to join a group)

Lấy dùm cuốn từ điển đi bạn.

*Pass the dictionary to me, my friend.*

‘Please pass the dictionary to me.’

S3: (gave S2 the dictionary)

T: (was not standing near them and might not have heard what they said)

As in Nam’s class, the students in Binh’s class usually used Vietnamese for their organizational language. However, as I observed, when they discussed a certain topic that the teacher gave them, most of the time (80-85% of class time) they spoke in English.

In the post-observation interview, I asked the teacher if he had recognized his students sometimes spoke Vietnamese. He told me that he sometimes could not check if they spoke mostly in English. He also mentioned his students “love to speak English”. However, sometimes especially the weaker students lacked the vocabulary to express their ideas, which resulted in their use of Vietnamese. He said that, nevertheless, he encouraged his students to speak English as much as they could.

#### Episode 2:

This episode was taken from the first class I observed and focused on error correction. In this episode, the students were working in groups. One group was talking about the relationship between colors and luck. The teacher was moving around the class.

S1: How about the color we wear cloth.

S2: Maybe pinks.

S1: pink. And many other color.

S2: Yeah.

In this episode, both students made grammatical errors. For example, S2 said “pinks” and S1 appeared to recast this error by saying “pink” but then made an error by failing to make the word “color” plural. The episode does not indicate clearly if S1 was aware that “pinks” was inaccurate, especially given her subsequent error. Therefore, this may or may not have been an intended recast.

I asked the teacher whether or not he encouraged his students to correct each other’s errors, and he told me that he did. He said his students, however, were concerned more about ideas than about correcting each other’s errors.

#### Episode 3:

This episode was taken from the first class I observed and also concerned error correction. Two students were discussing superstitions. In S1’s first utterance, she consistently

mispronounced *luck* as /la:k/. The teacher recast this later and S1 showed evidence of uptake in her correct repetition.

S1: We talk about luck. You know luck. We have good luck and bad luck. In the first three days you get lucky money, it's good luck. You don't sweep your house because it is bad luck. You building, you build your house the main gate is to the east because it is considered good luck.

T: (negotiated the intended meaning of "gate")  
You say "the main gate". Do you mean "the main door"?

S1: Yes.

T: (explicitly corrected the pronunciation error)  
And you say "good luck".

S1: Yes, good luck. (she pronounced the word correctly)

In this episode, the students made pronunciation errors and errors in word choice. They corrected both kinds. This was consistent with what he told me in the post-observation interview. In his answers to my questions in the interview he also said that he did not often stop his students to correct their grammar errors because he did not want to disrupt the flow of their ideas. However, he stopped his students if they had pronunciation errors because this was a listening/speaking class.

Episode 4:

This episode related to error correction occurred in the third class I observed. After discussing in pairs, two students constructed a dialogue with the topic: Is it a good idea to live in the dormitory?

S1: I think you should go to the dormitory to live with me.

S2: Why? Why do you think so?

S1: I think if you live in the dormitory, you'll have a lot of advantage such as you will take less time to go to school and you have good environment for your study.

T: (wrote “For example” on the board as his notes)

S2: I live with my friends and I go to school. I don’t think it *take* much time.

S1: But I think if you live in the dormitory, you will save more money.

T: (after students finished their dialogue)

Well, I want to remind you one thing. You say, “Well living in the dormitory offers us many advantages such as we can do this we can do that...” No, after “such as” we use nouns or noun phrases (he pointed to his notes on the board) like living in the dormitory offers us many advantages such as sharing joy and (...) having a good environment.

In this episode, the teacher took notes on the students’ errors and corrected them after they finished their dialogue, which was consistent with what he told me about the way he corrected his students’ errors.

### *Linh*

In contrast to the second-year students in the previous two classes, the students in Linh’s class were in their first year and were at a lower level of English proficiency.

- First observation: As in Nam’s and Binh’s classes, students in Linh’s class spent a lot of time working in groups. In this class, the teacher started the lesson by introducing the new topic (technology). Then the students worked in two groups. Each group was provided with a tape-player (walkman). One group needed to imagine that they did not know how to use the device and they would develop questions to ask the other groups. The other group needed to learn how to use the device and be ready to answer the other group’s questions. The teacher did not allow students to speak Vietnamese in general, but I observed that they did quite often (about 20-30% of the class time).

- Second observation: Before this class, the students had worked in groups to prepare presentations about certain machines or devices. In class, in groups, the students took turns giving their presentations. After each group finished, the students in the other groups asked questions. The teacher took notes on the students’ errors and corrected them at the end.

- Third observation: In this class, first the teacher asked the students about their leisure time activities and the students answered individually. The teacher did this to lead the students to the topics of their lesson: shopping and advertising. Then the students were given a chart with questions about shopping habits. They asked their friends the questions and completed the chart. At the end of the activity, they sat down in groups and exchanged the information. Then they listened to the cassette player for advertisements and completed an exercise based on them. The teacher corrected the exercise by asking some students to answer her questions.

#### Episode 1

This episode happened in the first class I observed. It was related to error correction. In this episode, the teacher asked students some questions to lead them to the topic of the lesson (technology).

T: (pointed at a drawing of a vacuum cleaner that she had posted on the board)

Is it useful?

S1: Yes. For example, the vacuum cleaner help housewife to save time.

T: That means you can save your time.

(After a while, when they had switched the topic to television)

S2: It is good for entertainment.

T: For entertainment only?

S2: and for get information.

T: (recast)

to get information. Right.

In this episode, the teacher corrected the students' grammar errors by recasting. In the post-observation interview, she told me that she usually corrected students' errors through explicit correction at the end of an activity. She said that she did not usually interrupt her students while they were talking but she did so if she thought it was necessary.

## Episode 2:

This episode happened in the first class and was related to the use of Vietnamese in class. In this episode, the teacher put some drawings of certain electronic devices on the board and asked the students to work in groups to find as many verbs as they could to describe how to use the devices.

S1: Cái đầu tiên là cái gì quên mất tiêu rồi.

*The first one is what (I) forget totally already.*

‘I forget what the first device is.’

S2: Hổng biết.

*Not know.*

‘I don’t know.’

Ss (Some students chattered in Vietnamese)

T: English, not Vietnamese, please.

In this episode, the students spoke Vietnamese while they were asking about the names of some devices. In the post-observation interview I asked the teacher if she recognized that her students sometimes spoke Vietnamese. She said that she always encouraged them to speak English as much as they could. However, they were first-year students and their English proficiency was not very high, so they spoke Vietnamese even in some situations when they could express ideas in English.

## Episode 3:

This episode occurred in the second class I observed and was related to error correction. In this episode, the students took turns making short presentations in front of the class. The teacher took notes. One student was standing at the board offering a presentation about the history of television.

S1: (holding up a picture of a TV)

What did you see in the picture?

Ss: A TV.

S1: Do you think television is very important to you?

Ss: Yes.

S1: Television is really important to us. It's become an importance friend in families. You can enjoys many thing on it. People invents a lot of kind of TVs. The inventions of television last for a long time. If you want to know about the invention of television, my members of my group will continue.

In this episode, the student made some grammar and pronunciation errors. The teacher took notes. She let every group present without stopping them to correct any errors. In the post-observation interview, she told me that she had taken notes very carefully although she did not have time to correct their errors in that hour that I observed. Linh did report that she corrected the errors in the following hour, which I did not observe.

### *Questionnaires*

After the third and final observation of each class, I distributed a twelve-item questionnaire to the teachers and another similar one to the students (see Appendices A and B). The questionnaires concerned classroom activities, the importance and frequency of group work, use of English in class, and preferences for error correction. The teachers preferred to complete their questionnaire in English. The one for the students was in Vietnamese. It was more comfortable for the students to respond in Vietnamese due to their English proficiency.

To analyze the students' questionnaire responses, I tabulated the frequency with which each option was chosen for each item. I then compared the students' responses in each class with those of their teacher on these topics. For items that required respondents to select only one option, chi-square analysis was conducted on the frequency with which a given option was chosen within each class. Comparison was then made across the three classes. Chi-square analysis was also used for items that required a ranking of options.



### *Items 1 and 2*

Item 1 asked the teachers and the students about the kinds of activities usually taking place in their class. Item 2 asked them about the kinds of activities that they thought should be effective to teach and to study aural/oral skills. Responses to Item 1 shown in Tables 2a and 2b indicate the number of students who selected each option (Table 2a). The teachers' responses are represented by (✓) in Table 2b.

The responses indicate that in these three classes, teachers and students had very similar perceptions about the kinds of activities taking place in their classes. The majority (56/64) of students chose option (d), 45/64 chose option (e), and the three teachers also chose these two options as kinds of activities that were organized most often in these three classes. The teachers and students thought the following kinds of activities that show students' active roles in learning occurred most frequently in their classes and were considered the most effective ways to teach and to learn aural/oral skills: (1) Teacher raises questions; students discuss the questions in groups and give their ideas afterwards, and (2) Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions about the topics, discuss with their friends in groups, and give their ideas afterwards. These responses were consistent with my observations. In these classes, the most frequent pattern of activities was that the teachers raised questions, the students discussed them, and gave their opinions at the end of the task.

Table 2a

*Students' Responses to Item 1: Most Frequent Activities in Classes*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. Teacher lectures; no discussion	2	1	0	3
b. Teacher lectures; some discussion.	13	8	4	25
c. Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.	10	11	5	26
d. Teacher raises questions; students discuss and give ideas.	18	22	16	56
e. Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions, discuss, and give ideas.	22	8	15	45

*Note.* Respondents could select more than one option. Ss = students.

Table 2b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 1: Most Frequent Activities in Classes*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. Teacher lectures; no discussion				0
b. Teacher lectures; some discussion.		✓		1/3
c. Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.		✓	✓	2/3
d. Teacher raises questions; students discuss and give ideas.	✓	✓	✓	3/3
e. Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions, discuss, and give ideas.	✓	✓	✓	3/3

The responses for Item 1 are also very similar to those for Item 2 which are shown in Tables 3a and 3b concerning activities that they considered the most effective ways to teach and to learn aural/oral skills: 46/64 students chose option (e) and 40/64 students chose option (e); all of the teachers chose (d) and (e).

Table 3a

*Students' Responses to Item 2: Activities Most Effective for the Development of Aural/Oral Skills*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. Teacher lectures; no discussion	0	0	0	0
b. Teacher lectures; some discussion.	6	4	0	10
c. Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.	7	2	3	12
d. Teacher raises questions; students discuss and give ideas.	18	15	7	40
e. Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions, discuss, and give ideas.	20	12	14	46

*Note.* Respondents could select more than one option. Ss = students.

Table 3b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 2: Activities Most Effective for the Development of Aural/Oral Skills*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. Teacher lectures; no discussion				0
b. Teacher lectures; some discussion.		✓		1/3
c. Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.				0
d. Teacher raises questions; students discuss and give ideas.	✓	✓	✓	3/3
e. Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions, discuss, and give ideas.	✓	✓	✓	3/3

*Item 3*

Item 3 asked the teachers and the students to express the reasons they thought the activities they chose when responding to Items 1 and 2 were the most effective ways to teach and to learn aural/oral skills. Their most common responses were as follows.

Students' responses:

1. Students can improve listening/speaking skills.
2. Students learn ideas from classmates and from teachers.
3. Students learn how to respect others' ideas.
4. Students become more active.
5. Students feel comfortable while studying.
6. Errors can be recognized and corrected.

Teachers' responses:

1. Students can learn to co-operate with their classmates and their teachers.
2. Students become more active.
3. Students feel more confident.

The teachers and the students agreed that students' active roles in class are important. Students can help one another improve their skills while interacting and co-operating in class

activities. They also thought there are a lot of opportunities for students to talk with one another and with their teachers if they are active in class.

#### *Item 4*

Item 4 concerned the approximate amount of time used for group work activities ranging from less than 25% to 100%. Responses to this item were shown in Tables 4a and 4b.

Table 4a

#### *Students' Responses to Item 4: Percentage of Group Work Activities in Average Class Meetings*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a_ 100%	1	1	2	4
b_ 75%	14	7	13	34
c_ 50%	7	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	21
d_ 25%	2	2	1	5
e_ less than 25%	0	0	0	0

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant within each class and across classes. The two bolded

responses represent the cells with the highest chi-square values in the comparison across classes. Ss = students.

Chi-square analysis revealed that the distribution of responses was significant within each class, Nam's class  $\chi^2 = 17.67$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Binh's class  $\chi^2 = 15.78$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Linh's class  $\chi^2 = 24.18$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .001$ . Of the options offered in this item, the majority of Nam's and Linh's students indicated that group work activities constituted 75% of the average class meeting. In contrast, most of Binh's students selected 50%. Distribution of responses across the three classes was also significant,  $\chi^2 = 13.13$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .05$ . The contrast between the preference for option (c) by Binh's students and the rejection of this option by Linh's students contributed the most to this result.

Table 4b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 4: Percentage of Group Work Activities in Average Class Meetings*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a_ 100%			✓	1/3
b_ 75%	✓			1/3
c_ 50%		✓		1/3
d_ 25%				0
e_ less than 25%				0

As indicated in Tables 4a and 4b, the perceptions of Nam and the majority of his students were similar (i.e., they chose option b); Binh and most of his students also agreed on this item (i.e., they chose option c). However, while the majority of the students in Linh's class indicated that group work activities accounted for 75% of the average class, the teacher responded that she thought it was 100%. In general, group work activities were very frequently organized in all of these classes, from 50% to 75% of each class meeting. These results are consistent with my observations of the classes.

*Item 5*

Item 5 asked the teachers and the students if they thought group work activities could help students cooperate with their friends and help them acquire knowledge well. Chi-square analysis of the data shown in Table 5a revealed that the distribution of responses was significant in Nam's class,  $\chi^2 = 8.17$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ , and in Binh's class,  $\chi^2 = 12.57$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ . A significant number of students in each of these classes responded positively to this item. The distribution of responses was not significant for the students in Linh's class or in the comparison of responses across the three classes. The responses in Tables 5a and 5b demonstrate this consistency between teachers' and students' perceptions across the three classes. All teachers and most of the students (51/64) agreed that, in general, group work activities helped them cooperate

with their classmates and helped them acquire knowledge well. Some of them (13/64) thought that the value of group work activities depended on the kinds of lessons.

**Table 5a**

*Students' Responses to Item 5: Whether or Not Group Work Activities Help Students Cooperate With Friends and Study Well*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes.	19	20	12	51
b. <input type="checkbox"/> No.	0	0	0	0
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Depends on kinds of lessons.	5	3	5	13

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant in Nam and Binh' classes only. Ss = students.

**Table 5b**

*Teachers' Responses to Item 5: Whether or Not Group Work Activities Help Students Cooperate With Friends and Study Well*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes.	✓	✓	✓	3/3
b. <input type="checkbox"/> No.				0
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Depends on kinds of lessons.				0

### *Item 6*

The respondents were asked to rank 5 criteria that teachers should have in mind when designing group work activities. The students' responses are shown in Table 6a. The criteria are shown on the left side, and ranks 1-5 are shown horizontally across the top of the table below the name of each teacher. Each cell indicates the number of students who gave the criterion a rank of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

Table 6a

*Students' Responses to Item 6: Criteria for Designing Group Work Activities*

Options	Nam's class (24 Ss)					Binh's class (23 Ss)					Linh's class (17 Ss)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
a. Questions for discussion	1	6	7	4	6	2	10	9	1	1	0	5	4	7	1
b. Students' English proficiency	9	3	3	5	4	5	3	3	5	7	9	2	2	2	2
c. Time for discussion	0	2	5	7	<b>10</b>	0	2	1	7	<b>13</b>	0	1	2	4	<b>10</b>
d. Topic for discussion	<b>13</b>	6	2	2	1	<b>13</b>	6	2	2	0	8	5	3	1	0
e. Instructions for activities	1	7	7	6	3	3	2	8	8	2	0	4	6	3	4

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant. The bolded responses represent the cells with the highest chi-square values. Ss = students.

Table 6a (cont'd)

Options	Three classes (64 Ss)				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. Questions for discussion	3	21	20	12	8
b. Students' English proficiency	23	8	8	12	13
c. Time for discussion	0	5	8	18	<b>33</b>
d. Topic for discussion	34	17	7	5	1
e. Instructions for activities	4	13	21	17	9

*Note.* Ss = students

Chi-square analysis was conducted on the students' responses in Table 6a. As shown in Table 6b, results revealed that the distribution of the ranking of the five options was significant in each of the classes and across all three classes. The majority of the students in Nam's and Binh's classes ranked the topic for discussion (option d) as the most important criterion, and the amount of time allotted to it (option c) as the least important. The students in Linh's class also gave the time factor a rank of 5 but considered the students' English proficiency to be the most important criterion although the number of responses in favor of option (d), the topic for discussion, is very close.

Table 6b

*Chi-square Analysis of the Distribution of the Students' Rankings of the Options in Item 6 (Criteria for Designing Group Work Activities)*

Class	Chi-square results	Cell(s) showing the greatest difference between observed and expected frequencies
Nam	$\chi^2 = 49.58, df = 16, p < .001$	Option (d) Ranking of 1, Option (c) Ranking of 5
Binh	$\chi^2 = 77.39, df = 16, p < .001$	Option (d) Ranking of 1, Option (c) Ranking of 5
Linh	$\chi^2 = 57.65, df = 16, p < .001$	Option (b) Ranking of 1, Option (c) Ranking of 5
All Classes	$\chi^2 = 152.34, df = 16, p < .001$	Option (d) Ranking of 1; Option (c) Ranking of 5

In Table 6c, the cells with the check marks (✓) indicate the teachers' rankings of the options as 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

Table 6c

*Teachers' Responses to Item 6: Criteria Teachers Apply to Design Group Work Activities*

Options	Nam					Binh					Linh				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
a. Questions for discussion			✓				✓					✓			
b. Students' English proficiency		✓						✓			✓				
c. Time for discussion					✓					✓					✓
d. Topic for discussion	✓					✓							✓		
e. Instructions for activities				✓					✓					✓	

There is consistency between teachers and their students respectively as shown in the third column of Table 6b and Table 6c. All teachers differed somewhat in their viewpoints as shown in Table 6c. Nam and Binh and the majority of their students thought that topics of discussion are the most important, and the amount of time for discussion is the least important. While Linh agreed that time is the least important element, she disagreed about the topic element. She considered level of English proficiency among students the most important, which corresponds to her students rankings, and is perhaps influenced by the lower English proficiency of her first-year students compared to the other two classes.



### Item 7

Item 7 was also a ranking item that had four scales. The respondents were asked to rank 4 characteristics of a successful group work discussion. Results are shown in Tables 7a, 7b and 7c. Results of the chi-square analysis, shown in Table 7b, revealed that the distribution of the rankings of the four options was significant in each of the three classes and across all three classes.

Table 7a

#### *Students' Responses to Item 7: What Makes Group Work Discussion Successful*

Options	Nam's class (24 Ss)				Binh's class (23 Ss)				Linh's class (17 Ss)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
a. Ss' cooperation	<b>15</b>	5	2	2	11	11	1	0	<b>12</b>	4	1	0
b. Ss' chances of speaking	8	7	5	3	11	10	1	1	5	<b>11</b>	1	0
c. Ss' ability to answer the questions correctly	1	5	9	8	1	1	15	6	0	1	5	<b>11</b>
d. Activities done in a given time	0	6	7	<b>10</b>	0	1	6	<b>16</b>	0	1	10	6

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant. The bolded responses represent the cells with the highest chi-square values. Ss = students.

Table 7a (cont'd)

Options	Three classes (64 Ss)			
	1	2	3	4
a. Ss' cooperation	<b>38</b>	20	4	2
b. Ss' chances of speaking	24	28	7	4
c. Ss' ability to answer the questions correctly	2	7	29	25
d. Activities done in a given time	0	8	23	32

The responses show that while the teachers thought students' chances to speak English (option b) were the most important in terms of making a group work activity successful, they did not totally agree on the least important element. Nam and Binh thought that the least important element should be time (option d) while Linh thought it should be the students' ability to answer the questions correctly (option c). In terms of the most important element of a successful group work activity, there was inconsistency between the teachers' responses and those of the majority

of their students. While the three teachers ranked the chances for students to speak out (option b) as the most important element, the majority of the students in three classes (38/64) thought it was students' cooperation (option a). While Nam and almost half of his students, and Binh and most of his students ranked time given for activities (option d) as the least important element, Linh and most of her students thought it was students' ability to answer the questions correctly (option c).

Table 7b

*Chi-square Analysis of the Distribution of the Students' Rankings of the Options in Item 7 (What Makes Group Work Discussion Successful)*

Class	Chi-square results	Cell(s) showing the greatest difference between observed and expected frequencies
Nam	$\chi^2 = 36.84, df = 9, p < .001$	Option (a) Ranking of 1, Option (d) Ranking of 4
Binh	$\chi^2 = 85.74, df = 9, p < .001$	Option (d) Ranking of 4
Linh	$\chi^2 = 71.29, df = 9, p < .001$	Option (a) Ranking of 1, Option (b) Ranking of 2, Option (c) Ranking of 4
All Classes	$\chi^2 = 152.70, df = 9, p < .001$	Option (a) Ranking of 1

Table 7c

*Teachers' Responses to Item 7: What Makes Group Work Discussion Successful*

Options	Nam				Binh				Linh			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
a. Ss' cooperation		✓				✓				✓		
b. Ss' chances of speaking	✓				✓				✓			
c. Ss' ability to answer the questions correctly			✓				✓					✓
d. Activities done in a given time				✓			✓			✓		

### Item 8

Item 8 asked the teachers and the students for their opinions about good questions for group work activities. The responses are shown in Tables 8a and 8b.

Table 8a

*Students' Responses to Item 8: What Makes a Good Question for Discussion*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. ___ A question that is about the topic or issue the teacher wants students to discuss.	18	16	11	45
b. ___ A question that asks students to make clear some ideas from the lesson.	8	6	3	17
c. ___ A question that requires students to think beyond the lesson.	17	11	6	34
d. ___ A question that requires students to use their prior knowledge about the topic to answer	11	16	12	39

*Note.* Respondents could select more than one option. Ss = students.

Table 8b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 8: What Makes a Good Question for Discussion*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. ___ A question that is about the topic or issue the teacher wants students to discuss.		✓	✓	2/3
b. ___ A question that asks students to make clear some ideas from the lesson.				0
c. ___ A question that requires students to think beyond the lesson.	✓	✓		2/3
d. ___ A question that requires students to use their prior knowledge about the topic to answer		✓		1/3

Across the three classes, the students favored discussion questions that were related to the topic, and required them to use prior knowledge about the topic. Students in Nam and Binh's classes also favored questions that required them to think beyond the lesson. The teachers differed in their responses as shown in Table 8b. The only option not selected by any of the teachers was (b) which referred to a discussion question asking students to clarify ideas from the lesson.

*Item 9*

Item 9 was about the ideal size for group work activities. Responses to this item are shown in Tables 9a and 9b.

Table 9a

*Students' Responses to Item 9: Ideal Size for Group Work Activities*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. ___ 3 students	3	6	5	14
b. ___ 4 students	19	12	9	40
c. ___ 5 students	2	5	2	9
d. ___ 6 students	0	0	0	0
e. ___ 7 students	0	0	0	0

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant in Nam's and Linh's classes only. Ss = students

Chi-square analysis revealed that the distribution of responses was significant only in Nam's and Linh's classes, Nam's class  $\chi^2 = 22.75$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Linh's class  $\chi^2 = 4.63$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Table 9b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 9: Ideal Size for Group Work Activities*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. ___ 3 students		✓		1/3
b. ___ 4 students	✓		✓	2/3
c. ___ 5 students				0
d. ___ 6 students				0
e. ___ 7 students				0

Results shown in Tables 9a and 9b indicated that there was consistency between teachers' and students' perceptions in Nam's and Linh's classes. However, Binh's selection of option (a) indicating the ideal size for group work was 3 students differed from the other two teachers and the majority of all the students who preferred 4 students (option b).

*Item 10*

Respondents were asked to rank 3 criteria related to the most common interaction pattern among students in group work activities. Chi-square analysis was conducted on the responses provided by the students who followed the instructions accurately asking them to rank the options. Responses are shown in Table 10a from each class separately, and then on the data from

all three classes. As shown in Table 10b, results revealed that the distribution of the rankings of the three options was significant in all cases.

The responses to this item indicated that all teachers and almost all students (59/64) agreed that the most frequent kind of interaction among students in group discussion is that every student has at least a chance to speak out while discussing (option b); and the least frequent pattern is that one student dominates the discussion (option a). This consistency is shown in column 3 (cells showing the greatest difference between observed and expected frequencies) of Table 10b.

Table 10a

*Students' Responses to Item 10: Patterns of Students' Interaction in Group Work Activities*

Options	Nam's class (24 Ss)			Binh's class (23 Ss)			Linh's class (17 Ss)			Three classes (64 Ss)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
a. One student dominates the discussion	0	2	17	0	5	11	0	3	13	0	10	41
b. Every student has a chance to speak out	23	1	0	19	2	2	17	0	0	59	3	2
c. Some students speak and the other(s) listen	1	16	2	4	9	3	0	13	3	5	38	8

*Note.* The bolded responses represent the cells with the highest chi-square values. Ss = students.

Table 10b

*Chi-square Analysis of the Distribution of the Students' Rankings of the Options in Item 10 (Patterns of Students' Interaction in Group Work Activities)*

Class	Chi-square results	Cell(s) showing the greatest difference between observed and expected frequencies
Nam	$\chi^2 = 90.19, df = 4, p < .001$	Option (b) Ranking of 1, Option (a) Ranking of 3
Binh	$\chi^2 = 36.82, df = 4, p < .001$	Option (b) Ranking of 1, Option (a) Ranking of 3
Linh	$\chi^2 = 68.14, df = 4, p < .001$	Option (b) Ranking of 1
All Classes	$\chi^2 = 186.92, df = 4, p < .001$	Option (b) Ranking of 1; Option (a) Ranking of 3

Table 10c

*Teachers' Responses to Item 10: Patterns of Students' Interaction in Group Work Activities*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>
a. One student dominates the discussion	✓	✓	✓
b. Every student has a chance to speak out	✓	✓	✓
c. Some students speak and the other(s) listen	✓	✓	✓

*Item 11*

This item concerned the approximate amount of English the students used when they worked in groups. The responses are shown in Tables 11a and 11b.

Table 11a

*Students' Responses to Item 11: Percentage of English Students Used in Group Work*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. <u>  </u> 100%	2	0	1	3
b. <u>  </u> 75%	<b>16</b>	7	2	<b>25</b>
c. <u>  </u> 50%	<b>5</b>	14	12	<b>31</b>
d. <u>  </u> 25 %	1	2	2	5
e. <u>  </u> less than 25%	0	0	0	0

*Note.* Distribution of responses is significant within each class and across classes. The two bolded responses represent the cells with the highest chi-square values. Ss = students.

Chi-square analysis revealed that the distribution of responses was significant within each class, Nam's class  $\chi^2 = 12.25$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Binh's class  $\chi^2 = 9.49$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Linh's class  $\chi^2 = 17.18$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .001$ . Of the options offered in this item, the majority of Binh's and Linh's students indicated that 50% of their language use in group work was in English. In contrast, most of Nam's students selected 75%. Distribution of responses across the three classes was also

significant,  $\chi^2 = 13.13$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .001$ . The contrast between the preference for options (b) and (c) by Nam's students contributed the most to this result.

Table 11b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 11: Percentage of English Students Used in Group Work*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. <input type="checkbox"/> 100%				0
b. <input type="checkbox"/> 75%	✓	✓	✓	3/3
c. <input type="checkbox"/> 50%				0
d. <input type="checkbox"/> 25 %				0

The responses shown in Table 11b indicated that Nam and most of his students had the same opinions about the percentage of English used in group work activities while Binh and Linh differed from their students' viewpoints. It is interesting that the three teachers had the same opinion on this issue but it differed from almost half (31/64) of the students in the three classes. These students agreed that the percentage of students' English use was usually 50% while their teachers all thought it was 75%. In the classes I observed, students used English approximately 70-85% of their talk time.

#### *Item 12*

Item 12 concerned the way students usually helped one another to correct their errors during group work. Respondents were allowed to select as many options as they wished. Four specific options were listed as shown in Tables 12a and 12b, followed by an opportunity for them to express their opinion. Students' responses across classes showed a preference for option (b): students point out their peers' errors and correct at least some of them. All three teachers selected this option also.

Table 12a

*Students' Responses to Item 12 (Options a to d): How Students' Errors Are Corrected*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam's class (24 Ss)</i>	<i>Binh's class (23 Ss)</i>	<i>Linh's class (17 Ss)</i>	<i>Three classes (64 Ss)</i>
a. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students repeat what was said and correct at least some of the errors.	17	4	9	30
b. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students point out what the errors are and correct at least some of them.	19	17	12	48
c. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students write down the errors and ask the teacher how to correct them when they finish the discussion.	9	5	6	20
d. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; but other students generally ignore the errors.	4	13	2	19
e. ___ Others? Please provide examples:	1	1	0	2

*Note.* Respondents could choose more than one option. Ss = students.

Table 12b

*Teachers' Responses to Item 12 (Options a to d): How Students' Errors Are Corrected*

<i>Options</i>	<i>Nam</i>	<i>Binh</i>	<i>Linh</i>	<i>Three teachers</i>
a. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students repeat what was said and correct at least some of the errors.				
b. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students point out what the errors are and correct at least some of them.	✓	✓	✓	
c. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; one or more students write down the errors and ask the teacher how to correct them when they finish the discussion.				
d. ___ One student makes some errors while speaking; but other students generally ignore the errors.		✓	✓	
e. ___ Others? Please provide examples: _____	✓ (also depends on a certain stage of the discussion. We often do that in the end.)			



The above responses show that there is consistency in terms of error correction in group work activities between the student's perceptions and those of their teacher, among the three teachers and among the students across the three classes. All of the teachers and most of the students thought that in their classes when one student made some errors while speaking, one or more students pointed out what the errors were and corrected at least some of them. However, these responses were not consistent with my observations. In the classes I observed, the students did not often correct their peers' errors. In the post-observation interviews, the teachers told me that was because the students were concerned about ideas for their discussion rather than correcting one another's errors.

## Chapter Four

### General Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated teachers' beliefs and practices, and students' perceptions about communicative language teaching activities in terms of organizing and monitoring group work, the use of the L1 in class, and ways students' errors are corrected in an EFL setting in Vietnam. The data were collected through three class observations of each of the three teachers at Cantho University in Vietnam, post-observation interviews with them, a questionnaire for the teachers, and a questionnaire for the students. I also met with the head of the English Department and the dean of the School of Education to obtain their ideas about communicative language teaching and about classroom management. It is interesting to see more consistencies than inconsistencies in terms of perceptions between teachers and students in each class, among the three teachers, and among students across the three classes. However, there are some inconsistencies between the teachers' beliefs and their practices.

This discussion follows the order of the research questions.

*Research Question 1:* Are teachers' beliefs consistent with their practices in terms of methods of organizing and carrying out group work activities, L1 use in the classroom, and error correction?

The following discussion is organized according to the fictitious names of the three teachers beginning with Nam, followed by Binh and Linh.

*Nam*

In terms of frequency of organizing and carrying out group work activities, Nam's beliefs are consistent with his practices. In his response on the questionnaire, he indicated that approximately 75% of an average class meeting was spent in group work. In his class, I saw that 80 – 90% of his class time was in group work. In the particular classes that I observed, the students were preparing for their final listening/speaking exam. They discussed ideas to construct dialogues similar to the ones they might perform in their exam. The students enthusiastically worked in groups and in pairs. In my post-observation meetings with the teacher, I asked him

whether he organized so much group work solely because it was time for exam preparation. He responded that I observed usual classroom activities. He organized group work activities on a regular basis.

When Nam organized group work activities in class, I did not see him show any concern for the amount of time the students had for each activity though he gave the students a time limit before each one. I asked him if he thought much about the amount of time for these activities, and he indicated that it was the factor that he paid less attention to, which was compatible with his response on the questionnaire.

In terms of awareness of L1 use, Nam told me that he tried to limit the use of Vietnamese in class and encouraged students to use English as much as they could. In his class, he reminded his students to use English when he recognized some were speaking in Vietnamese. His students used Vietnamese for their organizational language but for their discussion in groups they used English. I saw in this class that the teacher used English all the time, when he gave instructions, explained and clarified any points to his students, and so forth. When I asked the teacher whether or not he believed his students understood him, he told me he was very positive about that. He also indicated that his students could use Vietnamese if they wanted to save time but only when it was absolutely necessary. For example, if there were some complicated terms that students needed to explain but were too hard for them to do so in English, they could use Vietnamese to save time and to make sure everybody understood them.

I found both consistencies and inconsistencies in the ways the teacher corrected his students' errors. In the classes I observed, the teacher corrected the students' grammar and pronunciation errors. In the post-observation interview, he indicated that he really focused on these two kinds of errors to correct. I asked him when he thought he should correct his students' errors. He told me that teachers should know when and how to correct errors. To him, teachers should not interrupt students when they were speaking; instead, they should wait until their students finish. He said teachers should certainly interrupt their students when there are some

serious errors that could lead to miscomprehension. In his class, most of the time he waited for his students to finish their talk. However, on a few occasions he did interrupt them when they were speaking though the errors did not seem to cause miscomprehension (e.g., when a student placed the stress incorrectly in pronouncing the word *idea*), which showed that his beliefs were not always consistent with his practice or that he interpreted this more seriously than I did. Nam was consistent in his beliefs and practices with regard to the type of corrective feedback he provided.

### *Binh*

Binh organized more group work activities than he thought. In the questionnaire he indicated that 50% of his class time was spent in group work. In my observations across his three classes, approximately 75% of class time was spent in group work. In a post-observation interview, he indicated that 50% to 75% of his typical class was in group work. The percentage varied from time to time depending on the topics of the lessons.

Binh indicated in his questionnaire response that time was the least important element in organizing group work and pair work activities, which was very consistent with his practice in the classes I observed. In a post-observation interview, he said that even when his students were still excited when the time for the task was up, he gave them some extra time.

In terms of awareness of L1 use, like Nam, Binh said that he always encouraged his students to use English in class and thought that his students loved to speak English. However, in the classes I observed, his students sometimes used Vietnamese as an organizational language just as the students in Nam's class did. Like Nam, Binh allowed his students to speak Vietnamese when they explained some complicated words (e.g., baby boomers). He also said that sometimes weak students had ideas but found it hard to express them in English; in these cases, he allowed them to use Vietnamese in order to help them feel comfortable sharing ideas.

In the classes I observed, Binh addressed grammar and pronunciation errors, which was compatible with his responses to my questions in the interviews. In terms of error correction, he

said that he did not want to interrupt his students when they were speaking; he generally waited until later. He said he took notes when his students were speaking and corrected them afterwards. In the classes I observed, his practices were generally consistent with his beliefs.

*Linh*

In her responses to the questionnaire, Linh indicated that 100% of her class time was spent in group work. In the classes I observed, about 85-90% of the class time was spent in group work. Like Nam and Binh, Linh considered time the least important factor in organizing group work activities, which was consistent with my observations. In a post-observation interview, she said she highly appreciated students' enthusiasm in sharing their ideas to contribute to the lessons and considered it more important than time for an activity. Therefore, she often gave students more time to finish their task.

Like the other two teachers, Linh encouraged her students to use English as often as they could. In her class, many times she told her students, "English only, please". However, she said it was really hard to monitor them. She also told me that her students were in their first year, so their English proficiency was rather low, which led them to use Vietnamese in class sometimes. Like the other two teachers, she said that Vietnamese was allowed when students struggled with vocabulary.

Also like Nam and Binh, Linh said that she usually corrected the students' errors in grammar and pronunciation. In the classes I observed she focused on these kinds of errors. Linh said she usually took notes on the students' errors in grammar and corrected them afterwards. However, on one occasion I saw her take a lot of notes but not correct the students' errors. She told me she did so in the following class, which I did not observe.

In sum, there are many consistencies within and similarities between the beliefs and practices of the three teachers in terms of organizing and monitoring group work activities, the use of the L1, and error correction. They all organized group work activities on a regular basis. They all encouraged their students to use English often in class. They all agreed that they could

not monitor them all the time to see if they used English on a limited basis. They agreed that their students could use Vietnamese if they struggled with vocabulary.

They all thought that the time given for group work activities was not important, which was consistent with their practices in their classes. They all addressed attention to grammar and pronunciation errors. In fact, they did not correct a lot of the students' errors in the first class that I observed for each of them. The frequency of error correction in the second and third classes that I observed increased. It is possible that the amount of error correction differed in the second and third classes I observed because of the objectives of the classes compared to the first one. For example, in Nam's first class, students were involved in brainstorming activities; however, in the third class, they were performing the dialogues they had prepared, which produced more opportunities for error correction to take place.

*Research Question 2:* How do teachers' beliefs compare with those of the department head with regard to group work in language learning, L1 use, and error correction?

The head of the department was one of the teachers that taught methods courses in the department. He was also involved in several projects involving teaching and learning methods including one with two universities in The Netherlands (Hoogeschool van Amsterdam and Universiteit van Amsterdam) and one with the British Council. In general, the teachers' beliefs are compatible with those of the head of the department with regard to group work in language learning, L1 use, and error correction. In fact, all of the teachers used to be the students of the department head in his teaching methods courses.

In the interview, the department head, told me that the teachers of the English department were aware of organizing group work activities and the importance of conducting these kinds of activities in class. He also emphasized that the teachers had learned the techniques of organizing and monitoring group work activities in their teaching methods course and in the workshops that the department and the School of Education conducted. In terms of monitoring group work activities, he emphasized that teachers should know what their students do in groups. Therefore,

teachers should circulate around the class to monitor and to offer assistance when needed. The three teachers involved in this study organized a lot of group work in class and they tried to go around the classrooms often to help their students. It was interesting that the department head and the teachers all considered time to be less important in organizing and monitoring group work activities.

In terms of the use of the L1 in class, the department head thought that the roles of the L1 in the English classes should depend on the teachers' and the students' English proficiency. In general, teachers who teach second-year students should limit their language use to only 10% Vietnamese and their students should use English 70-80% of their talk time. Teachers who teach first-year students should limit their L1 use to 20% of the time they are speaking and should encourage students to use English 60-70% of their talk time. He supported his ideas by explaining that students in Vietnam do not have much access to English outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers should encourage them to use English in class in order to offer them as many opportunities to use the language as possible. He also mentioned that Vietnamese is allowed when teachers explain complicated terms including grammatical points. These comments were also compatible with those of the three teachers, who encouraged their students to speak English most of the time, and they spoke English all the time. In fact, the percentage of English they used in class was higher than the department head's recommendation. Their students also used more English than the department head had expected.

With regard to error correction, we also find a lot of consistencies between the department head's beliefs and the teachers' beliefs and practices in their classes. The department head said that error correction should be focused on grammar and pronunciation problems. He also thought that in general teachers should wait until their students finish talking before they correct errors, which again was similar to what the three teachers had done. However, while the department head suggested many ways to correct students' errors such as recasting, taking notes about students' errors and explicitly correcting them later, most of the time the teachers did not

recast students, but explicitly corrected the errors by writing them on the board and pointing them out with correction.

*Research Question 3:* How do teachers' beliefs compare with those of the Dean of the School of Education?

The dean is responsible for any activity occurring in the school. He was originally a lecturer of physics. He was involved in many projects in teaching and learning methods including two with Michigan State University and one with the two universities of the Netherlands mentioned above. He also teaches courses in pedagogical theory. He encourages the teachers of the school to observe each other's classes. He observes many classes in the school also.

In the interview, the dean mentioned that teachers at the school in general and teachers in the English department were aware of the importance of organizing group work and pair work activities. He said that teachers in the English department were very confident when they organized such kinds of activities. To him, all of the teachers organized group work activities because they had been trained to do so and knew that they were effective techniques in teaching. He also said that the students in the English department were among the most active students in the school<sup>5</sup>. The three teachers involved in the study used group work often in their classes, which was consistent with the dean's view.

*Research Questions 4, 5 and 6:*

4. What are students' preferences with regard to their use of the L2 in class?

5. What are students' preferences with regard to the effectiveness of group work as a language-learning tool and their preferences for error correction?

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<sup>5</sup> In their final year of study, pedagogical students of the School of Education spend 8 weeks in high schools for their teaching practicum. The School gets reports from high schools after the students finish their practicum. Each student also submits to the School a report of their trip which includes comments of the student's mentor. The School also organizes a meeting after the students return to the School. In the meetings, the representatives of the high schools and of the Services of Education and Training of the provinces where the students went for their practicum comment on the students' teaching abilities.



6. Are teachers' beliefs compatible with those of their students with regard to the effectiveness of group work, L1 use in the classroom, and error correction?

In general, these three questions dealt with the students' preferences and beliefs with regard to the three research foci: group work activities, the use of the L1, and preference for error correction. These questions also involved a comparison of the students' preferences and beliefs with those of the teachers. The preferences and beliefs were obtained through the questionnaires for and interviews with the teachers and the questionnaires for the students.

There were definitely more consistencies than inconsistencies in terms of the perceptions of the teachers and their students, among the three teachers, and among the students within each class and across the three classes. All of the teachers and almost all of the students thought that their classes were more "student-oriented" because they reported that the teachers did not lecture so often, and the students played active roles in class. They thought that they were involved in class discussions and communicated with their classmates as well as their teachers while they were working in groups.

Though there were slightly different opinions between Linh and her class, results of the study generally indicated more consistencies in the ways teachers and students thought about the percentage of group work activities, which was considered one of the main elements of communicative language teaching and the one related to students' active role in language learning. They reported 50% to 75% of class time was spent in group work activities, giving the students many opportunities to interact with each other in English.

All of the teachers and most of the students rated topics for discussion as the most important element in designing group work. Half of the students and all of the teachers ranked time as the least important element teachers should think about when designing group work. All of the teachers and about 60% of the students ranked the chances that one student has to speak out in group work activities as the most important indicator of students' involvement in the activities.

In terms of the use of the L1 in class, the teachers and the students thought they did not really use Vietnamese very often. Instead, the students reported that 50% to 75% of their discussion was in English, which is an optimistic picture in an EFL setting where using English outside the classroom is very limited. In terms of error correction, both teachers and students in the study indicated that errors should be corrected.

In sum, the teachers' and students' perceptions about communicative language teaching activities showed that these respondents were aware of the importance of students' participation in class activities, the importance and value of group work activities, and their chances to speak English in class as well as opportunities for error correction.

The research has shown more consistencies than inconsistencies between the teachers' beliefs and their practices in terms of organizing and monitoring group work activities, the use of the L1 and error correction. There were a lot of consistencies between the teachers' and students' preferences in terms of error correction. They also shared common beliefs about the kinds of activities occurring in their classes. The teachers' beliefs were generally consistent with those of the head of the English Department who was their teacher in teaching methods courses, and those of the Dean of the School of Education who encouraged teachers of the school to organize group work activities as an example of effective teaching techniques.

Basturkmen et al. (2004) found more inconsistencies than consistencies between the three teachers' beliefs and their practices with regard to focus-on-form in their ESL classes. According to the researchers, one of the possible reasons for the inconsistencies was that the teachers' statements in the in-depth interviews reflected their technical knowledge rather than their practical knowledge. However, when the teachers were in their classes, they drew on their practical knowledge.

In the current study, though there were more consistencies than inconsistencies between the three teachers' beliefs and practices, the inconsistencies that were found may have arisen because of a conflict between their technical and practical knowledge, much as Basturkmen et al.

(2004) suggested. For example, in the interviews, the three teachers mentioned that most of the time they left the errors uncorrected until their students finished speaking. However, on one occasion, Nam interrupted his students when I thought the error (i.e., mispronunciation of *idea*) was not serious enough to interfere with the flow of communication.

On the other hand, the reasons for the consistencies between the teachers' and the department head's beliefs regarding the three research issues were probably due to the fact that the teachers had been students of the department head in his teaching methods courses, and all of them had attended the same kind of training workshops, and were involved in several professional projects taking place in the department and in the school. These would contribute their shared knowledge.

There are two major limitations in this study. The first is related to organizing the items in the questionnaires. Item 10 asked the teachers and the students to rank the three options. However, this item appeared within a series of items (items 8, 9, 11 and 12) that required choosing one or more options from the list provided in each item. Therefore, item 10 was different in its format. This might account for the fact that some students simply put a check mark next to one of the three options and did not rank them although I tried to explain the process during the administration of the questionnaire. Secondly, this study focused on activities in listening/speaking classes only but not in every skill class or in linguistics courses. In conclusion, the results I found in this study are limited to aural/oral skills classes that participated in my study in this learning context in Vietnam, and are not necessarily representative of the whole picture of teaching English in Vietnam. Further research should be conducted using the same foci and the same groups of students when they are in their third and final years as a follow-up study.

## APPENDIX A:

### Questionnaire for Teachers

- \* Please answer the following questions. All of your information will be kept confidential.**  
**\* All questions relate to the course that the researcher observed.**

Degree(s) you hold: \_\_\_\_\_  
Total years of teaching: \_\_\_\_\_ years.

1. What kinds of activities do you usually have/organize in the course that I observed?  
(Please check the letters of **ALL** the options that apply).
  - a) ☐ Teacher gives lectures; there is no discussion between teacher and students or among students.
  - b) ☐ Teacher gives lectures; there is some discussion between teacher and students and/or among students.
  - c) ☐ Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.
  - d) ☐ Teacher raises questions; students discuss the questions in groups and give their ideas afterwards.
  - e) ☐ Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions about the topics, discuss with their friends in groups, and give their ideas afterwards.
2. Among the kinds of activities mentioned in question 1, which one(s) do you consider the most effective way(s) of teaching aural/oral skills? (Please write the letter(s) of the option(s) you choose on the line provided).  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do you think that/those kind(s) of activity(ies) is/are the most effective? ( Please write down up to 4 reasons)
  - a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Approximately what percentage of an average class meeting is group work? (Please check **ONE** option)
  - a) ☐ 100%
  - b) ☐ 75%
  - c) ☐ 50%
  - d) ☐ 25%
  - e) ☐ less than 25%
5. Do you think group work activities, in general, can help students co-operate with their friends and help them acquire knowledge well (Please check **ONE** option)?
  - a) ☐ Yes.
  - b) ☐ No.
  - c) ☐ Depends on kinds of lessons.

6. What criteria should a teacher keep in mind when designing group work activities? (Please rank the following from the most important to the least important; 1 = the most important; 5 = the least important).
- a) ☐ Providing students with questions for discussion.
  - b) ☐ Level of English proficiency among students in the same groups.
  - c) ☐ The amount of time given for a discussion.
  - d) ☐ Topics of discussion.
  - e) ☐ Teacher's instructions for the activities.
7. What makes group work discussion successful? (Please rank the following from the most important to the least important; 1 = the most important; 4 = the least important).
- a) ☐ Co-operation among students.
  - b) ☐ All students get a chance to speak in English.
  - c) ☐ Students are able to answer the questions correctly.
  - d) ☐ Students complete the activity within the allotted time.
8. In your opinion, what is a good question for group work activities? (Please check the letters of **ALL** the options you choose).
- a) ☐ A question that is about the topic or issue the teacher wants students to discuss.
  - b) ☐ A question that asks students to make clear some ideas from the lesson.
  - c) ☐ A question that requires students to think beyond the lesson.
  - d) ☐ A question that requires students to use their prior knowledge about the topic to answer.
9. What is an ideal size for a group work activity? (Please check **ONE** option)
- a) ☐ 3 students
  - b) ☐ 4 students
  - c) ☐ 5 students
  - d) ☐ 6 students
  - e) ☐ 7 students
10. What kind of interaction do your students usually have when they are discussing in groups? (Please rank the following according to the levels of frequency; 1 = most often; 3 = least often).
- a) ☐ One student in the group dominates most of the discussion.
  - b) ☐ Every student has at least a chance to speak out.
  - c) ☐ Some students speak and one or two students listen.
11. Approximately how much of the students' language use in group work is usually in English? (Please check **ONE** option).
- a) ☐ 100%
  - b) ☐ 75%
  - c) ☐ 50%
  - d) ☐ 25 %
  - e) ☐ less than 25%

12. How do students in your class usually help other students correct their mistakes during group work? (Please check ALL the options that apply)
- a) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students repeat what was said and correct at least some of the mistakes.
  - b) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students point out what the mistakes are and correct at least some of them.
  - c) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students write down the mistakes and ask the teacher how to correct them when they finish the discussion.
  - d) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; but other students generally ignore the mistakes.
  - e) ☐ Others? Please provide examples: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

***Thank you very much for your time!***

## APPENDIX B

### Questionnaire for Students

- \* Please answer the following questions. All of your information will be kept confidential.**  
**\* All questions relate to the course that the researcher observed.**

You are a (please check): \_\_\_ first year student; \_\_\_ second year student; \_\_\_ third year student; \_\_\_ fourth year student. Your major: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What kinds of activities do you usually have/organize in the course that I observed?  
(Please check the letters of **ALL** the options that apply).

- a) \_\_\_ Teacher gives lectures; there is no discussion between teacher and students or among students.
- b) \_\_\_ Teacher gives lectures; there is some discussion between teacher and students and/or among students.
- c) \_\_\_ Teacher raises questions; students answer the questions individually.
- d) \_\_\_ Teacher raises questions; students discuss the questions in groups and give their ideas afterwards.
- e) \_\_\_ Teacher gives students topics; students raise questions about the topics, discuss with their friends in groups, and give their ideas afterwards.

2. Among the kinds of activities mentioned in question 1, which one(s) do you consider the most effective way(s) of teaching aural/oral skills? (Please write the letter(s) of the option(s) you choose on the line provided).

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why do you think that/those kind(s) of activity(ies) is/are the most effective? ( Please write down up to 4 reasons)

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Approximately what percentage of an average class meeting is group work? (Please check **ONE** option)

- a) \_\_\_ 100%
- b) \_\_\_ 75%
- c) \_\_\_ 50%
- d) \_\_\_ 25%
- e) \_\_\_ less than 25%

5. Do you think group work activities, in general, can help students co-operate with their friends and help them acquire knowledge well (Please check **ONE** option)?

- a) \_\_\_ Yes.
- b) \_\_\_ No.
- c) \_\_\_ Depends on kinds of lessons.

6. What criteria do you think your teacher keeps in mind when designing group work activities? (Please rank the following from the most important to the least important; 1 = the most important; 5 = the least important).

- a) ☐ Providing students with questions for discussion.
- b) ☐ Level of English proficiency among students in the same groups.
- c) ☐ The amount of time given for a discussion.
- d) ☐ Topics of discussion.
- e) ☐ Teacher's instructions for the activities.

7. What makes group work discussion successful? (Please rank the following from the most important to the least important; 1 = the most important; 4 = the least important).

- a) ☐ Co-operation among students.
- b) ☐ All students get a chance to speak in English.
- c) ☐ Students are able to answer the questions correctly.
- d) ☐ Students complete the activity within the allotted time.

8. In your opinion, what is a good question for group work activities? (Please check the letters of **ALL** the options you choose).

- a) ☐ A question that is about the topic or issue the teacher wants students to discuss.
- b) ☐ A question that asks students to make clear some ideas from the lesson.
- c) ☐ A question that requires students to think beyond the lesson.
- d) ☐ A question that requires students to use their prior knowledge about the topic to answer.

9. What is an ideal size for a group work activity? (Please check **ONE** option)

- a) ☐ 3 students
- b) ☐ 4 students
- c) ☐ 5 students
- d) ☐ 6 students
- e) ☐ 7 students

10. What kind of interaction do the students in your class usually have when they are discussing in groups? (Please rank the following according to the levels of frequency; 1 = most often; 3 = least often).

- a) ☐ One student in the group dominates most of the discussion.
- b) ☐ Every student has at least a chance to speak out.
- c) ☐ Some students speak and one or two students listen.

11. Approximately how much of the students' language use in group work is usually in English? (Please check **ONE** option).

- a) ☐ 100%
- b) ☐ 75%
- c) ☐ 50%
- d) ☐ 25 %
- e) ☐ less than 25%



12. How do students in your class usually help other students correct their mistakes during group work? (Please check **ALL** the options that apply)

- a) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students repeat what was said and correct at least some of the mistakes.
  - b) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students point out what the mistakes are and correct at least some of them.
  - c) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; one or more students write down the mistakes and ask the teacher how to correct them when they finish the discussion.
  - d) ☐ One student makes some mistakes while speaking; but other students generally ignore the mistakes.
  - e) ☐ Others? Please provide examples: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

***Thank you very much for your time!***

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